

(unable to hear) and “Deaf” (actively belonging to Deaf culture), despite the fact that the contrast “deaf/Deaf” appears several times throughout the subsection. Monaghan then describes a case study of identities in conflict. Two splits in a church were prompted by attempts to satisfy the needs of both facets of the congregation members’ identities as both Deaf and Christian. Finally, Roger W. Shuy tells of a Deaf man manipulated by a car salesman, pushed into writing a check for a car he had no intention of buying. The salesman’s unscrupulous behavior was documented in written notes, which allowed the exchange to take place between the parties.

Overall, this volume is a superb introduction to interpersonal communication, and it does an excellent job of bringing students to the understanding that at every level, communicative practices are steeped in and mediated by culture. This book will surely find its way onto many syllabi as teachers of both interpersonal and intercultural communication strive to illuminate ways in which communicative practices are organized across peoples and settings, and as they work to train a new generation of ethnographers.

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WEBB KEANE, *Christian moderns: Freedom and fetish in the mission encounter*.  
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Which things in the world are to be considered as having agency and which are not? How can one best address those agents in a morally efficacious way? This is the central conundrum explored in Webb Keane’s new book, *Christian moderns*. More a semiotic history than an ethnography, the book engages with a century-long encounter between Dutch Calvinism and potential converts on the island of Sumba, where Keane has performed fieldwork since the 1980s. While he often frames it as a “missionary encounter,” Keane is careful to point out that the message of Christianity among the Sumbanese – as in many other postcolonial contexts – is often carried forward by Sumbanese converts rather than Dutch evangelists. Thus Keane’s thesis concerns not so much the encounter between missionaries and their Others as it does the encounter between

differing assumptions about the nature of the unseen world, the sources of power and grace, the efficacy of ritual and language, and the attribution of agency to human and nonhuman Others. Keane's term for these assumptions is "semiotic ideology," by which he means to expand the scope of the study of "language ideology" to other systems of expression, communication, and culturally meaningful action. In this encounter of semiotic ideologies, Keane argues, one can identify a number of the threads of "modernity" traceable to Protestantism. These include an ideology of inner sincerity over ritual form in individual utterances, and a systematic refiguring of agency that Dutch Calvinism shares with other aspects of modernism's rationality.

Keane divides the book into three broad sections. The first, comprised of four chapters, traces the larger context for his argument: a history of Christianity, Protestantism, and Dutch Calvinism as global religious movements; the sense of "modernity"; Keane's argument that the idea of modernity as progress toward freedom and away from superstition arises out of the Protestant Reformation; and the crucial role of "purification" as adumbrated by Bruno Latour, in Keane's discussion of the transformations he credits to these shifting ideologies of agency and discourse. Part 2 consists of four chapters that focus more closely on the encounter between Dutch Calvinism and *marapu* ritual. Keane explores the concept of fetishism "as a precipitate of the encounter between semiotic ideologies" (p. 26). In the third section of the book, Keane extends his argument to a discussion of the role played by these shifting semiotic ideologies in ideas of text, objectification, and commodification among the Sumbanese.

Chap. 1 explores a number of themes that Keane argues are held in common in various Protestant contexts: "the concept of agency . . . the disciplining of interior belief, the work of purification, and the semiotic ideologies these presuppose" (39). Keane sees these as being manifested in "recurrent practical and theological questions about language, materiality, and their implications for humans" (39). The moral dimensions of these questions are associated with ideas linking modernity to notions of freedom. Keane addresses the global spread of Christianity and the ways in which this global circulation relates to "the moral narrative of modernity" (42). Contrasting with those who see in modernity an increase in secularism, Keane demonstrates that "religion has not retreated to the private sphere" in the modern context (47) and therefore demands to be studied for its contributions to the production of modernity.

In chap. 2, Keane takes up Latour's problem of "purification" – the modern desire for pure categorization and the ultimate impossibility of achieving it. He does this through an exploration of Calvinist semiotic ideology, centered on a discussion of the Creed. Part of Keane's argument in chap. 1 is that "Ideas, like everything else, circulate insofar as they have some medium. They are materialized in specific semiotic forms" (42). The semiotic ideology of Dutch Calvinism, however, distrusts the materiality of semiotic form, desiring a more individual revelation of sincerity in distinction to what it sees as the Catholic (and Sum-

banese) dependence on fixed forms of ritual language. The creed form raises the possibility that converts are not sincere but merely have learned the proper words to say at the proper time. The encapsulation of belief in a creed, therefore, was ideologically problematic for Calvinists, yet necessary for the denomination's circulation. Indeed, Calvinism's emphasis on inner sincerity inevitably leads to a conundrum about the very possibility of purification.

Chap. 3 links Protestantism to the early history of anthropology, and specifically to anthropological interpretations of religions as "belief systems." The distinction between "religion" and "culture" was important to missionaries, so they might effect change in one without disturbing the other. This distillation of the cultural and the religious, and the decisions about which was which, involved a stripping away of "belief" from the material forms manifesting that belief. Keane strongly draws into his discussion early anthropologists' debates about religion, culture, and science, exploring the roles played by Tylor, Spencer, and Morgan in the constitution of "primitive society" that was perhaps nonrational, perhaps rational but working with limited knowledge about the proper location of agency. In the desire to convert RELIGION of the Sumbanese but not disturb their CULTURAL traditions, Keane locates "one of the core paradoxes of missionary ethnography, the tension between the relativizing perspective and the vocation to change the native" (98).

