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**Personal Knowledge and  
Beyond:  
Reshaping the Ethnography  
of Religion**

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Introduction

*Whither Ethnography? Transforming the  
Social-Scientific Study of Religion*

*James V. Spickard and J. Shawn Landres*

The choice is not between regretting the past and embracing the future. Nor is it between the anthropologist as hero and as the very model of a postmodern major general. It is between, on the one hand, sustaining a research tradition upon which a discipline, "soft" and half-formed perhaps but morally essential, has been built and, on the other, "displacing," "reworking," "renegotiating," "reimagining," or "reinventing" that tradition, in favor of a more "multiply centered," "pluralistic," "dialogical" approach, one which sees poking into the lives of people who are not in a position to poke into yours as something of a colonial relic.

—Clifford Geertz (1998, 72)

*Locating Ethnography*

There has long been a methodological divide in the social-scientific study of religion. On one side, there have been "the generalizers": those who use polling data and membership lists to present the overall trends of religious life. On the other side, there have been "the particularizers": those who show us the minute details of specific religions, letting us see their concrete effects on small numbers of people. The former tell us what kind of people

are religious and how they are religious, and let us know what accompanies their religious behavior. The latter explore what religion means to the individuals they interview, how they make sense of it, and how they use it to make sense of their world. As Jürgen Habermas (1968) showed over thirty years ago, these two styles are each valuable, though for different ends. They arise out of complementary human interests. The first comes from a desire to find lawlike regularities in human life; the second stems from a wish to understand how particular people see the world.

Generalizing inquiry seeks the rules of social life, the laws of social motion, to paraphrase Marx, by which we can better understand human life in general. Its prime focus is on "How?": How do religions form? How do they change over time? How do they attract members? How do they lose them? Such questions are best posed comparatively, so scholars using this approach look for the patterns behind disparate cases. Statistical researchers, for example, try to generalize from persons to populations. Anthropological ethnologists, to take a second example, catalog traits from many cultures to see if they can find the rules that govern such combinations. Each treats individual cases only to the extent that they illustrate wider trends. Generalizing social science believes that truth is found in such patterns, not details.

Particularizers do not look for such general social laws but seek to understand specific communities of people. They focus on people's intentions: Why do these people say they do what they do? What are they intending when they pray? What do they mean when they say they are serving "God" or "the gods"? Such questions help them to understand individuals and communities rather than explaining whole societies. They may even have wider significance—indeed, many contemporary particularizers connect the patterns they find in their local sites to society at large. Nevertheless, particularizers keep their informants front and center. They remain focused on a specific time and place; their findings are set in history rather than transcending it. These scholars do not tell us what people-in-general do, but tell us what some people do in the particular community that they have observed. Only afterward do they consider how these details relate to the whole. This is a different intellectual product—one that focuses on human meaning, not laws and patterns.

Ethnographers are good examples of such particularizers, for they choose a specific research locale, which they spend several years getting to know. It might be a New York synagogue (Davidman 1991), a Chicago Catholic parish (Neitz 1987), a Japanese healing cult (Spickard 1991a), or

a particular practitioner of Haitian Vodou (K. Brown 1991). Or ethnographers might study networks of Appalachian snake handlers (Birckhead 1997), Cuban-exile visitors to a Miami shrine (Tweed 1997a), or professional women who joined the Rajneesh movement (Goldman 1999). They listen and watch, question, think, and listen again—always trying to make sense of their informants' lives. Whether their topic is a foreign pilgrimage site or the church next door, whether the resulting prose is academic or popular, the ethnographer has "been there." Their research succeeds when they can portray the natives as if from the inside.

There are, of course, other terms that capture this "generalizing" vs. "particularizing" divide—if not exactly as we have framed it here, at least from related angles. Besides the "ethnology" vs. "ethnography" pair just mentioned, anthropologists have distinguished "nomothetic" from "ideographic" and "etic" from "emic" as basic approaches to social life (Harris 1968). Sociologists have preferred terms like "comparative" vs. "descriptive," though they have lately embraced "ethnography" as well.<sup>1</sup> Although these sets are not identical, the first term generally implies a wish to find society's underlying rules, while the second term implies a wish to understand a social or cultural scene in its full individuality.

