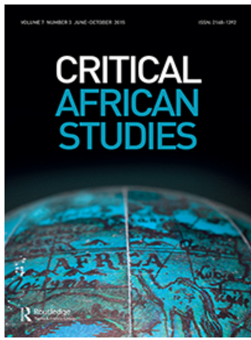

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Critical African Studies

ISSN: 2168-1392 (Print) 2040-7211 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcaf20

The work of fate and fortune in Africa

Paolo Gaibazzi & Marco Gardini

To cite this article: Paolo Gaibazzi & Marco Gardini (2015) The work of fate and fortune in Africa, Critical African Studies, 7:3, 203-209, DOI: 10.1080/21681392.2015.1075413

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2015.1075413

Published online: 06 Oct 2015.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 14

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rcaf20

Download by: [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] **Date:** 15 October 2015, At: 02:04

Critical African Studies, 2015
Vol. 7, No. 3, 203–209, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2015.1075413

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

EDITORIAL

The work of fate and fortune in Africa
Le travail du destin et de la fortune en Afrique

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015

This special issue explores notions of fate and fortune as they inflect and are inflected by work as a practice and as a way of being in contemporary Africa. In so doing, it aims to shed new light on the cultural and moral terms in which economic realities are apprehended, organized and transformed across the continent at a time in which modes of value creation and accumulation are rapidly changing. Five case studies from Western and Southern Africa feature in this collection, covering a range of situations and activities in which fate and fortune are variously invoked in the making of livelihoods, the appropriation and distribution of valuables and/or the endorsement of specific economic predicaments. Rather than to philosophical or cosmological systems, attention is given to the work, in a broad sense, that notions of luck and fortune sanction, require or neglect in order to achieve certain economic objectives. Briefly outlined, the articles in this collection inquire into: the intergenerational changes in the ethic of work and magic regulating the distribution of fortune in Ewe agricultural communities in Togo (Gardini); the role of destiny in the making of open-ended livelihood trajectories among Soninke men in the Gambia and beyond (Gaibazzi); the 'chain' of social, physical and spiritual activities generated by the highly contingent search for diamond luck in Sierra Leone (D'Angelo); the efforts and outlays implied by holding an 'active faith' in order to restore good fortune and elicit divine providence in a Pentecostal movement in South Africa (van Wyk); and luck and indeterminacy as foundations of the entrepreneurial strategy and ethos of two young multi-media businessmen in Namibia (Fumanti). From agriculture to migration, from diamond mining to petty trade and popular TV shows, this issue investigates in other words the articulation between local notions of fate and fortune and a wide range of activities in contemporary African economic life.

Exploration of the convergence and disjuncture between economic, spiritual and existential domains of social life has a respectable tradition in African Studies. Magico-religious mediation has been found to be an important aspect of economic transactions and decision-making (e.g. Soares 2005), and in some historical settings, it has been a central driver in the emergence of new economic modes of production and distribution (Cruise O'Brien 1971, 1975). Evans-Pritchard's (1937) pioneering study of causality, divination and witchcraft among the Azande (North-Central Africa) has set, in this respect, a blueprint for scholarly inquiries concerned with the imbrications of cosmological forces in social life (Douglas 1970; Geschiere 1997). If his legacy has meant that *mis*fortune rather than fortune has thus claimed the lion's share of research, the use of witchcraft, magic and other supernatural means in fortune-making has been equally well documented, particularly in situations marked by rapid economic change, immoral modes of accumulation and deepening inequalities (Ardener 1970; Ndjio 2012). Albeit less studied than witchcraft, concepts of fate and fortune have remained a classic topic in the study of African religions, cosmologies and systems of thought (Fortes [1959] 1983; Jackson 1988), in some cases becoming a recurrent trope in specific local economies[1]

© 2015 Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh

(e.g. Hill 1972, 185–188; Masquelier 2001, 200ff). In recent years, the scholarly interest in the economic significance of fate and fortune in Africa has become more robust and analytically diversified (Whyte 1997; D'Angelo 2011; Krige 2011; van Wyk 2012; Cooper and Pratten 2015), if arguably still lagging behind other area studies in terms of scholarship devoted to destiny, luck, chance, uncertainty and related categories of contingency[2] (among others: Malaby 2003; de Rios 2011; da Col 2012b; da Col and Humphrey 2012; Swancutt 2012; Guenzi 2013).

