

clusion of field photographs, maps, tables, and photomicrographs enhances the book to make it more valuable to historians of technology, metallurgists, Africanist historians, art historians, ethnohistorians, and Iron Age archaeologists worldwide. It is very clear that we have not heard the last word on preheating, but with this publication many notions about African creativity may be laid to rest. ■

African Material Culture. Mary Jo Arnoldi, Christraud M. Geary, and Kris L. Hardin, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. 369 pp.

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This is a collection of 14 essays by seven cultural anthropologists, four art historians, two historians, two archaeologists, and a linguist. An introduction by Hardin and Arnoldi makes useful points about the past study of material culture in Africa but ends by tediously recapping the key points of the essays that follow. The contributors include: Kris L. Hardin, on modes of production and their social categorization among the Kono of Sierra Leone; Michael Rowlands and Jean-Pierre Warnier, on iron technology and magic among peoples of the grassfields of Cameroon; Labelle Prussin, on the impact upon material culture and its symbols produced by changing from nomadism to sedentary life among the Gabro, Rendille, and Somali of northeastern Africa; Kanimba Misago, on continuity and change in ceramics from the Upemba depression of Zaire; Kazadi Ntole, on the relation of everyday objects to categories of gender and the impact of change among the Bambala of Zaire; Aneesa Kassam and Gemetcha Megerssa, on symbolic meanings of various men's and women's sticks and staffs of the Booran Oromo of northeastern Africa; Mary Jo Arnoldi, on objects employed by different ethnic members of Malian theatrical troupes; Michael Rowlands, on goods used by a wide economic range of bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, and laborers in urban Cameroon and how these relate to constructions of personhood, prestige, and respect; Chike Aniako, on ways the Igbo of Nigeria utilize household objects and space; Margaret Jean Hay, on increased consumption of hoes and clothing occurring among the Luo of Kenya as they converted to Christianity and were caught up in a cash economy; Philip L. Ravenhill, on how displays and labeling of artifacts in French West African museums produced misleading colonial and neocolonial stereotypes; Christraud M. Geary, on the use of royal objects, especially thrones, in expressing and defining Bamun political concepts and relations to Cameroonian colonial and postcolonial governments; Henry John Drewal, on the ways foreign objects and motifs are rede-

finied and incorporated into West African Mami Wata shrines and their relations to defining social self and alterity; and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, on the use of Zairian popular painting as means to express social criticism of colonial and independent politics and social tensions.

The best-written and -argued essays are those by Prussin, Rowlands, Hay, and Kassam and Megerssa; the most incoherent, by Jewsiewicki. Nearly all the essays contain some useful and provocative information. The collection would be a valuable tool for teaching graduate seminars about social change, construction of personhood, and material culture in Africa. There is much to debate and reanalyze on these still underanalyzed and poorly reported topics. Yet students would need careful guidance because many of these essays are unclear—even poorly—written and weakly organized, and they convey little sense of sophisticated social analysis and a feeble impression of how material culture relates to construction of personhood and facilitates or impedes social relations. Few of the authors convey clear ideas of how objects, especially those associated with quotidian life, actually inform ideas and feelings about social selves. What is needed is a better sense of what Durkheim considered the social psychological aspects of symbols and beliefs. Little relates this potentially interesting material to broader issues long raised by sociologists and historians working in other parts of the world. I recommend this volume for its data, scattered ideas, and the analyses in some of the essays. Better copyediting, a more concise and theoretically oriented introduction, a clearer sense of social theory and analysis, and better outside reading more directed to scholars not parochially interested in only Africa would have made this an even better volume. ■

"A Trade like Any Other": Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt. Karin van Nieuwkerk. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. 226 pp.

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Here is the problem: to successfully dismantle one of the most resilient tropes of the "Orient's mystique"—the transgressive figure of the female belly dancer and singer—without thereby further exoticizing. Karin van Nieuwkerk accomplishes just that in her historical and ethnographic account of the female performers of Cairo who were dubiously immortalized by 18th- and 19th-century travel writers and who continue to draw both local and foreign audiences. Exploring her topic through the double lens of gender ideology and the condition of marginality associated with "dishonorable professions," van Nieuwkerk enli-

vens the cultural politics of Egyptian history as she traces the changing fortune of these entertainers from the period of increasing foreign presence in the 18th century to the present. She shows how these entertainers were frequently subject to scrutiny under changing social and political conditions, while their performances were evermore defined by Western notions of the "East."