Particularizers traditionally have held less status than generalizers in the social-scientific study of religion and have been outnumbered by them, though this is now changing. Quantitative sociologists and psychologists have historically ruled the field, and they get their data from surveys, not from the minutiae of religious life. These generalizers have long claimed their broad results to be more authoritative in the development of general theories of religion. Academic anthropology has been the ethnographers' haunt, but few anthropologists attend the meetings of such groups as the Association for the Sociology of Religion, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and the Religious Research Association (to name just the three most prominent in North America). Few anthropologists write for their journals, and religion-specific groups of anthropologists have been slow to form. The fact that the American Anthropological Association usually meets at the same time of year as the American Academy of Religion—and in a different city—does not help matters. Such institutional barriers have slowed ethnography's growth among scholars of the religious life.

On the other hand, a number of non-anthropologists who came of intellectual age during the 1970s and 1980s have come to value the ethnographic way. Seeing how different religions are from each other,

they distrust premature generalization. The rapid growth of religious options in this period—from the flowering of new religions to the rise of the Christian Right—made ethnographic research all the more necessary, for too many standard survey questions were not relevant to these new faiths. For example, questions about “belief in God” are irrelevant to Buddhists, whose religion is orthopractical rather than orthodox. Surveys framed to fit traditional Christians not only missed much that mattered to other groups, but increasingly misunderstood new Christian groups as well. Many scholars realized that they could not write about religion-in-general without knowing more than they did about religion-in-particular. They found a need to understand meanings as well as patterns. This perception changed their research careers.

Feminism, too, had an impact. As Neitz (2000) notes, a commitment to putting women at the center of social analysis showed quite clearly how the world is experienced differently by women and men. Exploring this experience requires ethnography; it is not an accident that many—not all—of the most prominent contemporary ethnographers of religion are also feminist women. Not only have these new ethnographers—women and men—published widely, but they have also gained notice and position in the major professional groups. They have won important grants for research, charting the new religious landscape. Generalizers have come to rely on this work to enrich their questionnaires and statistical analyses. Ethnography’s second-class status in the study of religion seems fated to end.

### *Criticizing Ethnography*

Given this sea change, it is ironic that scholars of religion have started to adopt what they understand to be “standard” ethnographic practices, just when those practices have come under attack from anthropologists. If ethnography’s rationale is “being there” and “knowing the natives,” recent anthropological critics point out that these activities are rather problematic. Not only does mere presence not ensure insight (though no one ever thought it did), but also the very possibility of understanding others seems to have been lost. How much can one really know another people? How completely can one see the world through their eyes? Even if one can, how does one report such knowledge to readers, for whom ethnography’s appeal may be a prurient exoticism rather than a sincere wish to

encounter other people’s lifeways?<sup>2</sup> Recent academic anthropology has seen a deluge of books and articles questioning the epistemological premises of such reporting.

Several issues stand out in this critique, of which we will only highlight four. These are: the problem of subjectivity; the insider/outsider problem; the question of researcher identity; and issues of power. They are among the many topics that our contributors treat in the chapters that follow.

First, quantitative researchers have long accused ethnographers of unthinkingly mixing their own thoughts and concerns with those of the people they study. How else, they ask, could one get two such different pictures of the same Mexican town as Robert Redfield’s *Tepoztlán* (1930) and Oscar Lewis’s *Life in a Mexican Village* (1951)? Yes, ethnography can present people’s lives and religions in full color, but does that color not often come from the glasses that researchers wear, whether rose or blue?

Ethnographers have made various replies, the most honest of which admit the problem and offer ways to combat it. Some opt for methodological rigor, routinizing data collection to avoid bias—though this effort can produce such oddities as “ethnoscience,” which limits people’s worldviews to lists of terms. Others work as teams, in the hopes that several perspectives will be better than one—especially if the teams include members of the group under study. Still others freely admit their subjectivity, saying that no “objective” system can replace human insight, and do not claim their work to be anything other than fiction.

The problem is especially thorny for those studying religions, as religions are—among other things—systems of ideas that orient people to the cosmos. Religions tell their members what is real, what is important, and how to live in a world that gives them few ready-made guides. In addition, most religions claim that one worldview is better than others’, that one is “right” and that others are at least partly “wrong.” If ethnographers accept this claim, they must limit their work to recording exactly what the natives say. If they do more than this—if they try to explain what native thought is “really” about or put it in any sort of context—they implicitly claim this “really” for a more inclusive worldview. Yet, this amounts to positing a superior religion. On what intellectual basis can this be sustained?

