

currency and cheap labour – conquering export markets and driving up raw material prices. Yet China’s leadership remained unaware of its global responsibilities. Neither did it care about them, nor about foreign criticism of its foreign and domestic policies (p. 212). This is reflected in the attitudes of their citizens, who now settle all over the world with little knowledge of national cultures and even less understanding of local life, and worse, no desire to learn (p. 186).

This somewhat melancholic volume of a very perceptive, well informed observer makes insightful and fascinating reading. Hence with Xu’s critical insights the book is a useful antidote to the propaganda spread by the regime’s Confucius Institutes at Western universities. His repeated conclusion that the regime is unsustainable is plausible and easy to follow. Yet Xu shirks the question of actual regime change – with good reason. Were he to have indicated identifiable actors within China, the regime would have arrested, eliminated or rendered them harmless long ago. The book’s format of a collection of previously published essays makes them sometimes appear dated and occasionally repetitive. Although aimed at a general reader and not at an academic audience, Xu’s essays offer valuable insights into dramatic events of the last decade and to social milieus and outlying provinces not readily accessible to foreign researchers.

*Albrecht Rothacher*

CHRISTOPHER J. SHEPHERD, *Haunted Houses and Ghostly Encounters: Ethnography and Animism in East Timor, 1860–1975*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2019. 416 pages, 21 illustrations, 4 maps, £25.00. ISBN 978-87-7694-267-0

This volume by Christopher J. Shepherd presents itself as a meta-ethnography, an analysis of how ethnography, ethnographers and animism converge in Portuguese Timor, which was Portugal’s most distant colony in Southeast Asia. This colonial presence ended in 1975 and was followed by a complex and troubled decolonisation process that involved a civil war between the political parties. Although the country proclaimed independence on 28 November of the same year, it was soon invaded by Indonesia, which occupied the territory until 1999, when a UN-supervised referendum ensured freedom from foreign rule. Resistance to the Indonesian occupation lasted 24 years and cost the lives of an estimated 180,000 people.

The book consists of an introduction, two distinct parts and a conclusion. The sobriety of its structure contrasts with the detail of its ten chapters, each

dedicated to an author with specific work on Portuguese Timor. Although not identified as such, there is an eleventh author, which is the native Timorese themselves, whose voice can be heard in the writings of the others. The extensive analysis covers 115 years, ranging from the publication of Afonso de Castro's seminal work in 1867 to when the last professional anthropologist working in the field, Elisabeth Traube, left the territory in 1975.

The introduction explains the pertinence of religious studies – in particular the renewed interest in animism – which is a key concept for understanding colonised societies. It also illustrates how the ethnography undertaken in the field was combined with this concept, and how this process proved mutually intelligible to colonisers and natives, serving the purpose of both domination and reciprocal accommodation.

The author's basic argument is that animism cannot be analysed without examining the agents involved and the dichotomy between colonisers (foreigners) and colonised. Animism is, simultaneously, an instrument of communication, interpretation and correlation of the powers present. It is a tool of affirmation or recognition of power, in both its material tangibility and the intangibility of belief. Indeed, the author advocates a dynamic notion of animism, which he calls “transformative animism”, a dialectical process that stems from the interpretation and mimicry of Timorese society by the foreign colonisers for the purposes of domination and, in the case of the Timorese, the accommodation of these foreigners and their demands. This is a heuristic device used to interpret the dynamic of the potencies involved, those resulting from animism practices versus the dangers posed by the challenges of accommodating the colonisers' attitudes towards such practices. The endogenous concept associated with practices of animists, which is present as an investigative thread, is *lulik*, from the Timorese Tetum language. There are several possible translations of this word, such as sacred, or forbidden, with connotations of “taboo”.