Moving into the ethnographic heart of the book, van Nieuwkerk recounts several female entertainers' life stories, supplemented by her own observations, drawn from 15 months of field research in Egypt. These vindictory narratives tell of hard work and sacrifice for families in the face of negative stereotypes and unwarranted misconceptions. Accordingly, in the second half of the book van Nieuwkerk critically explores the academic canons associated with marginality, honor and shame, and gender ideologies, in light of her own ethnographic material. Investigating the status of female performers from the perspective of Cairenes, van Nieuwkerk reveals the complex interactions between religious perspectives and class-associated beliefs. These performers characterize themselves as *banat al-balad* (home girls), a publicly recognized and respected identity involving a "tough" demeanor and masculinized practices associated with lower-middle- and lower-class women who must work with men. Van Nieuwkerk suggests that such masculinizing practices serve to neutralize these female performers' gender in their public interactions, thereby compensating for the feminized erosions to honor that are inherent to the profession. While van Nieuwkerk's rich material might have additionally benefited here from recent theorizing about narratives, performance, and embodiment, the chosen framing permits her to drive home her thesis that most women performers are, as they claim, simply trying to make a living, and while this work may be shameful, it is not necessarily dishonorable, according to many Cairenes. Throughout these discussions she deftly packs in an impressive amount of information regarding the hierarchies, argot, microeconomics, and changing work strategies involved in Cairo's entertainment business.

While other works seeking to deconstruct stereotypes about Middle Eastern and North African peoples have focused on mainstream men and women's public and private lives, van Nieuwkerk's work offers new understandings about how these public, transgressive women came to stand in as the desirable yet debased figure of Eastern subversion in the margins of Middle East Orientalist scholarship and how this image lives on in present-day Egyptian popular discourses. Van Nieuwkerk's restrained descriptions and positionality, complemented by her grounded approach and lucid writing, ultimately underscore her aim of dispelling

the myths and stereotypes that haunt these performers. This account, sensitive to historically changing circumstances, partly foreshadows the changes that have occurred in this profession due to the economy, increasing moral conservatism, and audience tastes in the intervening years since van Nieuwkerk conducted her research. As such, these developments do not belie the value of this well-crafted work that contributes enormously to our historical and ethnographic understanding of performance, gender studies, and labor in the Middle East. ■

Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt: The Battle for Islamic Tradition. Julian Johansen. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1996. 323 pp.

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When social scientists set out to explore aspects of an esoteric tradition, they almost inevitably confront a classical dilemma that pressures them to choose at various junctures between the medium and the message. Since mystical lore and mystics themselves defy characterization in standard rational—not to say functional—categories, an observer's access to Sufism, for instance, requires extraordinary methodological agility in order to avoid surrendering precious ground to obscurantism on the one side or to historicism on the other. Thus many end up justifying partialism, adopting either an insider or outsider vantage point.

For all their value as sources of information, the one-or-the-other approaches that usually follow tend to beg or to displace rather than to address the fundamental question, which seeks to grasp the dynamic integration fusing this double dimension into a lived reality. Julian Johansen's book broaches this too-often partitioned genre as a rare exception, by taking up the extraordinary if not altogether original strategy of choosing as his focus precisely that ambivalent space where the private or intimate elements of Sufism meet and interact with its public and outward face.

The richness of this study does not consist in broad horizons but in profound perceptions. Its author, who acknowledges his intellectual debt to Michael Gilson in many ways, trains his well-tooled sights upon the multiple levels of implication that rest on or lurk beneath the surface of the language and gesture of self-presentation displayed by one relatively small but remarkably articulate and plainly very successful Sufi group.

The Muhammadiyya Shadhiliyya differs from most mainstream Sufi orders in Egypt in several important particulars, virtually all of them stemming, in one way