

stance toward earlier tribally specific histories of American Indian peoples, Usner draws interpretive inspiration from anthropological and historical studies of cross-cultural exchange, borderland situations, and regional interaction systems. In the historiography of North America, this perspective is associated most closely with Richard White's model of the colonial "middle ground" that characterized interethnic relations in the Great Lakes region (*The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*, Cambridge University Press, 1991). Usner recognizes that refocusing historical interest on regional interaction represents a broader interdisciplinary trend. In contrast to White, he sees the model of frontier exchange in broader temporal terms. In several essays in this collection, Usner shows how American Indian strategies for economic and social interaction with the region's diverse colonial population of African and European peoples continued not only into the U.S. period but also through the period of Louisiana and Mississippi statehood. In contrast to White's middle-ground model, the frontier exchange economy described by Usner has roots in precolonial social and cultural practices and lingers on in important ways after the frontier—from an Anglo-American point of view—was declared closed.

In his first chapter, Usner orients readers to the changing pace and concerns of historical scholarship focused on southeastern American Indians during the 20th century. In the second essay, he sets the tone for the volume as a whole with a case study examining the history of the Natchez people, whom he views within a framework that treats the lower Mississippi valley region as a multiethnic borderland. Here he draws inspiration most directly from contemporary work in cultural anthropology. Chapter 3, presenting the region's population history, lays the foundation for the areal histories that comprise the remainder of the book. In those chapters, Usner traces the emergence and transformation of the system of colonial interdependence, the central concern of both this work and his earlier monograph *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992). In these essays, Usner is aware of the issues in social theory that his particular historical case illuminates, even as he stays close to the documentary sources. While compensating

for a scholarly trend that privileges political intrigue and the social force of global structures, Usner demonstrates a keen awareness of the interpretive balance to be struck between granting agency to Native American (and enslaved) individuals and populations and recognizing the demographic and economic forces at work in the larger Atlantic world that had an impact on this corner of North America.

In framing potential achievements of current work in southeastern Indian studies, Usner expresses the hope that members of the Native American communities concerned, as well as the general public, will view accessible works of southeastern native historiography as valuable. As an effective introduction to the social history of Greater Louisiana, I recommend Usner's essays to such audiences and to specialists in the anthropology of the southeastern United States. While anthropologists may be pleased to note their influence outside their own field, they should also recognize the ways that historical research such as Usner's can contribute to broader projects of understanding structural transformation and cultural persistence in multiethnic societies. For cultural anthropologists interested in seeing how ideas now central to their discipline are enriching the work of U.S. historians, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley* is a commendable starting point.

**Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana.** *Birgit Meyer*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1999. ix + 265 pp., maps, tables, appendix, notes, glossary, bibliography, index.

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This remarkable and finely documented ethnography is based on the history and contemporary lives of Peki Ewe Christians as they invent a modernity that accommodates the active presence of the Devil. Meyer states that her purpose is to examine "the relationship between conversion, modernity, (dis)enchantment and the image of Satan" (p. xxi). Facing the title page is a Ghanaian illustration of "the delights of heaven and the terrors of hell," showing at the top Jesus accompanied by tall modern buildings, the words "Judgement Day—No Partiality" painted across the middle, and at the bottom a tortured regime of

modernity gone awry due to its truck with paganism. "This . . . depicts heaven as the ultimate fulfillment of modernity" (p. 214).

The first chapter addresses the nature of Peki engagement with Pietist missionary Christianity, and thus the origins of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). A vibrant interest in the Devil energized the work of 19th-century Protestant zealots who went to Peki to "open the Ewe's eyes about their condition and fight Satan . . . the Ewe religion was fascinating to the missionaries, because it could provide them with more insight into the realm of darkness that obsessed Awakened Pietists" (p. 51). The EPC, however, did not allow for any emotional practice of dealing with Satan in church. In a later chapter, Meyer writes about disagreements inside the EPC over what Christians ought to do about Satan and his demons and how the resulting conflict brought secession of large numbers of church members and the development of two Pentecostal groups—Agbelengor and the new EPC "of Ghana." (Paradoxically, the Africanization of the old EPC helped bring about the split.) Meyer provides rich details for contextualizing changes taking place today with substantial chapters on the doctrines and practices of Pietists in Germany, on the Bremen missionaries and the history of the EPC in Peki since the mid-19th century, on Ewe religion, and on the two Pentecostal groups.

Refusing simplistic social science divisions between the modern and the traditional and between pagan and Christian, Meyer finds such divisions in Peki Christian discourse. Images of Satan and possession by demons take center stage among Pentecostals. They must cut themselves off from generations-old obligations to serve ancestors and lineage gods, but abandoning kinship and spiritual ties does not come without a cost (a welcome one, in a certain sense). As artifacts of a rejected world, Ewe spirits (re)possess Christians; and the church translates these spirits as demons who must be exorcised. "By creating room for the expression of the satanic in the context of deliverance, Pentecostals are allowed to enact otherwise forbidden or muted aspects of themselves" (p. 211).