The first part of the book, which is dedicated to “colonial ethnography”, broadly covers the period between 1860 and the 1940s, and includes the work of six authors, symbolised by their occupations: Afonso de Castro, the governor, Henry Forbes, the naturalist, Osório de Castro, the magistrate, José Simões Martinho, the captain, Armando Pinto Correia, the administrator (but also a military man) and Abilio José Fernandes, the missionary. This selection of actors facilitates an understanding of how they related to the *lulik* and the Timorese, as well as inferring how the native people reacted to the presence of these newcomers, each potentially perceived as a threat. With the exception of Armando Pinto Correia, the texts of these authors are not classical monographs of an exclusively ethnographic nature and purpose, but include sections in which ethnography emerges in description, and in which Shepherd undertakes exegetical meta-ethnographic interpretations.

The second part, which is dedicated to “professional ethnography”, analyses the work of four anthropologists who did fieldwork in Portuguese Timor, the results of which were published in the 1970s and 1980s. These texts are classic anthropological endeavours, based on a lengthy period of time and painstaking work in the field. Each chapter’s title alludes to the respective anthropologist’s perceived or adopted posture regarding their enquiries and relationships in the field, according to Shepherd. The first is Margaret King, who Shepherd calls a sentimentalist, followed by David Hicks, the theologian, Shepard Forman, the apprentice, and, finally, Elisabeth Traube, the detective. The analysis of these professional anthropologists focuses mainly on how they portray, or fail to portray, their relationship with the Timorese and *lulik* in their work. There are also conclusions regarding how the Timorese they interacted with interpreted the presence of these foreigners within the framework of existing colonial relations. The essential difference when studying the work of the colonial authors versus the professional anthropologists is that, in addition to the access to their textual data, the latter could still be questioned, directly or through family members (in the case of King, who had died). This was a process in which the author’s understanding was not always accepted by those concerned, particularly the discussion regarding their posture towards colonialism and anthropological tactics of field maintenance, a discussion that is expanded in lengthy notes. Some of the remarks could, in a “meta-ethnographic” approach, be portrayed as “meta-considerations” because they are somehow speculative, leading to the objectivation of certain private traits of the author’s life experiences.

For each of the authors analysed, the book shows how animism, its sublimation or its knowledge became constituted as an ecology of mutual knowledge and behaviours between colonisers (and anthropologists) and the colonised populations. One of the key points of understanding here is the condition of being a foreigner. When animism is understood as a form and manifestation of power, the presence of foreigners – colonial agents, administrators, missionaries and anthropologists – emerges as a potential threat, alongside non-humans or ancestors. Whereas in the case of colonial ethnography, the reflection on the theme has an underlying instrumental, material purpose that incorporates the natives into the colonial order and culture, in the case of professional anthropologists we can observe how their work reflects their understanding and management of their role as agents and bearers of *lulik*.

The book ends with a comparative analysis of the various authors surveyed and their relationship to animism based on interactive argument, in what the author christens hyper animism, defensive animism and assisted animism. Hyper animism occurs as a reaction to threats posed by the colonial power. Defensive animism functions as a way of protecting animism against the transgressions of foreigners, while assisted animism occurs in situations in which

animism, its practices or material manifestations are tolerated. Running deeper, in a structural mode, the homology argument proposed by the author discusses the processes that engage foreigners and spirits and that, throughout colonial history, would provide a basis for relating to others, namely ethnographers, not only in a ritual fashion but also a political one.

The book makes a significant contribution in several areas. It examines animism, demonstrating how it has developed in context and showing its dynamism. It is a study of how the process of knowing others manifests itself in different judgements or interpretations, whether by colonisers or anthropologists. It enquires into the presence and articulation of ontological world visions. It offers potential clues for more in-depth research of this same period using the work of other authors, either colonial or professional anthropologists. It also covers new ground in the way these same concepts can be an object of research within the context of post-colonial anthropological studies, as well as in the way key institutions of society, such as the State and the Timorese Catholic Church, deal with animism, despite the fact that, nominally, the overwhelming majority of the Timorese population is Catholic.

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