

The appendices are important references as well. They treat the terminology for botany, seasons, and weather. In addition, there are transcriptions of Lacandon texts that are particularly insightful and should be available online in video (URL provided does not include these promised components) or as an accompanying DVD (not included).

Useful plants are compiled in tables based on household uses that are fundamental to understand the variety of resources even one plant can provide. These tables include the relevant parts of the plant that are used. If it is edible, is it the fruit or the spout? If it is used in construction, what part of the house frame might it serve? And for the jeweler, is it only the seed? These tables and the later descriptions are organized by Lacandon words. They are very helpful in understanding the variety of resources embedded in the forest and deserve to be reviewed with ethnobotanical data across the Maya forest for comparable uses. A review by scientific names of the uses itemized on Table 4.2 reveals many comparable plants in the greater Petén and with similarities to Lacandon names used by other lowland Maya.

Another important aspect of information is that where the resource materials are found. Secondary forests are a common source of materials, and this coincides with both the importance of the Maya milpa cycle (called fallow in this book but in fact is not at all fallow) and the archaeological faunal data. ("Fallow" means an unseeded plowed field. The Lacandon nor any traditional milpa farmers plow, and as well demonstrated in this book, the regenerating forests are treasure troves of useful resources.) Hardly abandoned fields, they are intensely managed and selected landscapes that are strategically stocked with utility. The management of secondary forests is corroborated with the accumulating archeological data from Maya faunal collections that reflect animals that frequent secondary forests. Regenerating forests are an essential resource, frequently visited and deliberately managed for the acquisition of plants and animals, exactly the forest garden that Cook's ethnobotany reveals.

Cook's book will serve as a benchmark reference on Maya ethnobotany that builds on the historical research before her. It merits much attention and will set the stage for the conservation of the language of the Maya forest, a forest that is reliant on human manipulation for its co-existence.

Anabel Ford

**Covington-Ward, Yolanda:** *Gesture and Power. Religion, Nationalism, and Everyday Performance in Congo.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. 287 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-6036-0. Price: \$ 25.95

This book combines historical and anthropological methods to explore political uses of bodily gesture such as handshakes, ecstatic trembling, and dance by the *ngunza* prophets of Lower Congo and as part of nationalist propaganda in Mobutu's Zaire. It is based on archival research and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the territory of Luozi in Lower Congo, an area where earlier scholars Kimpianga Mahaniah and John Janzen carried out their research. The study appears at a timely moment when the

Democratic Republic of Congo's state monopoly of force is once again challenged by political uprisings across the country, which have an important spiritual dimension and, as this book reminds us, are part of an older historical pattern of prophetic resistance.

The book's greatest strength lies in the author's use of her own bodily presence as a method of inquiry: her role as an Afro-American researcher in a region of the DR Congo, where the prophet Simon Kimbangu prophesied in 1921 that one day Black Americans would return to their homeland to liberate the Kongo people from White colonial domination. That nearly a century after the prophecy was uttered it remains the popular framework through which to explain the presence of a young Afro-American speaks for itself in a country that continues to be torn by greed, exploitation, and hardship. The book is a powerful reminder that race and power relations are omnipresent in the production of ethnographic data, and that the human body, including the researcher's own body, is an arena for memory production. The author's concept of "performative encounter" is useful to grasp these body-centred yet power-stricken intricacies.

This is not a book about gesture and power in the capital city of Kinshasa, nor does it address special handshakes, dress, and linguistic codes or the innumerable dance moves persistently recrafted and performed by young Kinois in the quest for aesthetic unison and generational identification. Instead, Covington-Ward focuses on the political history and use of body techniques such as possessive trembling (*zakama*) by Ngunza prophets, political dance (*animation politique*) in Mobutu's Zaire, and the "traditional" Kongo hand gestures (*bula makonko*) in their everyday performance. In all these instances the body and its gestures are the site of either domination or the struggle for liberation.

