

Groffmann, Beatrice Ploch *et al* (ed.),
Kulturanthropologinnen in Dialog, 178–202.
 Königstein: Ulrike Helmer Verlag

MEAD, Margaret
 1965 *Coming of Age in Samoa*. London: Penguin

Elizabeth Köpping

* * *

David Akin and Joel Robbins (eds.): *Money and Modernity: State and Local Currencies in Melanesia*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press 1999. 256 pp. (ASAO Monograph 17.)

This thought-provoking collection of essays explores a puzzling phenomenon in modern Melanesia: although most Melanesians have eagerly embraced national currencies, local currencies have not disappeared, nor become mere symbols of tradition in opposition to modernity. Even among avowed modernists of the region, local currencies continue to play important roles in social life. Furthermore, despite general enthusiasm about national currencies, many Melanesians express deep anxieties about them. Most contributors to this volume focus on how national currencies come to have meaning in the context of local symbolic and representational schemes. They attest to what Robert Foster calls the “analogical open-mindedness of Melanesians”, that is, their ability to “put exogenous currencies and other foreign imports in the service of social reproduction as indigenously imagined” (227). The result is an insightful exploration of how people in Melanesia morally evaluate and attempt to control currencies and the political and semiotic structures that those currencies represent.

This emphasis on local schemes of meaning is one of the great strengths of this collection. The authors do not propose grand theories that pin a definitive, cross-cultural content on to ‘modernity’. Rather, they focus on how various Melanesian groups conceptualise their present and imagine their futures as different from their pasts. At the same time, however, this emphasis on social reproduction and local schemas of meaning is somewhat one-sided. As Foster puts it, the analogies that Melanesians draw between national and local currencies become strained “by the long-run unintended consequences of articulating indigenous modes of social reproduction with an expanding capitalist mode of production” (228). However, except for Edward LiPuma, the authors only comment in passing on the capitalism that Melanesians are encountering. It would have been productive, for example, to ask whether people react differently when value arises from the commodification of agricultural products, of labour or of forest or mineral resources – three quite different modalities of capitalism in Melanesia.

In the introduction, editors Joel Robbins and David Akin argue that both national and local currencies play a central role in Melanesian social life. They suggest that currencies have the distinctive ability to flow across time and social boundaries, which makes them crucial in rituals of social reproduction such as marriage and mortuary ritual. To explain why anxieties arise with commodification, they propose a revised model of spheres of exchange. In the original model, Paul Bohannan suggested that money was problematic because it flowed against all kinds of objects, thus confusing formerly distinct spheres of exchange. Robbins and Akin contend that Bohannan put too much emphasis on objects. They identify three dimensions to exchange: first, the *objects* exchanged, second, the *relationships* between the people doing the exchanging, and third, the

modality of the exchange. The modality of the exchange addresses how people classify the exchange – as sharing or buying, for example – and they argue that this dimension is most crucial for Melanesians. Money becomes problematic because it “can move against anything in any kind of exchange between people who stand in any kind of relationship to each other” (12, authors’ emphasis).

Robbins and Akin suggest that Melanesians are particularly concerned with regulating exchanges because fundamental social categories in the region are constituted through exchange, instead of being pre-determined. This characterisation, apt for various societies of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Highlands, is difficult to maintain for numerous Melanesian societies with hereditary leadership.¹ Most of the articles in the volume suggest that currencies are deeply rooted in place. The Melanesian people discussed worry when value production and social reproduction are not symbolically linked to the locality. This linking of value to place – and not the performativity of social relations – may be distinctive to Melanesian societies. If so, this may explain why particular anxieties may not resonate elsewhere.

