

Culture



Victor and Edith L. B. TURNER, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 281 pages

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[See table of contents](#)

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contact-period nativistic cults (p. 173) but this theory is not tested with Boyd's knowledge of the mission.

Although this volume does not address issues in social change that would be of benefit to a wider audience, it is an excellent source book for students of this region for it comprises a wealth of useful data and analyses of change of regional interest. The novel addition of original writings and biographical sketches adds to its value to historians and anthropologists and, of course, the *People of The Dalles*.

Victor and Edith L. B. TURNER, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 281 pages.

By Christopher G. Trott

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This is a very Catholic book.

Wait. Did reading the opening sentence make you want to flip to the next review? Do you object to a position in anthropology that is so evidently sectarian?

It is for precisely this reason that anthropologists need to reread and reconsider some of the later positions articulated by the late Victor Turner and his wife Edith. This volume is a paperback edition of a book originally published in 1978, which Columbia University Press feels is significant enough to republish. As the book has already been reviewed and now subsists as part of the anthropological literature it is not necessary to review the contents but to suggest why it would be useful to read this book in the 1990s. A comprehensive critical evaluation of the Turners' position with respect to medieval Christianity has already been provided by Bynum (1984).

In the current post-modern atmosphere that insists on exposing the authors' predispositions and cultural biases, this book can be read as an important early contribution. The Turners state that they are intrigued by the symbolic processes of Christian pilgrimages because of their own personal Roman Catholic commitment and devotion. It is not entirely clear in the text whether the Turners have undertaken these pilgrimages because of their faith and then written an analytical reflection on them, or whether they appreciated the analytical questions and then sought to test

their ideas against existing pilgrimage events. In some ways it does not really matter: The Turners' own Catholicism shines through every page of the book.

This raises a far more difficult problem for contemporary anthropology: to what extent do the faith and beliefs of the authors affect the way that anthropologists conduct their field research? In this case it is made explicit and one is obliged to take the authors' religion into account. On the other hand, how would such a revelation have influenced our readings of Victor Turner's earlier works on Ndembu ritual when the anthropologist's stance is supposed to be disinterested and distanced? I suspect that many readers would have dismissed the careful analysis of much Ndembu ritual had this been taken into account, while at the same time Turner's own faith probably allowed him to take what the Ndembu were telling him much more seriously.

Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture also provides an example of turning the anthropological gaze back onto our own society. The Turners assume that the reader is largely familiar with the elaborate conceptual apparatus that Victor had developed in his earlier work (and for those who may be unfamiliar, there is a very useful appendix providing definitions for the technical terms used in the analysis). This move shows that the methods of processual symbolic analysis are as productive in examining complex societies where we have access to historical developments as they are in examining ritual in societies more often studied by anthropologists. The Turners outline the texture of the similarities and differences between the types of analysis, but are not obliged to change the basic terms of the process.

The Turners raise some important questions concerning the suppression of existing religious systems and the imposition of Christian practice. Their typology of four different kinds of pilgrimage (prototypical, archaic, medieval, and modern) is not particularly helpful but in the case studies of Mexico and Ireland it does raise questions concerning the ongoing influence of earlier religions and the reappropriation of particular symbolic vehicles into Christian practice. While in some cases the church authorized the "baptizing" of existing sites and pilgrimages, in others they were totally destroyed and replaced by Christian buildings. What emerges is a complex dynamic interaction of symbolic systems that cannot be classified

as "syncretism" nor does it allow one to assume that the Christian invasion was totally destructive. The historical perspective of the Turners gives depth to some of the more recent discussions over religious change in a number of societies.

Christian pilgrimages also raise the question of the relationship between the "great tradition" and the "little tradition" (to use Redfield's terms, as do the Turners). The popularity of pilgrimages among the masses and the hesitancy of church authorities to recognize the miracles at the various sites suggest that there is a theologizing that takes place apart from academic musings. The Turners subsume the symbolic production of the "little tradition" under that of the church authority, arguing that the sensual symbols of the pilgrimage concretize the abstractions of theology into a form more comprehensible to the illiterate. But they overlook the fact that such symbols may be fragmentary and incomplete and *not* cohere into a systematic whole. If this is the case then a radically different analytical approach would be required. Indeed, the systematizing tendencies of Victor Turner's work among the Ndembu can be largely attributed to Muchona's exegesis (as Turner himself admits) rather than to anything that might inhere in the ritual itself.

The Turners further demonstrate that Christian pilgrimages produced a plethora of signifiers attached to a limited number of (theological) signifieds. The multiple images (especially of the Virgin Mary) and rituals that surround each of the sites are transformations of one another in such a way that no new signifieds emerge; rather, old ones become involuted. As such, this book provides an interesting case study of the process of the production of signs within a semiotic context. The Turners do not enter into a discussion of the implications of semiotic production, but leave the data at the level of the empirical.

Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture thus constitutes an important foreshadowing of issues that have become prominent in more recent anthropology. It is worth the time to look back to a concrete case study that raises many empirical problems that have latterly become central theoretical concerns.

Reference

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Mary HUFFORD (dir.), *Conserving Culture, a New Discourse on Heritage*, Urbana et Chicago : University of Illinois Press, 1994, 264 pages (broché).

Par Philippe Dubé

Université Laval

«Une mission culturelle à recentrer»

Dans le cadre d'un colloque intitulé «Cultural Conservation: Reconfiguring the Cultural Mission» tenu à la Bibliothèque du Congrès à Washington en mai 1990, on a cru bon de réunir un certain nombre de spécialistes des domaines du folklore, de l'anthropologie, de l'archéologie, de l'ethnologie, etc. – en somme des intervenants du patrimoine – afin de réfléchir sur les tenants et aboutissants de la conservation. Il s'agissait, à cette occasion, de revoir les mesures prises à l'égard des patrimoines naturel, bâti et vivant, secteurs où les enjeux se sont passablement modifiés au cours des dernières décennies. Des divisions comme patrimoine tangible et intangible viennent en effet bousculer les conceptions et les définitions de l'heure. Les législations en force ne semblent pas non plus correspondre aux réalités actuelles. L'idée de patrimoine national est aussi remise en cause par les mouvances sociales et politiques qui ne cessent d'ébranler les acquis de la vie en société. Toute cette effervescence amène les responsables à repenser non seulement les pratiques en matière de préservation mais aussi les politiques qui réfèrent habituellement au large concept de conservation. L'idée, par exemple, de protection de la diversité bio-culturelle suggère de nouveaux aménagements tant au niveau des approches professionnelles que du point de vue des cadres législatifs qu'il faut, à cette étape, reconsidérer entièrement. C'est donc sur la base de ces objectifs que ce colloque s'est tenu, favorisant ainsi des échanges qui ont permis de revoir certaines manières de penser et surtout, repenser certaines manières d'agir.