This special issue aims to contribute to this (re-)emerging strand in Africanist research. It employs fate and fortune as heuristic devices to arrive at the cultural terms through which social actors grapple with the contingent quality of economic life and experience, tame the non-human forces that govern the distribution of wealth in the world, elaborate moral commentaries on economic accumulation and direct the vital energies needed to pursue a gainful activity. By fate, we generally refer to a scheme of things designed at a higher, non-human cosmic level (by gods, ancestors, etc.) thought to partly or wholly determine the course of human existence and worldly events. Fortune refers to the agencies controlling wealth and health; it may qualify or overlap with fate, but it also includes other natural or supernatural forces, such as luck, chance, blessing, and other powers that do not necessarily presuppose a comprehensive cosmology of predestination or predetermination. In other words, fate and fortune are causative powers that carry varying aetiological weight across cultures in accounting for particular economic outcomes. In addition to pinpointing to cultural aetiologies, fate and fortune are interesting to us because they usually serve to define and sanction human agency (e.g. work) and hence the norms, dispositions and practices required of people to adjust to a given economic environment (cf. Fortes [1959] 1983). Finally, far from solely being cosmological principles removed from everyday consciousness, fate and fortune are often conceptualized as embodied or external forces, flows, capabilities or substances that sustain human vitality and relatedness (Gudeman 2012; da Col 2012b; cf. Fontein and Harries 2013). As such, they are a source of nagging concern, tribulation and, as we purport to show, work.

The cue for spotlighting fate and fortune as analytical conduits to economic life comes primarily from the growing significance of contingency and ideologies of fortune in African economies and in the world at large. Indeed, among the factors that account for the burgeoning social-scientific interest in these themes across the world, the globalization of neoliberal capitalism and its logic certainly feature prominently. Strange (1997) has famously coined the expression 'casino capitalism' to capture the unprecedented degree to which processes of capitalist accumulation hinge on a positive evaluation of contingency, as is manifest in the volumes of capital circulating in futures markets and speculative finance. In this form of capitalism, risk and chance become assets in the generation of profit, often breeding hopes and hazardous investments, as well as panics and sudden busts (Tsing 2000; Miyazaki 2006). People excluded from the mechanisms of accumulation are nevertheless exposed to this elusive logic. On the one hand, large sections of the world population experience their livelihoods becoming more fraught with uncertainty. On the other, they may also engage in dreams, hopes and speculation, most notably via consumerism, financial schemes and scams, and fast-growing popular industries such as lotteries and gambling (Piot 2010; Krige 2012; Cassidy, Pisac, and Loussouarn 2013).

Africa is certainly no exception to such far-reaching developments of global capitalism. Several contributors to this special issue refer to the work of Comaroff and Comaroff (1999, 2001, 2011), who are amongst the first and most influential writers on the emerging cultures of neoliberalism in Africa and the Global South. Through the concept of 'occult economies', the Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) capture the ways in which South Africans mobilize cultural repertoires of magic and witchcraft to decipher and control the abstract, mysterious means of accumulation and impoverishment in the current world economy. Further elaborating on their argument,

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015

the Comaroffs underline that such phenomena are not merely responses but veritable cultural articulations of what they refer to as the millennial or messianic spirit of contemporary capitalism. Millennial capitalism refers to the interplay between the palpable, salvific possibility of enrichment and actual deprivation pervading (South) African consciousness in neoliberal times, and potentially extends to fortune-related practices as well (cf. Comaroff 2009). At a loss in this new configuration of the economy is labour itself (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011, 157–160). Once figuring as the hallmark of capitalist exploitation in the southern African industry, labour has today become not only a scarce resource, but also, ironically, the symbol of a demise of a predicament in which hard work, skill and long-term management constituted a dominant ideology of personal and collective progress. Thus, as the new generations of South Africans hang indefinitely in unemployment or are forced to make do in the informal economy, participation in occult economies seemingly offers immediate solutions to their impellent financial needs and their dreams of a prosperous life fuelled by global consumerism, even the creation of wealth without effort and capital.

