together in modernity. Certainly the missionary effort benefited from its relationship with the colonial state, but in the decades-long exchanges between Dutch Calvinists and the Sumbanese, neither side was "in full command of the terms of the discourse" (9).

The Calvinists who planted the Gospel on Sumba starting at the very end of the nineteenth century were largely unsuccessful for several decades. The agency of self-satisfied natives thwarted the missionaries' plans, but agency is always a slippery concept in Reformed Christianity where God's omnipotence overshadows human choice. Wasn't the almost fruitless toil of the missionaries in this small, out-of-the-way place also God's will? In any case, the missionaries did not expect overnight success. In this era, missionary ethnographers attempted first to understand the language and culture through which Christianity might be naturalized over time into *volkskerkken*, that is, churches thoroughly at home within their cultural settings. They wanted to preserve a substantial cultural foundation as underpinning for a society undergoing change, but eliminating only those elements of thought and practice that conflicted with Christian beliefs demanded surgical precision at times. The challenge still exercises Christian Sumbanese, whose living kin morph into revered ancestors and whose signature houses model the cosmos. The local languages did not name a discernible realm called religion, and traditional Sumba lacked scriptural texts and creeds. The Sumbanese missed "even a proper sense of the distinction between humans and inanimate things" (39). The assumption that power inhered in ancestral heirlooms and sacrificial meat, indeed, that power flowed from language itself when spoken ritually in rhythmic couplets, stood intransigently against the worldview of the Protestant missionaries.

Surely the Calvinist missionaries saw their struggle on Sumba as analogous to that of the Reformation itself. Reformation is a process of "purification," Keane writes, a process of separating, making distinctions, and reordering the world. Fifteenth-century Protestant reformers had disavowed that the Eucharist effected a transubstantiation of bread and wine into actual flesh and blood; the token edibles merely *symbolized* the sacrifice of Christ's body. The reformers' renunciation of iconic representation, of Romish clergy and their liturgical "magic," had rendered Christianity in its modern (Protestant) form an almost wholly interior matter. Now the scriptural Word in the vernacular shined the light of meaning into the dark of Latin mysteries. Small wonder, then, that Sumbanese ritual speaking and other practices seemed positively atavistic to the Calvinists. Native preoccupations with feasting and with exchanges of meat and the hallowing of heirlooms seemed misplaced, fetishistic. The missionaries sought to purify all that by persuading the Sumbanese to embrace European conceptual distinctions.

The conversion story of one man, Umbu Neka, an elderly ritual specialist in the 1980s when the old religion was already well into its decline, distills the long social process by which Sumbanese society was transformed while resisting transformation. If the term "conversion" implies a precise crossing point in a person's mind and being, it is hard to say just when Umbu Neka crossed that Rubicon. Summoned to embrace the new religion by a voice speaking to him out of the darkness, he staged a final nightlong oration and dance to put away the old and accept the new. Regaling his audience, both seen and unseen, with couplet-laden speeches, he portrayed his conversion as a powerful act of reshaping the world. Then the spirit audience had a chance talk back about this momentous change through auguries. In Umbu Neka's memory, or at least to hear him tell it a year later, his magnanimous feast had been the impetus for "everyone else" to accept the Christian message.

The Calvinist missionaries and the Sumbanese shared different semiotic ideologies, to be sure, but was that difference any more basic than so many others, such as the material and political resources to which each side had access? And why was the gulf of misunderstanding gradually but ultimately bridged, to the extent that it was? "Christian Moderns" left those questions open. Call me old-fashioned. I delighted in the details of Umbu Neka's story and other such thick description (such as it was) but was not greatly enlightened by the author's theoretical ventures into the well-worn territory of modernity and its relationship to Protestant Christianity.

Rita Smith Kipp

Keller, Eva: The Road to Clarity. Seventh-Day Adventism in Madagascar. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 286 pp. ISBN 978-1-4039-7076-9. Price: £ 14.99

In recent years there have been a series of efforts to retheorize the awkward relationship of anthropology to Christianity, as well as an emergent group of compelling ethnographies of Christian practice around the world. Eva Keller's excellent new monograph "The Road to Clarity. Seventh-Day Adventism in Madagascar" is a welcome addition to this growing set of discussions, one that has much to offer both the anthropology of Christianity and the anthropology of Madagascar.

Based on her dissertation fieldwork in Maroantsetra, a small town on Madagascar's northeast coast, and Sahameloka, a village located up river from Maroantsetra, Keller's book is an in-depth study of what Seventh-Day Adventism means to its practitioners and what it feels like to live as a Seventh-Day Adventist in semirural Madagascar. This is no small issue as most Malagasy – particularly in rural settings – form their social identities and moral commitments via their relationships with their ancestors. Like many fundamentalist movements, however, Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine forbids adherents from participating in the practices through which local people communicate with ancestors, interpreting them as the work of the Devil. Given the inevitable tension between being an Adventist and living in community where "the ways of the ancestors" are central to everyday life, why do people join the Adventist Church? More central to Keller's concerns, why do they stay? What does Seventh-Day Adventism give them that other forms of Christianity – which have deep roots in Madagascar dat-

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ing back to the 19th century – do not? How do they negotiate their identities both as Adventists and as members of a Malagasy community where relationships constructed through ancestors remain central? And what might the answers to these questions contribute to our knowledge of fundamentalist Christianity in Madagascar or elsewhere? Keller's answers to these questions shift the focus of analysis away from conversion, which has dominated much of the literature, to an "ethnography of religious commitment" or why Adventists choose to stay. At the same time, it moves beyond an analysis of Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine and church ceremonies, to concentrate on the everyday practice of lay practitioners.

