

Book Reviews

Henrik Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic (eds): *Occultism in a Global Perspective*. Durham: Acumen (now Routledge), 2013, 288pp.

Reviewing anthologies always implies a choice: should the book be addressed as a general argument or as individual contributions? Usually, one of three scenarios follows: first, a celebration of the originality or importance of the project as an intervention in or contribution to a field of inquiry, while accepting a certain unevenness to the book as a collection; second, a lamenting of a missed opportunity, while commending individual chapter authors or even the collection as a whole as noteworthy; or third, a recognition of a rare anthology which succeeds in furthering a single coherent argument, while also providing an interesting collection of voices in their own right. *Occultism in a Global Perspective* is definitely an anthology of the third type, even if it has a few rough spots. Editors Henrik Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic have done a great job in taking a disparate selection of contributions and weaving them into a whole with a common thread, namely the necessity of a 'global turn' in the study of esotericism, where global influences and currents provide an important context to the traditional, near-sighted studies of single authors, groups, or source material.

As the editors state in their programmatic introduction, this anthol-

ogy aims to 'understand how occultism changes when it "spreads" to new environments, placing occultism in its cultural, political and social context' (p. 5). Hence, the volume seeks to address the historical, typological, and (not least) geographical preferences prevalent in studies on Western esotericism. By juxtaposing similarities and differences between the occult as a global and local phenomenon, they seek to 'acknowledge that occultism is not merely a French or British phenomenon, but rather a Western esoteric current that has travelled around the world, having been re-interpreted in a number of different ways' (p. 6). Given the status and current development of the study of Western esotericism in institutions, journals, networks, publications, conferences, and scholars both grey and green, this is a very timely and appropriate venture. Employing a wider perspective, a relatively recent timeframe, and fresh case studies not only broadens the field, it also opens it to neighbouring disciplines and new theoretical angles at an opportune moment.

Having discussed concepts such as the occult, the West, and the global in the introduction, the anthology takes an appropriately theoretical turn with Kennet Granholm's chapter on 'the Western' as a concept 'both within and beyond the study of esotericism and occultism' (p. 17). Granholm embarks on a stimulating journey through postcolonial theory

and the sociology of late modernity to undertake a discursive analysis of our conceptual blind spots, issuing a critique of the field's homogenising discourse and hegemonic assumptions. Here, 'Western' as an emic category is part of the field of study, not the framework of the discipline; it is simply too vague and dysfunctional to work in a postcolonial and postsecular context. While I support the call to focus on more 'specific localities and the connections between these' (p. 32), it seems to me that Granholm's conclusion sidesteps Wouter Hanegraaff's argument that the 'Western' in Western Esotericism is not part of a whole, but the field as a whole (see the editors on page 6). Hence, it makes sense to maintain an umbrella category precisely to facilitate complex descriptions in terms of transmission, appropriation, and the construction of a sense of identity in relation to others. 'Western' can be both an emic category to study and an etic analytical construct with which to demarcate and reflect on the field in specific and global perspectives.

The chapters that follow discuss particular cases under this umbrella. Some contributions examine specific groups or individuals in 'the West', mainly in a historical-descriptive mode; others attend to regions on the boundary (both geographically and imaginary) of 'the West', or salient themes highlighting interrelations between 'the West' and its others. Consequently, the case studies invite the global perspective outlined in the introduction in various

ways, exhibiting varying degrees of specificity in time and space.

The first and largest group studies examples from Europe, South America, and Australia, all of which are influenced by, yet stand outside, the common core of French and British cases studied in previous textbooks and anthologies. Three contributors, Hans Thomas Hakl, Francesco Baroni, and Nevill Drury, offer straightforward presentations, tackling the German occult group *Fraternitas Saturni*, the Christian esotericism of the Italian Tommaso Palamidessi, and the Australian witch and trance-artist Rosaleen Norton, respectively. These chapters are interesting in their own right, yet their historical and descriptive focus comes across as somewhat narrow when viewed in the light of the broader argumentation of the anthology itself. The remaining contributions in this group, by Per Faxneld, Arthur Versluis, and PierLuigi Zoccatelli, offer more in terms of theoretical reflection and links to global processes. All three include a past and a present as well as a development outside the confines of the original group or individual under scrutiny. In Faxneld's case we move from the Danish *fin-de-siecle* Satanist Ben Kadosh to the modern Neo-Luciferian Church, with some thought-provoking discussion of the selective appropriation of the past to gain legitimacy. Versluis offers some insight into the esoteric Hitlerism of Savitri Devi and the South American 'neo-esotericism' of Chilean author Miguel Serrano. Finally, Zoccatelli's

discussion of Colombian sex gnostic Samael Aun Weor examines how the work of G. I. Gurdjieff has spread and developed throughout the new world, offering new insights on both fronts by bringing them together.