Chap. 4 uses Dipesh Chakrabarty's critique of history to unpack the notion of progress at stake in the Calvinist mission of proselytization. Central to this was disentangling persistence from transformation, and the question of whether the language of ancestor spirits could be calibrated with new forms of worship that denied the agency of those ancestors. Here there is a tension between anachronism (persisting in believing as before) and translation (using a common language to pronounce new beliefs). Must old places of worship be destroyed, or can they be maintained as a bridge to new forms of worship? Are the key concepts of Christianity transparently translatable into native languages? Keane brings into play the semiotic ideology that separates thought from its material instantiation, as informing Calvinist ideas about this translatability.

In chap. 5 Keane takes the reader through a discussion of the conversion of Umbu Neka, a powerful ritual specialist. Keane shows the deep contradictions in Umbu Neka's use of *yaiwo* oratory form to speak about his conversion. The couplets of *yaiwo* discourse are meant to communicate with departed spirits, and are formalized, in part, because of this: "We speak to them in their words, not our own" (166). Both the material form and the addressees of Umbu Neka's discourse, then, were at odds with Calvinist semiotic ideologies. At the same time, the form that his ceremony took – without ritual sacrifice of chickens and pigs, for example – brought its efficacy into question by Umbu Neka's successor.

Chap. 6 explores differences between Sumbanese and Calvinist ideas about the speaking subject. At stake for the Calvinists is a "mistaken view of language" (193) among the unconverted, a view that inappropriately strips agency

from the human subject, where it rightly belongs, and transfers it to “objectified verbal formulae” (193). For the *marapu* followers, conversely, Calvinists display hubris in pretending to be able to address God directly, unmediated by ritual language. For these differences, both Calvinists and *marapu* followers agree that there are limits on human agency, but they disagree about the site at which those limits exist.

Chap. 7 traces the links between “modernity” and “sincerity” by exploring the ways in which notions of the interior and exterior sources of expression have shifted since the arrival of Calvinism to Sumba. Looking at ritual exchange, Keane argues that for Calvinists materiality is replaced by a purer symbolism. That is, the items of ritual exchange are dematerialized, “to treat material objects as being merely signs of an immaterial value to which they are subordinate” (206). Keane reads through this a separation of symbolic and material that is simultaneously religious (Calvinist), economic (Marx), and semiotic (Saussure).

Chap. 8 describes the ways in which Calvinists and *marapu* followers characterize each other’s practices as fetishism. The meanings of neither objects nor practices are either stable or delimitable, of course. Since fetishism requires “both a fetishist and an outside observer in whose eyes the fetishist is trapped in misrecognition” (225), there is plenty of room for both sides in this discussion to see the other as being in error. For example, *marapu* followers see Christians as “mistaking symbols for substances” (231); Christians see *marapu* followers as wasteful, “misidentifying the recipient” (233) of their sacrifices. Keane exemplifies this complex discussion by exploring the problem of meat, and its status as nutrition, as sociability, as commodity, as ritual presence – its exchange value, use value, and spirit. Here the nexus of “modernity” and “rationalism” in spiritual practice comes to the foreground.

In chaps. 9 and 10, Keane explores the ways that ritual speech and money are deployed. In the first, Keane discusses the ritual couplets used to describe ancestor spirits entering a house and shows that these couplets, divorced from their ritual setting, are used by Sumbanese Christians as mere referential descriptions of houses. In the second, Keane links the rise of a money economy to the wedge that is driven between semiotic form and its exchangeability for what that form represents.

The book is lengthy and densely layered, and I have done its many themes scant justice in this retelling. The key themes – modernity, materiality, sincerity, purification, and semiosis – recur throughout its pages. In a book with sweeping goals, some issues will by definition receive lighter treatment than others. Individual readers must decide whether the stew is worth the missing spices. Keane’s exploration of sincerity as a semiotic ideology of Dutch Calvinism is carefully wrought and resonant with other contemporaneous concerns of modernity, for example ideas regarding the relationship between artistic expression and the interiority of the artist. At times, I wished for more people. Granted, this was not really the approach Keane chose to address his subject. Still, the semiotic ideol-

ogy of Dutch Calvinism was circulated on Sumba by individual actors with individual understandings of their roles in the process and individual agendas. In this book about agency, I wanted to read more about that. I also wished at times for more complexity. Keane sometimes appears handcuffed by his choice of the language of “encounter.” He often points out to his readers the nuances of the situation he writes about, and the potential difficulties that attend thinking about Christianity in Sumba as a binary meeting between peoples. Still, I would have preferred more of the plurality and fluidity of the context.

That said, this is an important book that brings clarity and theoretical depth to a number of important issues around postcolonialism, history, symbolism, and religion. Its insights and conclusions will be productively circulating for some time to come. Readers can open it to any page and find insights of great scope coupled with telling details that reveal the thoroughness with which Keane has unpacked and addressed his object of study.

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