

# Creating an Image Bank for Teaching World Religion: Challenging and Reifying Structures of Knowledge

by  
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**Abstract:** Creating an indexed set of slides for teaching the academic study of religion reveals how existing structures of power/knowledge shape the frameworks from which new knowledge emerges, and how that knowledge may affect those structures. Although cultural, political and personal history impinge upon every aspect of the project, the data and the challenge of organizing them reveal meaningful world-experiences that lie outside the capacity of our knowledge structures, tending to transform or destabilize them.

AT ANY GIVEN TIME, either within the academy or more generally within a culture, knowledge (and the power it enables and from which it emerges) is structured in a system that is partly articulate, partly mute, and only somewhat accessible to awareness at any time. There is, for example, what Foucault has called the “episteme”: the root metaphor for knowability and relevance that legitimates and provides a context for all forms and contents of knowledge and which makes some disputes seem vital and relevant while others appear unintelligible or pointless. (1973)

There are also social influences at work, generating both a widely shared social construction of the “real” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and a socially distributed experience of reality and knowledge (Gurvitch, 1972) only some of which is accessible to that social construct known as the academy.

Knowledge is further organized in relation to factors such as gender, age, class, ethnicity and interest. In the academy, knowledge is also determined by the disciplines which define focus points of investigation, validate methodologies and articulate the field of the knowable. The disciplines provide both analytical and synthetic possibilities for those working within them. That is to say, one can work within a discipline, one can synthesize methods and/or data from two or more fields, or one can find the interstices between the various disciplinary methods and data.

The disciplines also restrict (by defining) the fields and objects of analysis and synthesis. One issue for academics seeking to work against the grain of disciplinary delimitations is the extent to which the disciplines structure their “outsides” as well as their “insides.” The interstices which appear “between” the disciplines are structured by “spaces” of the disciplines between which they fall and by the episteme which legitimates some questions while making others appear absurd or pointless.

Today one might write, as the contributors to *Rethinking Patterns of Knowledge* (Bjornson & Waldman, 1989) have done, about the unseen relationship between fractal mathematics and the logic of social problems, or about the relationship between advanced computer graphics and the transformation of scientific perception, or about the relationship between the breakdown of religious traditions and the uses of “foreign” myths. One is less likely to ask how to listen more closely to bird songs to learn the fate and wishes of our ancestors, as some South American peoples might do (See Sullivan, 1988. e.g., p. 391-392). Nor are we likely to devote our lives to learning to read the way God has written Himself into the book of the world, as Foucault (1973) claims our own medieval ancestors did.

The impact of existing disciplines on our imaginations appears even in the debate over non-disciplinary nomenclatures: is one to be multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, integrative, or, as Ninian Smart has suggested, “poly methodic” (1987 presentation to the Summer Institute on Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies)? In a different way, each of these labels takes off from the existing structures of knowledge and resists, transforms, or accepts them.

It is both exhilarating and frustrating to work in the academy with a sense of its cultural trajectory, of the historical nature of its episteme, and of one’s own embeddedness within them. It is exhilarating because it offers chances to push the boundaries of the given; it is frustrating because the boundaries are real, and they push back.

From 1988 through 1992 I experienced both the frustration and the excitement while serving as Director and Editor of the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion (IBTWR)—a project to create a collection of annotated and cross-referenced slide images to serve as a teaching tool in the academic study of religion and cognate disciplines (i.e., the history of art and architecture, gender studies, anthropology, etc.). This brought me face to face, on a daily basis, with the mutual entanglements

of teaching, scholarship, and the structures of knowledge/power within which they take shape and which they shape.

Scholars tend to reify these structures of knowledge and power, thinking and acting as though they describe an independent reality, rather than one they (and we) help bring into being. We live, after all, in a context of power/knowledge that both certifies and relies on our teaching and our scholarship. For example, most readers of this journal probably teach in institutions of higher education. We have studied in graduate schools, written dissertations, and received (or hope to receive) tenure. We teach graduate students and participate in tenure decisions affecting others. We know the exercise of power and the extent of socialization involved in these processes. (See Marcus, 1986, pp. 262-266.)

Yet like everyone else, academics are active participants in our culture, however much we may be critics of it. Although the academy prides itself on fostering “original research” and “independent creative thought,” few of us would employ the method by which the Canelos Quechua increase the scope and depth of knowledge—acquiring an ever increasing number of the souls of animals and the dead, especially the dead from Ancient Times, to enhance one’s soul power (Sullivan, 1988, pp. 380-381). To them, this approach seems both necessary and successful; to us it seems neither original nor independent, but inappropriate. A scholar would encounter great difficulty publishing or even presenting such work. This exemplifies the fact that our knowledge, and the systems by which we pre-organize it (before searching for or generating it) and with which we access it (after developing it), are permeated with the structures of knowledge and power characteristic of our culture, of the academy, and of our disciplines.

A project like the IBTWR, intended both to serve existing disciplines in the classroom and to challenge them to break down cultural and disciplinary boundaries, brings one face-to-face with the inevitable reification of extant structures of knowledge and power and of the potential to transform them.

## The Project

**Preamble.** Before considering the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion directly, I need to express a few caveats. Everything said above about the culturally embedded nature of work in the academy applies to this project. The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion emerges from trajectories implicit in the Enlightenment project of rationalizing, analyzing and humanizing the world, and its subsequent history in the United States. It embodies a history of thought about religion, and it expresses not only my own existential stance, but that of my closest collaborators.

As such it is, in Derrida’s term, disseminative, at every point erupting in meanings which are unintended by me and even unimaginable to me. To the extent that I am its “author,” it is permeated with my own unconscious (and semi-conscious) evasions, desires, and deletions.

Yet this does not condemn the work. These statements apply to all human expressions—or so it appears to us at this moment of our cultural history. This is a theme to which I will return in some detail near the end of the paper.

