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Srinivas, Tulasi: The Cow in the Elevator. An Anthropology of Wonder. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 269 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-7079-6. Price: $ 26.95

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strategies of brewing *liangcha* as a means to prevent illness caused by heat as part of equatorial living.

The liveliness of Singapore's food culture is featured both in Michelin food guides as well as the 2018 film "Crazy Rich Asians" whereupon arrival to Singapore, key characters go immediately from the airport to a well-known food market. By chapter six, Smith brings readers to several hawker centers and food courts to address the significance of gastronomy – particularly for the intersections of food and medicine and notions of healthy lifestyles. While public food consumption in the markets and food stalls offer distinctive embodied experiences of Singaporean culture, the consumption of medicinal foods in private are also a significant component of the pursuit of health. Dietary practices and home-based medicinal foods utilizing specific herbs, berries, or plants are a significant part of Smith's interlocutors. Teas, soups, and tonics are prepared to enhance a person's vitality as well as manage elements of heating and cooling in one's body. Rather than frame these practices as compliance or resistance, the author suggests that food and medicinal practices in Singapore facilitate "creative negotiation of authority, heritage, identity, and health" across a range of hierarchical, colonial, and socioenvironmental landscapes. Smith concludes with reflexive anthropology frameworks to illustrate how normalizing any system of medicine as the primary standard may obscure complex and generative practices with potential for new forms of hegemony.

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Srinivas, Tulasi: The Cow in the Elevator. An Anthropology of Wonder. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 269 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-7079-6. Price: $ 26.95

In this intriguing and richly-textured book, Tulasi Srinivas immerses us in the world of contemporary Hindu ritual practice in Malleshwaram, a suburb of the South Indian city of Bangalore. The author notes that she did not originally intend to write a book about wonder. Yet in the serendipitous encounters that so often emerge in ethnographic projects, an initial inquiry into modern ritual change morphed into this delightful examination of ritual wonder in the context of rapid economic and technological transformation in India. Srinivas proposes in the introduction that "wonder is apparent in everyday ritual in Bangalore," and "practices of wonder align with moments of ritual creativity or improvisation that occur sporadically but then sediment and become instituted as part and parcel of the ritual" (4). She then sets out to explore the numerous ways Malleshwaramites seek and find wonder in the particular context of Hindu neoliberal modernity, where ancient habits of ritual practice collide with the ever-changing landscape of new technologies and the surging power of a capitalist economy. The universe Srinivas explores is one of "experiential Hinduism" where established Hindu rituals interact with modernity in ways that render these rituals both iterative and innovative. While much of Srinivas's inquiry focuses on the religious life of two particular temples and their attendant priests, Dandu Shastri and Krishna Bhattar, her field of inquiry expands beyond temple space to ponder the wondrous nature of, for example, street processions and house blessing rituals. Of particular concern throughout the book is the ethical creativity that the author sees emerging from the various forms of ritual practice she delineates.

The book's first chapter focuses on ritual wonder in the context of overwhelming spatial transformation as it is occurring in the rapidly modernizing information technologies hub that Bangalore has become. It is here – among innumerable shiny, new luxury apartment buildings with improbable Western names and malls boasting fast food chains like Taco Bell and Krispy Kreme – that Srinivas encounters the book's eponymous "cow in the elevator," who has been deployed for a ritual blessing of a swank penthouse flat. The author acknowledges that wonder emerges in the encounter with extravagant built forms available only to the rich; but it also emerges in religious practices, like the house blessing, that recover morally and socially vital mappings of space that resist the modernist transformations embodied in the physical landscape. Chapter 2 examines the many ways that ritual and everyday practices mutually shape and validate each other's ethical universes. Practices of waiting that arise in religious discourse and in contemporary urban ritual procession, for example, lend moral weight to mundane routines of waiting in traffic gridlock, and a deity's alleged frustration when ritual disruption occurs vindicates ritual participants' frustrations in light of the rapidly changing landscape of everyday life. The adjustments that deities and humans alike require to navigate modernity also suggest the need for compassion in the face of challenging situations and hence valorize traditional aspects of Hindu *dharma*.

The 3rd chapter explores the alliance, variously perceived, between ritual displays of wealth and social conceptions of virtue. The aesthetically wondrous deployment of money and gems as forms of deity adornment in temple practice cements the apparent bond between wealth – whether real or aspirational – and divine blessing; simultaneously, however, ostentatious displays of temple wealth incite distrust and cynicism concerning the moral stature of temple priests. Chapter 4 explores the expanding use of new technologies in temple practice. Noting that "[t]edium … is an enemy of wonder" (148), the author describes in fascinating detail a number of modern inventions (including a helicopter, an animatronic goddess, and an automatic drum set) that have come to be incorporated into temple ritual in the last two decades particularly to appeal to younger devotees by positioning temples as fashionable and "cutting edge." The 5th chapter examines the disjuncture between the rationalization of time in neoliberal modernity, which requires punctuality and adherence to schedules, and ritual time, which "needs to remain open ended, porous, and mysterious" (191) to make room for

wonder. The conclusion returns to a concern with the capacity of ritual creativity to perform the "moral work of resistance, acceptance, rupture, and capture in a fraught time" (208). Srinivas notes again that creativity is part of ritual, and she observes that Malleshwaramites perform ritual "not only to engage modernity but to disrupt it in productive ways and create new ways of worlding" (212). The conclusion attempts to bring together the various threads of inquiry that Srinivas has woven throughout the book, and the final pages offer a brief but moving afterword concerning Dandu Shastri's death in a traffic accident.