A second group of contributions focuses on occultism in regions which by their very nature shed light on 'the West', namely former Yugoslavia and Turkey. While Goran Djurdjevic's survey of occultism in former Yugoslavia initially comes across as a bewildering collection of individuals, groups, and literary outputs, it is in fact organised around certain themes and currents prevalent in the occult milieu in this region, culminating in presentations of Z. M. Slavinski and J. Trobentar, both of whom are connected to Thelema and the OTO. It is interesting to learn how this specific current contributes to global developments, and how former Yugoslavia is in turn affected by global flows. Similarly, Thierry Zarcone's study of occultism in Turkey examines exchanges between Europe and Turkey in an Islamic context, thus highlighting not only specific organisations and spokespersons relevant to the region, but also the dangers of homogenising 'Christian Europe' and 'Islamic Turkey', as well as stereotyping 'Christian' and 'Muslim' esoteric trends. Batinism, Muslim occult sciences, and contemporary trends illustrate the harmonisation processes at work on the boundary.

The final group of chapters examines the development of occult ideas and practices in a global

perspective, centred on processes of migration and influence between geographically separate regions. Henrik Bogdan offers a fascinating exposition of the 'pizza effect' by showing how The Holy Order of Krishna first appropriate Aleister Crowley's Thelema into a Hindu context and, conversely, influence Crowley and Kenneth Grant through British occultist David Curwen and his guru Swami Pareswara Bikshu. This web of relationships, based on manuscripts, initiations, and possible meetings, complicates the traditional image of sexual magic, tantra, and carnal alchemy in the East and West by contextualising similarities. Even more intricately woven is Emily Aoife Somers's post-structural discussion of *neo-nô* stage plays in Ireland and Japan as strategic epistemologies utilising the twilight and 'in-between-ness' of folklore to re-centre and subvert political narratives of time and space. Here, the 'necromantic' performances of W. B. Yeats and Izumi Kyôka can be read as both esoteric and political interventions which, when seen together, work on the national in a transnational perspective.

As should be obvious, *Occultism in a Global Perspective* travels far and wide to substantiate its central thesis. One could argue that the strong emphasis on historical development and regional specificity obscures possible insights based on contemporary perspectives and global flows; here, general attention to theories of transnationalism and globalisation such as Thomas

Tweed's 'crossing and dwelling' or Arjun Appadurai's 'scapes' and 'flows' might counteract the temptation to fall back on traditional modes of analysis. But this only proves that there is room for another volume built on different intentions and areas of interest. By linking specific sites, by theorising on global perspectives, or simply by shedding light on neglected corners of the global 'esoscape', the editors and contributors succeed in building a case for an increased sensitivity to, and interest in, the global and the local in the study of esotericism and occultism. That is more than enough.

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Bengt-Ove Andreassen and James R. Lewis (eds): *Textbook Gods: Genre, Text and Teaching Religious Studies*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2014, 252pp.

This anthology, edited by Bengt-Ove Andreassen and James R. Lewis, offers analyses of textbooks used in religious education in various countries. It covers books used in primary, secondary, and higher education, although most of the book deals with religious education or other arrangements where religion is part of the curriculum in public education. The textbooks are studied by scholars with backgrounds in the academic study of religion or education, or both. There is a slight emphasis on Nordic countries, although materials from Japan, Australia, Switzerland, Britain, and Canada are also analysed.

Textbooks are rewarding objects of research for various reasons, and the introduction by Bengt-Ove Andreassen outlines them well. Many are connected with the power and reproduction of ideology. Textbooks must embody authority in order to be what they are, and they convey 'key knowledge' and, in effect, 'truths' about particular subjects. They are written by 'expert(s) in the field', and they emphasise the qualifications of the author(s). The choice of images combined with the text represents religions in particular ways, showing what is considered 'important'. Even maps are biased and work in favour of particular interests, as they represent certain viewpoints and define both centre

and periphery. Indeed, as Jonathan Z. Smith has more generally observed concerning the metaphor of the map, researching and writing about religion is like making a map, which should not be confused with territory (p. 1–6). Religious education is, therefore, work done with maps or *constructions of religion*.