**Prelude.** The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion is a collection of 5500 slides designed for teaching about religion at the college level. Using slides from the IBTWR, it will be possible to show and discuss: a 1950s Ndembu circumcision ritual; pilgrimage to Benares; ancient Goddess religion; a traditional funeral in Szechuan; women shamans in Korean ritual life; the World Council of Churches Assembly VI; the Hajj; nomadic architecture in West Africa; and images of religious life more familiar to Western culture such as the cross, a baptism, a seder, a Hindu lila, a mosque, a Buddhist ordination, and so forth.

Note that there is a certain ambiguity. The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion is a set of slides of *events and objects*. It is also a set of *slides*. Depending on one’s focus and point of view, one can view it primarily as information about the subject matter of the photographs or as information about the photographs and photography. Again, I will return to this issue below in the section called *Medium*.

The Image Bank project grew out of an Institute on Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1987. This Institute was itself part of an ongoing collaboration between Berkeley, Harvard and the University of Chicago.

Institute participants ranged widely over the fields of religion and teaching and their intersections. One resource group at the Institute was called “Deconstruction/Reconstruction,” and all of our conversations were filled with the delicate ambiguity that comes from a sense of one’s cultural limitations/potentials. We were well aware that all of our deliberations, including the five points of agreement below, reflected our context.

Nevertheless, we found ourselves in agreement about several points that are relevant to the use of slides in our teaching:

1. Religion and religious meaning are not simply, or even primarily, matters of verbal expression. Often religion appears first in a nonverbal medium which may then be explained verbally. Religion is not to be identified either with theology or with philosophy of religion.
2. Art and architecture are fundamental bearers of religious meaning, often outweighing scripture and liturgy in the

religious lives of ordinary people, even in the most literate religious traditions.

3. We would like to incorporate more of the sensory dimensions of religious experience and meaning into our classrooms.
4. Most of us are at best ill-trained in the Western arts, or perhaps in the arts of our area of specialization, and many of us have no training in the arts or art history at all.
5. Therefore, in order to be able to teach beyond the verbal traditions, we need a teaching tool that provides both relevant images and enough information about them to enable us to present them in class intelligently and usefully.

Because I had initially raised the question, and because I was the resident art specialist, I found myself (with lots of support) drafting a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities to create an Image Bank for Teaching World Religion. The proposal was grounded both in the need in the field expressed by the participants in the Institute, and in an interdisciplinary (or integrative) theoretical base, which I developed in conversation with the participants at the Institute. This theoretical base is sketched out below.

**Philosophy—Perceptual Acculturation.**<sup>1</sup> Our bodies are complex organisms that actively seek out and grasp the world in the synaesthetic activity of perception; they are not like mechanical sensing systems, such as cameras, video and sound recorders and hearing aids. The machines detect a particular kind of vibration (light, sound, etc.) within their range of sensibility and translate it into marks on a medium or digital information stored magnetically; they are passive. Perception is an active, selective process, not a passive registration of a pre-existent world.<sup>2</sup>

Perception does not record a world which exists apart from the perceptual acts in which it appears. It is a constructive act by means of which a person forms the world which appears to her, including the ways in which she appears in that world.

Like all human activities, perception is learned. Newborns are inchoate and incomplete; even rudiments of the perceptual world such as three-dimensionality are lacking. Infants begin to construct a self/world in a creative process that includes both organic maturation and learning. This learning is guided by cultural systems which are experienced largely through material culture. Because of the unformed character of the newborn's perceptual world, the process of clarifying perception is permeated with cultural learning; both the structure of the perceptual world and the constructive acts that make up perception are learned.

The body may be considered the first artifact of material culture, both created and received by each person in the activity of growing up.<sup>3</sup>

Orientation and meaning are embedded in and based upon fundamental perceptual structures. Overt forms of thought and expression gain their credibility from the perceptual universe within which they exist and which, in turn, they help to structure.<sup>4</sup>

Since the experience of knowing emerges from perception, knowing is infused with basic cultural attitudes and presuppositions (what might be called values and beliefs) through the construction of perception. This process is fundamental to the creation and transmission of meaning. Over time traditions of perception are developed, maintained and transformed in material culture, which refers to all aspects of culture that are not entirely verbal or ideational.<sup>5</sup> This includes (but is not limited to) artifacts, architecture, the arts, ritual, and even texts in their physical or material aspects.<sup>6</sup>

Increasingly, religion is being investigated in relation to its involvement with material culture and being viewed through the lenses provided by anthropology, architecture, art history and media studies, even as these fields are being viewed with the lens of the academic study of religion.<sup>7</sup>

Margaret Miles (1985) notes that:

... a person's self-image, values and longing are shaped by the visual objects of her or his habitual attention. In our culture, whether we acknowledge it or not, images retain their role of formation by attraction. (p. 147)

One might add that art, because of its formative role in human life, has religious overtones, even when the art appears to be completely secular. The built environment, made up of all the results of human making including architecture, art and design, shapes fundamental aspects of individual and collective experience of reality.<sup>8</sup>

In *Incanchu's Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religion*, Lawrence Sullivan demonstrates the symbolic independence of non-textual modes of meaning and expression from textual modes. "Properly understood," he writes, "they should not be viewed as 'text,'... nor even should they be viewed as language" (1988, p. 773). He suggests that many traditional cultures retain non-verbal (i.e., visual, aural and kinaesthetic) systems of religious meaning in explicit critique of Western text-based religious systems.

In *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (1991), Karen McCarthy Brown shows how followers of the Vodou spirits, by manipulating space, symbolic objects and their bodies, work through and resolve practical and spiritual life problems in a highly rational and effective manner, but without the verbal processes of ratiocination that might be associated with such

problem solving.

The question of religion and spirituality is also gaining renewed relevance in art history. Recently Roger Lipsey (1989) has demonstrated that there are important religious and spiritual dimensions in the history of 20th century art, even in Modernism and Abstract Expressionism, so long held to be purely “about art.”<sup>9</sup>

These insights lead us into meditations on the relationship between embodiment, material culture, and patterns of meaning, meditations which encompass ourselves and others. In these meditations, we can ask only those questions our situation reveals to us. We can also listen, though, to questions sounded in different worlds, questions in which we often appear as items of interest and concern to others, seeming not at all as we do to ourselves.