The chapters by Davidman, Coleman, Landres, Birckhead, Goldman, and McGuire—among others—shed various lights on this problem of how ethnographers know what we know.

Second, similar questions arise about the ethnographer's relationship with the people under study—particularly about the ways in which such ties shape knowledge. The traditional model demands that the fieldworker keep a strict social and intellectual distance from his or her subjects. As a rule, this model imagines an elite, Western researcher—often White and male—reporting on nonelite subalterns; the results are written for fellow elites, not for those whose lives are probed. How does this social dynamic slant one's results? Would informant-centered research be any less (or more) scientific? What boundaries between the analyst and the analyzed can—or should—be maintained? Does this vary according to the type of religion being studied? Such interpersonal issues pervade actual fieldwork, forcing the abandonment of a naïve “been there, seen that” view.

The nature of religion makes these questions especially biting. It is much easier to change one's religion than to change one's social class, nationality, ethnicity, and whole way of life. One can join the Assemblies of God, Chabad Lubavitch, or the Church of World Messianity without leaving one's family and day job—considerations that have prevented many anthropological ethnographers from staying with “their” far-off tribes. Does joining the group one is studying make a fieldworker's knowledge less—or more—authoritative? What kind of relationship with group members is most appropriate: personally, ethically, and for the production of knowledge? One can study the Nuer without becoming Nuer, but can one study evangelical Christianity without somehow “getting inside” the faith that defines it? Such questions have long bedeviled ethnographers, but scholars of religions find them particularly apposite.

The chapters by Neitz, Tweed, Coleman, Jacobs, Peña, Brown, and Birckhead all explore this issue from several angles.

Third, a somewhat different set of issues arises from the ethnographer's real or imputed social identity. Ethnographers have long noted that women and men have access to different social spheres, though this often lies unacknowledged in accounts that treat men's worlds as central and women's worlds as sideshows. However, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, life experience, and one's own religious identity also shape what one can learn. Does it take a gay or lesbian researcher to investigate gay or lesbian religious worlds—either because this identity opens doors or because it primes one to notice things that straight researchers would miss? Does being Jewish give one access to—and help one understand—the religious response to oppression in a way that passes non-Jews by? What

happens to one's ethnography if one discounts the role of identity by hiding behind the myth of the “universal” researcher? Or if one accents that identity, so much so that it overcomes all?

We can pose these questions from the other side: What happens to the ethnographer's identity in the research process? It is not news that anthropologists are changed by their fieldwork, though traditional accounts hid the details. What happens when ethnographers acknowledge the personal changes they have undergone and even use them as part of their data? Questions like these are taken up by most of our contributors and are central to the chapters by Davidman, Neitz, Wilcox, Tweed, Coleman, Jacobs, Landres, Peña, Brown, Birckhead, and McGuire.

Fourth, there are political issues. Ethnographic anthropology arose at the end of the nineteenth century to serve the needs of Western colonialism, as American, British, French, and Russian imperial bureaucrats wanted to avoid the shoals that had sunk their Spanish and Portuguese predecessors. The better they knew their subjects, they believed, the easier would be their sway. So they hired anthropologists: from James Mooney (1965), who investigated the Sioux Ghost Dance at the turn of the last century, through Evans-Pritchard (1940), who explored Nuer politics in the Sudan in the 1930s—and incidentally led native raids on the Italians (C. Geertz 1988)—to the less well-regarded 1960s anthropologists who fed the CIA data on the Pathet Lao (Horowitz 1974).

Sociological ethnography was born in the Chicago settlement houses; it was not interested in rule but in assimilation. How could the “socially disadvantaged” be made to join the middle-class world? Sociologists from W. F. Whyte (1943) to Elliot Liebow (1967) and their journalistic successors (e.g.: Kozol 1988; Kotlowitz 1991; Lemann 1992) have been guided by the sense that the first step in helping poor people was to know them. Their descriptions of gang members, Blacks, homeless families, and other social outsiders humanized such people to mainstream readers and thus helped support social programs to improve their lot. Too often, though, such ethnographies fed the semiconscious idea that given the right support and surroundings, the “disadvantaged” would become “just like us.”

Again, the ethnographic study of religion is especially challenged, as it copes with a heritage in which nonmainstream faiths need to be explained. While the religions of the marginalized are no longer seen as just an irrational response to social dislocation, there is still a tendency to think of them as problematic. Thus, there are more ethnographies of

African American Pentecostalism than of the mainstream African Methodist Episcopal Church, more studies of new religions than of Episcopalians, and so on. We play to a popular fascination with “Others”—though the best ethnographies have used this fascination to question mainstream beliefs as well.