Echoes of the Comaroffs' insightful analysis resound in several articles in this volume. At the same time, the articles nuance their interpretations and, above all, offer alternative analytical possibilities and conceptualizations. At least three general premises are shared by all contributors and characterize the original approach of this special issue as a whole. First, while being attentive to the shifts heralded by the neoliberal moment in Africa, we refrain from characterizing it as novel or exceptional. Certainly, some phenomena can be characterized as momentous, as in the case analysed by van Wyk of a South African branch of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), a Pentecostal denomination which promises miracle jobs and immediate prosperity. As van Wyk points out, however, millennialism has been a long-standing feature of Christianity in South Africa. More importantly, while several scholars, including the Comaroff and Comaroff (2000), see in the UCKG the quintessential embodiment of a new spirit of speculative capitalism, too narrow a focus on novelty and consumerist desires distracts attention from the cultural continuities in the believers' quest for ontological integrity through the restoration of flows of good fortune. This is not to deny the presence of important discontinuities, but to invite to attend to their historicity and sociocultural specificity. Writing about changing attitudes to agricultural work in Ewe communities in Togo, Gardini's article registers, indeed, a gradual decay of an agrarian ethic of hard, steady work and a resurgence of idioms of fortune magic in the pursuit of subsistence and economic breakthroughs. However, this shift is hardly reducible to a single-handed transformation of the capitalist mode of production in rural Togo. As Gardini shows, colonial and post-colonial trajectories, the changes in the local organization of plantation work and specific political experiences have equally shaped what has been a contested moral arena for framing work, fortune and spiritual mediation.

The second and consequent point is that exploring the ways in which reckoning with fate and fortune are accommodated and normalized in African contexts may provide useful entry points for a better understanding of how social actors manage the uncertainty and promises of the current economy. The notion of 'occult economies' envisages a broad range of phenomena and acknowledges the long-standing presence of beliefs and practices on which novel articulations of the economy are founded. On the other hand, the very label 'occult' risks reiterating an analytical bias towards misfortune, exceptionality and immorality, and may thus conceal the wider spectrum of ideas, dispositions and practices crystallized in everyday, morally acceptable economic activities[3] (see Hull and James 2012, 9). As generally pervasive, auspicious (or at least neutral) and vital forces that govern everyday life, fate and fortune enable us to shed light on these mundane activities. For instance, by exploring notions of luck, divine guidance and blessing shared by diamond miners in Sierra Leone, D'Angelo is able to retrieve what he calls a 'vocabulary of contingency', terms and notions through which social actors wrest meaning from uncertain

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015

economies and seek to address the supernatural forces that determine lucky findings of diamonds. In invoking fate and fortune, people do not simply seek the causes of the erratic nature of subsistence and accumulation, but also promote norms, ethical orientations and, ultimately, practical habits. Gaibazzi shows that references to fate and 'luck' among Gambian Soninke men serve to uphold a positive attitude towards indeterminacy, which in turns contributes to creating highly peripatetic and economically diversified livelihood trajectories. Engaging indeterminacy further becomes an entrepreneurial tactic and a lifestyle for the Namibian businessmen in Fumanti's article. The two entrepreneurs assume fortune, risk, hope and self-defiant playfulness as the foundations of their subjective-cum-economic transformation. While the influences of neoliberal models of entrepreneurship and iconic figures of the global IT economy are evident in this process of self-making, Fumanti shows that engaging fortune is not only a matter of continual reinvention and embracement of a millennial capitalist ethos; it is also a question of wider sociocultural habituation, which in this case harks back to two businessmen's upbringing and to apparently trivial activities such as playing videogames.