The book's title mentions 'teaching religious studies', but only a few of the chapters deal with the relationship between the academic discipline of religious studies and religious education at any length, although many reference it. Many of the authors frame their analyses with insights from religious studies. There is also, of course, a clear link between the academic study of religion and what has become the conventional textbook wisdom concerning religion. It would also be interesting to read a book-length examination of the materials (and of methods and focus areas) used in higher education.

The most detailed discussion of this relationship is to be found in Annika Hvithamar's piece, in which, as a published textbook author, she reflects on the challenges of writing religious studies-based textbooks for Danish religious education. In addition to her reflection on the student textbook, she also expands on the didactics of religion and explores how teachers, most of whom do not have a degree in religious studies, can be instructed in teaching about religion via a teacher's guide. According to Hvithamar, one of the key issues is that the field of religious studies

is unfamiliar to the public, which means that its 'neutral approach' is often interpreted as a 'lack of reflection or as an uncritical approach'. When scholars of religion focus on minorities in illustrating religious dynamics it is seen as irrelevant, and when religion is said to be comparable to a cultural phenomenon it is considered controversial, she writes. In other words, there seems to be a clash between Christian theology-based and RS-based educational interests. In my own experience similar conflicts may be observed in Finland. I agree completely with Hvithamar's assertion that religious studies scholars should participate in the writing of textbooks and in the various bodies producing executive orders and curricula.

Bengt-Ove Andreassen contributes a chapter in a similar vein, in which he analyses Norwegian textbooks intended as introductions to the didactics of religion in teacher education. He identifies several interesting discourses connected with familiar and important issues. The books present religion as a positive source for spiritual growth and human development. Andreassen argues that religions are presented – through the use of familiar but vague concepts such as 'the Holy' or 'Mystery' – as a reservoir of symbols from which the students can draw as they grow. This empathetic approach, clearly rooted in liberal theology and phenomenological perspectives, provides few tools for an analysis of the negative phenomena associated with religion. Andreassen is correct to say

that such perspectives are too normative and ideological to be useful in proper education about religion.

Most of the authors scrutinise written texts, but in their chapters Mary Hayward and Suzanne Anett Thobro examine the use of images and representations in maps. Torsten Hylén's and James R. Lewis's pieces also differ from the others. Their aims are slightly more general. Hylén examines the problem of essentialism in academia, mostly in the history of religions. Having offered critiques of Karen Armstrong, John L. Esposito, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, and others, he proposes a *prototype*-based approach, building on Benson Saler and others, as a starting point for overcoming the problem of essentialism in teaching about religion. Lewis's chapter, in turn, presents an updated version of his earlier piece from 1990 entitled 'Images of Traditional African Religions in Surveys of World Religions'. He analyses the 'evolutionary pattern' of religions in widely used academic world religion textbooks, focusing especially on the treatment of African religions. Lewis finds that contemporary world religions textbooks are considerably better than works from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but some problematic features have survived. For example, smaller-scale traditional religions, usually from Sub-Saharan Africa, are often still portrayed as representatives of an earlier stage in the assumed evolutionary development of religions.

To illustrate a critical point concerning some of the chapters, I

will begin with two quotations. In her chapter on a Swiss textbook Katharina Frank writes: 'I will analyse the new textbook *Sachbuch Religionen* with respect to how "religion" generally and the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are represented and what images of these religions are conveyed.' (p. 63) In their chapter on the ethics and religious culture textbooks used in Quebec Sivane Hirsch and Marie McAndrew write that '[t]he study of Judaism and the portrayal of Jewish community in these textbooks will be the subject of this chapter'. They also ask: 'Can the new textbooks change perceptions of this community by making its social, cultural and religious reality more intelligible?' (p. 86–7) Barbara Wintersgill and Carole M. Cusack examine similar questions – issues of representation – in their chapters.

The evaluation of how accurately certain social phenomena are *represented* by the textbooks is a worthwhile task in the educational sense, but at a more critical-theoretical level it is my contention that the reality/representation relationship needs to be problematized. What is the reality against which the material is evaluated, and why is it usable as a reference point? Is there in any strict sense 'real' Christianity to begin with, for example, or are we comparing maps with maps, not maps with territory? Would it not have been methodologically more accurate to emphasise not the representation of 'the truth' but the construction of 'the

truth' – as described by Andreassen in the introduction?

