

these points are discussed thoughtfully in the book, a few brief historico-ethnographic examples stop short of elucidating the workings of non-human agency. The chapter declares that we should pay attention to it, but it is unclear how it can be detected in the broad-stroke discussion.

The last two chapters have prompted a nagging concern. I can't brush aside a feeling that either the empirical reality or our mode of manifesting it in writing seems to confound our flights of theoretical imagination. Tremlett's efforts to synthesize what is usually dubbed as theory and ordinarily ethnographic description are exceptional. Yet a few examples seem a bit drab, without much storytelling craft or poetic density. Perhaps the author was suspicious of presenting a new theory of religion according to the old conventions of academic writing. Is this why Tremlett's analysis switches from writing to drawing? Is it a gesture that questions the adequacy of a certain kind of writing for conveying the flows and assemblages of the living, the dead, gods, and buildings?

Atsuhide Ito, who was tasked with providing and explaining drawings of a Christofilipino colonial city assemblage, comments on applying full body weight to paper to produce a visible mark, a line, a dot, an accidental smudge in an "apophenic exercise" (p. 159) that renders assemblage visible. The collaborative labor of Tremlett and Ito render a glimpse of generative interactivity. Recommended!

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KENDALL, Laurel, *Mediums and Magical Things: Statues, Paintings, and Masks in Asian Places*, 280 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. Paperback, \$34.95. ISBN 9780520298675.

Laurel Kendall's new book offers an interesting and compelling study of the production and ensoulment of specific sacred objects and of their interrelations with shamans and spirit mediums in East and Southeast Asia. Highly interdisciplinary, it derives from four collaborative projects that the author undertook in South Korea, Vietnam, Bali, and Myanmar. Kendall's years of fieldwork with Korean shamans particularly shine through, but the ethnographic accounts of the other three contexts are also so captivating that readers get to experience part of her journey, approached as "a wide-ranging conversation where things learned in one place pose fresh questions in another and sometimes garner surprising answers" (p. 180). Moreover, the use of anecdotes and vivid analogies makes it easy to follow the narration, and the beautiful illustrations and photographs included offer a useful visual support that renders this journey even more enjoyable.

The only weakness of the book is that readers unfamiliar with Asian religions might find it difficult at times to follow Kendall's analysis. A brief description of the four religious contexts might have been useful. Readers would also have benefited from the presence of a glossary of specific emic terms. Although this is a minor aspect, in a future edition the author might wish to provide a revised and more coherent use of Chinese and Korean characters throughout the text, and perhaps also add the Vietnamese, Burmese, and Balinese alphabets.

The opening chapter introduces Kendall's research, presenting her four main case studies: statues used by Vietnamese and Burmese spirit mediums, paintings used by Korean shamans, and masks used by entranced dancers in Bali. These "are all considered by devotees to be inhabited by gods/spirits/energies

that become present and agentive through appropriate use in appropriate settings” (p. 8). Students and scholars interested in the study of the materiality of religion might want to pay particular attention to this chapter, where Kendall explains how she conducted her research, thus providing a practical example for those wishing to follow the same path. In particular, she briefly reviews the state of the art in the field of studies on object agency and material religion.

Kendall acknowledges the risks of adopting certain concepts, such as that of magic (pp. 9–10), and certain strategies, such as that of comparison (pp. 15–25), and she carefully clarifies why and how she made certain choices and produced this research. The author also carefully presents the discussion on new animism based on Viveiros de Castro’s and Descola’s works. Throughout the chapters, she contributes to broadening and deepening this discussion by showing elements that conflict with the animist ontology outlined by these two scholars. This could have been made even more explicit, since it is one of the most interesting contributions of Kendall’s work.

Chapter 2 focuses on the topic of image agency. Through vivid accounts of her encounters, Kendall discusses how Vietnamese and Burmese statues, Korean paintings, and Balinese masks are enlivened with gods/spirits/energies, and how spirit mediums and shamans interact with them. In chapter 3, the author deals with the processes by which the sacred images at the core of the study are made. Kendall shows how image-makers need to carefully consider circumstances, materials, and modes of productions to make their images efficacious. Since, as she notes, gods/spirits/energies need “both the image body and the medium’s more mobile body to be vividly present” (p. 103), in the following chapter, Kendall turns her (and the reader’s) attention to the relationship between sacred objects and shamans and spirit mediums.

In chapter 5 Kendall takes a detour in her analysis to focus on the porous “boundaries

between magically empowered (or empowerable) things and pure commodities” (p. 131). The relation between this chapter and the previous ones is made clear only in the last pages of the chapter itself. In a future edition it might be a good idea to make this connection more explicit at the beginning of the chapter to allow the reader to better follow her analysis. The final chapter explores the processes by which (once) sacred images become museum objects. Through various anecdotes, the author shows how “the ambiguous status of an image may become a matter of consequence” (p. 177) for the many actors connected to its museumification. In the conclusion, Kendall reflects upon her “exercise in thinking through things” (p. 178) and retraces in a very clear way what she has come to understand and realize through this process.

All in all, I highly recommend this book as a significant contribution to the field of material religion studies. In presenting a detailed account on how her study was undertaken, Kendall encourages students and scholars to adopt a similar approach to sacred images. This book is also an excellent resource for all those academicians who are interested in ways of interacting with deities and spirits in Asia. General readers, too, will enjoy being guided by Kendall on her journey across East and Southeast Asia.

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LANG, Natalie, *Religion and Pride: Hindus in Search of Recognition in La Réunion*, 234 pp., illustrations, glossary, index. New York: Berghahn Books, 2021. Hardback, \$135.00. ISBN 9781800730274.

Natalie Lang’s *Religion and Pride* looks in detail at the specific context of Hindus in the French overseas department of La Réunion, located in the Mascarene Islands in the Indian Ocean. Through her research on religious practices