Seth Schermerhorn. *Walking to Magdalena: Personhood and Place in Tohono O'odham Songs, Sticks, and Stories.* University of Nebraska Press and the American Philosophical Society, 2019. 258 pp. ISBN: 9781496206855.
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Walking to Magdalena reflects a decade-long dialogue between the author, Seth Schermerhorn, and members of the Tohono O'odham Nation. The main driver of the book is to uncover and understand the ways in which the principles and practices of Christianity have been adapted and co-produced by Indigenous tradition. In the introduction, Schermerhorn notes that analysis in this field too often leans towards discussion of what Christianity does *to* Indigenous cultures, as opposed to what Indigenous cultures do *with* Christianity. This important critical distinction establishes both the content and the methodological decisions that shape this book.

Much of the study provides fascinating and detailed conversations with Tohono O'odham participants in the pilgrimage to Magdalena, a journey from Arizona to Mexico. Unlike traditional narratives of the pilgrimage to Compostela, Northern Spain—a comparison noted in the book where the destination is more often the principal focus—in this narrative account the word "pilgrimage" is replaced with "process of the journey," to ensure that participation, not destination, is the subject of analysis. The embodied experience of travelling and journeying as a collective across this at once ancestral and contemporary landscape provides the core focus for analysis.

In each of the five chapters, different strands of Christian and Indigenous practices are explored though very specific means, focusing on personhood, place, songs, and wooden staffs, connecting geographical, spiritual, and material realities. In the introduction and chapter one, and in keeping with established interventions in the field of Indigenous methodologies and systems of knowledge construction—specifically Lisa Brooks's contribution in her ground-breaking text, *The Common Pot* (2008)—place is given priority over time, meaning that where an event happens is given priority over when. In this way, the author sets out to show that "the O'odham have made Christianity their own by embedding it within their ancestral landscapes" (23). Prioritising place and challenging the dominance of historicism, which Schermerhorn does by navigating established spatial and cultural theorists, Soja, Bourdieu, and Foucault for example, allows him to cut through chronological sequences of colonisation that might normally set a more linear critical framework for analysis of the legacies of Christianity brought by colonisation.

Indeed, the historical framework—which relates the legacies of Catholicism brought by Spanish colonial rule, legacies which would normally set the context for such an analysis—appears towards the end of the text, in an appendix. The methodological implications of this move are revealing: it allows the voices of the O'odham travellers to speak their religious traditions, past and present, not necessarily as a legacy of colonisation, but as their Indigenous Catholicism reflects lived, everyday practice. The anthropological research methods, gathering testimony through conversations and recorded interviews, is shaped by the author's decision to follow the methods of Jill Dubisch, where "observant participation" is prioritised over observing participants (13). Further, following James Clifford's work, Schermerhorn also rejects the traditional model of the binary where the anthropologist writes what the "Native speaks" (13). Instead, a more collaborative model of co-production is created and deployed, modelled on Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena who insists on the "co-laboring" of cultural or anthropological knowledge and understanding. Ultimately, this approach has the effect of successfully challenging the loaded binary distinctions between what de la Cadena (and Schermerhorn) have described as "*their* belief and *my* knowledge" (qtd. in Schermerhorn14).

The central challenge proposed by the study—where place is prioritised over time, where the land and embodied experiences of walking, song, and material objects become the focus for different chapters—allows a composite narrative of Indigenous Christianity to emerge. Importantly, this exploration of Indigenous Christianity is not driven by time-markers but by lived experiences and cultural memory.

Chapter one prioritises the links between person and place: designated sites in the landscape are layered with stories, actively supporting the development of personhood as individuals move through that landscape and understand the agency of ancestral land. In chapter two, Schermerhorn creates what he calls a song map. This mapping exercise is based on accounts of the songs sung during the different parts of the journey, cumulatively creating a song series for each of the different routes taken to Magdalena. Crucially, the songs are mapped onto the landscape, taking the singers and the audience through traditional landscapes, acknowledging Indigenous knowledge and meaning-making as part of that process. The following chapter focuses on material culture and the walking sticks that support the walker physically, it's true, but the symbolism is much richer. The author contends that the sticks (generally each individual has the same stick for their many journeys to Magdalena in their lifetime) have become personal archives, with the addition of ribbons and notches,

documenting lived experiences of the journeys and offering stories that offer access to the ethical or moral imagination.
Chapter four focuses on the journey, attending to categories of movement that reflect specific cultural resonances. Again, the destination is not the final goal, rather it's the dynamic process of walking, of being in motion, of being "a good walker," which sets the terms for an analysis of personhood. Defining "a good walker" is learned and practiced, rather than perfected, and becomes an art as well as an action. Personhood, like the walker, is therefore analysed as a state of being in process. Chapter five, where divergent claims about the where, when, and how of Catholic influence on O'odham culture emerges, draws the strands of the book together: people are connected to places rather than times, and lived experience, the everyday, navigates ancestral and conceptual landscapes.

The subject-matter of the book is original: a decade-long partnership with the O'odham, built on trust, offers the reader insights into contemporary, every-day, lived religious experiences of this Indigenous Catholic community. It's a complex and, at times, contradictory or incomplete account, where internal disagreements about cultural memories and values add to the veracity of lived experiences and vitality of a community at ease with negotiation, change, and adaptation. It appears as an ethnographic study of an Indigenous community, and it is. But it's also an auto-ethnography, where Schermerhorn consciously positions himself as a participant, an observer, a friend, and a travel companion. The conscious revelation of self, as it sits alongside the presentation of the O'odham, allows the author to acknowledge his position as the author, without effacing the co-production of this work with his partners in the O'odham community.

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Work Cited

Brooks, Lisa. The *Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. U of Minnesota P, 2008.