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Review

Reviewed Work(s): A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine. by John K. Nelson

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subvert the very dialectics between the erudite and the popular that is its dynamics. This attack on popular culture, he finds, not only renders Pentecostalism locally popular, but gradually establishes a new global Pentecostal culture purged of the personal clientelism and elitism that the *basistas* abhor but cannot avoid.

As a specialist I am stirred to think again but not completely convinced by all this. To make his case about the gathering Pentecostal cultural revolution in Brazil, Lehmann argues that differences between the neo-Pentecostals and the older Pentecostal Churches are of degree and stage of development, rather than profound and qualitative as Paul Freston and others have found them. Lehmann's Catholic activists too, some cross-generational differences allowed, are more homogeneous than Daniel Levine has found them to be elsewhere in Latin America. The divide between Pentecostal culture and beliefs and practices common in the popular classes is held to be stark, though Lehmann himself vividly evokes continuities in his account of neo-Pentecostal exorcism. Lehmann's arguments about homogeneity within religious traditions and differences between them are lively, deeply intelligent and generally well supported from his own fieldwork data. But there is other evidence to be considered which leaves me thinking his syntheses and differentiations are overdrawn. I wondered why, when he allows the unavoidable limitations of his own fieldwork, he did not admit more of the voices recorded by other gifted fieldworkers such as Cecilia Mariz to enrich and challenge his classifications.

Enough of specialist critique and complaint. As a specialist I welcome this book: it does the subject proud. It shows that religion in Latin America, or indeed Brazil, is a prime case for those who would understand cultural flows and changing patterns of hegemony and agency in the global village. Above all it shows those of us with these ambitions how we might proceed.

ROWAN IRELAND

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NELSON, JOHN K. *A year in the life of a Shinto shrine*. xii, 286 pp., illus., plates, maps, bibliogr. Seattle, London: Univ. of Washington Press, 1996. \$35.00 (cloth), \$17.50 (paper)

In view of the pervasive influence of Shinto within many aspects of Japanese culture, it is surprising that there has been little ethno-

graphic research into the life of Shinto shrines in contemporary urban Japan. Nelson's book is therefore long overdue in helping to fill this major gap. It provides a reasonably comprehensive description not only of the major rituals at a Shinto shrine during the course of a year but also reveals some of the attitudes of participants towards those rites.

The book is arranged chronologically according to the major rituals during each of the four seasons, with several other rituals mentioned but not described in Appendix I. Although descriptions of public rites can be useful as ethnographic accounts, some of the more interesting material comes from the occasional insights into what goes on behind the scenes in planning meetings for the dolls' day festival or the New Year rituals (pp. 79-83, 203-4). Other original material (in chapters 6, 13 and 14) consists of interviews with priests about their own biographies and their views on shrine life – including some of their private gripes – which furnish realistic glimpses of social relationships among the priests.

In common with most other ethnographies, there is the question of representativeness. Certainly, the shrine in Nagasaki that Nelson studied had some unique features, including one of a deity apparently enshrined within what was originally a Roman Catholic relic (pp. 31-2). Nevertheless, the types of rites, their form and the general ethos of the shrine all seem to be fairly typical of major Shinto shrines around Japan. In this way the book is a valuable resource for anyone wanting to gain a better understanding of the place of Shinto shrines within Japanese society.

Studies of this kind are inevitably bounded by the degree to which outsiders are permitted to enter into the life of an institution. Nelson's ethnography therefore focuses on public rituals with only passing mention of other rituals performed for individuals or companies, such as weddings or the purification of motor vehicles, although he does describe one rite performed at the commencement of building work. There is only passing mention of the involvement of Shinto priests in rituals to avert anticipated misfortunes at certain ages in a person's life, or disasters thought to come from an inauspicious alignment of buildings, even though the shrine's high priest described this as one of the most important services performed at the shrine (p. 183). It is surprising too that there is little reference to divination even though his caption to figure 9 shows that oracles called *omikuji* are sold at the shrine he studied.

