Book Reviews

Max Charlesworth, Françoise Dussart and Howard Morphy (eds.), *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings*. Vitality of Indigenous Religions Series, 4. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005, pp. xii[i] + 324, 0754651282. Review doi: 10.1558/arsr.v22i3.368.

Tanya Storch (ed.), *Religions and Missionaries around the Pacific, 1500–1900*. The Pacific World: Lands, Peoples and their History of the Pacific, 1500–1900, 17. Ashgate Variorum, Aldershot, 2006, pp. xxxvii + 415, ISBN: 0754606678. Review doi: 10.1558/arsr.v22i3.368.

These two collections are highly valuable resources for students of religious anthropology and history. Max Charlesworth is an 'old hand at the game' at producing anthologies of scholarly work on Australian Aboriginal religion. Adding to *Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An Anthology* (1986), which he put together with Howard Morphy, Diane Bell and Kenneth Maddock, and his (edited) *Religious Business: Essays on Australian Aboriginal Spirituality* (1998), Charlesworth has cooperated with Dussart and Morphy to produce the most mature set of essays yet on indigenous religious life in Australia.

The hottest issues in Aboriginal religion studies concern 'spiritual beings' (to use Edward Tylor's language), cosmology and relationship to Land, the place of art and the interpretation of religious change. Apropos spirit beings, the debate over high gods has half-returned. Some scholars are suspicious that evidence for some single high spirit beings is too close to contact to be explained away as reaction to outsiders (e.g. Hilary Carey and Edward Tyler against Tony Swain, especially on the cult of Baiami among the Yuin complex of peoples of coastal New South Wales). Admittedly, the old claim (first popularised by Andreas Lommel) that the Rainbow Serpent was near enough to a pan-Australian creator being and thus high god remains hard to sustain, but, as the important chapter by (the now sadly deceased) Lester Hiatt shows, however inconstant the 'form, powers and role' of the these Serpent creators, the fact that in Northern Australian contexts they can be female or male, and bi-sexual elsewhere, should keep us open to the possibilities of pre-contact cult changes and accentuations 'under tradition's own steam'.

An increased airing of previously neglected women's sides to religious life will hopefully provide clues for future research. In this regard Diane Bell keeps up a useful role, along with other female interpreters in this volume—Dussart of course, Marika Moiseeff, Debbie Bird Rose, Frances Merlan and Fiona Magowan. The one Aboriginal contributor in the book, David Mowaljarlai, stresses the coming down of a creator Wallanganda from the sky, appearing as a *Wandjina* raingod and making 'man', but the whole Kimberley myth is prefaced by reference to an 'Earth Snake', Wunggud—'She *is* the earth'—and with this

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kind of material one hopes from research into women's stories some resolution to the debate about Mother Earth in Aboriginal spirituality. Tony Swain, in *A Place for Strangers* (1993), has strongly contended that Mother Earth is a latish foreign import, for him high gods also being post-traditional but in the 'contact period' (and it is surprising how little his provocative views are aired and discussed in this volume). But one should still keep a keen ear out for odd bits of new information suggesting that, while it is more typical to hear talk of one's 'father's country', ideas of Land as mothering were also 'deeply traditional' (especially among women) and not recently introduced (as Johannes Falkenberg, among other outsider researchers, and Graham Paulson, among Aboriginal scholars, have suspected). In the present book it is Rose (on the Northern Territory Yarralin) who has the most data material of relevance on this matter.

The book encourages more debate about the Dreaming—about cosmology, cosmogeny and relationships to the Land. French anthropologist Moiseeff redefines the Dreaming as 'a substance-free spatial dimension held to modify matter without itself being imprisoned by it'. American Merlan raises the related question 'Do Places Appear?' thus asking: under what circumstances and in what ways might an object, such as a special stone, come to be associated with a totem or spirit being—or 'an object of thought' that constitutes a datum of the Dreaming or of 'Aboriginal religion'? An intriguing question, and there are other related ones that 'black and white' scholars outside this collection have been exploring—'sacred maps' (the *alcheringa*) for mental and ritual interaction with the landscape, about what occurs at sacred sites as they are reached in journeys by single bands; what are the different meanings of 'tracks' and also (more especially) songs and singing. Some newer investigators, I think first of the young Swede Monica Engelhart, might need to be sought out for another anthology!