This is not to say that there are no harmful stereotypes, misinformation concerning groups of people, or unbalanced portrayal of those groups in educational material. Indeed, many of the authors highlight these faults very well. However, a critical analysis of a textbook – especially when the introductory chapter raises issues of power and the construction of 'truths' – should perhaps not be restricted to 'fact checking' or the common stereotype vs. reality evaluation. Religion textbooks offer constructions like 'religion', 'world religions', 'Islam', 'Judaism', and so on. They are constructed for primarily pedagogical reasons, but other interests are often in play as well: the maintenance of national and cultural identity, the integration of minorities, increasing tolerance, confessional interests, and so on. It would be useful to make interests like these visible in studies of religion textbooks, and while some of the articles meet this expectation well, some fall a little short.

A good example of a properly critical examination is the piece by Jens-André P. Herbener, in which he examines the *School Bible*, a combination of Bible and religion textbook intended for Christian studies classes in Denmark's municipal primary and lower secondary schools. He offers not a few valid criticisms of the book's contents – most of which target its confessional, unhistorical, and biased nature (towards Danish Protestantism). The book is pro-

duced by a Christian organisation, and Herbener argues that it serves the interests of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.

Finally, I have two minor complaints. First, maps used in Thobro's chapter are printed in black and white, which makes them a little difficult to read. Second, some chapters use Roman numerals to divide the sections, while some use numbered or unnumbered subheadings.

Textbook Gods offers many interesting findings, relevant information on teaching materials used in various settings, and several good insights into the difficult task of writing about religion. Questions of didactics and pedagogy add further challenges, which some of the writers tackle engagingly. The volume is a valuable addition to comparative research on religious education, which often focuses on the legal arrangements in different countries instead. It also affords a good practical example of the discursive study of religion, an approach gaining scholarly attention in our field at the moment, which focuses on the constructions of the category of religion. Religious education continues to be an active topic of debate in the academic, popular, and political spheres, and a critical examination of the educational materials should be seen as essential.

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Nadia Jeldtoft and Jørgen Nielsen (eds): *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities: Visible and Invisible Muslims*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, 242pp.

Recent decades have seen a burgeoning of research on Islam and Muslims in Europe. Very often this research has concerned Muslim minorities in a particular country, focused on Islamic organisations and their activities, or dealt with Islam in different contexts, such as migration, law, education, and politics. What thus far has been very much lacking in research on Muslims in Europe is an analysis of the different concepts, categorisations, and methods it has utilised.

Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities, edited by Nadia Jeldtoft and Jørgen Nielsen, is, therefore, a very welcome collection of articles in mapping the field for the critical discussion of research on Muslims in Europe and, especially, the constitution and use of the category of 'Muslim' itself. As the title suggests, the volume consists of thirteen articles divided into two parts, namely those of methods and contexts.

One of the most important issues for the methods of studying Muslims in Europe concerns terminology. An interesting shift in the categorisation of the people migrating to Western Europe from Muslim populated countries after the Second World War has taken place. In the 1960s and 70s they were mainly described ethnically, as Turks, Moroccans, and

so on, but since the 1980s they have been increasingly perceived through a religious lens as Muslims. In their introduction Nadia Jeldtoft and Jørgen Nielsen discuss how the categorisation of Muslims as 'Muslims' has in recent decades been reified in research, in the media, and in politics. As a consequence, it is now more or less taken for granted that one can describe and count Muslims as a distinct religious minority. It is this commonsensical categorisation of Muslims as Muslims that this volume aims at problematising. The authors are very well aware that it is not only the media and the public in general that are responsible for reproducing the category of Muslims, but that research has also been involved in this reification process. Consequently, it is all the more important to analyse how and by what methods research constitutes images of Muslims, how research describes Muslims as a distinct group, and the portrayals of Muslims such research has constructed. This question can also be turned around to ask how the methods we use determine our analytical outlook.

One of the main contributions of *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* is its focus on the so-called 'invisible Muslims', i.e. Muslims who are neither activists nor organised in any way. The volume highlights the observation that research on Muslims in Europe is heavily focused on the institutional and public expressions of Islam. As Jeldtoft and Nielsen note, this approach leads to a bias, especially in

the media, where all Muslims are often grouped as activists of one sort or another. This in turn obscures the fact that a large proportion of the people we call Muslims may self-identify as Muslims in one way or another, but are not necessarily involved in the organised forms of Islam. As a consequence, the platform is often given to those who see themselves as spokespersons of Islam actively representing all Muslims, while the majority of Muslims is rendered invisible in the public eye.

