

Einblicke in die Reaktionen buddhistischer Gruppen auf die Katastrophen und die Notwendigkeit, konkrete Alltagshilfe für deren Opfer zu leisten. Literarische Reaktionen auf die Katastrophen sind ebenso vertreten, mit einem Blick einmal auf Yoshinori Kobayashis Manga (Sakamoto) und einmal auf das Werk von Haruki Murakami (Suter).

Angesichts der Fülle und der disziplinären Diversität der hier versammelten Beiträge mag man befürchten, dass es sich um ein Sammelsurium von wenig verbundenen Einzelbeiträgen handelt. Ganz klar: Dem ist nicht so. Der Leserschaft werden, im allerbesten Sinne, zahlreiche Querverbindungen – inhaltlich wie argumentativ – zwischen den Beiträgen auffallen. Zudem muss betont werden, dass die Einzelbeiträge allesamt neues empirisches Material präsentieren, das den Blick der Leserschaft kurzweilig auf Einzelaspekte des Umgangs mit den größten Katastrophen der japanischen Nachkriegszeit lenkt. Die beiden Herausgeber und ihre Autorinnen und Autoren vermögen der Ankündigung des Einleitungskapitels gerecht zu werden, nämlich zu Tage zu fördern, wie: „crisis moments can bring out the best and the worst of the human condition“ (15).

Gabriele Vogt

**Cornelia Reiher, Lokale Identität und ländliche Revitalisierung. Die japanische Keramikstadt Arita und die Grenzen der Globalisierung [Local Identity and Rural Revitalization. The Japanese Pottery Town Arita and the Limitations of Globalization]**

Bielefeld: transcript, 2014. 294 pp., 44,99 EUR

Depopulation and economic decline can be caused by natural disasters or wars, occur as a result of fertility decline, or when a primary industry ceases to exist. This last scenario is addressed by Cornelia Reiher who discusses the entwined phenomena of globalization, economic decline, and local identity

in Arita in southern Japan, which was once a vibrant pottery town. The Arita pottery industry began with the captured Korean pottery maker Ri Sam Pei who discovered kaolin (china clay, essential for porcelain making) there. During the 17th and 18th centuries, porcelain manufactured in Arita greatly inspired European porcelain manufacturers. After the industry almost ceased during World War II, pottery production rose to new heights during the 1970s and the 1980s, before the burst of the economic bubble took the industry into major decline. Presently, Arita is struggling with the characteristic problems that many declining areas in Japan are facing. The number of inhabitants has decreased while the ratio of people aged 65 and over is rising (17). The city's only hotel had to close in 2006 (12). In this bleak context, Cornelia Reiher investigates strategies of local actors to overcome decline and the role of local identity. The theoretical framework is taken from political science and draws on the work "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics" by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) who argue that political identities are constructed through a process of discursive articulation of signifiers that determine difference, meaning, and identity.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first part, Reiher identifies three signifiers that construct Arita's local identity – Arita as a historical place with a history of 400 years, Arita as a "traditional" pottery town, and Arita as an "international" town, which has a city partnership with the German porcelain town Meissen. The second part addresses identity construction, which is taking place against the backdrop of crisis. The first identity crisis has been caused by dwindling pottery sales. The second identity crisis was caused by the merger of Arita with the neighboring farming town Nishi-Arita in 2006, which has resulted in a loss of autonomy and financial dependence on the national government. The merger also showed the evolving conflict between farmers in Nishi-

Arita and pottery makers in Arita. Finally, frictions within Arita reveal that the dominant presence of pottery leaves no room for outsiders such as pottery makers from outside Arita who are not integrated into the town's professional network. Reiher's aim is to investigate whether crises of this kind weaken or challenge existing identities, perhaps leading to the creation of new identities. Her significant conclusion is that Arita's hegemonic local identity as the "home of pottery" in Japan is not being questioned but, paradoxically, remains firmly in place despite the decline of the main industry. However, local identity depends greatly on context and is being constructed in relation to and — in an almost obstinate manner — against "the others" — against pottery makers from China, who import "cheap" pottery, against Americans who advocate a dietary culture that does not require delicate porcelain, against consumers who do not appreciate the history and craftsmanship of Arita pottery, and finally against the farmers in Nishi-Arita and pottery makers from outside Arita (177).

The third part of the book addresses potential revitalization strategies such as regional development programs (*machizukuri*). Efforts to market Arita in an exhibition about arita-yaki in Germany and Japan in 2004 and 2005, and an attempt to link the promotion of Arita pottery to a national food education program have been only partially successful. So, is Arita an example of failure? The persistence of Arita's local identity as the "home of pottery" reveals the limitations of national revitalization strategies. Globalization is primarily seen as a threat by local actors in Arita and not perceived as an opportunity for new business concepts and global partnerships. However, Reiher concludes her analysis with cautious optimism. The development and implementation of viable national revitalization strategies that acknowledge globalization at least partially as a positive force will be needed to address the growing frictions between the national government and mar-

ginalized areas in Japan, and to improve their economic and political situations.

The strength of this timely book is the meticulous analysis of the complex relations between national, regional, and local identities. Reiher draws upon two years of work experience in Arita and applies a qualitative discourse analysis, which combines participant observation, in-depth interviews, and regional statistics. Approximately a hundred excerpts of extensive interviewing conducted in 2008 add analytical depth to the book and subtly but powerfully reveal the concerns, hopes and fears of people living in Arita. The theoretical framework could have been more closely connected to the empirical findings. The ideas of Laclau and Mouffe are presented at the beginning (26–30) but are rarely addressed throughout the analysis. Despite this minor flaw, Reiher's case study offers new perspectives on identity creation and showcases the dire situation of rural areas in OECD countries, and the limitations of globalization in marginalized areas. Addressing and overcoming these limitations is the task of sociologists, political scientists, and cultural anthropologists; for whom this book is essential reading.

Stephanie Assmann

### **Guy Powles: Political and Constitutional Reform Opens the Door: The Kingdom of Tonga's Path to Democracy**

Suva: University of the South Pacific Press, 2013. 122 S., 20 USD

Am 19. Januar 2015 wurde im südpazifischen Königreich Tonga erstmals in der 170jährigen Geschichte der bis heute herrschenden Erbdynastie Tupou I ein bürgerlicher Abgeordneter im Parlament als Premierminister vereidigt. Es ist das Ergebnis von Verfassungsreformen der Jahre 2009 bis 2010, die im November 2014 (nach 2010) die zweiten Parlamentswahlen ermöglichen, in denen der Regierungschef und seine Minister nicht vom König ernannt