In section one, Keller provides the social and historical context for the study, including the general history of Christianity in Madagascar, and the history of Seventh-Day Adventism in particular. The section ends with a chapter on profiles of various people who have converted to Adventism, a chapter that is particularly important because it helps to make a crucial analytic point: Adventists do not share a common socioeconomic background or social status. What they share is a religious commitment to Seventh-Day Adventism.

It is the nature of this commitment that is the focus of part two, which is the ethnographic heart of the book. Keller peels away, layer by layer, the reasons why converts find Adventism so compelling. In her analysis of Bible study, what one lay leader calls "the heart of the church," she shows the Socratic, dialogic nature of Adventist practice. In study sessions at both church and at home, Adventists learn to read Bible lessons and interpret them as they apply to their own lives. This is no somber, wrote kind of memorization. Rather, as Keller (114) writes, "Bible study was of a dialogical, discursive, and participatory nature, and involved much intellectual engagement and critical thinking for those taking part." It is also clearly fun. Yet despite the intellectual bent, Adventism is not exactly like science – or rather it is both more and less like science than one might suppose. Keller suggests that Adventist practice is similar to what Kuhn called normal science, in that a paradigm exists and people try to match their information to that paradigm.

The following chapter places this Adventist enthusiasm for books and learning within the context of Malagasy beliefs which link studying and learning with the acquisition of potency. Yet once again, it isn't just any kind of potency – for example, the desire to achieve economic power – that these Adventists seek. Instead, the potency acquired from studying is closely linked to the knowledge that everything that has happened in the past, is happening now, or will happen in the future is a result of the struggle for power between God and the Devil. The potency gained by studying is a potency to "see clearly" and according to God's plan, rather than be tricked by the Devil.

The catch, however, is that according to Adventist doctrine, many of the practices through which Malagasy in this area construct their relationship to their ancestors, particularly reburials and cattle sacrifice, are thought to be the work of the Devil. The last third of the book, then, deals with the contradictions that Adventists face, trying to negotiate between their identities as Adventists and as Malagasy. In contrast to studies in other parts of Africa which have argued that one of the appeals of Adventism is that it enables practitioners to throw of the demands of kin, Keller convincingly argues that these Adventists constantly struggle to reconcile their competing identities in ways that honor both their kinlinks and their religious commitments as Adventists.

The intellectual argument of the book (despite the author's quibbles with that label) is clearly a product of Adventist practice, and I would have liked to know more about how Adventism compares in this respect with other kinds of Christianity in Madagascar, particularly given the historical links between Christianity, literacy, and intellectual endeavor in Madagascar. At the same time, the author's conclusions regarding the potential insights that Adventism might give to an "anthropology of discontinuity" might have been more developed, particularly given that so many aspects of what people found attractive in Adventism seemed (to this reader) so familiarly Malagasy. Nevertheless, these are minor quibbles. As the first ethnographic study of Christianity in Madagascar, this book has clearly set the standard for those to follow.

Jennifer Cole

Kirsch, Stuart: Reverse Anthropology. Indigenous Analysis of Social and Environmental Relations in New Guinea. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-8047-5342-5. Price: $ 21.95

In "Reverse Anthropology," Stuart Kirsch engages in a comparative ethnographic project that combines indigenous modes of analysis "with more familiar forms of analysis from the social sciences" (2). In writing a reverse anthropology, Kirsch argues that indigenous analyses provide alternative viewpoints that allow for indigenous critiques of culture, history, and political economy. Moreover, in this frame, ethnographers can mediate between forms of social analysis that may be more local, specific, and restricted and those that are more general and accessible, yet are potentially alienating in that they lose the specific context that appeals to wider audiences. An ethnography based on reverse anthropology, then, "can convey the insights of indigenous analysis while evaluating the political factors that may limit its effectiveness" (187). To this end, Kirsch deserves recognition for this refreshing and intellectually stimulating monograph.

The principal setting for this book is a lowland rain forest region that straddles the border between Papua New Guinea (PNG) and West Papua, Indonesia. The people, the Yonggom, as they are called in PNG, or the Muyu, in West Papua, share a common language and culture, although colonial history and contemporary events have combined to create radically different social realities for the groups on each side of the border. Many of the Muyu are currently political refugees in PNG, escaping from the Indonesian state in its reprisals against the Free Papua Movement that is seeking independence

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