**Process.** The IBTWR was shaped in consultation with an Advisory Board composed of leading scholars in the academic study of religion who had an interest in perceptual meaning. They influenced the project from the outset, critiquing and reviewing the application before it was submitted. Most members of the Advisory Board participated as faculty in the Berkeley Institute.<sup>10</sup>

The project was funded for three years, beginning in July 1988. During the first six months, I met with each member of the Advisory Board and with a number of scholars they recommended in order to generate and refine criteria for seeking and selecting slides and to identify scholars in several fields who might have useful images.

Developing criteria for selection of images was essential, given the limitations of time and funding, the number and diversity of slides, and the great range of religious phenomena. I came to think of the criteria, which later became the basis of the Directories, Indices and Sub-indices through which the IBTWR can be accessed, as a perceptual tool. They literally focused our attention in relevant directions. One could not look at hundreds of thousands of slides and select a few thousand from among them without a conceptual framework for sorting them.

We considered organizing the slide search by listing events, persons and objects to include in the project, but soon gave this up for several reasons. First of all, the IBTWR was to be exemplary, not encyclopedic. Moreover, our funding limited selection to slides for which we could obtain free copyrights.<sup>11</sup> This meant looking through the slide collections of many scholars who are not professional photographers. We could not be sure in advance what we could find. We were not overly disturbed by early indications that the final collection would be idiosyncratic and adventitious, since the project makes no claims to be complete, only to be useful.

Settling on a set of criteria, rather than a list of images, did not keep us from deciding that some images were essential. Clearly we wanted to document a eucharist, to have pictures of the Hajj, and to present Borobudur as a key example of architecture as cosmology. Examples like these, along with the criteria, became my guides.

Criteria were designed to ensure exemplary coverage by religious tradition, geographical area, time period and thematic category. We also identified a small list of what we called “stories to tell”—such as the development of European Christian culture out of late Hellenistic/Roman culture. We were committed to using only high quality slides, since students will not look attentively at poor photographs. In addition, we decided to focus on sequences of images rather than single slides. Finally, we attempted a rough balance of slides across traditions and geographical areas.

The selection criteria led to the interwoven Directories and Index categories of the final version of the project. Thus verbal distinctions, themselves based on visual experience, became vital elements in the selection of the final visual elements. At the same time, these categories shifted and changed in response to the visual experience of the slides. Although the three largest groupings (“Directories”)—traditions, geography and themes—remained intact, many of the categories composing them (Indices, i.e., “Ritual” or “Community”) changed, were eliminated, or were added. Thus visual distinctions (some of them doubtless based on verbal experience) became vital factors in the selection of final verbal elements of the project.

The next two years were spent soliciting scholars’ participation in the Image Bank. Both politics and fortune played a role in this process. The scholars to whom we wrote represent my extended network and that of the Advisory Board and of the participants in the summer Institutes. Many scholars to whom we initially wrote suggested others for us to contact. There must be many more people with appropriate slides whom we were not able to reach. Of those we did contact, some were enthusiastic, some were not. Some promised help and never delivered, others went out of their way to be helpful. The final contents of the IBTWR can be viewed as a summation of the individual responses of this network to the requests we made.

Contributors came from the fields of the academic study of religion, art history, anthropology, literature, area studies (i.e., Asian studies, African studies, Middle Eastern studies, etc.), women’s studies, painting, sculpture, ceramics, fiber, history of architecture and photography.

In the final six months of the funded period we filled gaps in the slide collection and worked on annotations—short introductory essays, brief descriptions of each slide keyed to the essays, and bibliographies for further research. Most sequences were annotated by the contributor, and many contributors who lacked time to write annotations directed us to published sources from which annotations could be taken. Over a thousand images remained for which original research had to be undertaken. This phase of the project is still underway.

**The Product.** The final product is a collection of about 5500 slides, all but a handful in color, of religious events, activities,

buildings, sites, artifacts and images from around the world and from the Paleolithic to the present. These images, nearly all taken by scholars and museum professionals, have been selected to provide an exemplary look at the relationship between vision and religious experience on a global and historical basis. More than half the slides are arranged in sequences fully annotated for classroom use, with contextual information about the tradition as well as about the sequence and the individual slide. There is an interwoven set of Indices available to help people order from or find slides in the collection (see below).

The slides themselves are hard to describe, both because they are visual (and therefore intractable to translation into verbal terms) and because they survey a complex and varied terrain. Many of the original photographs were taken by individual scholars because of personal interest and were then used in their own classrooms for some time. Some of these scholars have a more than academic interest in their topics. For example, Karen McCarthy Brown, author of *Mama Lola* and contributor of slides on Vodou, is herself initiated into Vodou practice, while the slides of the consecration of an Episcopal Bishop were taken by a member of the congregation and the pictures of the Hajj were taken (of necessity) by a Muslim. Yet the predominant “point of view” of slides of events and activities is that of an interested, knowledgeable, and sympathetic observer.<sup>12</sup>

The IBTWR is inherently polymethodic and interdisciplinary. At the surface level, it connects two disciplines (the academic study of religion and the history of art and architecture) which are themselves interdisciplines, each drawing upon methods and contents from the social sciences and the humanities (including one another) to construct their objects of knowledge and their methodologies.<sup>13</sup> By linking two interdisciplines, the IBTWR opens a myriad of conversations among multiple disciplinary perspectives. The two disciplines reverberate across and through each slide in the visual arena; the annotations, too, draw on methods and data from a broad range of disciplines to provide a context of relevant information for what is shown.

As a visual teaching tool in the predominantly verbal arena of the academic study of religion, the IBTWR insists on teacher and student mastery of perceptual skills (both receptive and critical) that introduce new methods and data into the discussion, while the written materials extend the history of art and architecture by providing a richer and more detailed and scholarly presentation of relevant religious information than is prevalent in the classroom. Thus the skills, methods and data of each interdiscipline call for a transformation in the structures and practices of the other.

This last point could be extended to what I have called disciplines cognate to the study of religion, such as anthropology, psychology and the study of perception. An insistence on the relevance of material culture in these studies requires a variety of new methods.