Though few ethnographers now work for colonial offices and settlement houses, their informants often still think that they represent governments and power centers. Despite ethical qualms, many take advantage of this, for such relative social power gives them access to information that others would be denied. As elites writing about nonelites for elite readers, their authorial styles most often suppress this sociopolitical context, but they do not reduce its importance. Is such ethnography not a “colonial relic,” to use Clifford Geertz’s term?

The chapters by Armin Geertz and by Spickard most directly confront this issue, though others (Neitz, Birckhead) touch on it too.

### *Anthropological Reactions*

It is hard to exaggerate the impact that such concerns for knowledge, identity, and power have had on the anthropological establishment. The list of authors is staggering, as nearly every major figure has weighed in. Among others, Talal Asad (1973) and Eric Wolf (1982) unmasked the complicity of anthropologists in the colonial process. Edwin Ardener (1972), along with Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974), exposed its male bias. Clifford Geertz’s *Works and Lives* (1988) showed how rhetoric as much as fact shaped several classic ethnographies. Renato Rosaldo (1989) questioned the very idea of culture, on which traditional ethnographies were based. Akhil Gupta, James Ferguson, and their collaborators (1997) explored the politics of ethnographic settings.<sup>3</sup>

A closer look at just two such efforts shows some of the issues involved. Both *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and *After Writing Culture* (James, Hockey, and Dawson 1997) devote themselves to the “problem of representation.” The former highlights the question of how ethnographies are written, while the latter focuses on the issue of what such writing really accomplishes. Among other things, contributors to the first volume note that “ethnographic truths are . . . inherently partial”

(1986, 7) rather than complete pictures of the societies they describe. They are “cooperative and collaborative” (127) rather than the results of the ethnographer’s own disinterested vision. Ethnographic “representations are social facts” (256) that tell us as much about the observer’s social location as they do about the natives. The ethical dilemma here is: How can I (as an ethnographer) be sure that I am really understanding the people that I study? Clifford, Marcus, and their colleagues conclude that one cannot guarantee anything, and so recommend showing readers the conceptual scaffolding that holds up one’s narrative, so that one’s work can be checked. They even recommend letting one’s informants erect their own scaffolding—cutting out the middleman in the interests of getting a better picture.

In the second volume, James and her colleagues extend these epistemological concerns to politics, noting that ethnographers’ reports can be put to some gruesome uses. Here the ethical dilemma runs: Why should it matter that I get it right? Because what I write will affect how “people like me” see the “Others,” and that in turn will affect the decisions “people like me” make about these “Others”—whether to support them, rob them, or bomb them. As the “Others” can also read, my texts will as well affect how they see “people like me” and how they see themselves, though not in any simple or predictable way. In a post-Cold War, fin de siècle, multipolar world, we have to recognize both our interconnections and our mutual estrangement. “Getting it right” thus requires new sensibilities and new narrative forms that help capture a multivocal reality; even then, success is not guaranteed.

Indeed, the situation has evolved such that some scholars no longer think it possible to give a clear picture of their chosen people. Instead, they have become travel guides, midwives, or poets: the guides entertain us with the sights, the midwives help the natives express themselves, and the poets write about the ways that fieldwork has changed their own lives. Though it often fails to satisfy our curiosity about others, the new anthropology has the merit of being honest—and it no longer speaks in the imperial mode.

This provides but a taste of the current anthropological stew. From the feminist and ethnic critiques of the 1970s to the postmodernisms of today, anthropology has had to face its epistemological and political shortcomings. For most anthropologists, this identity crisis has made traditional ethnography impossible.

### Studying Religion

Until now, such issues have not fully penetrated the social-scientific study of religion. Perhaps because they have long played second fiddle to the generalizers, or because they most often teach in departments of sociology and religious studies—out of reach of anthropology's crisis of confidence—that ethnographers of religion typically operate in the old style. They choose a religious locale, spend time (often very brief) with its inhabitants, listen, watch, question, think, listen again—and then they write reports telling us what goes on there. They neither guide us, nor midwife the natives, nor poet themselves; they simply tell us “the facts” about the religions they have studied. Too seldom do they acknowledge these facts' shaky foundations. Furthermore, some of those generalizers who have lately come to realize ethnography's virtues have decided to try their hand. They imitate their particularistic brethren, not realizing that they have missed the ethnographic criticisms of the intervening years.

