

sich das Buch hervorragend als Lektüre für Studierende, um sich mit diversen indienbezogenen Berufsfeldern – angefangen bei der Museumsarbeit bis hin zum diplomatischen Dienst – vertraut zu machen.

Eine Institutionengeschichte, zumal in Form eines Sammelbandes, steht immer vor der Herausforderung, einen großen zeitlichen Bogen zu spannen und gleichzeitig nicht zur „Inventur“ von Wissenschaftlern und Forschungsprojekten zu geraten. Lange Aneinanderreihung von Personennamen und Arbeitstiteln, die gewiss den Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit genüge tragen wollen, schmälern hier nur in wenigen Ausnahmen das Lesevergnügen. Und obwohl die Idee für den vorliegenden Band aus der Not geboren ist, die sich aus der angekündigten Streichung des Bereichs Südasien aus dem Asien-Afrika-Institut im Jahr 2007 ergab, beweist er vor allem eines: Indienbezogene Forschung ist vielseitig, wandlungsfähig, und unheimlich zäh.

Johanna Hahn

JÜRGEN WASIM FREMBGEN / PAUL ROLLIER, *Wrestlers, Pigeon Fanciers, and Kite Fliers. Traditional Sports and Pastimes in Lahore*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014. Xviii, 172 pages, PKR1350.00. ISBN 978-0-19-906918-7

This charming little book is dedicated to popular pastimes, or rather sports, that were once widespread all over northwest India in general and the old city of Lahore in particular. It is a description written with affection, of wrestlers, pigeon fanciers, and kite flyers. But it is as much a book on the pastimes themselves as on their practitioners. Both the authors are anthropologists: Jürgen Wasim Frembgen is Senior Curator of the Islamic Collection of the Munich State Museum for Ethnology and also a professor at the University of Munich, and co-author Paul Rollier is a post-doctoral research associate in Social Anthropology at University College, London.

It is a very timely book given that electronic devices from television to mobile phones are increasingly absorbing the attention of the younger generation in South Asia as elsewhere. Wrestling, pigeon fancying and kite flying are competitive sports, not necessarily requiring much equipment, space or patronage, though they have their sponsors, especially the wrestling schools and pigeons can be very expensive indeed. But all these pastimes need experience, expertise and advice. There is also a cultural, and even a religious dimension to the issue – as the authors write in their introduction: “In both public and academic debates, Muslims are generally described as essentially a religious community. However, there are also many cultural fields in Muslim societies that are not directly informed by religious belief or ritual. There is, for instance, the dimension of traditional sports and pastime games and play, entertainment and amusement.

These cultural practices are creative, and the body is experienced in spontaneity. Most importantly, they are an expression of happiness and joy (p. xiii).”

The latter aspect is so important it should not get lost in the vast literature on Pakistan’s many economic, social and political problems. The authors cast light on the intricacies of “Celebrating the male body: Traditional wrestling” (Frembgen), “The everyday pleasures of flying pigeons” (Rollier), and “Duels in the air: The art of kite fighting” (Frembgen). All these pastimes have their own language and vocabulary, now gradually being lost in the process of changing attitudes. The slim book, thus, may end up as an authoritative source on local traditions. The contributions are well documented by endnotes and bibliographies. There is also a glossary of the most common expressions and an index.

The volume is dedicated to Dr. Adam Nayyar (1949–2008), for many years Research Director, at Lok Virsa – National Institute of Folk Heritage, Islamabad. After training as a chemical engineer, he took up the new subject of anthropology when it was first introduced in Pakistan at the Qaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad. From the 1980s onwards he advised generations of scholars from around the world and familiarized them with Pakistani culture.

He was troubled by an increasing tendency to regulate everyday life in the name of religion. As Frembgen writes: “Within the contemporary stream of conservative, and often rigid, scriptural Islam, the passion, pleasure, enjoyment, and happiness of a wordily pastime [...] is seen – at best – with suspicion and disregard. But, more than that, orthodox religious scholars and activists of Islamist reformist groups – bemoan the wasteful spending of money [...] (p. 147).”

“The art of kite fighting”, the subtitle of the last section, should be taken literally: Producing beautiful kites and flying them is very artful, indeed. But beyond the art and the beauty, it is also a serious competition, a fight. Chasing other kites is a sport and winning requires downing the other kites. To quote Nayyar and his co-author: “The most amateurish form of trying to win is the *tunka*, i.e. sawing the string back and forth in short, sharp tugs (p. 134).” For this purpose, the twine is coated with fine broken glass, one of the secrets of the trade described in loving detail. Unfortunately, there have been incidents where kites became band saws that injured and even killed people. Accordingly, kite flying has been banned by the police in Pakistan, drones are being employed to find the culprits, and recently there have been arrests (*Dawn*, 26 February 2016). This has led to protests over camera-equipped drones which are “violating the sanctity and privacy of private residences” (*Pakistan Observer*, 20 February 2016).

Thus, kite-flying, as an old, almost obsolete tradition, could become a rallying point for citizens’ protest against religious orthodoxy and bureaucratic regulation. The book is a useful source which can contribute towards understanding the culture behind this development.

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