The IBTWR is designed to allow teachers to present both religion and religions in terms of the material culture which expresses, generates, sustains and transforms them. In Lawrence Sullivan’s terms, it presents non-text media in their own rights, not viewed as “texts” or even as “languages” but viewed directly in their visual and kinaesthetic significance.<sup>14</sup>

Again, though, there is a paradoxical ambiguity. In order to provide teachers with information about the images, we have used a good many words. In fact, we have created accompanying texts, in the form of essays and annotations, and teachers will either read these texts or turn them into their own oral presentations in the act of teaching. The images are not devoid of text/word, nor did the things depicted exist in a non-linguistic universe. Words, images, musics, gestures mutually interpret one another. One must not be reduced to another. The verbal character of the academy assures that all teaching tools will be embedded in texts, but even if this were not so, we had no theoretical or other motivation to eliminate the word.

## Issues in the Structures of Knowledge

In addition to the concerns developed above, the IBTWR was, from the outset, confronted with issues in the structures of knowledge. All of these issues impinged on and appeared in the Indices in both of their roles—as perceptual tools in the slide search and as accessing tools for potential users of the product. For convenience, I will separate the issues into four categories in ascending order of comprehensiveness: mission, media, structures of the academy, and cultural incommensurability. Issues in each of these categories place in the foreground the relationship between expressive form/content and assumptions about appropriate structures for creating, storing and transmitting knowledge.

**Mission.** The primary mission of the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion—serving as a college level teaching tool—has proved to be double-edged. It has forced us to work within the structure of classes most often taught even while challenging these classes to open themselves to aspects of religion beyond the verbal.

The study of religion, especially at the introductory level, is most frequently taught in three formats: the world survey, the study of a region or area, and the investigation of a theme. At more advanced undergraduate levels, courses are often taught in terms of traditions (viewed either singly or in comparison: e.g., “Christianity” or “Salvation in Buddhism and Christianity”), in terms of advanced area studies, or thematically (as in the “Salvation” course mentioned above).

The world survey attempts to provide an overview of religion in the world, either from a historical or a contemporary standpoint. Often the world survey works with a concept of “great traditions,” identifying either five (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism) or seven (adding Confucianism and Taoism). Often this course either ignores what we have called “local traditional” religions, or relegates them to the status of ancient predecessors (“axial” religions) or that of

contemporary relics (“primitive” religions).

To assist both with the world survey course and with more advanced courses taught from a “traditions” vantage point, the record of every slide in the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion attributes it to one or more traditions. Each tradition has its own index: Christian Traditions, Buddhist Traditions, Confucian Traditions, Local Traditional Religions, Ancient Urban Traditions, Neolithic Village Traditions, Syncretic Traditions, Judaic Traditions, Islamic Traditions, Taoist Traditions and Other Traditions (i.e., Jain, Sikh, Modern Secular).

While this structure clearly reifies the tendency to view religion in terms of tradition, it also subtly challenges several important assumptions. The strongest challenge is presented by the “s” at the end of “tradition.” This implies that there is no normative center from which to judge an authentic expression of a tradition from an inauthentic one. Each religion in fact contains a debate about orthodoxy, heterodoxy and heresy. The definition of orthodoxy is a political fact, dependent on power. No clear scholarly judgment can be made about which form of Christianity or Buddhism is “normative.”<sup>15</sup>

Categorizing images in indices also blends and fuzzes the seemingly hard edges that separate traditions. Vodou appears as a syncretic religion combining elements of Yoruba and Christian religions, so it is listed in three indices: Syncretic, Christian and Local Traditional (Yoruba).

The area studies approach looks at religious practices within a given geographical region, e.g., “Religion in Southeast Asia” or “Religion in North America.” We identified nine relevant geographical areas.<sup>16</sup>

The thematic study of religion has been pioneered especially by the faculty of the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University. They have developed courses such as “Pilgrimage” and “Scripture” with which to discuss religion in a global and comparative manner while focusing attention around the thematic topic of the class. As with tradition and areas, the IBTWR developed index categories around themes commonly used to structure college classes. There are, for example, indices for ritual (which includes pilgrimage), text, symbol and gender.

The latter provided an interesting opportunity to think about knowledge structures. Currently, most courses investigating gender and religion are in fact Women and Religion courses, often taught out of Women’s Studies departments or programs. Initially we considered offering a “women” index. Before making this decision, we consulted with a number of colleagues, including Susan Henking (Hobart William Smith College—Religion/ Women’s Studies) and Karen McCarthy Brown (Drew University—Sociology and Anthropology of Religion). During these discussions it became clear that the relevant concern for the study of religion is the construction and experience of gender, an issue which is not the exclusive domain of either sex and which is not coterminous with sex.<sup>17</sup> Within the Gender Index, it is possible to access slides according to their relevance to females, males, or both, so people teaching “Women’s Studies” can easily find slides relevant to their concern, while those interested in other gender concerns can find appropriate images. The general issue of gender is brought to the foreground in the index, and a basis has been laid for teaching not only “Women’s Studies” but also other, currently less common, courses.

There were other questions, too, that helped us see both our limits and our opportunities in order to expand them. For example, we included a category, “masks,” and had to decide whether a mask is any image of a face or only those artifacts (of whatever content) that are made to be worn over the face? We chose the latter, although a great deal of literature has been written about masks which could never be worn. In another category, we distinguished between “high” and “vernacular” artifacts. We were concerned from the outset to collect vernacular images, since both religion and art history have concentrated so heavily on high culture. This objective certainly shaped the collection, and making the distinction in the index seemed worthwhile, especially given the desire of many faculty to teach about religion “from underneath” rather than “from on top,” i.e., from the perspective of the powerful and wealthy. Nevertheless, when the time came to index an artifact, the distinction became blurred, to say the least. Is a golden Aztec brooch high or vernacular, and to which category should one assign a Chinese bronze pot? Finally, we decided that “high” artifacts would be those made by professional artisans, while “vernacular” artifacts would be those made by people whose primary economic activity was something else. Another category we used was “nature.” We decided this category would include only images of the other-than-human world such as mountains, glens or vistas that had particular religious meaning or images of the use of relatively un-manipulated nature. We did not include images of nature such as landscape paintings. Interestingly, this led to the inclusion of the Ganges in the nature category but not in the “symbol” category. The Ganges is a goddess; she is not a symbol of a goddess.

