

metaphorical translations of Indigenous terms and conceptualization of myth, spirits, spears, and animal tracking to build empathy for feelings. It's hard to imagine any anthropologist being unsympathetic to this ambition. Whether a less accomplished multi-modal crafting would be as effective is hard to say, but it is to be hoped that others will be inspired to emulate this example. As one of the contributions proclaims, this is a book that hums, where humming is established as the unity between diverse rhythms. Channelling all this through the medium of people's appropriation of smartphones – a device which radically increases our capacities but simultaneously generates anxiety about what might be lost, or the new pressures of life – works brilliantly to jolt us into an appreciation of the contemporaneity of indigeneity.

The nature of that appropriation is equally expressed in the book's own use of digital technologies to humanize and give character to individuals, their colours, their quirks, and their creativity in deploying the phone, whether through ringtones or dance videos. From the perspective of my own research, I much appreciated the refusal to accept glib claims about the smartphone as a replacement of real or intimate relations. Instead, there is a focus upon the materiality of SIM cards, the perspectives granted by apps such as Google Earth, or the response to the apparent instantaneity of communication with both people and landscapes. I don't believe a work of this kind should simply replace the richness, detail, and analytical gain from the holistic contextualization of more traditional ethnographic monographs. But it is the ideal complement, because this book conveys so much, so effectively, and in such a spirit of conviviality that might be missing in the drier tone of the conventional monograph and its single author. And then there is the beauty of the thing.

DANIEL MILLER *University College London*

RAFAEL, VICENTE L. *Motherless tongues: the insurgency of language amid wars of translation*. xii, 255 pp., illus., bibliogr. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2016. £22.99 (paper)

In this extraordinary collection of essays, anthropologist and historian Vicente L. Rafael offers the reader a fast-paced tour of the complex relationship between language, history, colonization, and war. Structured in three parts – entitled 'Vernacularizing the political',

'Weaponizing Babel', and 'Translating lives' – the book is essentially a collection of independent essays that can be read separately but which are also held together by the narrative thread of translation, a topic that still receives regrettably little scholarly attention.

The third section of *Motherless tongues* charts the scholarly biographies and intellectual maturation of four scholars who have shaped Rafael's own thinking: Benedict Anderson, Arjun Appadurai, Renato Rosaldo, and Reynaldo Ileto. While these academic biographies are interesting, they are not an altogether comfortable fit within this otherwise well-integrated monograph. The final chapter is a transcription of a fascinating interview between Rafael and the editor of the transdisciplinary journal *Translation*, in which the author outlines his unique insights into language, literature, and translation.

Recurring themes in the monograph's first two sections are the instrumentalization of language, the regularization of speech, the imposition of linguistic hierarchies, and the deployment of translation as an instrument of war. As Rafael dextrously demonstrates through ethnographically rich examples from the Philippines, the United States, and beyond, certain ideologies and practices 'reduce translation and languages into mere instruments of conversion, colonial conquest, and social control' (p. 18). In a razor-sharp and devastating analysis of the impact of colonial education in the Philippines, Rafael documents the alienating effects of English, which – rather than unifying native societies by providing a common language (as promised by the colonial authorities) – actually 'intensified social divisions while promoting historical amnesia' (p. 49). Departing from the colonial context, Rafael takes on the political and symbolic exertions of cell phone users, who, 'bypassing broadcast media ... themselves become broadcasters' (p. 73), creating a context in which 'the hand takes the place of the mouth, the fingers that of the tongue' (p. 76).

Rafael is at his lyrical best when analysing the politics and ethics of linguistic and semiotic exchanges. Just as chapter 2 can – and, I would argue, should – be widely read as a stand-alone indictment of the racist ideologies that undergird colonial schooling, in chapter 4, the author unpicks with forensic precision the US National Security Language Initiative in order to delineate the 'historical specificity of a nationalist idea of translation in the making of an American Empire' (p. 100). From the perspective of the 'militant monolingualism' (p. 110) of the Anglophone settler-colonial mindset, translation is not a

celebration of multicultural diversity, but rather a monodirectional process of assimilation, a 'transformation of the foreign into an aspect of the domestic, and thus of the plurality of native tongues into the imperious singularity of a national tongue' (p. 110). Assimilation, in other words, is the end of translation, the 'cure for the curse of linguistic difference' (p. 112).

