

logical sources. Instructors will, I think, enjoy taking issue with it just as much as students will. *Ordered Universes* is a product of considerable experience, scholarship, and long reflection that will elicit serious engagement from all readers.

***Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister: Religions Dominated by Women.* SUSAN STARR SERED. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 330 pp., photographs, notes, references, index.**

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This book describes the characteristics of a number of "women's religions," sometimes called "female-dominated religions." Among these are ancestral cults of Black Caribs in contemporary Belize, the indigenous religion of the Ryūkyū Islands, the *zar* cult of northern Africa, Christian Science, Shakerism, the Feminist Spirituality Movement in 20th-century United States, and a number of others. The data collected here are interesting and clearly worth serious consideration.

There are, of course, certain problems of definition in such an approach, notably the creation thereby of a residual category of "men's religions" (p. 12); because Catholicism is a "men's religion," there is no place in this book for, say, Mother Theresa. The author asserts that she is committed to the idea that "religious beliefs are not inscribed on the X or Y chromosomes" (p. 7), and states that she is a "feminist anthropologist" (p. 35). Yet she regularly makes what seem to this reader to be essentialist assertions about religious and other sorts of behavior of "women," many of which seem at least arguable if not dubious. Although such essentialisms may characterize certain varieties of feminism, this is hardly acceptable anthropology. We are told that the Shakers, for instance, had an "ordered life style [that] was particularly compelling for women" (p. 25). We are also told that "women's overwork, burn-out, and frustration often lead to chronic ailments which do not respond either to modern or herbal medicine" (p. 105). In addition, "grounded in particular relationships with particular children, mothers are unlikely to find a wholly other-worldly religion appealing" (p. 149). Finally, "mothers quickly learn that absolutes are useless in dealing with the vagaries of intimate human relationship" (p. 158): the author did not know my mother.

This book, then, is not theoretically satisfying. It does collect a broad range of interesting information on religion, women, and mothers, but the conceptualization of these data remains an open problem.

***The Kingdom of Individuals: An Essay on Self-Respect and Social Obligation.* F. G. BAILEY. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993. xlii + 231 pp., references, index.**

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*The Kingdom of Individuals* offers a stimulating set of reflections on the limits to our understanding of human experience derived from a focus on institutions, collectivities, and the rituals and symbols that go with them. Drawing on a career that began with fieldwork in a peasant community in highland India in the 1950s, Bailey approaches the understanding of human beings largely through the lens of self-interest, whether exercised in the political or economic arenas. What makes this book particularly interesting is that although his analysis of individuality is shaped by this lens, he also explores the limits to self-interest as an explanatory frame.

Primarily, Bailey's analysis endeavors to show that although an institution or a collectivity is concerned to contain individuals and to use their energies for its own purposes, the very nature of its attempts to do this through coercion or convention inspire individual "disengagement" from the collectivity. Institutions are, of course, directed by human beings, and while one purpose of an institution might be efficient production, its leaders are also concerned to manipulate and dominate. Thus some of the examples of disengagement he describes are concerned with finding room within an institution for uses of time that seem more interesting to an individual. Other forms of disengagement assert the resistance of the individual to being manipulated or display the knowledge that power is necessarily involved in institutional life even if the individual is formally powerless within it.

In this analysis individuality is associated with freedom, conscience, and "cogitation"; institutions with order, duty, and emotion. Institutional activities are either efficient, in terms of their purpose, or ritualistic. This separation is rather too clear-cut to encompass my experience of institutions. It relies too heavily on a functional explanation of institutions, namely that their reason for existing is to serve a productive purpose. This emphasis on function and production also leads to the personification of the institution: it has needs, and "the organization's goal . . . is to inhibit the calculation of self-interest, the notion in individual members that they might have an identity which is distinct from and sometimes in competition with the organization which encompasses them" (p. 61).

Bailey does not ignore the fact that most of us—particularly in the industrialized, capitalist world—participate in a number of collectivities, and indeed he talks of the ability of a collective to capitalize on the habit of loyalty built up in individuals through their prior experience of other collectivities (as well as their need to ensure that individuals give this particular collective their full attention). All of this would make a certain sense if collectives were distinct entities, if there really were a spatial boundary between the individual and the institution, and if individuals and institutions really were competing for the same space (or time). Such competition, and the view that social life offers no zero-sum games—that there is always a hierarchy, always someone who dominates, and someone who is dominated—is taken for granted in Bailey's analysis. In this case, the someone is "the institution," "the collectivity." This personification, linked with an inherent opposition to individuality (to free-