Several authors explore how state money is assimilated into local notions of agency and efficacy. Mark Mosko describes how the recently affluent Mekeo understand the power of money to be parallel to the ritual logic of sorcery. Like magic, money is hot, attracting people and objects even against their will; unlike magic, however, it is not restricted to ritual specialists or under chiefly control. Doug Dalton also explores the symbolism of agency among Rawa speakers, distinguishing ‘cold’ agency which elicits sorrow and compassion, from ‘hot’ agency, which more actively exerts control. He argues that an anomalous shell valuable presented to him upon his departure creatively manipulates

these symbols to express Rawa speakers’ ambivalence about encounters with capitalism and colonialism. According to Karen Brison, Kwanga people have adopted Western notions of investment which overlap with indigenous notions of communal potency. In re-categorising value-producing exchange practices as wasteful consumption, village leaders suggested that the way to increase village potency was through investment, not exchange – which, paradoxically, has led to an emphasis on more individual family groups.

Sometimes, local schemes are retained even against explicit modernist ideologies. Joel Robbins examines why the ultra-modernist Urapmin continue to use their shell money, even though they vehemently reject the old and indigenous ways in favour of the new and Western. In paradoxical origin myths, shell money originated in Urapmin, only coming to be located outside of Urapmin through historical exigencies. Today, although Urapmin rely on the same regional trade relationships to acquire both the national currency and shell money, shell money symbolises a past and potential autonomy, while cash only represents regional dependence.

When characteristics of national currencies do not seem to fit local schemes of agencies and value, Melanesians seem quite willing to actively legislate barriers between national and local currencies. The pagan Kwaio, discussed by David Akin, provide a striking example. They argue that their locally-produced shell money is superior to the national currency because they control it – it is not, in their minds, subject to the vagaries of capitalism. Nevertheless, Akin argues, the system is effective precisely because it allows conversions between commodities and shell money. John Liep describes how Rossel Island big men decided that the highest ranking shell values ought to be taken out of circulation. However, at the same time that these shells were transformed into inalienable posses-

sions, lower rank shells were commodified, particularly as European pearl traders were forced to meet islanders' demands for traditional valuables in preference to cash.

Most contributors attest to the resilience of culture by highlighting how Melanesians have creatively assimilated state money and capitalism into indigenous semiotic schemes and systems of social reproduction. But several authors suggest that there is one circumstance that would make such creative assimilation impossible: the commodification of land. The editors note, "many people's greatest fear is that they will lose control of their land" (24). Little explicit attention is given to the commodification of land, perhaps because it has not yet occurred in most of Melanesia. Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart suggest that the Hageners' widespread belief in Pentecostal Christianity and the immanent end of the world stems from the recent commodification of land through cash cropping and the potential for individual land registration. Hageners' panic over the commodification of land contrasts with their easy acceptance of the commodification of pearl shells, which were eventually replaced with cash. Pearl shells were already non-local symbols and carriers of value, and pigs continued to be essential components of exchanges, precisely because pigs, which were grown locally, "represent the idea of the local group" (LiPuma notes a similar situation).

Edward LiPuma, alone among the authors, does not focus on how money is incorporated into indigenous schemes but insightfully criticises ethnographic accounts that mistake money in its fetishized state for its actual form. However, in arguing that money is the "perfect instrument of modernization" (194), LiPuma appears to accept the ideology of money recited by his informants as a representation of actual practice. He quotes extensively a well-educated storekeeper who claims to use money "exactly as white people do" (208). Without discussing the

long-term success of the store or how profits were actually used, LiPuma asserts that this storekeeper has a modern subjectivity because he has grasped the workings of capital. Such an interpretation ignores the insights of other contributors, for example, Brison's discussion of the overlap between indigenous notions of communal potency and Western notions of investment. Nonetheless, the argument challenges us to consider how capitalism may, indeed, subsume social relations based on kin and community.

The two concluding chapters are comparative. Comparing Melanesians to American metallists, Robert Foster suggests that the metallists subscribe to a commodity theory of money which focuses on objects, while Melanesians subscribe to a token theory in seeing money as a symbol of political authority. In discussing how money represents relations between persons, between nations, and between persons and the state, Foster elegantly reminds us that crises of semiotic representations are also crises of political representation. Jane Guyer highlights the disjuncture between Melanesianist and Africanist approaches to currency, questioning whether it originates in theoretical approaches or in regional phenomena. She points out that Melanesianists are much more confident in talking about social reproduction and whole transactional orders than are Africanists, who tend to take a more politico-economic approach to problems of currency. Unfortunately, she fails to engage major issues raised by the collection seriously. She does not speculate on why African societies have not retained local currencies as Melanesians have, nor does she examine whether some of the anxieties that Melanesians seem to have about national currencies are shared by their African counterparts.

