local contexts of meaning and power. It does this by distinguishing different layers in the human rights processes, from transnational elites who work effectively in the global terrain of rights making, down to local complainants who are trying to resolve personal problems like an abusive husband or unfair inheritance practices. The process of translation goes both ways. "Thought of as human rights violations, local problems become issues that a global audience can understand" (227). Often this leads to distortions and superficial interpretations of complex issues that may not further social justice, such as proposals to ban village mediation in Fiji because it is sometimes abused in being applied to cases of rape. In the other direction, effective translators can help local people with grievances recast their problems in ways that compel responses by national legislators and courts. Merry shows, however, that when human rights programs and ideas are translated into local cultural terms, this occurs at a superficial level. They are appropriated and translated but are not indigenized, because to "blend completely with the surrounding social world is to lose the radical possibilities of human rights. It is the unfamiliarity of these ideas that makes them effective in breaking old modes of thought" (178). The novelty of the ideas in this book, and the clarity with which they are presented, should do the same.

While the book as a whole is exciting, not all of the pages are quite as fascinating. The examination in chapter 3 of the work of creating and negotiating human rights in the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" can become a bit mind-numbing, but that seems to be an accurate reflection of the actual process itself, where many hours by many people are devoted to the nuances of particular phrases. Overall, the book makes major contributions not simply to studies of human rights and gender violence, but also to our knowledge of law, globalization, culture, and power in a world where transcultural ideas have an important capacity to promote change, but only through the processes by which they are mobilized, translated, and appropriated. Alan Smart

Morris, Brian: Religion and Anthropology. A Critical Introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 350 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-61779-6. Price: £ 16.99

Brian Morris has once again provided students and teachers of the anthropology of religion with a highly readable, erudite text. It could equally form the basis of an undergraduate or masters course, or provide an introduction to the scope of ethnographic and theoretical interests and approaches to religion. Morris's 1987 textbook, "Anthropological Studies of Religion" (Cambridge), an invaluable reference source of theories, authors, and ethnographic works, was probably read more by those teaching the subject than by undergraduates. "Religion and Anthropology," however, is more approachable, inviting the uninitiated into the sometimes arcane world of academic writing and scholarship.

After a brief summary of the various approaches to religion that formed the basis of his earlier work (intellectualist, emotionalist, structuralist, interpretive, cognitive, phenomenological, and sociological), Morris focuses on the sociological approach, which he rightly identifies as the dominant trend in anthropological studies of religion, at least within the British tradition. It was also this approach, according to Morris, that has most successfully combined anthropology's dual heritage as an interpretive and scientific discipline. The approach taken in "Religion and Anthropology" is regional, thematic, and ethnographic and, inevitably in a book that takes the whole world as its remit, eclectic in its choice of material. Not surprisingly, the subject matter reflects the particular interests and expertise that Morris has developed over a long and distinguished career, including, for instance, strong chapters on the relationship between Christianity and African traditions, and on Paganism, New Age religions, and Western esotericism. At first glance the volume looks a little like a religious studies text, with several of the world's major religious traditions treated to separate entities, but Morris's intention is clearly neither to explicate the theologies of the various traditions nor to present a rounded or balanced picture of their beliefs and practices. Rather, he uses ethnographic studies to illustrate some of the ways in which religion within these traditions is lived out, claiming that anthropology is "unique among the human sciences in both putting an emphasis and value on cultural difference, thus offering a cultural critique of Western capitalism and its culture, and in emphasizing people's shared humanity, thus enlarging our sense of moral community and placing humans squarely 'within nature' " (2).

The adjective "critical" in the subtitle could well refer to Morris's scathing comments on various forms of postmodern theorising, that have become detached from their empiricist roots, often appearing as nothing more than an unreflective mouthpiece for certain forms of Western capitalism. While justly criticising writers who caricature the theoretical positions of their forebears, Morris might well accept in that he is at times in danger of doing the same for "postmodernism." Many of the critiques of the anthropological method Johannes Fabian and others preached in the late 1970s and early 1980s, for instance, have been quietly accepted and absorbed into the academic mainstream. Not all anthropologists who describe themselves or their work as postmodernist believe that all life is a text, that all ethnography is autobiography, or all "truths" are fictions (although some may).

The ten chapters in "Religion and Anthropology" look at Shamanism, Buddhism and Spirit-Cults, Islam and Popular Religion, Hinduism and New Religious Movements, Christianity and Religion in Africa, African-American Religions, Religions in Melanesia, and Neopaganism and the New Age Movement. If the intention were to be comprehensive geographically or in its coverage of religious traditions there would be some obvious gaps (Judaism, Confucianism, Shinto, Sikhism and many other traditions get no mention, and Australia is unrepresented as a geographical region). The intention is not,

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however, to provide the kind of survey text commonly found in religious studies, but to illustrate something of the variety of topics and places that anthropologists study, and to give due weight to ethnographies, however atypical or apparently insignificant the people and practices described may be, as unique and valuable descriptions and interpretations of human action.

If Morris can be harsh on interpretive and postmodernist fashions, he also has little time for anthropologists as advocates of a particular tradition, nor for authors whose starting point is that the metaphysical or supernatural might actually have a dimension above and beyond other aspects of culture – that there really might be "something out there" to which the human person responds, rather than invents. This is dangerous territory for anthropologists, but Edith Turner, among others, is trying to unite the experiential, interpretive, and empirical traditions of anthropology in her focus on religious experience as "ethnographic fact." This contrasts with the rather more common anthropological perspective that regards religious experience as mistaken, embarrassing, or unmentionable.