The reasons research has focused on the public and organised expressions of Islam and its active representatives are obvious, as several of the articles *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* observe. It is easy enough for a researcher to study institutions such as mosque organisations and their activities, and to find willing interviewees among their leading members. The same cannot be said of the Muslims who constitute a 'silent majority'. In studying them we are faced with these questions: first, how this somewhat invisible and very heterogeneous group of people should be named; second, how data 'thick' enough for drawing some general conclusions can be collected.

Eight articles in the first part of *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* offer various answers to the question of how to study 'unorganised' Muslims in Western Europe. They suggest that research should not primarily focus

on the visible elements of Islam, such as rituals and dress, but should also focus on less visible aspects, such as spirituality, morality, and philosophy. Moreover, instead of 'institutional bias', research should direct more attention to the ways Muslims, living and functioning in different contexts, make sense of Islam personally and in their everyday life.

In the main, these studies employ different ethnographic methods among Muslims varying according to age, gender, ethnicity, religiosity, and nationality. They highlight the fact that Muslim identities are as eclectic and fluid as those of other Europeans; Islam does not encompass all aspects of an individual's life and there can be many variations in being a self-identified Muslim. They also show that it is quite impossible to draw a clear line between 'organised' and 'non-organised' Muslims, or private and collective religiosity, and that it does not automatically follow that being non-organised implies that Islam is not practised. In sum, the religiosity of European Muslims is a very multifaceted phenomenon, which the case studies in *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* open up nicely from different angles.

The second part of *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities*, which consists of four quantitative studies, differs greatly from the first in its methodology. By utilising different surveys, these articles pinpoint some crucial factors affecting the incorporation of Muslim

immigrants into Western European society, and especially the factors affecting their religiosity in their new environment. It is impossible here to go into detail concerning the discussion of the background hypothesis and process of analysis in these articles but, to list some of their findings, they show: Muslim immigrants tend to be more religious where the host society is less welcoming; there is a correlation between negative attitudes of young people towards Muslims and populist right-wing involvement in local government; the differences in democratic values among ethnic minorities of mixed religious composition are explained by ethnicity rather than religion; there is a decline of both religious and ethnic identity among second generation self-identified Muslims, and, therefore, no evidence of ethno-religious revival among them. As such, these studies may serve as an excellent springboard for quantitative research on Muslim populations in different European countries.

At first sight, the two parts of *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* seem a little at odds with one another, but a closer examination reveals a general link between them. As noted by Philip Connor, 'a seemingly individualized behavior such as religiosity is contextually guided by society more generally' (p. 160). What seems characteristic of Western European societies is that religion does not function as a vehicle for the incorporation of immigrants in a host society, as it does in the United States.

In a secular society 'religion can be seen as more of a boundary than a bridge', hence hampering successful integration, as Maliepaard, Lubbers, and Gijsberts discuss in the final chapter about the Netherlands (p. 219). However, more research is needed on this topic.

Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities offers new and fascinating insights into Muslims in Western Europe, and especially in relation to unorganised and 'invisible' forms of religiosity. It is therefore a little surprising that the volume does not contain any articles on the 'old' Muslim minorities in Europe such as the Tatars, who are well integrated into Western society. Showing how religion and ethnicity are entangled in the lives of Tatars, and especially how the meaning of religion has changed in their lives over their hundred years of residence in Europe, would add a historical perspective to the above-mentioned qualitative and quantitative studies which focus strongly on contemporary times. After all, Islam and Muslims are not new to Western Europe.

What *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* highlights in general terms is a problem with which both research and the media tend to be riddled, namely that Muslims are often perceived through a religious lens, thus making them more religious than they actually are. In this respect the worry about the 'religionisation' of Muslims reiterates the critical discussion about the 'religious paradigm' with

regard to Western perceptions of (Muslim) women in Turkey and the Middle East that was already being conducted in the 1980s. This demonstrates that European perceptions of Islam and Muslims change very slowly and that the critique of Orientalism raised some decades ago by Edward Said and others still needs to be taken seriously. Even if *Methods and Contexts in the Study of Muslim Minorities* is not concerned with the critique of Orientalism as such, it helps us to problematise the categorisation of 'Muslims' and alert us to the fact that the terminology we employ in our research is far from innocent.

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Andrew Dawson: *Santo Daime: A New World Religion*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, viii + 226pp.

As the past century has witnessed, processes of modernisation have had a substantial impact on religion and religiosity. The changes thus effected have been the object of study particularly since the 1960s, and especially in relation to religion both in the Western world and in other parts of the globe. Andrew Dawson's book on Santo Daime provides an important contribution to this field.

