

Series Editor: James G. Carrier, Senior Research Associate, Oxford Brookes University.

Social anthropology in Europe is growing, its variety is expanding, and this series aims to present the best of it. It publishes monographs and edited collections by members of the EASA, describing societies, processes and institutions around the world. The volumes are intended for both scholarly and student readerships.

ENCOUNTERS OF BODY AND SOUL IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Anthropological Reflections

Edited by Anna Fedele and Ruy Llera Blanes

There is a welcome international feel about the venture – indeed the contributors could hardly represent a broader range of European nationalities. Furthermore, I am impressed with both the relevance and diversity of the chapters.

Peter Collins, Durham University

This is an interesting and timely volume, addressing an important contemporary challenge for the anthropology of religion . . . The chapters . . . are ethnographically solid, and are tied nicely into the overall critique of the separation of body and soul.

Jon Mitchell, University of Sussex

Social scientists and philosophers confronted with religious phenomena have always been challenged to find a proper way to describe the spiritual experiences of the social group they were studying. The influence of the Cartesian dualism of body and mind (or soul) led to a distinction between nonmaterial, spiritual experiences (i.e., related to the soul) and physical, mechanical experiences (i.e., related to the body). However, recent developments in medical science on the one hand and challenges to universalist conceptions of belief and spirituality on the other have resulted in 'body' and 'soul' losing the reassuring solid contours they had in the past. Yet, in 'Western culture', the body-soul duality is alive, not least in academic and media discourses. This volume pursues the ongoing debates and discusses the importance of the body and how it is perceived in contemporary religious faith: What happens when 'body' and 'soul' are nonseparated entities? Is it possible, even for anthropologists and ethnographers, to escape from 'natural dualism'? The contributors here present research in novel empirical contexts, the benefits and limits of the old dichotomy are discussed and new theoretical strategies proposed.

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