The author notes in the introduction that she wrote the book as "fragments within this folio, a series of notes collected over sixteen years ... brought together by a commitment to 'thickness'" meant to invite the "unfurling of wonder" rather than presume "endings and completeness" (31). This is perhaps the book's greatest strength and its greatest weakness. The chapters are replete with marvelously rendered, often enchanting descriptions of ritual and modern life, but it is sometimes difficult to see the forest through the trees, delightful as the trees may be. The focus on wonder seemed to this reader to be somewhat forced in the last two chapters and especially the final chapter on time, which I found to be incongruous with the rest of the work. The book might have benefited also from deeper engagement with theories of ritual, especially in religious studies, beyond the classic but somewhat dated handful mentioned in the book. Nevertheless, "The Cow in the Elevator" is a deeply insightful work that offers us a glimpse of the creativity and wonder that sustain Hindu ritual life in the concrete jungles of modern, neoliberal India.

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Sugahara, Yumi, and **Willem van der Molen** (eds.): Transformation of Religions as Reflected in Javanese Texts. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2018. 179 pp. ISBN 978-4-86337-258-0. (Javanese Studies, 5) Price:

This book is the fruition of a major three-year research project titled "Transformations of Religions as Reflected in the Javanese Texts." It is a collection of some of the papers presented at an international symposium held in Tokyo in 2015. The aim of the project was to examine how external religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam were interpreted and transformed in Java from the 9th to the 19th century through methodological and comparative examinations of prominent pre-Islamic and premodern texts. Some of the very early epic texts are called *kakawin* texts. These texts were a literary form structured along specific rules, which gave the text its shape. Stuart Robson's chapter provides a methodology of how to work with *kakawin* texts. The methodological approach he uses to study such texts he calls a "terminological approach." This approach is based on the assumption that terms appearing in the text would have had corresponding concepts that were important in the external world in which these texts were written. Through a literary analysis he tells us that we can reveal how the text functioned and the messages it tried to convey. One important theme that emerges in the *kakawin* text Robson analyzes is that the text was conceived of being filled with the divine. The texts were used as a channel of divine messages instructing rulers on how to maintain the world. He further points out that these texts have much mystical thought in them that can be found in later Javanese mysticism. One *kakawin* text is the "Ramayana," which is thought to have been composed between 856 and 930 C. E. Toru Aoyama presents a discussion on the importance of *mokṣa* (freeing from the cycle of rebirth) in the "Ramayana" reliefs in the light of corresponding scenes in the literary texts. He argues that depicting *mokṣa* in the reliefs was important and that the producers of religious culture had a deep understanding of the concepts of Indian religious culture, which was adopted in early Java. Nevertheless, the Indian culture did not supplant indigenous Javanese concepts, which were also employed during the 9th and 10th centuries, a point that Miho Yamasaki, whose article presents a study of imprecations from old Javanese inscriptions, concurs with. Koji Miyazaki's article focuses on the interrelationship between the *pawukon* (Javanese fortune-telling-calendar) and the story of Watu Gunung. *Wuku* is a thirty-seven-day week calendar. The *pawukon* is an explanation of what a person must do on each day of *wuku* and the combination of each cycle. The names of *wuku* appear in many of the early and even later Javanese manuscripts although today the *pawukon* is not known anymore. Miyazaki explores the meaning of *wuku* in the Watu Gunung story which recounts the origin of the 30-week calendar and points out that the narrative is colored with an Oedipus motif.

With Ben Arps contribution we are taken to the late 19th-century *wayang* play which had a central role in Javanese court life. Arps focuses on a specific scenario in the Bima Purified tale. In this tale, Bima goes on a perilous search for the purifying water following the instructions of his guru. During his quest large Bima meets a tiny person called Dewa Ruci in the Ocean and enters his body through his ear and receives enlightenment there. Arps sees the tale as providing an index of the dynamics of world-making that existed in the court environment. The narrative suggests a desire for mystical unity with God. Edwin Paul Wieringa focuses on the Serat Jjiljalaha, a late 19th-century text, whose author claims to be Satan. It is a book written in a way that purports to be imparting immoral conduct and devilish behavior. But this is a reversible technique, which critically ridicules Javanese nobleman's behavior in court. Although the text utilizes playful wit, it was not meant to be taken lightheartedly and be laughed at. The text's ulterior purpose is to teach a righteous and noble morality through mirroring the immoral behavior of the nobility of the period when it was written. George Quinn