Most scholars will initially encounter the IBTWR through the Indices, without seeing the slides. The Indices can be ordered inexpensively, in print or in a variety of diskette formats: slide orders can be composed from them. Scholars using the Indices probably do not approach them blind. They are likely to work from their existing interests and categorizations. Someone might want to look, e.g., for gender images in Islam in Africa. By searching through cross-indices, individuals can custom-select groups of slides. There are many more slide sets that could be created from the collection than the ones we currently have. The cross-indexing feature makes it somewhat easier for scholars to develop their own sequences. Hopefully, some will offer those sequences back to the project to make available to others.

The Indices are also not the only way of gaining entry into the collection, nor, in my opinion, are they the best. My preferred method would be visual exploration of the slides with reference to the accession list for basic identification. Ideally, a university library or a department would have the entire set, and faculty could search them visually. Even then, the words are important.

Artifacts and activities may appear visually similar while having vastly different meanings and functions in their appropriate contexts. Verbal information helps contextualize the images, just as the images help to contextualize the verbal discussion of the study of religion.

**Media.** Any slide collection exists in a visual format, since slides result from photographic activities and result in visual acts. Recent critiques of the Eurocentric tradition have emphasized the scopocentric character of its sensorium and of its metaphors of knowledge (Howes, 1991; Foucault, 1979). Several critics have also indicated that this bias is distributed in Western culture according to gender (P. Berger, 1972; Irigaray, 1980). This has been further articulated in terms of the relationship between male desire, the gaze, and domination (Kuhn, 1982; Mulvey, 1975). Many of these critiques insist on the fundamental colonization inherent in establishing an overview of others especially when those others may not view themselves at all, preferring to hear, or taste, or feel the real. Moreover, the implications of an “overview” are that the viewer is situated above the viewed and occupies a privileged position in which the gaze can dominate the visual scene.

These issues are compounded by an unfortunate but common belief in the veridicity of photographic evidence, rooted in the maxim “seeing is believing.” Many members of Eurocentric culture tend to believe that a photograph is a truthful (or at least an accurate) representation of visible reality without the individual idiosyncracies and biases inherent in verbal representations. (See, e.g., Banta & Hinsley, 1986, p. 39.) This is, of course, not the case. Photography is an editorial and selective process in which aspects of the visible are chosen, framed, focused and reproduced according to the eye and intent of the photographer. It involves all the elements of selectivity, bias, limitation, interest and unconscious influence that pervade other communicative media.

At the same time, the Eurocentric academy, and especially the study of religion, is so verbocentric as to be biased against all the senses, including sight. Religion in America is often taught as if it were primarily a matter of verbally expressed intellectual beliefs and the books in which those beliefs are expressed and discussed. The sensory aspects of religious experience are rarely addressed in the classroom.

However, partly because of the visual bias of our culture, many individual scholars and institutions have slide collections, and most teaching institutions are equipped with projectors, screens, and so forth. It may also be that, a somewhat unfocused dissatisfaction with verbocentrism leads Western scholars into an interest in slides. Certainly many scholars take slides of places they visit and use those slides in their own teaching, even though their professional products are strictly verbal. In any case, a slide collection is immediately usable throughout the profession and provides the opportunity for a rapid increase in sensory information in teaching about religion.

In a chapter in one of the three books coming out of the B/C/H collaboration, I recommended using the materials and practices, as well as the images, involved in the relationship of religion and material culture (1991b). This works to overcome the visual bias inherent in slides. When one makes a mask, or develops a dance, or designs and wears a costume, one participates in a synaesthetic and bodily involving activity akin to those of the traditions under study.

Another concern arising with the use of slides is their tendency to reify the “ethnographic present.” Ethnographic studies of culture have recently come under criticism for treating cultures as monolithic and timeless, and making generalizations that are held to be true for all members of a group for an indefinite (and potentially endless) time span. Slides, too, can have this impact. One sees a picture of, for example, a Korean shaman engaged in a healing ceremony, and one says, “Aha! This is how they do this.” In fact, one has simply seen one example of how one shaman performed a healing ceremony at one time and in one place. The degree of similarity from time to time, community to community and shaman to shaman remains open.

We engaged in several strategies to overcome this tendency. The section “Images of the Other in Western Imagination” specifically addresses the way in which images have shaped our understanding of other peoples, cultures and religions, both historically and in a contemporary context. Teachers using this section in class can thematize the ways in which images both reveal and hide their subjects. Other sections, too, raise the issue of the “ethnographic present.” The sequence about the Hopi Snake-Antelope Ceremony weaves together accounts from the turn of the century and the mid-sixties. Two sequences on rituals of the Ndembu people in Africa present two sets of images of the same ritual, one taken in the early 1950s and the other in the early 1980s. The text, too, reflects on elements of continuity and change over the three decades. The annotations for two sequences of Native American artifacts, one from the Plains/Prairie area and the other from the Eastern Woodlands reflect on the need to choose a specific historic moment from which to describe the religious activities of the group under consideration.

So, not without reservations, and aware of the limitations of our medium, the B/C/H proceeded with the slide collection, recognizing how it reinforces the academy’s scopotropism, how it challenges the academy’s verbocentrism, and how it can serve as a means to bring the role of the senses in learning into the foreground.

**Structures of the Academy.** Both the Image Bank itself and the teaching field it serves are in large part structured by the history of the discipline of the study of religion, and to a lesser degree by the histories of the disciplines of art history and anthropology. These disciplines themselves have received their structure within the academy, itself formed in a large world-historical context and under the influence of a particular episteme. Consequently, some traditions, geographical areas and

themes have been much more fully photographed than others, and this photographic history has inevitably affected the shape of the IBTWR.

