

Price, Richard, Sally Price. 2017. *Saamaka Dreaming*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. 272 pp. Pb.: \$25.95. ISBN: 9780822369783.

For each professional, there is a beginning of a road; for some, it might be a short moment, maybe a spark; for others, it is a longer journey. For Richard and Sally Price, field research in Suriname was the beginning of a lifelong journey of history, art, and culture. The book *Saamaka Dreaming* is a look back, a glimpse of fieldwork notes, memories, and discoveries made five decades ago. Page by page, the authors take us with them on their fieldwork starting in 1966 with diary-like writing, giving us a chance to imagine attending village events and being with them through everyday challenges.

Saamaka Dreaming is a compilation of thousands of pages of field notes, tape recordings, drawings and photos; it gives the reader a colourful picture of what Saamaka life looked like and how Richard and Sally's life took place among the Saamaka people; the descriptions are very vivid and cover different aspects of both of their lives and, since both authors joined their notes, male and female perspective on different events are given.

The book's first chapters introduce the authors of the book, a young anthropologist and his wife who planned to do fieldwork with the Saamaka Maroons of Suriname. Describing their own experience, situations they have been through, Prices show the reader political situation in Suriname, and with the story of getting to live in Dangogo they illustrate not only the relationships between the state and the village, but also the background of struggles anthropologist had to go through to do the research. Their story goes on with the beginning of their life in Dangogo where they experience Saamaka's attitude towards incomers, especially white people, the doubts they are having, superstition, the opinions about them that have been influenced by historical events that date back to the first Africans coming to this place. The description of these attitudes continues through the next chapter, in which the Prices are slowly revealing different characters: people of the village in which they are living, how they welcome them in their homes, the first conversations and how they, the white people, who have never been welcomed among Saamaka, are introduced with rules of the place where they will live for the following two years.

A few chapters are devoted to the everyday order of things of the village, such as building a house, going hunting, cooking food, for example. Some of the personalities are described carefully with the help of detailed accounts of conversations and specific events during the first year of their stay in Dangogo village; these characters stay with the narrative until the very end, giving the reader emotional experience in addition to scientific insight and also learning about the importance of relationship with people while doing a research.

The main part of the book is devoted to the beliefs of Saamaka Maroons. The authors describe different rituals that are a crucial part of Saamakas' everyday life; a detailed description reveals several such rituals, including funerals, rituals for sickness, and rituals for the death of a child. These rituals are closely bound to deities and gods that are studied carefully in two separate chapters. These detailed notes examine the origins of rituals and deities and introduce the main differences and commonalities between the

Saamaka and different regions of Africa from which the Saamaka people come, originally as slaves brought to America.

The final two chapters describe the technical details of their research, how the notes were made, and how they were classified, in comparison with today's technology, how they have gone through the notes, and how their private lives have influenced their work over the previous five decades in Saamaka culture. They also give us a glimpse of what happened after the fieldwork, their return to Suriname, their relationships with people they lived with, and the changes they have witnessed. The short introduction of how Saamaka Maroons live today gives a feeling of a conclusion and shows as the importance of fieldwork since it captures the traditions, culture, and lifestyle that may never be witnessed again.

In several aspects, this is an inspiring narrative on Saamaka Maroons lifestyle changes through half a century, on changes from an anthropological perspective on these people, as well as the development of anthropology as a science and the impact that a researcher can make. It is not only a great source to learn about Saamaka culture but also a great narrative to read – it is literary anthropology at its best.

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Mahony, Sorcha. 2018. *Searching for a Better Life. Growing Up in the Slums of Bangkok*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. 206 pp. Hb.: \$110.00/£78.00. ISBN: 9781785338588.

In *Searching for a Better Life*, author Sorcha Mahony offers an insight into the lives of young people, their families and environment in a Bangkok slum. She tells the story of several young slum dwellers and their struggle to fulfil their dreams and aspirations for a better life in a world torn between traditional and local values and a modern, economy-driven surrounding. She presents the argument that while young people use their agency to achieve goals in individual spheres of their lives, their actions lead to unwanted consequences in other spheres. Mahony bases her book on fieldwork she conducted between 2005 and 2006 in the Khlong Toey slum in Bangkok, talking mostly to young slum dwellers aged between 15 and 22 and their adult carers. Additionally, she interviewed young people from wealthy families in a suburb of Bangkok, before shifting her focus solely on the slum.

