

tion. (The *niyoga* model in which a woman – whose husband is either incapable of fatherhood or has died without having a child – would request and appoint a person for helping her bear a child.) The narratives in chapters 5 and 6 reveal that indeed there is acceptance for *niyoga* model among couples but with an amplified segment of secrecy. However, in contrast to this assumption, a lady respondent referred to her genetic component as a “seed” (155). Another woman refused donor-insemination preferring adoption although her husband was supportive of the *niyoga* model (156). There was a strong argument for genetic credentials which effects their decision against adoption. In one such narrative on the quality of the child “the parent’s genes are bound to show up in the child” (162). The author relates this description with evidence that children in India are abandoned primarily due to pre-/extra-marital relationships. If this is true, people interpret their desired attributes in children based on convenience and contemporary situations and not merely in quasi-religious models. Another doctor denies the *niyoga* model by saying pious women will not accept another man’s sperms to have a child and would rather prefer to adopt. The interpretation of an adopted child as “a bastard” in one of the narratives is probably defined by same contemporary inference that many children are as “unwanted” by unwed mothers. Hence, people tend to make decisions based on present requirements and seek to justify it with a variety of explanations, cultural or otherwise.

I contend that people hardly read the original Sanskrit texts of Vedas or Upanishads but tend to read translated version of Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavad Gita either in the form of folklore or watched as television serials that iterate these stories. Other embodied forms of knowledge, that is not referred to in this book, are those transferred in daily life experiences of rituals as *pujas* (religious worship ritual), baby showers, marriages, *bhajans* (songs with religious theme or spiritual ideas), story-telling in *vrata pujas*, to name a few, that spread notions of (in)fertility, especially the birth of a son. I hoped that such versions of daily life interpretations would have emerged in the later chapters of this book, but the narratives of people’s infertility experiences do not make any direct reference to classical texts, folklore, or daily life stories. Instead, such an inference has been drawn from the narratives by the author himself and, hence, cannot be identified with specific texts or stories from the past which I find methodologically problematic. It would have been more interesting to ask the participants, how they relate their experience of the present technologies to the past in the form of literature, folklore in their day-to-day experiences. There are numerous complex interpretations of infertility and procreation practiced in the form of rituals, as Hinduism is considered a way of life followed by all religions in the subcontinent, not just by Hindus and hence day-to-day experiences can be an important form of embodiment. Another important form of cultural interpretation that this book missed is that the cultural Indian literature speaks not merely in terms of the body-mind binary but relates to soul and reincarnation. It would have been interesting to learn how people related these

understandings with their experience of using reproductive technologies.

In chap. 6, the author refers to commercial gestational surrogacy in India, drawing analogies with organ trade as an exploitative (re)production and the ineffectiveness of the state. Chapters 7 and 8 elaborate the quasi-scared cultural interactions between the fertility treatment seekers, treatment providers, and the technology that produce social suffering and stigma. Although the treatment seekers hold the providers responsible for eluding conception, the mounting costs, and a lack of human touch, they continue pursuing clinical options which according to the author brings them deeper into the same quasi-religious ideas that delegitimizes infertility. Chap. 3 discusses the contested conceptions reflected in the medical politics of test-tube babies; chap. 2 provides a detailed review of the social stigma and blame of infertility and how it affects both men and women. In chap. 4 there is given a detailed review of the role of the state and biomedicine in the politics of conception in India. Feminist discourse has been very well explained in various sections in this book but it has not been carried into data collection and analysis as that was not the book’s aim. This book is the first ethnography on infertility in India emphasizing on people’s cultural-religious experience with assisted reproductive technology and overall reveals valuable infertility experiences in India and the interactions between various players in the politics of conception and, thus, is an important source for future research on this topic.

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**Boekraad, Mardoeke:** Ecological Sustainability in Traditional Sámi Beliefs and Rituals. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016. 166 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-66598-5. (Moderne, Kulturen, Relationen, 20) Price: € 42.95

The only indigenous ethnic minority of northwestern Europe – the Saami – straddle the arctic and subarctic regions of contiguous regions across Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. While acknowledging considerable historical depth and a wide swath of geographic breadth, Mardoeke Boekraad mainly focuses on the most northerly, most populous, and least endangered subset of North Saami for her ethnographic, ethnologic, and sociological case studies of beliefs and practices pertaining to Saami cultural embeddedness in larger, and changing, transnational societies and global ecologies. Foregrounded amongst these beliefs and practices are those myths and rituals drawing on documented traditions as maintained and transformed in contemporary generations facing challenges from within and from beyond Saami society. Her book is a translation of her 2013 master’s thesis at the University of Bergen, Norway.