With a few exceptions, the volume is coherent and highly readable. The various contributors to this collection are clearly in conversation, and the editors cogently draw

out the important points in these dialogues. The authors address important questions about modernity by re-engaging rather than dismissing classical anthropological approaches. This is an exciting contribution to the somewhat moribund field of economic anthropology, and suggests how productive regional comparison can be. Perhaps the mark of such good ethnographies is that they invite more questions than the authors can explicitly address.

¹ Incidentally, although generalisations in the collection are made with reference to Melanesia, with the exception of Akin's discussion of Solomon Island Kwaio, all the societies discussed in collection are from PNG. Few references are made to Vanuatu, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, or Fiji.

Debra McDougall

* * *

Klaus-Peter Köpping und Ursula Rao (Hrsg.): *Im Rausch des Rituals: Gestaltung und Transformation von Wirklichkeit in körperlicher Performanz*. Hamburg: Lit 2000. x, 247 S. (Performanzen: Interkulturelle Studien zu Ritual, Spiel und Theater/Performances: Intercultural Studies on Ritual, Play, and Theatre 1.)

Die performative Wende hat der Ethnologie einen neuen Themenbereich erschlossen, der bald „Theater-Anthropologie“, bald „Theaterethnologie“, bald „ethnoscénologie“ heißt und (mit bisweilen Definitions-feindlicher Unschärfe) Spiel, Ritual, Körper, Drama und soziale Rollen einschließt. Die mittlerweile beträchtliche Reihe von Publikationen¹ zeigt keinen geschlossenen Ansatz, soll dies aus

postmoderner Abneigung gegen die ‚Große Erzählung‘ meist auch gar nicht, sondern einen manchmal etwas chaotischen, aber gerade dadurch auch anregenden Theorien- und Themenpluralismus.

Doch (wie Frobenius gesagt hätte), auf den spielerischen Aufbruch folgen die Prinzipien. Ein neues Buch scheint nun dem Bedürfnis entgegenzukommen, seriöse Ordnung in die fröhliche Wildnis des *anything goes* zu bringen. Nachdem ein thematisch verwandter Herausgeberband von Klaus-Peter Köpping 1997 noch die Frische des Experiments auf neuem Terrain zeigte, liegt nun die Stärke im Gegenteil in der theoretischen Präzision. Der Band ist als erster einer Reihe gedacht, die unter der Federführung von Christopher Balme, Klaus-Peter Köpping und Michael Prager Theaterwissenschaft und Ethnologie im gemeinsamen Interesse an „Ritual, Spiel und Theater“ zusammenbringen soll.

Der erste Band ist gleich ein großer Wurf, was ich freilich erst allmählich gemerkt habe. Zunächst sah ich eine Art Momentaufnahme einer *Heidelberg school of theatre anthropology* (auch wenn die Autoren weder alle in der Heidelberger Ethnologie arbeiten, noch alle Ethnologen sind), die mir zwar materialreich und präzise, aber merkwürdig fade vorkam. Ich schreibe „anthropology“, weil doch ganz überwiegend an die englisch-sprachige *anthropology* angeknüpft wird. Das bedingt einen gewissen englischen Provinzialismus, schließt aber die Kenntnis anderer Wege, etwa desjenigen von Caillois, nicht immer aus. Letztlich bestimmt nicht Caillois Rausch das Buch, sondern das geordnete Ritual.

Gewiß finden sich auch eine Reihe Ausnahmen von der Beschränkung auf die englisch-sprachige Provinz, vor allem die gelassene Weltläufigkeit von Vincent Crapanzano, der auch kontinentaleuropäische Autoren (Dante, Lacan, Herder) im Original liest und gleichzeitig wie kein anderer die altgriechischen Wurzeln der Spiel- und Performanz-Diskussion lebendig hält.