In the first part of the book, Mahony outlines her topic and introduces the theoretical assumptions and approaches as well as the research field. She starts by defining the main key terms such as “youth” and “slum” but also explains her use of theoretical concepts, like “agency”, “culture”, and “structure”. Furthermore, she gives the reader an understanding of Theravada Buddhism as an essential leading structure for her informants and people in Thailand in general. In the following, she offers a glimpse into the younger Thai history showing how Thailand changed due to the shift from agriculture to industrial work and the resulting enormous economic growth. Both Buddhism and Thai history are used by the author to explain the striving for a better life inherent not only in the heads of Thai people but also at the heart of Thai culture. After setting the scene, Mahony outlines the literature regarding global youth studies and shows how youth is often connected to the narrative of risk, both for young people themselves and the society in which they live. In relation to development, youth is often seen as a productive resource. The last chapter of the first part deals with the fieldwork in Bangkok and takes the reader on Mahony’s research journey.

The second part is at the same time the main part of the ethnography, revealing the key findings of the fieldwork. Mahony uses this part to show the different spheres in the lives of the young people she met and how they are interconnected. In these chapters, she makes her main argument and explains how the agency that the young slum dwellers use to reach their dreams in the different spheres has adverse effects on success in the other spheres. These three aspects or spheres are *living the teenage life*, *doing the right thing*, and *forging the future*.

To present a better understanding of the sphere *living the teenage life*, the author uses interviews and her observations to show how the young slum dwellers put effort in their appearance to present themselves as modern and global young beings. The youth of Khlong Toey slum are aware of their material status and the accompanying stigma and live a lifestyle characterised by consumption, trying to create wealthy-looking images. However, the desired image remains a dream without validation outside of the slum, lacking the real material wealth to support the image.

Furthermore, the young people aim to *look sexy* in accordance with images of the global youth culture by moving and dressing their bodies in a particular way. Another aspect of *living the teenage life* is the high symbolic value and reputation originating from international contacts or stays abroad. By constructing themselves as international people, the young slum dwellers attempt to distance themselves from the parochialistic stigma related to slum life. However, these actions the informants take to present themselves as modern, global and wealthy youth have unintentional consequences. They contribute to the image of self-centred teenagers, who do not care enough for their families and have questionable moral values, turning their backs on Thai culture, thus weakening their claim to be good children. Additionally, the money spent on status symbols and consumption cannot be spent on the material advancement for which they strive.

The second sphere of the young slum dwellers' lives that Mahony introduces is *doing the right thing*. The main part of this sphere is the wish to contribute to the family, either financially or in the form of care work or domestic work. Almost every young person Mahony met in the slum supported his or her family or adult carers, although many of the supported ones felt the effort was too little, especially compared to what they used to do when they were young. This care for the elders or parents also derives from Buddhism. By making meritorious, spiritually charged actions that cleanse and purify the mind by doing the right thing, the young people attempt to construct themselves as *good children*. However, all the effort to support the adult carers and be a good child is often overshadowed by the ever-present narrative of the unhelpful teenager inherent in society and environment.

Furthermore, in their attempt to be good children, the young people unwittingly reinforce their socio-economic status, for example, by working in poorly paid jobs or for their families. In addition, being a good kid or doing the right thing makes it harder to live the teenage life as well as improve the socio-economic situation. In particular, the struggle between the first and second sphere is hard to overcome for the young people, which is why they actively use their agency to create hybrid identities including the roles of a good child, as well as a global and modern young person.

The third sphere of the lives of the informants is called *forging the future*. This chapter shows how the young people strive for a better material future and try to escape the hardships of the slum. This striving is often made harder by the actions necessary to live the teenage life and be a good child. Although most of the informants have to rely on support from either the family or other sources, such as NGOs or friends, there is a strong notion of self-reliance and independence. The possibility to achieve a better life is seen as deriving from a person's hard work and individual decisions. The actions in this sphere also have unwanted consequences, weakening the other spheres. By accepting the support of family or NGOs, the young people fail to present themselves as wealthy and struggle to support their families enough to be recognised as good children.

Mahony uses the third and last part to summarise her findings and arguments and revisit the literature to analyse what her study can offer to complete gaps in the current status of research. The author finishes with some policy and practical recommendations and closes her book with the words of an informant, stating that hope is everything they have.

Mahony's work is a fascinating and entertaining read. Her style of writing is scenic, and she seems to take the reader with her to the Khlong Toey slum by telling very detail orientated stories. Although she keeps the engagement with theoretical approaches and the current state of research at the minimum, this book is worth considering, especially for students. The author offers a deep insight into her research process, along with all the struggles and changes she took, making herself as well as her book extremely approachable. Mahony finds a good way to use vivid descriptions of the young people she met to show how they are struggling to find their way between two sets of cultural, moral parameters, experiencing financial and material hardships, but trying to achieve a better life.

