

niques: les aînés sociaux aisés et les rappeurs défavorisés.

La troisième et dernière partie traite des influences musicales et chorégraphiques des répertoires musicaux issus principalement des sociétés initiatiques masculines de Bwiti et féminines d'Ombudi dans le rap au Gabon mais également des questions d'identités multiples dans une nation en changement et dans un monde en perpétuel mouvement. L'auteure parle de "réafricanisation" du rap au Gabon comme une réaffirmation par les rappeurs de la dignité de l'être humain dans un contexte postcolonial. Les emprunts de formes aux sociétés initiatiques ne doivent pas être perçus comme une invention de tradition puisqu'aucune rupture n'est observée entre les pratiques religieuses et les expressions urbaines. Il ne s'agit non plus d'un phénomène nouveau dans les expressions musicales populaires du Gabon, au contraire, on observe un calque de ces formes lyriques actuelles sur celles anciennes et de cette façon, une façon de repenser l'Afrique et les différentes catégories identitaires: Africain, Gaboma, Afropéen ou encore afro-descendant. Dans ces jeux d'affirmation identitaires, l'influence des courant de pensées panafricanistes mobilisées par un faible nombre d'artistes mais très influents dans les milieux du hip-hop, soulève les questions de nationalisme face à un gouvernement absent et aux recours aux à ces courants de pensées comme distinction artistique et stratégie de positionnement politique sur le marché de la musique au Gabon mais également en Occident où l'on retrouve un goût pour les musiques africaines mêlant tradition et modernité ou encore d'une Afrique imaginaire. Les recours aux pensées afrocentristes ne sont pas toujours appréciés de la majorité des rappeurs qui y voient une façon de détourner le regard sur les problèmes concrets auxquels doit faire face la société gabonaise.

Le corpus d'étude prend en compte des œuvres de rap nationales et transnationales qui offre une ethnographie multisituée d'artistes qui fait dialoguer le local et le global. On ne peut qu'apprécier les abondantes transcriptions de paroles et des termes spécifiques employés en français ou recourant à des idiosyncrasies dans diverses langues gabonaises. Ces transcriptions lyriques viennent ponctuer les nombreux extraits d'entretiens semi-directifs qui amènent une véritable "ethnographie de l'intime" que l'auteure a su construire au fil du temps avec ses interlocuteurs et qui viennent compléter ses observations de terrain. Outre le fait de proposer un travail de terrain de près de dix ans auprès de la scène hip-hop au Gabon et dans la diaspora. L'ouvrage présente également des riches références bibliographiques et une mise en perspective fine des théories anthropologiques vis-à-vis des pratiques observées *in situ*. Ces riches observations laissent cependant peu de place à l'analyse des procédés musicaux chez les artistes et aux négociations entre rappeurs et beatmakers dans la composition des pistes qui viendront soutenir les paroles des premiers. Cela aurait sans doute été enrichissant dans un cadre où l'intervention fréquente de musiciens traditionnels plu-

sieurs fois évoquées soulève des questions d'ajustements structurels des répertoires anciens avec les arrangements modernes.

L'ouvrage vient combler un vide dans la littérature en sciences humaines gabonaise sur les expressions artistiques urbaines. Force est de constater que choisir le rap comme objet d'étude anthropologique ouvre les portes sur une meilleure connaissance des sociétés contemporaines.

Rémy Jadinon

**Biruk, Crystal:** *Cooking Data. Culture and Politics in an African Research World.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 277 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-7089-5. Price: € 91,44

This publication is an ethnography of survey research. The author argues, implied in the book's title – "Cooking Data," that "raw" data are an imagined fiction; they are processed and organized throughout the stages of a research project as they are collected in the field, entered in databases, analyzed and interpreted, and presented as evidence to and by policymakers and others. Biruk argues that quantitative data are neither stable nor objective measures of reality because they are shaped, among other factors, by social transactions during all stages. Her arguments are the outcome of long-term participation in and observations of several global health-related survey research projects, informed by many months joining fieldworkers collecting data in Malawi, underscored by detailed references to her research experience and observations, and supported by citing the relevant literature in anthropology and other disciplines.

