The Challenge of Indigenous Peoples

Spectacle or Politics?

Edited by Barbara Glowczewski & Rosita Henry
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& Rosita Henry

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the original bibliography and Dominique Samson Normand de Chambourg who compiled the updated English one. We take the opportunity here to congratulate the contributors who wrote their chapters while still doctoral students but who, since the publication of the French edition in 2007, have had outstanding success in completion of their theses and have had their doctoral degrees conferred (Jessica De Largy Healy, Martin Préaud, Géraldine Le Roux, Arnaud Morvan and Anke Tonnaer).

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Preface

This collection is significant in that it features the work of eight early career researchers who have developed deep understandings of the performatve dimensions of human intercultural engagement through long-term ethnographic fieldwork. Their work and the analyses of the other contributors to the book provide historical and anthropological insights that are invaluable for understanding the current complexity of local situations across the world. Since this book was first published in France in 2007, important events in Indigenous transnational politics have confirmed the trends highlighted by the authors, as noted by Barbara Glowczewski in her updated version of the first chapter. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 14 were written by members of the collaborative France–Australia “Strategies of Indigenous Communication: Cultural Festivals and New Technologies” programme. The programme leaders, Barbara Glowczewski (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France), Marcia Langton (University of Melbourne) and Rosita Henry (James Cook University (JCU)), convened a colloquium in July 2004 at the JCU campus in Cairns, Australia, at which we began to collectively explore the relationship between artistic expression and political action. A further avenue for the productive sharing of ideas was provided by Barbara Glowczewski’s seminars on the “Anthropology of Networks” held over a period of four years at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris (Chapters 12 and 13). In July 2005, we jointly convened a panel entitled “Festivals and strategies of communication: cultural singularities in a dynamic network” at the 6th European
Society for Oceanists Conference, organised by the Centre de Recherches et de Documentation de l'Océanie (CREDO) in Marseilles (Chapters 4, 9, 10, 11). Thus, the chapters in this book were developed from presentations delivered in several different seminar contexts where we questioned, among other issues, the idea of indigeneity as fixed essence by exploring different performative contexts in which Indigenous rights have been brought into the limelight.

Our collective aim is to bring into focus hotly contested contemporary debates regarding essentialism (of blood, soil, faith or culture) and their negative impacts in a context of globalisation and the concomitant rise of fundamentalisms. We highlight Indigenous Australian experiences as a framework for understanding how peoples in other cultural contexts respond to globalisation (as both discourse and practice) and the apparently contradictory, but actually complementary, increasing fortification of nation-state boundaries around the world. Globalising forces may work to encompass difference but, in their very encompassment, differences are regenerated and nationalisms are able to flourish anew. The cultural responses and strategies employed by Indigenous Australians, Pacific Islanders and other peoples, such as the Adivasi of India or the Khanty of Siberia, are based on concepts of human sociality that challenge social science analyses as well as taken-for-granted popular ideas concerning the nature and impact of globalisation.

Rosita Henry
& Barbara Glowczewski
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