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Thelen, Tatjana, Larissa Veters, and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (eds.). 2017. *Stategraphy. Toward a Relational Anthropology of the State*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. 170 pp. Pb.: \$27.95/£19.00. ISBN: 9781785337000.

Stategraphy is an anthology that brings together eight insightful contributions, which are set in the context of a profound introduction. The latter finely sets out the theoretical framework and the core aim of the volume that tends to bridge the analytical gap between state image and state practice. In this light, the editors thus introduce the term *stategraphy*, a concept that at first does not roll off the tongue easily but proves to be a useful working concept of the state throughout the next 160 pages. The whole volume is based on three core processes. The first pertains to the relational modalities, the second explores the boundary work, and the third refers to the embeddedness of actors. The following chapters (stategraphies) apply these principles in analysing different ethnographic fields, all situated in the domain of welfare and Europe, but each one with a different focus in the application of the analytical frame.

The editors, Tatjana Thelen, Larissa Veters and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann start by pointing out a theoretical void in the analysis of the state, even though other works have shown that a state and its actual practice are to be distinguished from each other, resulting in an interconnected mismatch of “state image” versus “state practice”, an examination for which no analytical tools exist today. Understanding the state as a complex, polymorphic net of relationships between individuals regulated by an elaborate set of rules, the approach stresses the analysis of the interactions between actors, especially state representatives. These interactions may be observed and set into context through the three above-mentioned principles of stategraphy, on which the authors further elaborate; as actors have certain expectations and views of “the state”, and state practice usually diverges with state image, a state is to be understood as ‘created by, and experienced through, different relational modalities’ (p. 8). The second analytical focus is boundary work, exploring how common dichotomies, such as state/kinship are created and what and how specific actions and interactions confirm or dissolve these seemingly different terms in constant negotiation. Thirdly, the embeddedness of actors is acknowledged and taken into account. As actors may be from multiple backgrounds, identify with different groups, and follow complex interests and patterns, this is crucial in evaluating states.

After having set the analytical fundament in the first part of the introduction, the following ethnographic settings are contextualised. The authors observe that the workings of the state have often been examined in non-European sites and/or in “states of crisis”, thus exoticising states of the south, and running the risk of concluding in comparison with an “ideal state”, which would be a fiction. Therefore, the eight contributions all discuss cases set in Europe, which offer a multitude of aspects to consider, such as the transformations after the demise of lived socialism. The common ground of the articles is the aforementioned analytical approach, and the topic of all field sites share: welfare. This issue already has an extensive history of research and analysis (not least through the prior works of the authors) and proposes comprehensive chances for understanding the processes between “state image” and “state practice” – a field in which citizens and represen-

tatives are in most direct interaction with one another. Interesting dynamics have become visible through already conducted research – state representatives have been known to apply personal moral evaluations upon their clients, while citizens have been successful in making their voices heard and developing agency in the face of the state.

Through these modalities, each chapter exhibits unique features of the location of the field, domain of welfare, ethnographic methods, and varying stress in the implementation of the analytical framework. The first to fourth chapters are based on the concept of relational modalities. The chapter by Larissa Veters opens with the portrayal of two cases of people tackling issues of displacement within Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the Bosnian War. Between the two different approaches of citizens appear the difficulties of people trying to connect and get in touch with the state, an ever-shifting terrain, through varying identifications.

Whereas Veters focuses on citizens, Vincent Dubois sheds light on French “street-level” bureaucrats in interaction with members of society, evaluating claims to social benefits through home visits. Here each state representative’s room to manoeuvre becomes visible, through which, in this case, a neo-liberal active welfare state is substantiated, with the idea that citizens are responsible for their social decay, and broader crises.

Also studying local social service providers, in this case in rural Russia, Rebecca Kay acknowledges the multiple levels on which state actors build and profit from relationships, within the social services and the village. She stresses that these relationships are not at all anomalies, but bind image and practice of the state together, and how personal contacts and interactions are used to using the full, though scarce, the potential of the welfare system to benefit citizens.

Alice Forbes and Deborah James’ contribution on non-profit legal advisers in Great Britain further shows that relational logic is not only helpful for actors with agency “between” state and civil society but utterly necessary in the fragmented structure of the state, to guide and support citizens. These actors narrow the constructed dichotomy of state and civil society.

Rosie Read completely opposes this split in her article on hospital volunteers in two different Czech cities. She points out how little competition there is between state and civil society, and the multiplicity of additional actors shaping the alleged line of what or who belongs to the state, thus creating new forms of care.

