



Konstanze N'Guessan, made with Openart.ai, 20.3.2025.

Welcome to the Book Reviews section of the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* | *Journal for Social and Cultural Anthropology*. What you ought to be expecting here are thoughtful engagements with new publications within the field of social and cultural anthropology (and neighbouring disciplines). We all enjoy reading those, don't we? Yet, it is increasingly difficult to get colleagues to engage in this kind of intellectual exercise, and we all understand and share the constraints that often prevent us from contributing reviews. We at the *ZfE* | *JSCA* are in fact not alone with that problem; see the call to rethink book reviews recently published by Elizabeth Chin (2024) of *American Anthropologist*. For early career scholars, book reviews no longer seem to be counted as meaningful publications in competitive tenure-track career trajectories. Retired colleagues eventually found more interesting things to do after retirement than reviewing books they liked (or worse, they didn't like). With e-books and open access increasing, publishers now rarely sent out actual printed copies (which used to be part of the reward system for potential reviewers). Moreover, in the age of ChatGPT and similar generative AI chatbots, book reviews seem to have become a genre that is rather easily replaced by LLM-based so-called artificial intelligence. So we have decided to use the momentum of that empty space of "not a book review" to invite your participation in the potentially exciting transformation of book reviews as a re-imagined scholarly space.

We are seeking reviewers who wish to participate in meaningful conversations about recent anthropological works through both traditional and innovative formats. Our goal is to create a more dynamic, accessible and intellectually stimulating review section that reflects the diversity of anthropological thinking and practice.

What we offer

- Flexible formats: from concise 500-word reviews to more substantial 2,000-word essay reviews
- Experimental approaches: dialogical reviews between scholars, multimedia presentations, visual reviews, or audio components
- Thematic clusters: opportunities to review related books in conversation with each other
- Peer review: literature review essays will go through the *ZfE* | *JSCA* peer review process

How to participate

- Suggest a book: recommend recent publications you believe deserve critical attention
- Propose a format: have an innovative idea for presenting a review? We welcome creative approaches
- Join our reviewer community: early-career scholars can participate in our mentorship program

- Contribute to themed sections: express an interest in our upcoming focus areas
- Whither book reviews: write a polemic against the genre of the review and in favour of what we should do instead

We encourage submissions from scholars at all career stages, including graduate students, early-career researchers and those from traditionally under-represented backgrounds in academic publishing. Reviews typically range from 500 to 2000 words, though we are flexible with length in the case of innovative formats. Books for review should generally have been published within the last three years.

To express an interest, suggest a book or submit a review, please contact the Book Reviews editor at nguessan@uni-mainz.de and anna-lena.wolf@ethnologie.uni-halle.de with a brief description of your interest. We look forward to your contributions to this vital space for scholarly engagement.

For the entire *ZfE* | *JSCA* editorial board
Konstanze N'Guessan and Anna-Lena Wolf

References

Chin, Elizabeth 2024: Whither book reviews? *American Anthropologist* 126(2):181.