

cher werden, wenn es nicht in grundlegenden Überlegungen zur Sozialität von Individuen aufgeht, sondern stärker auf deren weltanschaulich-religiöse Überhöhung abhebt. Mit dieser Fokussierung können die Beiträge der Dissertation für den ethnologischen Fachdiskurs noch deutlicher werden.

Karsten Lehmann

Thornton, Brendan Jamal: *Negotiating Respect, Pentecostalism, Masculinity, and the Politics of Spiritual Authority in the Dominican Republic.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016. 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-8130-6168-9. Price: \$ 69.95

“Negotiating Respect” is a welcome and overdue ethnographic account of Christian Pentecostal “*evangélicos*” in poor barrios of the Dominican Republic. It brilliantly draws upon two years of ethnographic research. Since at least the 1980s, there has been a notable and transformative influence from neoliberal economic reforms and the arrival of Protestant Christian sects, often through North American “sister churches.” This book addresses the latter. The author focuses primarily on young men living in urban poverty, delineating how some turn from a criminal path to Christianity, and thus gain a level of respectability formerly out of their reach. Thornton unpacks the very unlikely and unspoken alliance forged between urban gangs and Protestant churches, as gang members annul their life-long allegiance and are granted a “conversion exception” through local Pentecostal churches. Thornton convincingly traces the underlying grammar of these institutions through accessible and beautifully written prose. This book is appropriate for graduate and undergraduates.

Chapter one, “Orthodoxy and Christian Culture in the Dominican Republic” provides historical context for the theocratic roots of Dominican society as they are enshrined in the Catholic founding of the nation. The complexity of the Dominican case, complicated by the intertwinement with Haiti, African ancestry, and the near bastardization by the Spanish, situate the context for a better understanding of the fertile ground where Pentecostal culture has arrived and flourished.

Chapter two, “Villa Altgracia: El Pueblo Caliente, El Pueblo Profético” places the study in time and place. As a gateway to the north, “Villa” resembles many cities that flank the capital of Santo Domingo and have been touched by the rise and fall of various industries, agriculture, mining, sugar, and finally export processing zones. Today Villa relies on the dwindling sources of employment and proximity to the capital, but like the majority, the residents are underemployed and/or poorly paid, adding to urban strife and outright misery that in some lucky cases is mitigated by remittances from abroad. While Thornton argues that Villa is a typical town, living with the challenges of poverty and violence, he also emphasizes that, being true to its namesake, it has religious significance as the city of the prophets – “*el pueblo profético*.”

Chapter three, “Pluralism, Heterodoxy, and Christian Hegemony,” traces the experience of one woman. This case study is perhaps the most compelling chapter of the

book as it follows her journey from Catholicism to Dominican *vodú* to evangelical Christianity. While Thornton is more concerned with the consequences of conversion for men, here we see how Catholicism disappoints women as they navigate this complex landscape. It is through Mariela’s story that we witness the web of “... shared meanings across divides of orthodoxy and heterodoxy in fluid, reciprocal ways” (73). This chapter explicates how Pentecostals construe themselves as superior spiritually and morally, as the connection between Dominican *vodú* and Catholicism is inextricable, even as no practice can operate in isolation; their very currency is determined by the value and transactions of the other.

“Christians Apart. Being and Becoming Pentecostal,” chapter 4 makes the case “that the core of Dominican Pentecostalism in urban barrios is the *performance* of piety, not personal conviction or belief *per se*” (93). As Christianity is hegemonic, a belief in God and Jesus Christ through a Pentecostal faith must be enacted continuously in public performance. The definition and reinforcement of strict discipline and continuous public performance positions *evangélicos* – in their minds and the minds of others – as morally and spiritually pure and thus superior in their religious convictions. Here it is not simply carrying a Bible, but dress, hairstyle, speech, testimonial performance, embodiment of sanctity, as well as how individuals surround themselves, with material items (a respectable home) and immaterial practices, clean living through rejecting outward symbols of temptation (gold chains, alcohol, parties, etc.). Here public presentations are privileged – *how* you believe marks you as an *evangélico*. This distinction has ramifications for individuals’ reception in the community, particularly around concerns of respectability for those who have fallen from grace in the past.

Chapter 5, “Youth Gangs, Conversion, and Evangelical Moral Authority” explores the parallel structure of gangs and the Protestant churches. Gang life, like the protestant sects, are both imports to the Dominican Republic, and have formed an allegiance, if not mutual respect. The “conversion exception” is applied exclusively to *evangélicos* as the sole escape for a young man’s life-long allegiance to a gang. Exploring this relationship in great depth, Thornton provides insight into the tattered lives of urban poor where Christianity and gangs similarly offer “practical strategies for addressing the material and social deficits of living in poverty” (158). As if one feeds the other, gangs validate the claim of strict orthodoxy by Christian sects and underscore that Catholicism has failed on many levels, but particularly in its goal to alleviate suffering; in the words of one gang member: “... maybe I represent God more than many Catholics” (146). The strict and unbending rules and structure hold the same “grammar” for gang member and *evangélicos*.