This brings us to our third point. This special issue still privileges 'work' as a key analytical tool for investigating this routinization of fate and fortune in African livelihoods. We say 'still' because, despite an alleged demise of labour signalled by a proliferation of vocabularies of contingency, work and human agency continue to play a crucial ethical role in local representations of fate, fortune and wealth accumulation. For instance, the men in Gaibazzi's case study view hard work as being central to their 'quest for luck' in the sense that toiling in the West or trading internationally helps them in remaining connected and attentive to the potentialities that destiny disseminates in their lives. D'Angelo further warns against making a priori assumptions about the absence or decay of normative work ethics and diagnoses of societal problems. By labelling diamond miners as gamblers, in fact, some international observers ideologically conceal both the power inequalities in the diamond sector by blaming the miners for their own exploitation, and the sociality and ethical values that mining diamonds actually construe. On similar analytical grounds, van Wyk also insists on the need for an inductive rather than deductive inquiry into the articulation between capital and work as entailed by social actors' involvement with fate and fortune. Pentecostal churches' promise of miracle jobs disregards an ethic premised on education and honest work as historically promoted by mainstream Christian denominations in South Africa. Yet, focusing on the crisis of such Weberian versions of the Protestant ethic says little about the alternative – and, we suggest, equally Weberian in epistemological terms – affinities between ideas of fate, fortune and work. For UCKG members, maintaining an 'active faith' entails striving and sacrificing to pursue specific goals, efforts which may paradoxically entrench believers even further in the labour market.

The expression 'the work of fate and fortune' precisely aims to capture the range of activities implicated in the pursuit of a gainful activity and that may not necessarily be subsumed under a classic dialectic between labour and capital. As several studies highlight, African notions of work not only often include a wide array of activities, but are also central to sociality and existence at large, as evidenced by the significance of work in pedagogical or anthropo-poietic practices (Almeida-Topor, Lakroum, and Spittler 2003; Spittler and Bourdillon 2012). In this respect, we welcome Fumanti's invitation, who in turn draws on Jane Guyer's notion of 'valuable work', to empirically identify those actions and ethical stances that are deemed virtuous and productive in seeking the favour of fortune and destiny. By describing how people provoke, react to and manage auspicious events and the vital forces of fate and fortune, this special issue investigates the performances required by them, the economic and ethical values produced by harnessing them, and the kinds of working subjects and relations formed in the process. Thus, holding an 'active faith' in the UCKG means performing heavy spiritual work (van Wyk). Similarly, seeking blessing and divine guidance in diamond mines implies not only menial work, but

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015

also a kind of social work geared at creating social cohesion (D'Angelo). Being a successful IT entrepreneur in Namibia equally requires working at one's public image on the social media as well as cultivating a plethora of personal attitudes that distinguish one from ordinary office workers, and further blur the distinction between work and private life (Fumanti). Indeed, life forces and work are, as noted, rarely compartmentalized as separate agencies. In Soninke ontologies of the self, working also means working towards the fulfilment of personal destiny, for mobilizing the auspicious potentials of 'luck' is intrinsically linked to a capability to strive, toil and direct moral agency (Gaibazzi). Even where, as in modernist Ewe ideas of agricultural toil in Togo, work is apparently divorced from supernatural powers, this view results from the attempt to draw moral boundaries within a semantic field in which the efficacy of magical and cosmic forces of accumulation is willy-nilly acknowledged (Gardini).