After the introduction, chapter 1 gives a brief overview of demography, a positivist science that assumes reality can be observed, measured, and counted accurately through the use of surveys and that quantitative data are objective and value-neutral. Demography stresses humans' rational nature and individual existence but downplays their cultural and social context. Chapter 2 argues that planning and designing survey projects requires researchers to be creative in responding to local realities as they translate abstract standards into strategies to produce high quality data. Biruk presents fieldworkers, often considered unskilled laborers, as central actors in survey research whose innovative tactics ensure that data collection proceeds smoothly and results in data considered useful by survey research standards. Chapter 3 examines the transactions that are associated with data collection, processing, and presentation. The author discusses in-depth the practice of providing research participants with small gifts in exchange for information they make available to the research team. While such gifts are central standard in research, the local meanings of this exchange are by and large ignored. Marcel Mauss' analysis of gift-giving as creating and maintaining social bonds between the giver and the recipient of the gift is not considered by the re-

search gift. This and other transactions described in the book illustrate how data can only be collected through messy social relations and transactions. Chapter 4 focuses on how data are presented to and consumed by various audiences. Biruk argues that what is considered evidence is fashioned through relations and concludes that no single person or group can decide the quality of the data. Chapter 5 examines the evidence-based rhetoric and maintains that data do not stand alone but require cultural, social, and other scaffolding and negotiating through social relations to become policy and result in action. Users of data with their own assumptions, interests, and agendas leave their mark on them through their packaging, framing, and translating. The concluding chapter is a reflection of the anthropological critique of global health and research. The author reiterates her argument that it is fiction to assume data is free from any social and cultural influence and contends that they reflect and reproduce the social and cultural concerns and values of various stakeholders. Biruk does not dismiss the relevance of survey research but takes seriously the ways in which such research not only measures and claims to represent reality but also creates the worlds and relations that result in specific data. She argues that anthropology, and its prime research approach – ethnography – constructively critiques survey research by conceptualizing research as a social and cultural space where the interests, backgrounds, and realities of various stakeholders intersect temporarily.

In addition to the publication's robust examination of the assumptions and methods that help numerical data gain legitimacy, the author problematizes other themes associated with survey research, such as the "field." Biruk deconstructs the field as a natural and taken-for-granted site of knowledge production and conceptualizes it as a place with multiple actors with various motivations, agendas, and knowledge. Another important contribution of the books is to highlight how hierarchies of expertise and structural inequalities privilege Western researchers over others, despite the prevailing rhetoric of partnership in Global Health. Of particular value for furthering our understanding of survey and other types of research is the author's discussion of the role of fieldworkers. Biruk calls the interviewers and their supervisors "knowledge workers," a term often associated with elites and their claim to ownership of projects and their outcome, challenging the assumption that fieldworkers are minor actors in research. She argues that they are central to research because they are aware that knowledge is relational and context-dependent, and their innovative work in the field is invaluable for producing data considered to be of high quality according to research standards.

Overall, the publication is a powerful critique of the understanding that survey data are an objective and complete representation of reality. Biruk contends that surveys are a necessary means for knowledge making, but they have to be used in tandem with other ways of examining reality. While her thoughts and analyses are

generally detailed and convincing, some of her field experiences would benefit from a more meticulous analysis. For example, when describing how fieldworkers chuckled at the thought of some traditional beliefs (69), Biruk concludes that they expressed their disregard for what they consider backward beliefs. This might be true, but what they said could also be shaped by the research site dominated by Western thoughts and approaches. In a different setting, at a different time, and with a different audience they might have expressed a very different opinion of such beliefs. After all, knowledge and behavior are relational and context-bound, as Biruk argues elsewhere in this book. However, examples of incomplete interpretations are rare in the book and overall her thoughts and analyses are robust.

I strongly recommend using this publication as a required reading in undergraduate and graduate courses in Anthropology, Demography, Sociology, and related social sciences that teach students to design and conduct qualitative as well as quantitative research. Further, those interested in African Studies, Global Health, and International Development will tremendously benefit from reading this publication as these disciplines are strongly influenced by survey research. The book is also a must-read for agencies, policy makers, and funding agencies, to familiarize themselves with an appropriate understanding of the strengths and limitations of quantitative research, dynamics influencing the production of quantitative data, and how to appropriately use survey results and recommendations.

Alexander Rödlach

**Blanes, Ruy Llera, and Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic** (eds.): *Being Godless. Ethnographies of Atheism and Non-Religion*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. 147 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-628-7. (Studies in Social Analysis, 1) Price: \$ 95.00

This slim volume is a republished (*Social Analysis* 59.2015.2) collection of ethnographic essays revolving around "non-religion." While many of the works have implications for quantitative and scientific inquiry, the essays are entirely qualitative and situated more in the humanistic end of anthropology and sociology.

The introduction by Blanes and Oustinova-Stjepanovic details the appropriateness and limits of notions like "godless," "non-religious," "areligion," and "irreligion" while making calls for more ethnography of people who fit such labels, however inadequately they apply. The authors attend to the problems and limitations of such notions, pointing out that non-religiosity manifests itself in a variety of ways. One illustration of how oversimplification might result in overlooking or misrepresenting non-religious positions is in Lee's article that draws upon interviews conducted in southeast England. Rather than focusing on active anti- or atheist movements, Lee emphasizes ambivalence – and its various manifestations – and argues that it too is a real stance and identity regarding religion and is dis-