“Residual Masculinity and Gendered Charisma” (chap. 6) explores the gendered implications of conversion. *Evangélicos* may be overwhelmingly female, but in Villa males are targeted. While sacrificing the street definition of machismo, *tigueraje*, Thornton suggests that the popularity of conversion into “*el serio*,” a serious man, offers young men a level of respectability that is wide-

ly acknowledged, with its own advantages and advances. Suggesting there is a dialectic between the “really bad” *tigueres* of the street – sin being the domain of men – and the sanctity they then achieve after conversion reinforces larger Dominican male values and expectations so that both the sinner and the saved are reinforced as cultural icons, lending a paradoxical respectability to both.

In chapter 7, “Pentecostal Social Currency and the Search for Respect,” Thornton traces the tangible benefits available to the converted. Respect is the symbolic currency easily exchanged for new opportunities, economic as well as social. While converts must guard that their seriousness is not jeopardized by questionable behavior or practice, the ultimate rewards are not recounted as salvation but rather as a renewed ability to garner the trust and confidence of family, friends, and neighbors, as well as potential employers. The ability to rise above, particularly for those extreme sinners of the past – gang leaders – makes the transformation more exceptional. It is through his repeated public performances that the convert can reify his redemption at the same time proclaim the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thornton takes the reader through thick description of the Pentecostal *evangélico* practice in the Dominican Republic, tracing the religious transformation in the urban barrio where Christianity has come to a distinct fork in the road. The assumption of Catholicism, so long a given in poor neighborhoods, is challenged in a way that provides converts a path not to salvation in the after-life but rather to respectability and identity in the mundane world they dismiss. If this book has any weaknesses, it may be that we did not hear enough from the Catholics who still fill the pews across the nation, even from poor neighborhoods, who do not subscribe to Dominican *vodú* nor accept the moral or spiritual claim of superiority or pure orthodoxy from *evangélicos*. But perhaps that is Thornton’s next project, one can only hope.

Kathleen N. Skoczen

Voell, Stéphane, and Iwona Kaliszewska (eds.): *State and Legal Practice in the Caucasus. Anthropological Perspectives on Law and Politics*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. 247 pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-4690-9. Price: £ 70.00

Political and social science scholars from “the West” have been paying attention to the Caucasus more than two decades, yet only during the last decade research has slowly started to diversify away from a domination by geopolitical thought. The edited volume “State and Legal Practice in the Caucasus” is a very important step on the path of empirical research on the Caucasus that goes beyond prevalent paradigms, venturing on the path of “Caucasus Paradigms” by Grant and Yalçın-Heckmann, another seminal anthropological contribution in pointing to the specific importance of pluralisms in the history and contemporaneity of the Caucasus.

This collection of articles with a focus on Caucasus as one single region is also exemplary for the study of legal and state practice in anthropology in general. Anthropologists, ethnographers, and social scientists from

Russia, from the whole of Caucasus region, as well as from “the West”, all pertaining to different generations, have contributed to the volume, that consequently merges different academic and scholarly traditions. In particular, the volume – and the editors – have attempted to bring the Soviet tradition of ethnography into dialogue with the Western anthropological ones. They have also advocated to embrace some assets of Soviet anthropological tradition into a “Western” one, the latter of which now dominates the social sciences not only among young researchers in the Caucasus but globally. With its emphasis on a historical perspective, this unchallenged strength of Soviet ethnographic tradition becomes expedient especially for Caucasus given its complex historical entanglements. Underscored by Arutiunov’s contribution on the historically continuous presence of several interlocked layers of legal practice ranging from imperial law, *adat*, and sharia to today’s de-facto states, the editors Voell and Kaliszewska rightfully outline the need for *longue-durée* perspectives on the Caucasus and the fact that Western social science oriented researchers can and should deliberately learn from the local research tradition of thinking in historical dimensions instead of displaying an often slightly condescending attitude. However, a genuine appreciation of historical dimensions entails a critical interrogation of prevalent historical narratives as well as to seriously scrutinize underlying concepts of agency and historical change more broadly. Kaliszewska and Voell rightfully underline that all contributions “... focus on conceptions of order” and “... how [they] are enforced, used, followed and staged in social networks and legal practice” (19). “People may arbitrarily opt for one law or another, mix them, create something new or simply ignore the law and act as they want to. In most cases, however, people are not free to make their own choices, and a concrete legal framework is forced upon them by existing power relations” (19). The whole edited volume’s contributions are about the often contingent manifestations of agency between choices and constraints in specific contemporary or historical Caucasian settings. Jalabadze and Janiashvili’s article points to a broader challenge couched in minor details that the editors could have addressed in the introduction to great benefit for the volume and future research. On the one hand, Jalabadze and Janiashvili emphasize the totalitarian nature of the Stalinist regime, but on the other hand, they highlight the fact that “civil legal conflicts between Svans were settled almost entirely on the basis of traditional law during the Soviet period” (40). Without denying the tragic Stalinist totalitarian grip on society, here an opportunity has been lost to show the omnipresence of plural legal practice. The contradiction between the Soviet system’s attempts and claims, on the one hand, and continuing plural legal practice, on the other, could have been used for a more theoretical appraisal of how and which spaces for plural legal practice remain in totalitarian societies where there are virtually no choices, but constraints. In short, cracks in the overall “totalitarian regime” narrative can be critically examined, researchers can better appreciate theoretical implications of micro-level practices that tell wholly different stories,