Chapter 5, on counterinsurgency and the weaponization of language, is sobering reading. Rafael draws an ideological line from the colonial conversion of native peoples through the translation of Christian liturgy into Indigenous languages to how the US military has transformed language into a weapon of control, suppression, and power. Through human translation and interpretation, as well as through increasingly technical automation and abstraction, grasping the language of another is crucial to victory, whether in the service of God or in the theatre of war. Knowledge of a specific language, then, confers a strategic and tactical advantage: Arabic becomes a 'kind of special equipment' (p. 124), language emerges as a form of software, and local interpreters are at once indispensable and untrustworthy. Rafael's careful examination of the shameless US *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* is a masterclass in the power of ethnographic and sociolinguistic analysis, and would make an excellent resource for a linguistic anthropology class.

Despite all this, language remains remarkably resistant to co-option, resilient in the face of ideological harnessing to governmental agendas. Rafael goes to considerable lengths to illustrate how the dexterity of language and the agility of translation are enormous assets, impervious to taming and domestication. He thinks like a poet and writes like a politician, fusing the best of oratorical forms to a rhetorical parsimony that ensures that his work is always an absolute pleasure to read. As long as you have literature, he writes, 'you have need for translation'; but this works both ways: 'to the extent that you have translation, literature becomes possible, and to the extent you have literature, translation becomes essential' (p. 195).

MARK TURIN *University of British Columbia*

## Home and movement

KÖHLER, FLORIAN. *Space, place and identity: Wodaabe of Niger in the 21st century*. 246 pp., illus., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2020. £99.00 (cloth)

*Space, place and identity* by Florian Köhler is both a study of the Wodaabe in Niger and a work about fundamental questions of mobility and place-making. While mobility has become a central topic of social science research in recent years, the mobile way of life of nomadic peoples like the Wodaabe has been, with a few notable exceptions, largely ignored by contemporary mobility scholars. Köhler's book can be read as a plea to (re)introduce the analysis of nomadic movements and spaces to this field.

The book, which is more or less identical to the author's doctoral thesis, is based on the results of extensive fieldwork in Eastern Niger but also draws heavily on previous ethnographic work on Wodaabe (and other Fulbe groups). The author claims that while research on more recent and complex mobility patterns including urban migration is not altogether new in Wodaabe ethnography, there is no comprehensive analysis that seeks to understand the 'systematic logic of the interplay of different economic activities both in the rural and the urban sphere' (p. 6). The book aims to fill this gap and to show that the analysis of the multiple 'translocal relations' between both spheres is crucial in order to understand the dynamics that characterize Wodaabe society today.

One of these dynamics that can indeed be described as new and that has not been extensively investigated so far is the group's progressive pastoral sedentarization: that is, the (partial) fixation of pastoral households and kinship groups, and related endeavours directed towards achieving territorial rights. Köhler is thus confronted with both (relatively) new forms of urban mobility and hitherto unknown forms of rural sedentism – and with the question of how both phenomena are related to each other.

These complex developments suggest two major research issues: the relationship between mobility and place-making; and the processes of group formation and collective identification. Köhler deals with these broad issues by adopting a clear and elementary structure, which can be rendered in Fulani terms: the first part of the book deals with Wodaabe history (*tariihi*), their historical migrations since the nineteenth century and the 'colonial pacification' of the region; then follows a brief section on society (*duuniyaaru*), that is, on Wodaabe inter-ethnic relations and their being part of the Fulbe or, in Köhler's words, a 'meta-ethnic social space' (pp. 63ff.); the third part is dedicated to transformations in the pastoral realm, i.e. in the bush (*ladde*), and the fourth to its complement, the city (*si'ire*) and its appropriation; the book ends with a concluding