For example, while the so-called “great traditions” have been documented minutely both globally and locally, other traditions have been largely overlooked. Yoruba religion is the mother of the fastest-growing religions in North America, the “African Religions in the New World” such as Vodou, Candomblé and Santería. Yet Yoruba religion has been studied only superficially by scholars of religion. Similarly South American religions, which represent structured, thoughtful and intentional responses to colonial religions on the basis of indigenous traditions, have scarcely been studied at all until the last few years.<sup>18</sup>

Christian Traditions can be an Index category on its own, while Yoruba Religion is a subcategory of Local Traditional Religions. Similarly, Ritual is a major category of analysis in both religious studies and anthropology, while Human Body represents an emerging scholarly concern. Hundreds of rituals have been documented and studied and there is a whole field of ritual theory, while the use and meaning of the human body (or of community) has had relatively little attention.

These facts reflect the general biases of the academy. We have privileged culture derived from the high traditions of Europe over all others. After that, we have privileged the cultures with which European high culture has longstanding relationships and has long recognized as civilized—i.e., China and India. For reasons of European history and recent geopolitics we also have attended to Islam, at least in its Arabic and Egyptian versions.

In indexing the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion (in fact, even in selecting the slides to make it up), we have both created an information access system that embodies its history and cultural situation and one that makes available information revealing and questioning these biases.

Another interesting factor we encountered was staged photography. Western photographers have had very clear ideas about the sorts of images they want to take home with them. This has led even professional photographers to arrange photo sessions with “natives” to obtain those images, even if the images have little or nothing to do with practices actually in existence in the locality. Eliot Elisofon, a Time-Life photographer whose work makes up the core of the Elisofon Collection at the National Museum of African Art, routinely paid people to stage rituals for his camera. Banta and Hinsley (1986) note that at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, “some photographers... kept a supply of costumes on hand for their subjects to wear when photographed” (p. 45). Stage-set backgrounds were often used. Whenever possible, we excluded staged photographs from the collection, although some doubtless crept in.

A related factor is the tendency of photographer, other than those who specifically work against the grain, to romanticize a subject in the course of photographing it. Our sense of beauty is rooted in cultural norms and is embedded in automatic responses. When we look for pictures, we are not just looking for subjects which interest us. We are also looking for “good pictures,” governed by the aesthetics of the good picture. We look for beautiful snapshots to take home to remind us, and show the others, about our experience. It takes considerable training and sophistication to overcome this tendency.

Photographs tend to overemphasize not only the beautiful, but also the bizarre and picturesque. There is a tendency to photograph exotic dancers in the moonlight, or spectacular architecture at dawn. Annual rituals with dramatic costuming are more likely to be photographed than daily rites performed in everyday dress. For example, I doubt we have a photograph of an American family saying grace. The dramatic and spectacular are part of religion, and such images are included, but religion also encompasses village women in India scratching sacred designs on walls in chalk, pottery making in the American southwest, and felt banner competitions in the United Church of Canada; these are included, too.

Finally, the disciplinary structure of the academy has influenced the slides which have been taken. It is an old saw that we only get answers to the questions we ask. In the academy asking questions is structured by disciplinary affiliation. Architectural historians have asked about structures and spaces, without overly concerning themselves with the presence of people in action, using the structures and spaces. Art historians have asked about artifacts, without too much concern about their appropriate uses and contexts. Anthropologists ask about culture and have, until recently, assumed that this means hard edged things like economics, social structure, politics and housing patterns, and not such “soft” stuff as religion and ritual. In addition anthropologists, mostly men themselves, have seldom noticed the existence of women’s culture or wondered what sort of information they might get if they could talk with the women.

All of these facts about disciplinary history have influenced the slides which were available for us to find. In the first place, scholars tended to take slides responsive to the questions defined by their disciplines. In the second place, scholars tended to react against these strictures, leading to a variety of critiques of the academy of which integrative studies is one. Thus many of our contributors define themselves as critics of their chosen disciplines, and have taken slides in response to their critiques. This is one reason why we were able to find work relevant to the question of gender. Yet one must not overlook the fact that critique is largely determined by the object of critique. The questions asked by our contributors (and those we ourselves asked in the project) are formed by the disciplinary structure of the academy in which we were educated and by our specific dissatisfactions with it. They do not emerge from a questioning of the world *de novo*.

**Cultural Incommensurability.** The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion is a tool to help “us” study “them” in two senses. In the first instance, it is a tool for the secular modern university to investigate the religions. In the second instance, it is

a tool for the christianized high culture of the West to investigate the rest. Yet one cannot work on this project without the uneasy sense that the lens is really an eye, and that the eye looks back. The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion reinforces the tendency of the university to reduce the rest of the world to objects of study, but it also resists this tendency, both by turning us into comparable objects of study (as in the sections on Western Christianity and on Modern Secularity) and by forcing us to see (literally) that “the others” have their own views of us.<sup>19</sup>

All cross-cultural investigations soon bring to the foreground the awareness that the investigation itself is entirely characterized by the culture from which it emerges. The cultures which we study do not explore the world and their others in the same terms or with the same methods as we do. The study of religion further compounds this awareness, for religions are complex and (relatively) complete responses to human experience. They manifest, generate and interpret our being in a variety of manners, and there is no certain way to determine the relative correctness of one over another, or if the notion of relative correctness is appropriate when applied to them. The religions we study have their own methods of analysis and explanation. They are as capable of studying and explaining us as we are of them. As Pruett says, “We are mapping maps that map us” (Reynolds & Burkhalter, 1986).<sup>20</sup>

The study of art should raise this issue as forcefully as does the study of religion, for other cultures and other time periods in our own culture work meaning in material quite differently than we do, for different purposes, with different experiences, and each of these arts imagines the world as fully as our own. Yet the world of art history (and the cognate discipline of museology) is only beginning to acknowledge these complexities, as witnessed by recent publications such as *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*. Interestingly, this movement so far focuses on the other cultures and not on the otherness of our own past. One hears much talk about how museum showings falsify Maori drums, but little about how viewer tours falsify the Pope’s private prayer chapel (the Sistine). The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion challenges art history to work toward the context of artifacts wherever they emerge. When you read below that “the study of religion” challenges certain Eurocentric conclusions, add “the study of art should do so.”

