

## PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/64329>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2019-03-24 and may be subject to change.

Morgan and his companions struggling through the jungle on elephant back, and being amazed by the wonders they encounter. Jacques de Morgan also learned Malay, enabling him to communicate with local people in an easygoing manner. Often clad in Malay or Chinese attire, he must have made quite an impression on those he encountered.

I have the impression that the biography could have contained more information about de Morgan in the East, instead of paying the attention it does to his exploits in Persia and Egypt. In addition, some more personal information about his life, family, and surroundings would have added to a more comprehensive appreciation of the work he did. Some information about his scholarly surroundings at his time might also have helped to put his achievements into context. These are, however, minor points. It is to be hoped that other scholars, or perhaps the present team, will find the opportunity to do more research on the subject, and that an edition of all the drawings and sketches made by de Morgan may one day appear. Contemporaries of de Morgan mentioned in the 'Avant-propos' (by Christian Pelras) – such as P. Ruck, Alfred Marche, Zavier Brau de Saint-Pol Lias, and others – would also seem worth more attention in order to gain insight into the French interest and presence in the Malay world in the second half of the nineteenth century. Finally, it is a pity that the book is produced in such a way that one virtually has to break the spine if one wants to read it properly. In a book of this beauty and this price, such an important practicality ought to have received more attention.

---

Richard Eves, *The magical body; Power, fame and meaning in a Melanesian society*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1998, xxii + 302 pp. [Studies in Anthropology and History 23.] ISBN 90.5702.305.9. Price: EUR 105.00 (hardback).

TOON VAN MEIJL

The relationships between the body, magic and power constitute the main focus of this rich ethnography of the people living on the Lelet Plateau in central New Ireland, Papua New Guinea. It makes a valuable contribution to the debate that aims to transcend the Cartesian assumption that mental processes are essentially different from the body by showing that the cosmic order of the Lelet is not divided between spirit and body, or between irrational and rational. Instead, Eves demonstrates, non-empirical phenomena are physical and embodied in Lelet society, as testified to by the wide range of corporeal imageries that the Lelet deploy in the construction of their world, especially

in their magical practices. The emphasis on the body in action suggests, Eves argues, that corporeality is the threshold between the Lelet and the outside world. Since metaphors based on the body make the world meaningful for the Lelet, Eves even argues that bodily experience is foundational for the Lelet world view.

In spite of the complex argument of this monograph, it is grounded solidly in the ordinary and mundane nature of Lelet daily life. Eves makes a real effort to avoid the impression that the Lelet are always engaged in magic, showing that most of their time is spent gardening, going to the market and attending church. Nevertheless, magical ideas seem to be present throughout these daily activities. Magic may not dominate people's active engagement with the world, but it does reflect the way in which the Lelet imagine the world. Eves therefore is not simply studying magical practices as utilitarian acts, but more as revealing corporeal images that guide people's embodied relationship to the world.

The relationship between magic and the body suggests a conception of power that is much broader than the narrow political view of power. Following Foucault, Eves is more interested in Lelet cultural notions of power, as present in people's everyday experiences, than in political power that is associated only with issues of authority, leadership and hierarchy. Power in Lelet society is primarily concerned with acts of self-assertion rather than with political acts. It applies mainly to the capacity to achieve things or projects. Thus it is related not only to bodily strength and physical acts, but also to thinking and performing magic for a garden.

Eves explains the connection between magic, the body and power in a lengthy theoretical introduction that begins with a brief sketch of the ethnographic setting. Subsequently the argument is developed in eight chapters, while the book is concluded with a short epilogue. In the first chapter the author introduces Lelet conceptualizations of the body in all phases of the life cycle. Thematically this introductory chapter discusses the body in relation to gender constructions, Lelet conceptions of power, and various forms of magic centering on the body. In Chapter II, Lelet society is situated in a historical perspective sketching the transition from colonialism to postcolonialism and from subsistence agriculture to cash cropping. It is argued that taro gardening was continued during these periods, but acquired the new meaning of asserting Lelet cultural identity, while the body's role became more pronounced in the construction of 'otherness'.

The changing role of the body in the Lelet world view is further explored in a chapter examining the introduction of Christianity and the manner in which it was reworked within local horizons. Lelet forms of social organization are then analysed in a chapter on kinship that also focuses on the significance of the body to kinship etiquette. Chapter V explores Lelet religion and spiritual-

ity as the author elaborates the bodily form and physical nature of non-human spirit beings that inhabit the Lelet world and play an essential role in magical practices. Corporeal imageries used in relation to food, particularly taro, are discussed in Chapter VI, that focuses on agricultural practices and the persisting discourse of famine, from which magic seeks to protect people and their bodies. This chapter is particularly revealing of the poetic cadences and phrases that guide the Lelet's relationship to the world, a relationship in which the body is a rich source of metaphors and images. The following chapter extends the analysis of agriculture by providing a very detailed overview of magical practices in the gardens. The final chapter discusses the feasting cycle, particularly the continuation of mortuary ceremonies that are revelatory of all kinds of corporeal imageries and manipulations of the body. Mortuary ceremonies are also characterized by forms of intense rivalry, which Eves explains in relation to the circulation of successful memories during these events that are deeply intertwined with the production of fame.

This book is not only of interest for the Melanesian specialist, but also provides a welcome addition to the growing corpus of anthropological literature on the bodily basis of self and being. To some extent the book might be said to suffer from a slight discrepancy between analysis and description: the theoretical argument could perhaps have been set out a little more directly in terms of the ethnographic data. As it stands the argument is largely limited to the introduction and to the short introductory and concluding remarks before and after each chapter, whereas the bulk of the book is mainly descriptive. The ethnographic details, however, are so rich and intriguing that *The magical body* deserves to be read widely.

---

Florentino Rodao and Felice Noelle Rodriguez (eds), *The Philippine revolution of 1896; Ordinary lives in extraordinary times*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001, xx + 303 pp. ISBN 971.550.386.1. Price: USD 28.00 (paperback).

OTTO VAN DEN MUIJZENBERG

The worldwide hype of centennial and millennial celebrations around the year 2000 was preceded in the Philippines by a series of celebrations of the Philippine Revolution of 1896, which officially ended in the pact of Biak-na-Bato in December 1897. General Aguinaldo and his companions consented to go in exile in Hong Kong, but returned soon after the May 1, 1898 'battle' of Manila Bay, when US commodore George Dewey sunk the Spanish fleet in the context of the Spanish-American War. Having proclaimed Independence