The introduction opens with a description of *bula makonko* among the followers of the Bundu dia Kongo (BdK) spiritual movement, which was founded in 1969 by Ne Muanda Nsemi, who was born in Luozi territory. Contesting the legitimacy of both Christianity as well as the Congolese state (DRC), BdK is a very resolute version of Kongo messianic nationalism, which has been violently persecuted by the Congolese state. At first sight the decision to study Kongo prophets (*ngunza*) is surprising, given that they are among the most intensely studied religious movements in Africa. The choice to focus on the staunch and understudied BdK movement, however, is intriguing, given the difficulty to access a movement that is openly persecuted and suffered a crackdown by special forces of the Congolese police in 2007, entailing the death of allegedly at least 100 people. The ethnographic data presented in this book were collected before this date. Moreover, putting the body politics of Kongo prophetism (*ngunzism*) and Mobutu's *animation politique* into historical continuity is a truly creative move.

Chapter 1 is a personalised account of the author's fieldwork experience in Kinshasa and Luozi in the mid-2000s. The reflexive ponderings about the "normative power" of gender and complexion, which she herself experienced in a number of discriminating instances, will no

doubt help students to develop self-reflexivity and bodily awareness during fieldwork. Chapter 2 revisits the colonial and missionary sources on the well-studied Kongo prophets (*ngunza*) with a special focus on trembling (*zakama*) and drumming as “performative encounters” between the BisiKongo and European missionaries and colonial officials, who saw especially trembling as an irrational act that “deceived the good faith of the masses” (101). Chapter 3 is concerned with European reactions and colonial policies regarding indigenous dance (*Kongo makinu*). Missionaries, in particular, saw it as lascivious and a “threat to civilisation.” The author points out, however, that despite these moral concerns the Belgian administrator of Luozi territory introduced what she identifies as “secular dance” with *ngoma* drums commissioned by the local administration. Given that Kimbangu had ordered his followers to break, burn, and ban these drums for the sake of ritual purification, this policy served to “distract” people from the *ngunza*’s attempt to monopolise the ecstatic body. Chapter 4 considers the political use of dance gestures (*animation politique*) by the Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko to forge an embodied sense of national identity. The author also briefly mentions the strained relationship Mobutu had with messianic movements, because of their refusal to dance for the President and their perpetuation of prayer practices the President had officially banned (163). Once again, the body with its sounds and movements is the battle site for freedom and oppression. Chapter 5 presents Achille Mbembe’s theory of the banality of power so as to stress the everyday dimension and agency of ordinary citizens in the exercise and organisation of government. By pointing to the complicity of ordinary citizens in the performance and exercise of power the theory helps to overcome a sharp opposition of domination and resistance. With the assumption that Zaire’s female public dancers (*animatrices*) were simply “forced to perform” (142), however, the author seems to contradict this theory: if *animation politique* was really only “coerced performance” (139), what agency did the actors have? How did they participate in the “banality” of Mobutism as an everyday affair by doing something that was also fun? Was being an *animatrice* not also a means to mobility, to get access to power, money, and to the city? This seems confirmed by at least one of the three interlocutors whose accounts this chapter is based upon. The author points this out, but does not use it to add nuance to her overall assessment of *animation politique* as a “coerced performance.” Chapter 6 finally addresses the *Bula makonko* hand gesture and its use by followers of BdK as a way to craft continuity with pre-colonial Kongo. Such gestures, the author argues, “have come to play a huge role in the marshaling of popular sentiment and spiritual power toward the social and political goal of creating a sovereign Kongo nation” (191). It is unfortunate that the BdK became the author’s focus of attention only after her fieldwork was completed. This explains why this promising chapter is based only on “a few interviews with local group leaders, only one of which was recorded” (192). However, pamphlets and press accounts have helped to compensate for this thinness of data and elucidate the

doctrine grounded in Ne Muanda Nsemi’s creative interpretations of the mythic Kongo cosmology and past.

