

*Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization.* Edited by Thomas J. Csordas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 352 pages. \$24.95.

Globalization has been good for religion. Missionaries can carry their religious wares more easily across larger distances. More migrants take their faith with them and implant it in new places. New media, now including the Internet, spread the Word(s) far and wide. Many religions are globalizing, creating new ties across space and fostering new awareness of such ties—in many cases, Thomas Csordas might say, they are “reglobalizing.” This collection illustrates several “modalities” of religious globalization, conveying some of the nearly endless varieties of global religious experience.

Those varieties include charismatic Christian converts in Papua New Guinea, described by Joel Robbins in a chapter arguing that the “trans” in transcendence is like the “trans” in transnational. With a characteristic rhetorical flourish, Thomas Csordas pictures the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as “a multinational religious conglomerate that invites the layering of hybridity upon syncretism upon synthesis in a universal culture that is not polyglot but glossolalic” (78). Otávio Velho puts such cases in perspective with a wide-ranging essay on missionization in the Christian tradition. Esra Özyürek shows how Alevi immigrants adapted in Germany but in the process raised new questions about their status as a “minority” back in Turkey. Alberto Groisman recounts how Brazil’s Santo Daime, complete with its psychoactive drink, made its way to the Netherlands where new adherents viewed their role in it as reparation for old European sins. J. Lorand Matory argues that Yoruba-Atlantic religions have long been “transnational,” imbuing their faithful with a view of the self as inhabited by multiple beings. Peter van der Veer presents Yoga and Qigong as rooted in national encounters with imperial modernity that raise questions about the separation of the spiritual and the political. Kathinka Frøystad complements Van der Veer’s chapter by studying the “return globalization” of a Western yogi taking Kriya Yoga back to India, a process inadequate-

ly captured by the usual “flow” metaphor. Lauren Kendall describes how South Korean shamans cross borders more frequently, enacting an “ethnic” religious form through transnational tourism.

Beyond their intriguing details, the cases convey more general points that will sound familiar to most readers of this volume but are still worth making. For example, two historically oriented contributions, by Janice Boddy on the colonial Sudan and by Peter Cohen on the Orisha Atlantic, remind us that current trends in global religions have ample precedent in an earlier, imperial phase of globalization. (Incidentally, the travails of the Christian Missionary Society in the Sudan are telling with regard to constraints on religious globalization—in fifty-seven years of colonial rule it managed to gain one convert, a controversial one at that.) Though most scholars hardly need to be told, the book also reinforces the idea that globalization is a “multidimensional” process in which religious communities play a vigorous role that cannot be reduced to the play of economic interests. It counters the worn notion that globalization flows mainly from West to East or North to South by showing that in religion the South has taken the lead in several ways, helping to make globalization a “multidirectional” process.

Religion, we may infer, has also been good for globalization. Its subtitle notwithstanding, this volume actually questions such statements by inviting us to think a bit more deeply about the relationship. It may be a mistake to separate globalization and religion, even analytically. For example, Csordas suggests that by contributing to an “emergent global social imaginary” religious actors may be re-enchanting the world and breaking down the distinction between transcendence and immanence. In a slightly more concrete way, Matory suggests that some religions offer good ways to think about our connections to Other Places, a point we might generalize to say that all experience of globalization necessarily involves an imaginative negotiation of such connections in terms that transcend any one place or present. Robbins complements such ideas by suggesting that the Pentecostal version of an absolutely distant heaven, though with access partly mediated by the Holy Spirit, is “good to think with” for marginalized peoples coming to terms with their own social decentering.

Probing reflections on a key question combined with informative case studies is perhaps as much as we can reasonably ask one edited volume to provide. Still, it would have been good if the coverage of religious traditions had been a bit more inclusive—two pieces on the Yoruba and none on Buddhism make for imbalance. As anthropologists, the authors mostly stick to their own cases. Whether any forms of religiosity are inherently more “transposable,” or whether any groups or places are inherently more hospitable to glocal experimentation, remains unclear. For lack of a collective explanatory effort, understandable in a volume of this sort, the whole is the sum of its parts. Of course, readers will have their own questions about the individual chapters. For example, I might ask Robbins whether his quasi-functionalist hypothesis about the helpful parallels between the transnational and the transcendent implies that as groups become less marginalized in fact, say in Seoul or Rio, the appeal of charismatic cosmology will diminish.

Interested scholars should put this book high on their list. It will be required reading for dedi-

cated graduate students. Occasionally dense prose may keep it from reaching an audience in related fields, such as comparative political economy. Some chapters may be suitable for classroom use, but only very intrepid instructors will assign more than a few to their undergraduate students.

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