

Piepke, Joachim G. (Hrsg.): Kultur und Religion in der Begegnung mit dem Fremden. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2007. 207 pp. ISBN 978-3-8050-0544-9. (Veröffentlichungen des Missionspriesterseminars St. Augustin, 56) Preis: € 25.00

The centennial of this journal was celebrated with a three-day symposium on which Othmar Gächter and Anton Quack reported earlier (*Anthropos* 102.2007: 201–204). Joachim Piepke edited the proceedings, also entitled *Kultur und Religion in der Begegnung mit dem Fremden* (“Culture and Religion in the Encounter with the Strange”), consisting of the seven major contributions to the symposium.

In the introductory chapter Anton Quack makes clear that the discipline of anthropology has been an integral part of the education of missionaries of the order of the Society of the Divine Word (Societas Verbi Divini, SVD), established by Arnold Janssen in the Dutch village of Steyl. The aim of the anthropological training has always been to teach future missionaries to look beyond the confines of their own culture. Next, Quack discusses the concepts of culture and religion as well as cultural change, syncretism, and ethnocentrism in relation to external influences. In contrast to understandings of cultures and religions as being static, bounded, and pure, he emphasizes their dynamism. Wolfgang Marschall offers a working definition of culture in his chapter on cultural change: “alle variablen Vorstellungen, Verhalten und Verhaltensprodukte der Menschen” (37). He questions the ideology of purity, citing Ralph Linton’s demonstration of the manifold foreign elements that became part of American culture, and referring to Robert Lowie’s designation of culture as “a hodgepodge.” Variability might be limited due to insecurity, giving rise to established customs and a rigid structure, whereas heterogeneity and openness represent the other extreme of the spectrum. It also matters whether people’s worldview is receptive to innovations or not and the extent to which these are disruptive of the social system. Marschall further draws attention to the implications of cultural change, the need for supporters and of local knowledge to convince the people concerned. Ulrich Berner’s chapter deals with syncretism, defined by him as “das Integrieren fremder und/oder das Suspendieren eigener Elemente in der Begegnung der Religionen” (49). Theologians fearing the loss of religious identity tended to view syncretism negatively, while religious studies scholars considered it a quite normal phase in the encounter of religions. Berner notes that the inner pluralism of religious traditions is often overlooked. Furthermore, one can have a meeting of religions between individual persons, in dealing with texts, in the case of migration, or in one’s biography. Historical examples show that (the perception of) the intentions of participants and power differentials are important factors, and that old meanings can be transferred to new forms. Berner makes a plea for intercultural comparison as a means to make the strange familiar.

The four remaining chapters offer extended case studies. Bernhard Lang focuses on two models in the process of state formation in Biblical Israel. He distinguishes be-

tween the warriors and the scribes as the two main forces whose respective dominance resulted in a closed or bounded and an open society. The scribes were peaceful polytheists, but religious reform that went hand-in-hand with a mentality favouring war promoted monotheism and the policing of ethnic boundaries. A real synthesis between the two forces did never materialize, according to Lang. Klaus Hock deals with the relationship between African traditional religions and Islam. In the first part of the chapter, he relates how Islam spread in Africa in various ways. Furthermore, he gives an overview of the varieties of Islam in this continent. Hock discusses the compatibility and incompatibility of Islam and African traditional religions. One area of compatibility is the holism (“Ganzheitlichkeit”) in their understanding of their life-world. In this context he notes that the Islamism of recent decades is disruptive for its lack of Africanness. In a fascinating chapter on the christianization of the traditional cultures of the Andes Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz analyses the language and translations used in colonial times. In spite of the paternalism in the missionary texts translated into the indigenous language, indigenous concepts had to be employed to bring the Christian message across. Consequently, the foundations of the indigenous religion survived, no matter the Christian coating or outward appearance. Susanne Schröter deals in the final chapter with the impact of the Roman Catholic mission on a local religion in Flores, Indonesia. She notes that the islanders create religion in practice. They certainly should not be conceived of as passive victims: creative appropriations and the refiguring of rituals to adjust to changing social structures are still part and parcel of indigenous religious life.

The contributions to this volume confirm the dynamism of local religions in interaction with the initially foreign world religions. Further conceptualization of the processes of religion-in-the-making would be most welcome. The chapters of this book provide religious studies scholars with the building blocks for such an overarching model of syncretization. Another merit is the respect shown for the indigenous religions and their renewal as a result of not only external influences but also the agency of indigenous people themselves. Eric Venbrux

Ramani, Shakuntala: Kalamkari and Traditional Design Heritage of India. New Delhi: Wisdom Tree, 2007. 117 pp., illus. ISBN 978-81-8328-082-2. Price: Rs 995

Shakuntala Ramani, die südindische Doyenne des Craft Education and Research Centre of the Kalakshetra Foundation in Chennai, betitelt ihr neues, großformatiges und reich bebildertes Buch zu Recht “Kalamkari and Traditional Design Heritage of India”. Sie informiert kompetent über Kalamkari, eine alte indische Textiltradition, in der das Design von Hand gezeichnet oder durch Blockdruck mit pflanzlichen Farben ausgeführt wird. Dank ihres reichen Wissens und ihrer langjährigen Erfahrung mit dem Kunsthandwerk verschiedener Textiltraditionen Indiens, die mit aus Pflanzen gewonnenen Farbstoffen ar-