The study of religion raises fundamental questions of truth and value and demonstrates that those questions cannot be answered impartially, dispassionately or objectively. Actually we discover that these questions are not really questions at all, but part of a problematic of human life, to which we respond somatically, socially and psychologically long before we frame cognitive questions. Working in depth with the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion allows teachers and students to encounter other problematics and some alternative somatic, social and psychological responses.

Religion, even as we study it, calls into question the methods, motives, senses and objectives with which we study it. In order to study religion one must take a stance, existentially as well as intellectually, about issues such as the nature of evidence, the meaning and significance of participation in a tradition, the nature of the self, and the nature (as opposed to the content) of truth. This stance is pre-conscious, both in its childhood derivation and in its moment-to-moment functioning. It includes not only intellectual outlooks, but also, e.g., the structure of the sensorium (Howes, 1991).

The religions we study respond very differently to the need to take a stance, and articulate different issues as definitive, than does the Enlightenment tradition in which the academic study of religion and the liberal university are rooted. There is no self-evident way to determine the correctness of the academy’s stance in comparison to that of one or more religious tradition, or of, e.g., our emphasis on text as the means to and expression of truth in comparison to other traditions’ emphases on more sensory approaches.

Thus the study of religion calls into question the presuppositions upon which it rests: it is necessarily self-deconstructive. In studying religion we find out that people can lead rich, full, satisfying lives in contexts not only foreign but possibly repugnant to us. Even more disturbing (or interesting), we discover that our own context is equally strange, and possibly repugnant, to the others. This issue is directly confronted in one sequence in the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion—“Images of the Other in Western Imagination,” which deals explicitly with the way in which photographs, often doctored or staged photographs, have participated in creating common Western conceptions of non-Western peoples.<sup>21</sup>

The academic study of religion intrinsically dispels the notion that any idea or practice of discourse, truth, evidence or the human self is natural or self-evident. It shows that such ideas and practices are always saturated with history, culture, politics and psychology. The study of religion inherently deconstructs, showing that religious symbols, acts and communities are permeated by culture and history, class and gender, and repressed and unconscious desires. To the extent possible, within the limits of its makers’ cultural, historical and personal context, the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion puts all religious scenes, performances and artifacts on the same informational grid, placing our own neither above nor below the others but alongside.<sup>22</sup>

The study of religion itself is caught in the fissures of desire, history, culture and context as deeply as the religious traditions it studies. The deconstructive turn completes an ironic circle which threatens us with a universe of radical relativism. But this, too, is an unstable position, for relativism itself is situational, contextual, constructed. In the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion, the religious roots of modern secularity are thematized as well, in a section (listed in “Other Traditions”) called “modern secular,” and in a slide sequence called “Sacred Images and Intentions in Modern and Contemporary Art.”

The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion is an act of power as well as an act of knowledge. Its possibility rests on

current and historical geopolitical facts: the culture derived from European high traditions is capable of and interested in exploring those it has met as others without a reflexive opportunity for those others to explore us on their terms and based on their interests.

But for a variety of reasons, summed up in a predicament called “postmodernity” (see, e.g., J.F. Lyotard, 1979; F. Jameson, 1984; Harvey, 1989), we have become uncomfortable with both the pretension and the isolation of this position. For various motives and employing various strategies, people in and out of the academy (and, even, in and out of the mainstream West) are searching for avenues toward a multicultural path toward and understanding of useful knowledge.

Inevitably, because of the cultural moment of its inception, the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion, both in its content and its organization, embodies both facts.

**Conclusions.** The questions at stake in this issue of *Issues* revolve around the contextual and value-laden character of organization and retrieval systems for knowledge/information/ideas/power.

On one level, such questions sensitize us to the delicate and ambiguous nature of being human: they help us to be aware that every stance vis-a-vis the world is laden with unconscious and semi-conscious elements of personal history, politics, cultural position, and desire. Yet we remain aware that we cannot exist without a stance vis-a-vis the world. So we take one up, holding to it while acknowledging its unstable and uncertain bases.

On another level, the wistfulness of some of our questions seems to express a lassitude which has fallen on the academy following the breakdown of Enlightenment ideals of certain, objective knowledge. It is as if, having been forced to acknowledge the positional, unconscious, partial qualities of knowledge, we abandon the possibility of knowing altogether: as if every ignorance is equivalent to every other. But knowledge is contextual, even the knowledge that knowledge is contextual.

Reality is awesome and mysterious. The world toward which our intentions aim (cf. Husserl) is beyond them, and beyond us as well. Even our own self-knowledge cannot be equated with the selves we seek to know. Yet we cannot live without orientation: any claim to live without knowledge emerges from bad faith equal to that of the claim to live with perfect knowledge. Even a claim that “information access systems are futile” rests, in the final analysis, on information and a system of accessing it.

Perhaps what we need is a new understanding of the nature of “truth.” The tradition has been that truth as such is stable, neverchanging, imagined along the lines of “ideas in the mind of God.” Ideally, truth would be a copy of reality, a veridical map, a **mimesis**.

There are two problems with this image of truth. The first is that a map is not the reality, and every map is drawn according to some criteria. A rainfall map is useless to a lost driver, while a topographical map doesn’t give a clue as to the location of bathrooms. Any map can only be an image of a small part of what is mapped. The other problem with this image is that it imagines truth to be a copy, much as language, before Saussure, was imagined to be a copy of the world.

What if truth were a human artifact, tied in to human uses and needs? Sharpening a knife is “truing” the blade, and correcting the course of a satellite in space is “truing” it.

In an article on the work of art historian and critic Ananda Coomaraswamy, I suggested that:

“truing” may be a more fruitful concept than “truth,” for the human condition is, perhaps, more process than stasis, more verb than noun. When one is skiing down a hill, the overall objective is “balance,” but at each moment the specific content required to achieve that objective transforms; “lean a bit to the left,” “to the right,” “sit back,” “speed up,” “lean forward and slow down.”