This volume is dedicated to overturning such simplicity, as we seek to rethink the ethnographic study of religion in a new age. Ethnographers of religion face the same issues as do their anthropological cousins. “Doing ethnography” in the traditional way suppresses the social context of the ethnographic enterprise. It pretends that ethnographers know more than they do and imagines that their knowledge is somehow “better” and “more objective” than that produced by others. Moreover, it ignores ethnographers' relative social power—or at least ignores the ways in which their power shapes the social vision that one finds in their writing. In doing so, it misrepresents the religions it claims to describe.

Our authors are among those who have taken recent ethnographic discussions to heart, even if we do not agree on the right path forward. We come from varied fields but are all experienced researchers. As we reflect on our own work, we explore the consequences for the study of religion of rejecting the old ethnographic myths, along with the risks of forging new ones. In both a dialogue and a manifesto for change, we argue that current ethnographic practices in the study of religion are neither sufficiently reflective nor reflexive. We do not seek to exclude newcomers from the growing field of ethnography of religion; rather we seek to apprise them that the rules have changed and they are joining a different game from the one that they may have expected. The time has passed when one can do ethnography without reflecting on the issues we outline

here, any more than one can do survey research without having first mastered statistics. We wish to give these issues a wider audience among scholars of religion than they have heretofore received.

We have organized the volume into four related sections. This is not a strict division, as the topics interpenetrate and we could have placed many of these chapters in more than one spot. However, each section stresses a part of the whole. The first section, *Being an Ethnographer*, focuses on issues of knowledge and identity. Lynn Davidman, Nancy Nason-Clark, Mary Jo Neitz, and Melissa Wilcox present revealing essays that show the personal side of ethnographic work. Davidman explores the role of subjectivity, showing how her own psychological processes helped her understand her subjects more deeply. Nason-Clark examines the role of emotion in the life of the academic researcher, as she confronts religious responses (or nonresponses) to violence against women. Neitz reflects on her own experiences studying a variety of religious groups and movements (including Catholic Charismatics and Wiccans); she suggests that the process of doing ethnographic research forces the researcher to assume multiple identities. Wilcox explores the effect of being both inside and outside the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender Christian community she investigated.

We have entitled the second section *Doing Ethnography*. Its contributors—Thomas Tweed, Simon Coleman, Janet Jacobs, Shawn Landres, and Milagros Peña—each describes ambiguities arising from his or her fieldwork. Tweed notes his own internal conflict between being both an historian and an ethnographer: the former does not give you enough information; the latter disrupts your life. Coleman explores the peculiarities of investigating Swedish Evangelical Christians, who are simultaneously investigating him. Landres argues that this play of mutual representations actually enhances fieldwork and demonstrates this with examples from his recent work in Slovakia and Southern California. Jacobs charts her growing awareness of her own ethnicity as she interviewed crypto-Jews, the hidden descendants of victims of the Spanish Inquisition. Peña shows the importance of border crossings—physical, ethnic, and conceptual—not just for herself, but for the Latina women activists she interviewed in El Paso/Ciudad Juárez.

The third section raises issues of *Writing and Reading Ethnography*. Karen McCarthy Brown reflects on her path-breaking use of first-person, experimental writing in her award-winning *Mama Lola* (1991). Jim Birckhead illustrates the difficulty of writing about Appalachian

snake-handling ministers, given the fact that snake handling is simultaneously a small part of their everyday lives and the key identity that defines them to outsiders. Marion Goldman defends her use of “fictional” composite characters in her recent writing on the disciples of Rajneesh. Julie Ingersoll presents a critical reading of some recent ethnographies of conservative Protestant women, arguing that the claim that female submissiveness is somehow “empowering” silences the feminist women within these traditions. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes shows us how to read Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* as an ethnography of middle-class Black women in the 1920s South.

The four essays in the final section—*Beyond Personal Knowledge*—are all more programmatic than the foregoing. Meredith McGuire describes her return to an expanded phenomenology, as a way to deal with the issues of knowledge, identity, and power noted above. Laurel Kearns advocates an ethnographic attention to the environment, an influential factor largely ignored by past and present ethnographers of religion. Armin Geertz moves from the political complexities of research on indigenous peoples to an “ethnohermeneutics” that he hopes will breathe new life into ethnography. And Jim Spickard explores the epistemological underpinnings of current ethnographic practice, arguing that “post-colonial” ethnography has solved its political malaise by advocating two regulative ideals—“truth” and “equality”—rather than one, as did ethnography in its imperial mode.