Church members are commanded to leave behind all Ewe practices and family links judged as pagan. At the same time, they are permitted to bring their pagan past and discarded family spirits into the church through

spirit possession and "deliverance" (p. 165). Meyer demonstrates that Pentecostal insistence on the irreconcilability between Christianity and Ewe spirit worship allows for their continued proximity in practice. This is, however, not a tale of syncretism in the usual sense. The demands of Pentecostal Christianity require a radical break from a selfhood rooted in lineage and Ewe spirit worship. In addition to separating themselves from family engaged in Ewe rituals, Pentecostals are encouraged to give priority to their nuclear family—they may accumulate wealth without parsing it out to their extended family. These changes push Christians into a certain individualism, thereby facilitating their insertion into a particular modern way of life.

Meyer thus carefully traces a specific West African Christianity, one charged with old and new Ewe religious concepts and spirits. When discussing the operant distinctions between the EPC, the new EPC of Ghana, and the Agbelengor church, she illustrates how their different translations and treatments of the devil strengthen or weaken Peki Christians' espousal of modernity as well as their ability to remain Christian rather than go back to the (dis)satisfactions of Ewe spirit worship. Her account is enlivened by extraordinary narrations of Pentecostals' experiences with conversion, possession, and deliverance from demons. When people choose between alternatives to Ewe religion and to old EPC Christianity, their decisions are utterly connected to the economic, ideological, and psychological predicaments of West Africans struggling to accommodate and act upon a changing world. The author does not offer moral judgements regarding these diverse possibilities. Eschewing assessments of split consciousness or syncretism, Meyer sees different Peki Christianities and modernities as African, as is Ewe religion. She also argues that "Pentecostalism provides a bridge over which it is possible to move back and forth [between Christianity and Ewe religion] and thereby to thematise modernity's ambivalences" (p. 215).

Meyer describes relatively recent West African spirit orders (such as Mami Water) and magical practices (such as *dzo*), helping readers to understand the attraction of such ritual attachments and of what for numerous individuals would prove to be their antidote—Pentecostalism. Her references to various literatures on missionary history, conversion in

colonial contexts, and spirit possession provide a welcome review.

Meyer has produced a long-awaited ethnography of how multiple agencies craft specific West African forms of modernity. *Translating the Devil* is graced by narratives of the innermost registers of change—the intimate experience of the modern through conversion (often with the collaboration of the Devil) via the sufferings and ecstasies of Peki Ewe making choices.

**Night Skies of Aboriginal Australia: A Noctuary.** *Dianne Johnson.* Sydney: University of Sydney, 1998. 139 pp., drawings, charts, diagrams, appendixes, bibliography.

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Dianne Johnson delves into major and minor books, monographs, and articles on Australia's Aboriginal native population while eschewing original fieldwork. As a result, her book is both an exercise in scholarship and a great disappointment. I expected ethnoastronomy—Aboriginal astronomy and celestial beliefs about cosmology and cosmogony. What I found is Frazerian shreds and patches, often beginning with "Among the . . ." and then proceeding to list stars, asterisms, constellations, or beliefs while jumping all over both Australia and Tasmania, with occasional forays into other parts of the austral regions. The presentation style does not allow one to have a consistent view of any of the over 60 groups of people referenced in the text. Further, there is no discrimination between asterisms—or recognized star patterns (such as the Big Dipper)—located within constellations (in this case, Ursa Major).

The difficulties begin in the Preface (n.p.) with the statement, "until it slowly dawned [on the author] that all the so-named northern hemisphere constellations were drawn to make sense to northern hemisphere dwellers, with the result that many appear upside down to us southerners." The only way they can appear upside-down is if one takes a God's eye view rather than a human, earth-bound one. Along the path of the ecliptic (the path of the sun throughout a year and the path along which are located the zodiacal constellations), when given the same date, time, and orientation (that is, looking at the same spot in the

night sky say on August 1 at 9:00 p.m. of any given year), the appearance of any given constellation or asterism will be the same to viewers in all hemispheres.

During the course of a year, some constellations are visible and others are not. They also change their "tilt." Consider Capricornus, for example—a zodiacal constellation that lies between 330° and 300° along the path of the ecliptic. In either hemisphere, say on June 1 at midnight, Capricornus will be just slightly south of due east; its orientation, or shape, will also appear to be the same in both hemispheres, with the star Capricorni (Deneb Algiedi) pointing east. As the year progresses, the orientation and location of the constellation change to an earthbound viewer, so that by November 1 at midnight the constellation is plunging into the west with the star Capricorni (Deneb Algiedi) pointing north. By December 1 at midnight, the constellation is no longer visible. But it is not "upside down" even for those down under. There are many stars and constellations that are visible in the northern hemisphere and not in the southern, and vice-versa. It is only circumpolar constellations that are seen "right-side-up" or "upside-down," depending upon the time of year and the time of the night.

Because the visible stars change with one's latitude and horizon, it is imperative to know the latitude of the groups about which one is speaking. Johnson never specifies latitude for the groups or communities she considers. Nor, for that matter, is there a map locating the groups so that one may infer latitude. Appendix 4 (p. 139) does list the groups and communities discussed in the text with reference to the territories within Australia. But it is not helpful to know that Dharamba is to be found in New South Wales, a vast territory. More precise locations are essential to understand what people see when looking up at the night sky.

Nor is the anthropology convincing. On pages 4 and 5, Johnson rehashes old arguments about "science" when speaking of non-Western versus Western people. This section could have been strengthened by appeal to references and arguments later than the 1970s. There is a confusion of sex and gender, such as the statement, "the enactments of male and female were undertaken by each gender respectively" (p. 5). The social roles of gender are not necessarily equated with sex, as recent discussions of third and fourth genders between