There is a section devoted to Art and Religion. Even today, art plays a crucial role in passing down systems of knowledge, as Howard Morphy cleverly demonstrates about the Yolngu (northeast Arnhem Land). The very recent discovery of a giant wall of rock art at Djulirri in Arnhem Land also independently confirms that visitors and their vessels were being memorialised over centuries, the presence of Macassans possibly back as far as five centuries. But as Fred Myers's beautifully illustrated chapter on Aboriginal painter Linda Syddick tells us, artists in the midst of cultural break-up look forward to a new healing and wholeness inspired by Christian paradigms, in Syddick's case those of resurrection and ascension.

Other chapter clusters are on Religion and Law (featuring eminents Frank Brennan and Robert Tonkinson on land rights and the Hindmarsh Bridge affair respectively) and on religious change (or 'Religious Exchanges'). Of special interest in this last section are pieces on 'the strong case for Aboriginal tradition and Christianity' in the black theology of Djiniyini Gondarra and other Yolngu Christians (Fiona Magowan), and on varying degrees of Aboriginal interest in Islam (Ian McIntosh). Overall, then, the coverage is impressive and the balance between traditional and contemporary issues well struck, and earlier on room is given for reflection on old worthies in the study of Aboriginal religion: Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen (by the doyen of Australian prehistory John Mulvaney) and William Stanner (by Ian Keen). In sum, *Aboriginal Religions in Australia* is a very helpful text for undergraduates and higher-level academicians alike.

Whereas Charlesworth et al. have chosen up-to-date articles and book chapters, Storch's collection for a Variorum series allows her to put together 22 seminal chapters from over the whole of the post-War period. This book is not what some might have expected it to be, a collection of articles on missionary activities among the Pacific

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Islanders. In fact, it has only one selection on Melanesia (Jürgen Tampke on Lutheran missionaries to New Guinea and Aboriginal Australia, responding to the call to 'convert men-eaters') and one on Polynesia (Peter Lineham on Mormons among the Maori). The remainder concern what has been termed the Pacific Rim. And a wide and culturally diversified circle it is, covering Christian mission attempts in western America (Mexico, California, even Alaska), southeast Asia (Indonesia, the Philippines, even Indo-China, Singapore and Malay[si]a on the very edge of the perimeter) and east Asia (China and Japan, but not Korea). Storch has not forgotten the massive impact of Islam on Southeast Asia (see especially Gordon Means on Malaysia), or that the Jews had their own special impact in coastal China (Kaifeng) and Pacific Rim Latin America (Columbia), parts of Aharon Levi's fascinating seventeenth-century diary being translated for the latter case. Acknowledging that the western United States, especially California, has been a religious melting-pot, Storch has also rightly included chapters on Yogananda as the first famous Eastern *guru* to stay and proselytise in America, and on the arrival and work of Chinese Buddhists in the American 'Far West'.

Most of the selected writings, on Western missionaries, are divided in a balanced way between Catholics and Protestants, but we are reminded by Michael Oleska and Sergei Kan that the Russian Orthodox were converting the Tlingit in (once Russian) Alaska, even if their labours among the northern Japanese seems forgotten here (after all, St Nikolai's Cathedral is quite a landmark in Tokyo). And it is also noted that sectarians were also afoot elsewhere, as with Lineham on Mormons, who have long had a following among Polynesians, since their first independent kingdom was in the Tuamotus, before Utah, and the indigenes liked legitimation of their prior idea of rising to the stars at death. Storch has also nicely tried to balance Western with non-Western authorship, Raden Widjojoatmodjo writing on Dutch missionaries in Indonesia, for example, Kong Xianyi, Xiaoguang Xu and Irene Lin on matters Chinese and Yogananda on himself (that is, through a snippet from his famous *Autobiography of a Yogi*).

The material is largely ordered chronologically, with the Islamic, Ibero-Catholic, diasporic Jewish and 'Prostestant' [*sic*] and Asian immigrant periods being placed in that order. This is a bit misleading, of course, because each still trajectory goes on, yet the editorial effort has certainly been worth it. The editor's Introduction is itself a worthy contribution, if perhaps overly generalising about Catholic 'cultural insensitivity', and privileging the American Protestants as best in generating 'public education' (pp. xxii, xxix). The whole effect, in any case, is that of extraordinary human endeavour, of lives bearing new messages of hope, sometimes embroiled with *conquistadores*, sometimes against them, sometimes quite independent of any state, even any well-established religious institution, doing their bit to change the world.

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