Let us once more reiterate that our objective is to suggest analytical and heuristic possibilities rather than proposing yet another encompassing concept. Compared to the more sweeping notion of 'economies' – whether these are labelled as occult (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), prayer (Soares 2005), spiritual (Rudnyckyj 2010), fortunational (Festa 2007), and so on – a narrower focus on work serves here to discern the ways in which elusive notions like fate and fortune make and are made into specific skills, performances, moral frameworks, social relations and subjective qualities involved in the creation of value. As the articles compellingly show, probing the analytical purchase of fate and fortune in settings long dominated by uncertainty and auspiciousness provides insights into the shifting configurations of the economy, and especially into the forces that animate economic life in 21st-century Africa.

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015

Acknowledgements

The authors are responsible for the content of this publication. We are grateful to Birgit Meyer for her valuable comments on a previous version of this text.

Funding

The project on which this publication is based was supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Education and Research (funding code 01UG0713) and the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC Grant agreement no 313737.

Notes

1. In this respect, Weber's ([1930] 2005) foundational study on the affinities between Protestant theologies of predestination and the emergence of a capitalist work ethic continues to inspire research on the economic articulations of notions of fate and fortune, while at the same time novel questions, analytical perspectives and objects of study have emerged (e.g. Oxfeld 1993; Acciaioli 2004; Festa 2007; da Col 2012a).
2. The theme of destiny has also long ignited debates in theology and philosophy, particularly on the relation between freewill and predetermination, and more recently on the notion of contingency (Meillassoux 2010).
3. It is instructive that the Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) cite witch hunts and zombie stories as the main examples of occult economies in South Africa.

References

Acciaioli, Greg. 2004. "From Economic Actor to Moral Agent: Knowledge, Fate and Hierarchy among the Bugis of Sulawesi." *Indonesia* 78: 147–179.

Almeida-Topor, Hélène, de Monique Lakroum, and Gerd Spittler, eds. 2003. *Le Travail En Afrique Noire: Représentations Et Pratiques À L'époque Contemporaine*. Paris: Karthala.

Ardener, Edwin. 1970. "Witchcraft, Economics, and the Continuity of Belief." In *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, edited by Mary Douglas, 141–160. London: Routledge.

Cassidy, Rebecca, Andrea Pisac, and Claire Loussouarn. 2013. *Qualitative Research in Gambling: Exploring the Production and Consumption of Risk*. New York: Routledge.

Comaroff, Jean. 2009. "The Politics of Conviction: Faith on the Neo-liberal Frontier." *Social Analysis* 53 (1): 17–38.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 1999. "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony." *American Ethnologist* 26 (2): 279–303.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 2000. "Privatizing the Millennium New Protestant Ethics and the Spirits of Capitalism in Africa, and Elsewhere." *Africa Spectrum* 35(3): 293–312.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 2001. "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming." In *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, edited by Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, 1–56. Durham: Duke University Press.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 2011. *Theory From the South, or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Cooper, Elizabeth, and David Pratten, eds. 2015. *Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cruise O'Brien, Donal Brian. 1971. *The Mourides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Cruise O'Brien, Donal Brian. 1975. *Saints & Politicians: Essays in the Organisation of a Senegalese Peasant Society*. London: Cambridge University Press.

D'Angelo, Lorenzo. 2011. "Il Duro Lavoro ed i Soldi Veloci. L'Economia Occulta dell'Estrazione Mineraria in Sierra Leone." In *L'ideologia Del Denaro. Tra Psicoanalisi, Letteratura, Antropologia*, edited by A. Voltolin, 97–129. Milano: Mondadori.

da Col, Giovanni. 2012a. "The Elementary Economies of Dechenwa Life: Fortune, Vitality, and the Mountain in Sino-Tibetan Borderlands." *Social Analysis* 56 (1): 74–98.

da Col, Giovanni. 2012b. "Introduction: Natural Philosophies of Fortune, Luck, Vitality, and Uncontrolled Relatedness." *Social Analysis* 56 (1): 1–23.

da Col, Giovanni, and Caroline Humphrey. 2012. "Introduction: Subjects of Luck: Contingency, Morality, and the Anticipation of Everyday Life." *Social Analysis* 56 (2): 1–18.