Likewise, the sixth chapter has a more significant focus on boundary work is, in which Tatjana Thelen, Andre Thiemann, and Duška Roth insightfully show how Serbian citizens include state-paid care-workers of the elderly in kin structures and, through this, uphold the widespread image of the uncaring state.

The last two contributions apply the third principle of analysis, embeddedness, in the “stategraphies”. Ștefan Dorondel and Mihai Popa present how EU food aid is distributed on a local level by Romanian state representatives. By evaluating the processes of identifying eligible clients, the communications between the officials on different levels and with citizens, and through the circulation of goods, the two authors succeed in making power dynamics visible through the embeddedness of the local actors.

The last chapter, by Gyöngyi Schwarcz and Alexandra Szöke, demonstrates how two mayors in rural Hungary address the spending of public funds differently and the reactions this entails. It becomes clear that the state image is negotiated on diverse levels, and that the mayors did not act as mediators of the Hungarian state, but instead formed individual ideas of the state, creating coherence by the power invested in them through the citizens.

Throughout the contributions, the threefold “stategraphy approach” proves well-applicable and useful. Where at first sight, the selection of sites seems rather widespread and heterogenic, the analytical framework creates a leitmotif and coherence, through which reflected comparison is made possible. The relational approach offers a valuable and fruitful perspective on the workings of the state, while using the field of welfare as a site has the power to represent and mirror tendencies and dynamics beyond the social sector of states. It is easily imaginable to apply the “stategraphy-approach” in other contexts, such as education, law enforcement, health care or city planning.

All chapters are based on the extensive ethnographic research, and thus, they offer insightful ethnographic accounts that are finely translated and interpreted within the mentioned analytical framework. The anthology’s analytical approach reaches beyond the anthropological context; hence, it can be useful for those who are interested in the fractured, ever-shifting fields such as the state.

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Hickel, Jason & Naomi Haynes (eds.). 2018. *Hierarchy and Value. Comparative Perspectives on Moral Order* (Afterword by David Graeber). Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. 170 pp. Pb.: \$27.95/£19.00. ISBN: 9781785339974.

Hierarchy and Value, edited by Jason Hickel and Naomi Haynes, is a continuation of the longstanding academic debate about the tension between structure and agency; this time, however, through the thought-provoking observation of those people who ‘seem to support and value illiberal – and specifically hierarchical – social formations’ (p. ix). Reflecting this, in the editors’ term, ‘uncomfortable’ topic in anthropological discipline, all the volume contributors refer to the works of Louis Dumont, particularly to his *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970), as a seminal but also a controversial book on the topic. Despite the fact that Dumont’s consideration of hierarchy, especially when unquestioningly contrasting ‘a prior state’ of Hindu caste system with the ‘imposed’ Western ideologies of egalitarianism and individualism, is already recognized as primordial and ahistorical, the authors tackle his arguments with great precision. In so doing, they identify the fields of (dis)agreement with Dumont’s pondering on the issue to better explain their ethnographic contexts in which hierarchy was observed as desirable.

Tackling the questions ‘Why should anthropologists be concerned with hierarchy?’ or ‘How have people leveraged ideas about hierarchy in order to challenge liberal models of the social good?’ (p. 3), Haynes and Hickel provide a theoretical framework in the Introduction, relating the topic of hierarchy to value and values. In opposition to Dumont, who refers to hierarchy as ‘encompassment of the contrary’ – an inextricable relationship between a whole and its parts in which the superior value encompasses the lower – their definition of hierarchy as a social form refers rather to ‘difference and asymmetry, and often also to rank’ (p. 4). The authors believe that based on this definition one may explain the co-existence of hierarchy with a certain kind of ‘ontological egalitarianism’ (p. 5) – that people who inhabit different ranks in one system may be regarded as an ontological equivalent in other circumstances. Making a further methodological distinction between ‘value as a noun’, referring to ‘ideas about a good social and relational world’, and ‘value as a verb’, referring to the ‘process of valuing’ (p. 10), the editors establish a comparative approach for exploring ‘hierarchical forms of social organization in the face of other options’ (p. 11). According to the editors, such a perspective enables observing comparatively when and where hierarchy is elaborated as socially desirable, and whether valuing hierarchy in certain social formations impedes non-hierarchical codes in others. Additionally, moving beyond Dumont’s understanding of hierarchy as the exercise of power in which powerful people subordinate those below them, the proposed perspective is also believed to enable understanding people’s affections for hierarchy or their conception of it as a shared value.