Some of the thumbnail descriptions of ethnographic works, individuals, or themes are a little too brief to do their subject matter justice. Ethnographies are used with little or no attempt to bring the data up to date (an observation rather than a critique), but this can be misleading. The former bishop of Lusaka in Zambia, Emmanuel Milingo, for example, is described as an excommunicated Roman Catholic member of the Unification Church (176 f.). His (failed) "Moonie" marriage, period of "rehabilitation" in a Catholic community in Argentina, and reconciliation with the late John Paul II are nowhere mentioned.

This is a highly personal account of anthropological studies of religion, and it is the author's voice that makes the volume so eminently readable. Whether or not one agrees with the judgements expressed (and by and large I am in sympathy with them), they serve as a point of orientation in a wide-ranging and engaging look at the contributions of anthropology to our understanding of a central facet of human existence. Fiona Bowie

Mühlfried, Florian: Postsowjetische Feiern. Das Georgische Bankett im Wandel. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2006. 228 pp. ISBN 3-89821-601-2. Preis: € 25.90

Es gibt nur wenig deutschsprachige ethnologische Literatur über Georgien. Deshalb ist Florian Mühlfrieds Arbeit über das georgische Bankett sehr zu begrüßen. Wer sich – ob als EthnologIn oder BesucherIn – in Georgien aufhält, wird bemerken, dass mit Einladungen zu einem *supra*, diesem "strikt reglementierten, durch Trinksprüche strukturierten und durch einen Tischmeister geleiteten Bankett" (Buchdeckelrücken) die Absicht verfolgt wird, "georgisches Kulturgut" zu vermitteln. Die Anlässe dafür sind vielfältig: ein Übergangsritus (Taufe, Hochzeit, Beerdigung), ein soziales Ereignis (Geburtstag, ein bestandenes Examen) oder – sehr häufig – das Zelebrieren der notorischen georgischen Gastfreundschaft. Immer wieder wird auf die für den jeweiligen Anlass obligatorischen traditionellen Speisen hingewiesen, auf die Abfolge von Trinksprüchen, auf die Sitzordnung und auf die besonderen Gefäße, in denen – regional unterschiedlich – auf bestimmte Themen Wein getrunken wird. "Das *supra* wird oft von den Gastgebern dazu genutzt zu zeigen: So sind wir! Das ist unsere Kultur!" (36). Genauso habe ich es erlebt.

Mühlfried deutet: "Dieser Gestus … dient der Inszenierung von Identität" (36). Wieso Inszenierung? Ist diese Aussage eine dem Konstruktivismus geschuldete Banalität? Mitnichten. Die Antwort gibt Mühlfried mit seiner Abhandlung über die Geschichte des *supra*. Mich überraschte, dass es das *supra* in seiner gegenwärtigen Form als "Distinktionsmerkmal georgischer Kultur" (131) erst seit dem 19. Jh. gibt und es nicht – wie auch mir stets vermittelt wurde – ein "Paradebeispiel einer 'ewigen' Tradition" ist, also eine "kulturelle Institution, … deren Entstehen einer mythischen Urzeit zugeordnet wird" (111). Im Jahr 2000 vertraten "Angehörige der neuen Bildungselite die These, dass das *supra* erst im 19. Jh. unter dem Assimilierungsdruck der russischen Besatzer entstanden sei" (111 f.). Diese Aussage ist für georgische Traditionalisten schockierend. Mühlfried hat zwei Lager ausgemacht: "Auf der einen Seite steht die von ihren Gegnern so bezeichnete 'rote Intelligenz', für die das *supra* tief in der 'Volkskultur' verwurzelt ist; auf der anderen Seite stehen die von westlichen Fördergeldern abhängigen neuen Intellektuellen, die als 'Stipendien-Esser' verspottet werden und das *supra* als rezentes Phänomen begreifen" (137). Ich wage zu behaupten, dass die letztere These noch nicht ins Volksbewusstsein durchgesickert ist. Aber auch wenn das *supra* nicht so tief in der Kulturgeschichte verwurzelt ist, wie es sich die GeorgierInnen gerne vorstellen, so ist es doch tief in ihre Sozialpsyche eingedrungen. "Auch in Georgien gewinnt der Diskurs über die Gefahren der Globalisierung zunehmend an Gewicht. Wie in den meisten postsowjetischen Gesellschaften ist dabei Anti-Globalisierung keine liberale, sondern eine nationale Haltung. … *supra* als verhaltenstypische Differenzierung und Enkodierung kultureller Normen kommt in diesem Kontext besondere Bedeutung bei der diskursiven und performativen Konstruktion nationaler Identität zu" (138 f.). Mir haben die Ausführungen Mühlfrieds geholfen, das mir manchmal verschroben erscheinende Beharren auf dem postulierten Alter bestimmter Bräuche und Einrichtungen einordnen zu können.

Andere Aspekte des *supra*, die Mühlfried ebenfalls betrachtet, waren mir als Teilnehmerin unmittelbar einsichtig: das *supra* als Inszenierung von Männlichkeit durch Trinkfestigkeit, als Bildungseinrichtung für traditionelles Wissen durch den Inhalt und die Ausgefeiltheit der Trinksprüche und vor allem das *supra* als Inszenierung von *gender*-Differenzierung (Frauen tragen die Speisen auf, Männer sind für den Wein zuständig, getrennte Sitzordnung von Männern und Frauen, Trinksprüche fast ausschließlich von Männern ausgesprochen und bei Frauen nur legitim als "Antwort" auf eine auf sie gemünzte Rede). Es ist Mühlfrieds Verdienst, das *su-*

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