Douglas, Mary, ed. 1970. *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*. London: Routledge.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1937. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Festa, Paul E. 2007. "Mahjong Agonistics and the Political Public in Taiwan: Fate, Mimesis, and the Martial Imaginary." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (1): 93–125.

Fontein, Joost, and John Harries. 2013. "The Vitality and Efficacy of Human Substances." *Critical African Studies* 5 (3): 115–126.

Fortes, Meyer. [1959] 1983. "Oedipus and Job in West African Religion." In *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*, edited by Meyer Fortes and Robin Horton, 1–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geschiere, Peter. 1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa = Sorcellerie Et Politique En Afrique: La Viande Des Autres*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Gudeman, Stephen. 2012. "Vital Energy: The Current of Relations." *Social Analysis* 56 (1): 57–73.

Guenzi, Caterina. 2013. *Le Discours du Destin: La Pratique de L'Astrologie à Bénarès*. Paris: CNRS éd.

Hill, Polly. 1972. *Rural Hausa: A Village and a Setting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hull, Elizabeth, and Deborah James. 2012. "Introduction: Popular Economies in South Africa." *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 82 (1): 1–19.

Jackson, Michael. 1988. "In the Thrown World: Destiny and Decision in the Thought of Traditional Africa." In *Choice and Morality in Anthropological Perspective: Essays in Honor of Derek Freeman*, edited by George N. Appell and T. N. Madan, 193–210. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Krige, Detlev. 2011. "'We Are Running for a Living': Work, Leisure and Speculative Accumulation in an Underground Numbers Lottery in Johannesburg." *African Studies* 70 (1): 3–24.

Krige, Detlev. 2012. "Fields of Dreams, Fields of Schemes: Ponzi Finance and Multi-level Marketing in South Africa." *Africa* 82 (01): 69–92.

Malaby, Thomas M. 2003. *Gambling Life: Dealing in Contingency in a Greek City*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015

Masquelier, Adeline. 2001. *Prayer Has Spoiled Everything: Possession, Power, and Identity in an Islamic Town of Niger*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Meillassoux, Quentin. 2010. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
Miyazaki, Hirokazu. 2006. "Economy of Dreams: Hope in Global Capitalism and Its Critiques." *Cultural Anthropology* 21 (2): 147–172.
Ndjio, Basile. 2012. *Magie et Enrichissement Illicite: La Feymania au Cameroun*. Paris: Karthala.
Oxfeld, E. 1993. *Blood, Sweat, and Mahjong: Family and Enterprise in an Overseas Chinese Community*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Piot, Charles. 2010. *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
de Rios, Marlene Dobkin. 2011. *Fate, Fortune, and Mysticism in the Peruvian Amazon: The Septrionic Order and the Naipes Cards*. Rochester: Park Street Press.
Rudnyckyj, Daromir. 2010. *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization, and the Afterlife of Development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Soares, Benjamin F. 2005. *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Spittler, Gerd, and Michael Bourdillon, eds. 2012. *African Children at Work: Working and Learning in Growing up for Life*. Munich: LIT.
Strange, Susan. 1997. *Casino Capitalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Swancutt, Katherine. 2012. *Fortune and the Cursed: The Sliding Scale of Time in Mongolian Divination*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2000. "Inside the Economy of Appearances." *Public Culture* 12 (1): 115–144.
Weber, Max. [1930] 2005. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge.
Whyte, Susan Reynolds. 1997. *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
van Wyk, Ilana. 2012. "'Tata Ma Chance': On Contingency and the Lottery in Post-apartheid South Africa." *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 82 (1): 41–68.

Paolo Gaibazzi
Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin, Germany

Marco Gardini
University of Milan-Bicocca, Piazza dell'Ateneo Nuovo 1, 20126 Milano, Italy

Downloaded by [ZMO Zentrum Moderner Oriente] at 02:04 15 October 2015