In the light of the material turn in the social and human sciences this study addresses important issues by revisiting historical sources with an innovative new perspective. However, it also leaves a number of questions unanswered. Since Georges Balandier’s pioneering work on “Messianismes et nationalismes en Afrique Noire” (1953) – a title one seeks in vain in the bibliography – it is well-known that messianic movements have been important actors of political mobilisation across Bantu-speaking Africa, from South Africa to the mouth of the Congo River. That “politics and religion cannot be seen as distinct, separate spheres of influence” (231), as we read in one of the book’s final sentences, is therefore not surprising. Although at times somewhat thin, the historical and ethnographic data the book is based upon could have been used to investigate the divide between the “secular” and the “sacred” as an object of historical anthropological study, instead of postulating it with Durkheim as analytically useful. For instance, in chap. 3 the author does not discuss whether Kimbangu thought *ngoma* drums were secular or sacred, or whether this distinction was itself perhaps a colonial import, as is suggested by the absence of the concept of “religion” in Bantu languages. The same question can be asked about the trembling, dancing, and clapping body and calls for further research that is informed by anthropological debates on the religion-secular divide.

Secondly, what is “gesture” and what not? Where does the body and embodiment start, and where does it end? The presence of blue uniforms with red berets and armbands worn by BdK’s security personnel suggest the same mimicry and state bureaucracy as other *ngunzist* movements (e.g., Simon Mpadi’s *khakism*). If dance qualifies as gesture, could the notion not also encompass such aesthetic repertoires? But how do members of BdK combine their refusal of the state with military aesthetics such as uniforms and red berets?

Covington-Ward convincingly argues that the body acts as a memory site and that Kongo *bimpampa* (body gestures) are a form of mnemonics. At certain instances, however, she tends to take BdK’s neo-traditionalist discourse at face value. The concept of “invented traditions” could improve the analysis by suggesting a more constructivist understanding of history and tradition as political projects devised in the present rather than reconstructions of an authentic past. Thus the author could reinterpret her “disappointment” when an orchestra started using “modern instruments” during a BdK general assembly meeting (220), for instance, as positive ethnographic data rather than as an indicator of doctrinal incoherence in the movement’s ardent traditionalist rhetoric.

The importance of embodied practices in the constitution of local nationalisms, such as Kimbangu’s trembling, does indeed offer a helpful addition to Benedict Anderson’s notion that nations are just mentally “imagined.” In order to highlight the role of the body as a (civic) religious medium, the study might have benefited from literature in the field of material religion and African Pentecostal-

ism. This would have led the author to undertake a more substantiated analysis of spirit possession as an embodied form of resistance an idea which is mentioned only briefly. In her effort to analyse embodied nationalism by sticking to the concept of “gesture,” the author has isolated possessive trembling (*zakama*) as well as Zairian *animation politique* from a wider range of connected bodily practices, such as jumping, breathing, and especially singing and vocal sound. *Zakama* appears as a soundless practice, although the author herself describes how followers of a church in Luozi speak in tongues while they tremble, and “the air around me is filled with sound and energy” (81). A focus on verbal practices and acoustics (Hunt 2008) would no doubt reveal important continuities between Kimbangu’s glossolalia and trembling and these very practices in Kinshasa’s “Églises de Réveil,” where clapping too is an important ritual gesture.

The reader interested in religion and politics in Africa will find in this book a helpful historical introduction to the case of Lower Congo prophetism and Zairian *animation politique*. Beyond this academic interest, it will surely make the reader discover and think about the political implications of gestures in his/her own everyday life.