Dawson, who is senior lecturer in Religious Studies at Lancaster University in the UK, has been studying Santo Daime since 2005. Santo Daime is an ayahuasca religion originating in Brazilian Amazonia in the 1920s that has spread first to urban Brazil and later to several countries around the world. Dawson's book's title is a play on words. The 'New World' in the title may be read as referring to South America as a continent. Simultaneously, however, it can be understood as pointing to the Santo Daime view of a new world order, which may be seen as either imminent or as something desired. In both cases the new order contrasts with the current conditions on planet Earth. Furthermore, when considered with the term religion, the New World in the book's title refers to the common three-part classification of religious traditions into world religions, indigenous religions, and new religious movements. In one way or another, the author states, Santo Daime is char-

acterised by all three aspects: the religion was born in South America; the idea of a new world order is at the heart of Santo Daime practice; and, despite its still modest number of adherents (around 20000), it has already spread to other continents. These three meanings embedded in the title correspond well with the contents of the book.

The book addresses three main questions: the origins and ethos of Santo Daime as a religious system; the processes of transformation related to Santo Daime's movement first beyond the Amazonian lowlands and later Brazil; and Santo Daime's relationship with the socio-cultural dynamics characteristic of Western late-modernity. The book is organised around these questions: the first chapters deal with the basic principles and the formative period of Santo Daime; the later chapters concentrate on the urbanisation of Santo Daime and its interconnection with Afro-Brazilian religiosity, Western esotericism, and Western late-modern society.

The book's main contribution lies in its discussion of the relationship Santo Daime has with the sociocultural processes of what the author calls late-modern (Brazilian) society. Dawson shows how the aspects associated with modernity, e.g. individualisation, subjectivism, pluralisation, and commoditisation, have worked and are still working to transform Santo Daime. These processes tend to cause internal conflicts within the religion as its newly middle class urban practitioners have

different needs for and expectations of their religious praxis than those living in rural areas. Drawing from the scholarship of modernisation, Dawson identifies six central characteristics which work to organise the contemporary, and especially middle class, *daimista* repertoire. These are: 1) the 'subjectivized valorization of the individual as the ultimate arbiter of religious authority and the primary agent of spiritual self-transformation'; 2) an instrumental religiosity oriented toward self-realisation; 3) a holistic world view relativising belief-systems as expressions of universal truths; 4) an aestheticised demeanour characterised by inward self-exploration and outward self-expression; 5) a meritocratic-egalitarianism; and 6) a this-worldly ethos (p. 197).

The author presents an innovative discussion of these processes of transformation by exploring the changes taking place in spirit mediumship practices within Santo Daime. Whereas traditionally in Amazonian-based Santo Daime practices human-spirit relationships were centred on the spirit of *daimé* or *ayahuasca*, restricted to certain ritual occasions and often to certain persons, and were spatially regulated, in contemporary middle class urban *daimista* praxis individual possession is increasingly common and accepted. The scope of spirits with which people interact has widened, interaction with them more often takes the form of possession in which the individual momentarily loses their agency in contrast to the

formerly more egalitarian relations, and spirit mediumship is increasingly accepted in different ritual times and spaces. Furthermore, they can be realised by any of the practitioners.

It is, then, in relation to the spirit mediumship praxis that the processes of individualisation, subjectivisation, pluralisation, and even commoditisation of Santo Daime become most visible. The discussion on spirit mediumship and modernisation is theoretically and ethnographically the most interesting and fruitful part of Dawson's book. It is a pity that the discussion comes only in the last two chapters, and that the first three are not similarly constructed. The first three chapters are theoretically fragmentary and, while the author does refer to classics such as Bourdieu on ritual space and Berger and Luckmann on, for example, subjectivisation, in these chapters' theoretical discussions, more recent scholarship on many theoretical issues is eclipsed.

Furthermore, unlike the latter part of the book, which provides empirical material through which the reader has access to the *daimistas*' 'personal voices', the first chapters fail to bring the reader close to the Santo Daime community. In many ways the book succeeds in capturing its reader only in its last two chapters.

Nevertheless, as a whole the book provides an intriguing example of how the individualisation and subjectivisation of religion do not diminish the legitimacy or importance

of religious dogma and practice, as has often been argued. Rather, as the author notes, although these processes involve the 'recalibration of established modes of participation and belonging in a way which relativizes corporate dynamics through their subordination to the subjectivized needs and aspirations of the late-modern individual', they do not necessarily 'entail the end of collective forms of religious association' (p. 198). This book is important reading for anyone interested in religion in the contemporary world.

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