Boekraad draws on the rich corpus of already-documented Saami oral histories in considering how best to connect with and expand that genre in Saapmi (Lapland), while also reflecting on challenging conditions facing this and other Fourth World peoples. Although the Saami reside in four contiguous nation-states, their own local cultures inflect around regional land use along wa-

tersheds that do not align within national boundaries but rather straddle them. The minority of Saami who rely on reindeer management associate in a unit called a *siida*, a seasonally-inflected condensation of humans-reindeer-dogs-pasturage that have formerly crossed international boundaries, and inevitably today pass through counties and municipalities. Whether involved with reindeer or other subsistence activities, or living in settlements and depending on more commonplace commercial and administrative occupations, or moving to national capitals and other cities affording higher education, Saami today continue to intimately relate to their ancestral grounds, traveling great distances to participate in favorite seasonal subsistence activities – from berry-picking to reindeer roundups, or even the summer tourist period.

Relying on relatively few contemporary consultants, from distinct and separate regional Saami societies, Boekraad allows their voices to resonate backwards through lived experiences, and forward facing survival with or without sustainability, as well as inward. Inwardly, these generous contributors to the research project capture some of the potential expected from autoethnography, whereby personal epiphanies may surface in narrative that may be meaningfully shared, and metaphorically translated, across interpersonal, linguistic, and cross-cultural gaps. Many of these narratives involve reindeer and other species fused in an *Umwelt* – an ecological bubble – that both invites and resists the human actor; alongside the human still today there are superhuman spirits manifesting agency. Saami nature is a busy place!

Even when spirits themselves may not be invoked, Saami narratives reveal a communion between humans and individual animals as well as entire other species, where mutual respect and reciprocity are palpable. In some stories, the relationships may involve guardian spirits of food species having fragile populations; these animals may themselves be small, yet important symbolically as well as medicinally and in the diet – the frog figures here, as it does in so many other cultures around the globe. Boekraad points out the role of the frog in keeping water sources clear of unsavory plants and insects. Here and elsewhere, she also brings attention to how children's play and practical activities interact with the environment, in this case with frogs, keeping alive ethnoecological beliefs and knowledge in dynamical ways. In any society, children actively construct their culture as naturally as they inherit the wisdom of their elders – these dynamics remain under-appreciated socially and culturally, and consequently also ethnologically, though not obscured in this book.

Following Boekraad, it seems that familiar animals without obvious utility, but with sensitive populations, are also endowed with guardian spirits, while the main food species, such as reindeer and salt-water fish, and the predators of the reindeer, do not. This observation does argue for a protective function of the guardian spirits of delicate species, whether these animals are of direct utility or not, relating to the notional of sustainability in Boekraad's title. The regulation of everyday activities of reindeer-management and fishing appears to be more pragmatic than spiritual.

Other special spirits connect with nature via an underground realm, and these associate with regulative roles in the local landscape. Usually inferred but sometimes observed, surfacing in interaction with humans, underground spirits directly bind with the *Umwelt*'s earthly substrate, and through ritual activities manage to regulate practices in the ecosystem. Underground spirits may be manifest as virtual persons, whose roles in regulation range from guiding and teaching to demands for permission and protection. Encountering these spirits engenders a visceral sense of fusion and emotional identification with their locales.

While wide swaths of landscape evoke emotional senses and conscious meaningfulness for humans, and Saami reindeer and dogs, no doubt, the most salient of locations in any landscape will be the *sieidi*: singular stones or prominent rock formations that harbor resident spirits. They have names, from the spirit or from other associations such as a *siida* or just the territory. In seasonal migrations, Saami detour to visit any such *sieidi* spots, even leaving gifts, donations, or perhaps in earlier times, sacrifices. *Sieidi* may have been sites of more elaborate rituals in the past.

The surface of the shaman drum of old, and as resurrected in recent decades via popular culture and tourism, depicts many of the spirits and spaces of ecological significance for Saami people, as individuals and as social groups. One practice that conjugates all these same concerns of continuity with a fused environment is the *yoik*, *juoigos* – a vocal chant peculiar to the Saami but as a vocal art also found across many circumpolar peoples. Even though both shamanism and *yoiking* were banned by missionaries, the practices did persist under the radar of the dominant national cultures. Only the material drum was truly lost for centuries, deliberately destroyed in the name of national religion and surviving in few museum collections.

The *yoik*, as a habitual behavior rather than material object, was much less successfully discouraged. In *yoiking*, with or without words, the *yoiker* and anyone in earshot in a locale, truly communes emotionally with the spirits, feelings, and ideas of the moment. Through contemporary media, the increasing popularity of the Saami *yoik* has reached a global audience, sharing ecological concerns along with innermost feelings about human relationships with nature and with each other. To a lesser degree, the drum itself, though not the art of divining through drumming, has also returned as a commercial object and magical practice.

Without supporting old-fashioned romantic notions about indigenous peoples being fused with nature, Boekraad points out the linkages between both traditional and contemporary practices and beliefs of the Saami as these contribute to possible sustainability of both society and *Umwelt*. This book compiles selected written documentation augmented by contemporary voices about Saami in their Saapmi *Umwelt*, showing how inner values, cultural ritual, and the natural environment sustain their own enduring dance.

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