Our volume is thus critical, but not one-sided. We do not accept without question the “displacing,” “reworking,” “renegotiating,” “reinventing,” style of ethnography to which Clifford Geertz refers above. This meta-narrative asks that ethnographers rethink their relationship to their informants and to their own society—an effort we support. Yet, calling this critique a “meta-narrative” highlights the fact that it, too, is as much myth as reality. The link between anthropology’s grand theories and the actual process of fieldwork is still obscure. So is the applicability of much anthropological writing to other fields—particularly to the study of religion. What can ethnographers of religion learn about fieldwork from their anthropological cousins? What special issues do we face that others do not? What have we learned on our own, from which others might profit? This volume explores these and related questions.

We believe that the ethnography of religion must recognize the personal aspects of its knowledge: the fact that ethnographic knowledge is generated in interpersonal encounters between people with specific so-

cial locations. At the same time, ethnographic knowledge is not *only* personal; it aspires to something more. Finding that balance—encompassing personal knowledge but simultaneously going beyond it—seems to us to be the chief task facing ethnographers of religion today. Out of that belief comes the title of our volume.

### *Why Religion?*

We have three reasons for thinking that the ethnographic study of religion is an ideal spot from which to pursue this aim. First, the study of religion is an interdisciplinary enterprise. Our authors are sociologists and anthropologists, culture theorists and historians, plus a number of specialists who fit none of these academic boxes; though divided by methodological or disciplinary background, all have something to contribute to understanding religion. They approach their varied fields with great epistemological diversity: feminist, postmodernist, postcolonialist, and critical-philosophical, to note merely a few. No topic but religion can bring such a breadth of perspectives; this stew gives richer fare than would any one or two ingredients alone. We have sought authors who challenge accepted wisdom, take intellectual risks, and can imagine new ways of doing things—who seek to be provocative without insisting that they have all the answers. Our essays are designed to make thoughtful reading.

Second, religious groups provide clear examples of the pitfalls and promises of ethnographic work—examples that are needed in a volume centered on the research process rather than any social group per se. Religions are complex enough that we can see why they need ethnographic study; survey work does not penetrate people’s inner lives. In the cases used here, though, people’s lives are enough like those of our readers—though certainly not entirely so—that we can quickly and clearly map out the issues involved. We can thus focus more clearly on the epistemological, political, and other methodological problems that concern us. Moreover, we can do so with a specificity that conveys far more than theory alone.

Third, although discussions of ethnography are now on the rise among scholars of religion, they have so far found neither a focus nor an agenda. We believe that this is a fruitful time for our volume to appear, for our authors are drawn from—and attempt to unite—the many disparate conversations that have so far arisen. Anthropology has long been

racked by strife, and sociology has increasingly come under feminist and ethnic attack. The ethnographic study of religion has been something of a backwater on such matters and urgently needs to learn from them, at the risk of further stagnation. We have designed this volume to bring these issues to our colleagues' attention while simultaneously pushing the debate forward—beyond where it has gone in other fields.

We believe that only a deep rethinking of established practices can rescue the ethnographic study of religion from its current epistemological and political naïveté. Such innocence is unacceptable in a post-colonial era. We hope that this volume will result in a deepened sense of ethnographic responsibility—a key step toward letting the ethnographic study of religion transform the social-scientific study of religion as a whole. We wish to thank Wade Clark Roof, former President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and Christel Manning, the Program Chair for the SSSR's 1997 Annual Conference, at which some of these essays received their first hearing. We also thank our editor, Jennifer Hammer, for her continued encouragement and support. Above all, we thank our contributors, without whom this volume would not be possible.

We dedicate this volume to our colleague, Otto Maduro, a scholar of great kindness and insight.

#### NOTES

1. Sociologists' "quantitative" vs. "qualitative" pair does not fit here, largely because both methods can support either a generalizing or particularizing intent.
2. See Parkin (1988) for a fictional example.
3. Other notable examples include: Hymes (1969); C. Geertz (1977); Haan et al. (1983); Marcus and Fischer (1986); Clifford (1988); Fox (1991).