

references to anthropological monographs are not entirely absent, the use Jiménez makes of them is very occasional and in no way cumulative. There is no feedback that shows how the pattern he discerns can lead to a more meaningful interpretation of each singular instance.

One can admire the brave attempt to tackle critically what is very often taken for granted by looking at such large issues, but I am afraid that many readers will be put off by the language he uses. It reflects the opacity of much of the prose of many of his favourite authors, among others Marilyn Strathern and Gilles Deleuze. Several key concepts in his particular language game are only exemplified by metaphors the source (tenor) of which will be quite unfamiliar to most readers, with the result that their target (vehicle) will become even more obscure. It is also confusing that Jiménez gives a very peculiar interpretation of some of these sources. For example in his epistemology 'strabismus' means that the objects held in view by one eye are playfully deformed by the other eye. This generates 'knowledge' as 'a relation of difference between differential orders' (p. 25). Actually strabismus or squinting appears to be a pathological condition that has to be rectified at a young age to prevent the atrophy of the afflicted eye and loss of one's normal stereoscopic vision.

Jiménez also uses interpretations of the past to think with. However, he is not interested in problems of historical research, but in the construction of models that could elucidate the present. It is a creative piecing together of what others have written without any consideration of factors that one would take into account when judging the merits of work in one's own discipline, such as empirical adequacy. He admits this quite explicitly when writing 'Deleuze's take on the baroque is interesting because of his open disregard for the concept's historicity or sociology' (p. 16). Perhaps this is another instance of strabismus, but not one anthropologists should be comfortable with as it does not do justice to the work of historians and even less to the lives of the people they study.

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**Joshi, Vibha. 2013. *A matter of belief: Christian conversion and healing in north-east India*. Oxford: Berghahn Books. xxx + 298 pp. Hb.: \$95.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-85745-595-6.**

*A matter of belief* explores the complex, multi-faceted relationship between indigenous and Christian healing practices in Nagaland, which lies at the crossroads between South and Southeast Asia. The author, Vibha Joshi, is a long-term ethnographer whose familiarity with this war-torn region of northeastern India dates back to 1985. Accordingly, Joshi's ethno-historical narrative benefits from her deep empathy for her Angami Naga interlocutors and her extensive knowledge of their language, culture, religion and region. The book argues, first, that the growing popularity of different Christian denominations in Nagaland since the 1950s – Baptist, Pentecostal and Catholic in particular – ought to be understood in the context of a bloody secessionist war with India, and second, that Christianity intervenes as a system of healing practices in this context of war, accommodating non-Christian or indigenous healing traditions, as it attends to the scars and wounds of an oppressed population that is fragmented internally into clans and factions.

The Nagas, Joshi explains, are a hill people with historically fluid cultural and political identities that are markedly different from plains-dwellers in South and Southeast Asia. To this extent, they are typical of communities in the mountainous region that Willem van Schendel (2002) has recently labelled 'Zomia'. Linguistically diverse and endowed with a rich body of indigenous medicinal practices, the Nagas became subjects of the British Empire in the mid-19th century. Christian missionaries followed thereafter, and a growing number of Nagas began adopting the new faith without abandoning their existing 'animistic' beliefs, healing methods and structures of village organisation. Indeed, colonial anthropology reified and reinforced these 'traditional' aspects

of Naga life, which shaped modern political identities under British and Indian rule.

Joshi's fieldwork among the Angami Nagas, a sub-group among this Tibeto-Burman speaking people, enables her to painstakingly outline their beliefs and practices regarding the body and spirit. Her data on the 'Angami spirit world' (p. 53) and 'dualisms in concepts of body, disease and illness' (p. 70) are compared and, in some cases, complemented by J.H. Hutton's celebrated ethnographic monograph written nearly a century ago. She argues against a commonly held view among anthropologists of Christianity that the new faith marks a rupture or a clean break from earlier worldviews. Neither is it the case, however, that the popular notion of religious syncretism can explain the realities faced by Nagas. *A matter of belief* shows persuasively that 'patchy continuity' (p. 9) better describes the outcome of historical interactions and exchanges between Christian and non-Christian systems of healing. Patchy continuity implies a partial openness to contestation and reworking of existing practices, whether those relating to healing and the body or translation of the Gospel. As Joshi puts it, the 'existential concerns of animistic religion' have come to coexist with Christian ideals of 'empathy, salvation, guidance and admonition' (p. 81).

Whereas Baptist missionaries have worked with and alongside 'traditional' healers in Naga villages since the late 19th century, the Catholic, Revival and Pentecostal churches have grown since Nagaland was absorbed into India in 1947. The movement for Naga independence has been overwhelmingly Protestant, and well-known evangelists such as Billy Graham have helped to tie local beliefs and practices to a global Christian community. Yet violent repression by the Indian army and the fracturing of Naga identity along clan lines have also transformed Christianity into a force for peace and reconciliation in the region. On the one hand, Christian organisations have actively participated in peacebuilding negotiations between competing Naga militant groups, while on the other, churches offer solace and community in

exceedingly difficult circumstances of war. The Indo-Naga secessionist war makes brief, fleeting appearances in *A matter of belief*, perhaps owing to restrictions on research and writing on the subject. Nonetheless, the spectre of the conflict haunts the subjects of Joshi's ethnography as they seek to heal and remake their lives and communities.

This is a book that deserves to be read widely by students of indigenous medicine and articulations of Christianity worldwide. Its focus on the intimate politics of the body distinguishes it from anthropological studies of Christianity that emphasise more overtly political interactions between modern states, missions and colonised peoples. Such a focus on the politics of the body opens up exciting possibilities of cutting-edge scholarship on the intimacies of everyday Christianity in Asia and beyond.

#### References

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**Körling, Gabriella. 2011. *In search of the state. An ethnography of public service provision in urban Niger*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. *Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology* 51. 299 pp. Pb.: \$77.50. ISBN 978-91-554-8127-8.**

This book reports a PhD study (at the University of Uppsala) of the formation of the state in three urban settings in Niger. This interest in the state leads Gabriella Körling to examine a series of public service developments in these neighbourhoods involving education (schools) and health care (dispensaries and a maternity ward). She traces the emergence of these