Within this framework, the volume’s contributors provide illustrative cases of people’s re-establishment of hierarchies in certain social arrangements, usually when they were confronted with alternative models of society and personhood. Already in the Introduction, Hickel discusses why many people in rural Zululand perceive liberalism

as a threat to hierarchies in their home, which they value and re-establish as a means to achieve health and good conditions for their social reproduction. In the same chapter, Haynes provides an example of unexpected but socially desirable hierarchical ties between leaders and laypeople in practicing Pentecostalism in the Zambian Copperbelt, often referred to as that of parents-generation. These hierarchical ties prove to be important to people as ‘a means of realizing local models of a good social world ... in which everyone is moving’ (p. 12).

Discussing the observation of Catholicism, which ‘has not got under the skin’ of the majority of the Lio people in Indonesia since its introduction in the late 1920s, Howell (chap. 1) analyses hierarchy both as a value schema and a mode of social organization. Despite the fact that a majority of Lio individuals are Catholic, Howell convincingly explains why the attempt of superimposition of Catholic values at the expense of *adat*, which is fundamentally a hierarchical and holistic tradition while promoting the social good, was met with rejection.

Similarly, Malara and Boylston (chap. 2) consider ambiguous understandings of top-down power as both ‘a moral good and a coercive force’ (p. 41) in contemporary Ethiopian Orthodox society. Yet by shifting attention from the classification of values to the practicalities, that is, to the ways of how people actually live with, manage, negotiate, build, maintain and change asymmetric relationships of virtue and injustice, love and mediation in their religious and family lives, the authors offer a more complete picture of the power-value relationship.

The relationship between destruction and hierarchy is reflected by Damon (chap. 3), who holds that ‘destruction everywhere centres social reality’ (p. 60), which means hierarchy. That humans use destruction and sacrifice to create their social life and continuity, Damon elaborates with the help of classic anthropological considerations of the Kula ring exchange activities, Gregory’s *Gifts and Commodities* and Lévi Strauss’s *Totemism*, and finally, he applies his point to modern circumstances – the contemporary West.

In chap. 4, Feuchtwang offers a conception of civilisation as a result of combining Mauss’s consideration on civilisation with Dumont’s conception on hierarchy. Criticizing Dumont’s use of ahistorical binary opposites in a form of purity versus pollution or *aegalis* versus *hierarchicus*, and leaning on Mauss’s theory of civilisation, Feuchtwang concludes that every civilisation is hierarchical, that is, ‘ideological and aspirational’ (p. 79). Moreover, Feuchtwang suggests his use of the word civilisation, which describes historically continuous and at once transformed ‘evaluational encompassment, ideology, aspiration, and self-fashioning’ (p. 86), as an analytic concept for exploring the history of specific civilisations. The latter he illustrates by the changing hierarchies in 6,000 years of China’s history.

The efforts of establishing the conditions for a good Islamic community in Pakistan by a transnational Islamic piety movement – the Tablighi Jamaat – are discussed by Khan (chap. 5), who analyses the Tablighi religious practices through their critique of contemporary Islamist political activism. Kahn discusses this ideological cleavage as a distinction between the Islamist modernist conception of religion and the Tablighis conception of sacred transformative practices like *dawat* (face-to-face preaching to fulfil

religious duties). His analysis shows that while the Islamists have adopted an ethics of egalitarian individualism, placing the ultimate value on individual agency, the Tablighis, on the contrary, perform *dawat* to create a world of 'pious sociality' (p. 98) through ethics of hierarchy and virtue of submitting to authority in order to counter the threat of moral chaos posed by egalitarian individualism.

Smedal's contribution (chap. 5) on 'demotion as value' is a credible example of how the social organization postulated on rank is diminishing among the Nghada in eastern Indonesia, where a noble woman who marries a common man is 'irreversibly demoted to the rank of her partner' (p. 118). Even though the demotion of noble women is performed through a symbolic but still humiliating ritual, Smedal holds that this practice is falling behind in the Ngada community because 'the nobles pose no threat to the more egalitarian ethos of the commoners' (p. 130).

In the Afterward, David Graeber provides a convincing explanation of 'what this [Dumont's] project really was, as well as its long-term political and theoretical effects' (p. 136). Locating the work of Louis Dumont, particularly his notion of hierarchy as a central tool of anthropological analysis, in the intellectual history of the anthropological discipline itself, Graeber makes the reader challenge the tacit assumptions that lie behind Dumont's project – his reducing the complex relations that used to be called power, dominations, stratification, inequality into a single uniform category of hierarchy, or presenting them as never being a contingent result of a play of forces. A first step in rethinking Dumont's project, Graeber states is represented in this volume, in which 'almost every author sets out to speak of hierarchy in a broadly Dumontian sense and ends up discovering some way that this standard approach is inadequate' (p. 147).

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