Obviously, there is no need for Nelson to

repeat information available elsewhere (such as in Joy Hendry's book on marriage or in my *The unseen face of Japan*, on popular religion), but Nelson's focus on formal public rituals could easily give the impression that there is little else to Shinto. It would be like describing a church in terms of Christmas, Easter and other special services. Nelson's strength lies in his original ethnography of those public rites and his glimpses into what might go on 'behind the scenes' at a Shinto shrine. As such it constitutes a very useful source through which to gain a helpful perspective on an institution which remains an important influence on Japanese culture.

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Tunbridge Wells

TOULIS, NICOLE RODRIGUEZ. *Believing identity: Pentecostalism and the mediation of Jamaican ethnicity and gender in England*. xvi, 304 pp., illus., tables, bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berg, 1997. £34.95 (cloth), £14.95 (paper)

Believing identity may be a somewhat awkward title, but it aptly describes the construction of identity by a group of believers, the membership of the small King Street congregation of the New Testament Church of God in Birmingham. Indebted to Hall, Alexander, Gilroy and other scholars for new thinking on ethnic identity, Nicole Toulis describes for us the process whereby these African-Caribbean *saints* acquire and maintain a sense of self that allows them to claim both an ethnic specificity and a universality transcending race and ethnicity, within a racist society. Her description and explanation of female gender identity in the congregation are exceptional.

Founded by Jamaicans, the church operates as a family whose members are bound together by a network of fictive and non-fictive kinship ties which serve as a medium through which they, especially the women, are able to negotiate a sense of personal and group ethnic identity that gives them choice to claim both difference and affinity and to reconcile the apparent and the real in the structure of authority and power between the genders. The church replicates the paradigm of the biological family, which in its Jamaican variant presents motherhood as the defining feature of womanhood but in a manner independent of relationships with husband or father. The maturity, assertiveness and prestige of Jamaican motherhood allow women to achieve the status of *Mother* in the church, from

which position they are able to claim equality with the men, while at the same time being submissive to formal patriarchal authority as an appropriate form of behaviour within the Christian family. Here the Jamaican proverb *Man is the head, but woman is the neck* is used by female members to describe what for Toulis is the agency of women in assuming responsibility for the representation of the entire group. As the neck they support their men in so far as the latter are the embodiment of male responsibility and sexual restraint. Male power and authority to represent themselves as the official voice of the community are thus conditional on the validation of the wives and mothers in the church. In this way they succeed in 'negating a "powerless" Black male gender identity of deviancy, irresponsibility and threatening sexual promiscuity' (p. 264).

Seeking to contextualize the construction of gender identity, following Marilyn Strathern, Toulis traces the historical, social and cultural configurations in the construction of personhood and self by this group of believers. Against the background of religious multiplicity in the practices of the migrants both in Jamaica and the UK, and the growth of alienation in Britain, the author argues that in turning to their own form of Pentecostalism the Black migrants are able to satisfy their 'need for consolidation' (p. 117) of the fractured socio-religious order. English religion, including English Pentecostalism, could no longer claim to be symbolic of the social order. African-Caribbean Pentecostalism, on the other hand, 'privileges values like thrift, discipline and individual conscience which are compatible with the wider value system and with life in Britain' (p. 120). This simple Durkheimian formulation, rather than the earlier functionalist theories of deprivation, anti-assimilationism, etc., is offered as the author's main explanation for the rapid growth of African-Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain.

Yet I think Toulis is too dismissive of the argument for continuity proposed by Calley (p. 112), though she is quite right that the assimilationist paradigm he operates in ends up blaming the migrants for their insularity, instead of the society for its racism. Calley argues that African-Caribbean Pentecostalism in England is simply a transplant of the familiar. Yet it is precisely this line of argument that Toulis herself borrows to explain the rise of Pentecostalism in the sending-country, Jamaica, where it succeeded in combining aspects of traditional folk beliefs with Christianity. If people in Jamaica are turning to Pentecostalism because, as she quotes