

one wonders how this will end. With this record of failure, what is the editors' secret that will allow them to make a reasonable case for integrating 'grass-roots justice' into state law, attempts at which failed elsewhere? How can Pankhurst, an anthropologist, and Getachew, a scholar of law, maintain their case that what they strive for with this volume is at all feasible?

Following on Kohlhagen are eleven case studies, each undertaken by a team of junior researchers, both from law and anthropology, who with varying degrees of eloquence and subtlety characterise some CDR practices from Tigray to Sidama, and from Gambella to Harar. The generalising profiles of CDR in the various regions as well as the individual case studies some of these condensed reports contain are roundabout insightful. Can they, though, answer the critical question raised above? While none of these chapters strays into theorising (excepting the solicited section on Gambella supplied by Dereje Feyissa), they do go beyond mere empiricism by including some 'Conclusions and recommendations'. Nearly all of them acknowledge that there are de facto collaborations between appointed officials and CDR practitioners, and clearly highlight that CDR is faster, cheaper, more trusted, more accessible and less corrupt than the formal justice system, while the treatment of women, children and minorities and the lax stance towards basic human rights remain grounds for concern. Still, not sensitive to the issues raised by Kohlhagen or contemporary social science, some contributors succumb to simplistic normative claims-making, of which the following bizarre case is but one example: 'The formal justice system is founded on logic, reason and principles. *Wuqabi* [lit. 'spirit', F.G.] dispute resolution is based on the spirit world. As such, the decisions taken are not rationally based. Consequently it is difficult to see how the two systems could be integrated' (p. 119). It is in turn difficult to see how such a statement can be integrated with the first two parts of the volume, so it is with curiosity that one turns to the editors' last words, which are rather sensible.

Pankhurst and Getachew reaffirm that CDR is 'widely distributed and prevalent throughout Ethiopia' (p. 257), usually tolerated or even embraced by local officials even where their practice is not legally recognised, or where they overstep their constitutional applicability to civil law by dealing with criminal cases. The editors go on to succinctly list ten 'major characteristics' of CDR, ten 'advantages' (as those mentioned above) as well as five 'limitations' (such as 'inequity' and 'lack of uniformity' throughout the country), all of which are quite plausible. They also show *their* awareness of the troubled history of attempts to co-opt customary law (expert knowledge seemingly withheld from the junior researchers who wrote the regional reports), and finally suggest ten informed and non-coercive measures for 'enhancing partnership and collaboration' (p. 268). Thus, calmly and confidently, the initial claim that it is possible and feasible for the state to integrate CDR is maintained. That CDR institutions gain less from such collaboration than the official judiciary is demonstrated as well.

This surprising volume thus carries in itself the seed of contradiction, as it not only has potential use for policy-makers and administrators aiming to consolidate the state's influence on local practices, but could equally serve as a primer for more subversive inquiries or interventions.

FELIX GIRKE

*Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
(Germany)*

Pine, Frances and João de Pina-Cabral (eds.). 2008. *On the margins of religion*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn. ix+286 pp. Hb.: £45.00. ISBN: 978 1 845454 098.

The present volume, resulting from a meeting at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale (Germany),

presents contributions of fifteen scholars, in an unprecedented attempt to present a new perspective on one of anthropology's classical (and in many ways 'traditional') topics. Religion has occupied a special place in the imagination of early anthropologists, at least from Tylor's *Primitive culture* in 1871, and it remained one of the most important topic of research ever since.

In its thirteen chapters, divided through five parts, the contributors of this book present the case for the importance of religion in the contemporary world and in current anthropological research. In doing so, they introduce both historical overviews (João Vasconcelos on the late 19th-century anthropology of religion; Simon Coleman on Christianity, ethnographic taboos and the meanings of 'science'), and a variety of case studies. The latter cover a wide geographic range, from southern Zambia (Thomas Kirsch writing on 'African spirituality and transportation'), urban India (Ursula Rao on temple-building and re-creation of religious boundaries), Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Cornelia Sorabji on concepts of tolerance and neighbourhood), Laos (Grant Evans on Buddhist royal family commemorative rituals), and southern Fujian in China (Stefan Feuchtwang writing on pomp, extravagance and organisation of self-government). There are also chapters dealing with interactions between shamanism and Buddhism in southern Siberia (by Galina Lindquist) and on celibate marriages among the Brahma Kumaris in Poland (by Agnieszka Kościańska). The book concludes with three chapters on the relationship between modernity and the transmission of religion – on the dynamics of religious transmission among the Baga of Guinea (by Ramon Sarró), geomancy and colonial encounters in rural Hong Kong (by Rubie S. Watson and James L. Watson), and aspects of modernity in a Soviet-built town in Central India (by Jonathan P. Parry).

In their Introduction, the editors of this volume, Frances Pine and João de Pina-Cabral, introduce some basic concepts and general methodological principles. First

of all, they emphasise the fact that the very concept of 'religion' is very difficult to define, as it covers a wide range of beliefs and practices. By consciously avoiding any attempt to define it, even in the most general terms, Pine and Pina-Cabral argue for the *varieties* and *multiplicities* of religious experiences that should be observed and interpreted in concrete ethnographic situations. Another key concept that they introduce for the essays in this book is the concept of *margins*. As put by the editors: 'Primarily, there is the distinction between being "a margin" of something or "on a margin" between things. (...) Then, religion can either be treated as the object of consideration – the "thing" – or it may be treated adjectivally – a quality of the "thing". (...) And, finally, there is the matter of temporality or, better still, process. If marginality/centrality is a structural notion, it is necessarily in flux' (p. 5). All of this accounts for the setting where 'rather than engaging directly with the institutions of mainstream religions or the grand theories concerning magic, science or religion, the authors of this book focused on the politics of religion, on epistemologies and paradigms of spirituality and science, and on those areas of silence, ambiguity and forgetting, where religion and belief are hidden, subdued or suppressed' (p. 7). The result, with an overarching focus on 'modernity and its ambivalences' (p. 8), is a well-written and insightful volume, which presents new and exciting ways of dealing with one of anthropology's more ancient (but still essential) research topics.

ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIĆ
Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade (Serbia)

Pinto, Sarah. 2008. *Where there is no midwife. Birth and loss in Rural India*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn. xii + 330 pp. Hb.: £45.00. ISBN: 978 1 84545 310 7.

L'ouvrage a pour objectif principal de montrer comment se nouent dans les zones