Peter Lambertz

**Custred, Glynn:** *A History of Anthropology as a Holistic Science*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016. 255 pp. ISBN 978-1-4985-0763-9. Price: \$ 90.00

Glynn Custred is professor emeritus of anthropology at California State University, East Bay and a Central Andes specialist. Starting with the 18th century, he sets out to deliver a comprehensive history of the four-field approach and the holistic program of anthropology, as well as a philosophical foundation for both. The book is highly readable and clearly argued, offering broad coverage of a plethora of authors, theories, schools, and fieldwork in four national traditions. Its perspective is epistemological – looking not so much at anthropological data as at how it is handled conceptually – combined with disciplinary history. This is a well-chosen angle which reveals basic presuppositions at play in present-day anthropology – as well as in this book itself.

Before commenting on how his disciplinary history unfolds, let me start with my main reservation. Custred argues that since Franz Boas a holistic, four-field anthropology is “firmly bound together on a solid philosophical foundation ... now firmly established in the university ... based on a sound philosophical consideration of what science is ... [which justifies] the unity in a single discipline of such different fields as biology, linguistics, archaeology, and ethnology” (55, 57, cf. 64 ff.). However, the book is as much a historical analysis of as a partisan plea for the holistic approach! Time and again the latter angle gets in the way of the former one when Custred plays down rifts, fragmentation, and epistemological divergence.

Furthermore, he sees a major divide during the past 50 years between “scientific anthropology” and anthropological activism, but underplays the role of interpretive, culturalist approaches in both. Anthropology has

been described as the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences. In sync with similar debates in philosophy, there is strong disagreement on which epistemic stance is most appropriate for analyzing anthropological data, the interpretive (*verstehen*) or the explanatory (*erklären*) one, and how, if at all, the two can be combined. In my view *that* is the major divide in anthropology. The philosophical foundation of “scientific anthropology” is much less solid and uniform than Custred wishfully thinks.

This ambitious, deep history of the discipline starts with its twofold roots in Enlightenment thought (stressing the unity of humankind as a species) and Romanticism (emphasizing the diversity of peoples; cf. A. von Humboldt, J. G. Herder). From there on 19th-century developments in various countries are sketched, including theories of race and evolutionist anthropology, with a well-chosen focus on German scholars such as G. Klemm, A. Bastian, and R. Virchow.

Captain Cook and Oceania are duly mentioned, but Custred misses out on how, as Han Vermeulen, an historian of anthropology, has been arguing during the last 20 years, ethnography began as field research by German-speaking historians and naturalists in Siberia during the first half of the 18th century, and was influentially generalized as “ethnology” by scholars in Göttingen (Germany) and Vienna (Austria) during the second half of the 18th century. In his synthesizing “Before Boas” (2015) Vermeulen shows direct lines from here to Franz Boas.

Custred also tries to cast J. F. Blumenbach, one of the 18th-century fathers of physical anthropology, as a forerunner of holism (11 f.), but closes his eyes for the latter’s dualism of human *bimana* versus animal *quadrumanus*, which makes him a forerunner not of holism but of a metaphysics of human specialty that keeps holding anthropology captive and divided.

The stress on the influence of 19th-century German neo-Kantianism (H. Rickert!), historicism and hermeneutics on Boas and his disciples is well taken, but again Custred tries to force these developments into a holistic straightjacket. Of course, human sciences can also be nomothetic and natural sciences ideographic, as Custred underlines, but he forgets that the main point of these German scholars was rather the specialty (*Sonderstellung*) of humans as subjective self-conscious agents. The latter require an interpretive methodology, they argued, which is fundamentally different than the explanatory, objectifying one of the natural sciences. Through the Boasians – but also, hardly mentioned, through E. Durkheim, M. Mauss, and C. Lévi-Strauss, under the sway of French neo-Kantianism – this line of arguing flows directly into recent interpretive, culturalist anthropology. Boas’ dependence on R. Virchow, among others, is well illustrated, but Herder’s influence on him was in many respects even stronger.

A similar issue comes up in chap. 6 (Converging Sciences), which, laudably, ties linguistics and cognitive psychology into the analysis: if anything, the ordinary language philosopher John Searle (81) is a fierce critic – witness his “qualia argument” – of the idea that objectify-