The end is not to be confused with the means, nor are those good means which may seem to be good in themselves, but those which are good in the given application. (Coomaraswamy, 1956. p. 106)

Life is more like a balancing act and less like a pure description of static “essences” remaining unchanged behind a transforming surface. The “ends” of life—joy, fullness, loving and being loved—cannot be reached through any predetermined path. “Good means” to them must be found in each application, moment to moment. (Carp, 1991b, p. 35)

If this is so, the value of knowledge access systems (in fact the value of knowledge) lies not so much in their correspondence to reality (which can only be minute) but to their helpfulness in the conduct of our lives. A system of accessing knowledge is valuable because first, it helps us access the knowledge we need when we need it, and, second, because it helps us imagine new pathways into knowledge which help us find new (and useful) answers to old questions and new (and useful) questions to put to the knowledge. Knowledge is helpful because it help us ascertain and achieve the appropriate conduct of our lives. To return

to the skiing analogy, the value of knowledge is to get us safely to the bottom of the hill, exhilarated and enlivened.

This discussion does not tell us how to know what knowledge and which questions are useful, or what constitutes the appropriate conduct of our lives. These are, it seems to me, questions of great profundity, considerable ambiguity, and tremendous urgency. They are the questions mentioned above, about which we must act as if we had answers while acknowledging that we do not. Conducting the inquiry and realizing the results is, perhaps, at the heart of both culture and multiculturalism.

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## Endnotes

1. Although not every contributor would agree with this philosophy, it received broad support from the participants in the 1987 Institute and from the members of the Advisory Board, and the portions of it incorporated into the proposal were sent to most contributors.
2. This explains why hearing aids are so frustrating to their wearers. Normal hearing is a strongly focused activity. In a room full of noise, people can selectively move their focus from one conversation to another, to music playing in the background, to an unfamiliar noise coming from outside the room. Hearing aids amplify all noise, transmitting the entire babble of the sound environment.
3. For developing infants, learning to experience and control their bodies and to focus and respond to the perceptual world are elements of a single task. Even sitting up, rolling over and walking are habituated skills that we learn in infancy. These learned skills are saturated with cultural influence; different cultures actually represent different traditions of perceptual structuring. Habituated body rhythms, body postures and characteristic physical tensions are culturally learned, embedded in our bodies and lost from direct experience. (Carp, 1989, pp. 69-70)
4. As John W. Dixon, Jr. says:
 

"World construction" is the construction of the world as it is for those who live within it. It is not a "world view," a way of seeing the world or an attitude toward it. It emerges from and in turn shapes the rhythmic ordering of the body's processes so there is no way of thinking of a person distinct from the world who has a view of that world and opinions about it. . . . This constructed world is the world of those who have made it and live within it. It establishes the possibilities of their emotional life, the world of feeling. It creates the structures of the imagination that make possible the act of knowing. It defines purpose. (Art as Making the World, Journal of The AAR, March 1982)
5. The process of ordering the body correlates with that of focusing the world.
 

External perception and the perception of one's own body vary in conjunction because they are two facets of one and the same act. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p 205)

[The] developmental task of structuring body/world is accomplished within and in relation to the cultural landscape. The deep structures of the acculturated body correspond to those of the cultural landscape to which it acculturates. (Carp, 1989, p. 70)
6. For example, among some Islamic peoples, a page from the Qur'an may be powdered, dissolved and drunk for healing; while until quite recently in America a Bible was used to procure a binding oath in court.
7. These insights have also begun to affect classroom activity. The recently published *Tracing common themes: Comparative courses in the study of religion* (J. Carman and A. Hopkins, eds., 1991) includes courses investigating religion from the standpoints of art and architecture, pilgrimage, and masking. There is a broad recognition in the field that visually and kinaesthetically formed materials (i.e., art, architecture, ritual, and pilgrimage) are originating and original aspects of religion, not merely illustrations of verbal or literary material.
8. This insight can be found running through a number of studies now appearing in scholarly literature. For example, a group of authors in *Gender and religion: On the complexity of symbols* (edited by Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell and Paula Richman, 1986) illustrate the importance of a number of aspects of material culture to experiences of gender, the body, meaning and religion.
9. In this context one might also mention *Earthworks and beyond*, by Beardsley (1984), and *Overlay* by Lucy Lippard (1983). These investigations are not limited to the study of the contemporary world. *Gender and religion* (Walker, et al., 1986) contains several articles focusing on historical issues, while works of Jane Dillenberger (1988) and David Carrasco, ed. (1991) deal almost entirely with historical religion in relation to material culture. *Hatumere: Islamic design in West Africa* (Prussin, 1986) is an extensive discussion of the relationships between indigenous and Islamic religion and building traditions in West Africa over a millennium.
10. Politics always pertain to the generation of knowledge and of structures of accessing it. In the case of the IBTWR national politics, the history of academic prestige and academic politics all came into play. The support of scholars from prestigious institutions influenced the granting process, as did the longstanding relationship between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Berkeley/Chicago/Harvard collaboration. This is not a condemnation of the process. In the case of the long-running B/C/H collaboration, it seems to have led to truly creative and substantial results in a number of areas. The point is simply that both knowledge and systems of access are developed in contexts of power that affect them.
11. In a few instances we did commission slides, a few commercial photographers offered slides at greatly reduced prices,

and a very few essential images were purchased from distributors. However, an overwhelming percentage of the slides were contributed.

12. Some sets of slides investigate architectural facades and spaces, taking the viewer up to and through a mosque, church, or other sacred structure, while other sets explore historical trajectories (such as sacred high art in the Christian West, or Chinese painting) or focus on the development of a crucial image, such as that of the Buddha. While some sequences are focused around a particular theory (the sequence on Neolithic art in Europe is based on the work of Marija Gimbutas and that on syncretic Islamic/local built environments in West Africa is grounded in the work of Labelle Prussin), others center on an individual's consuming interest (i.e., the section on sacred mountains, generated by Eric Bernbaum, or that on Tara and the Black Madonna, which comes from the travels and observations of China Galland).

Some sequences are modeled on classic investigations in the field, such as that on the Hopi Snake-Antelope Ceremonial and those on Ndembu rituals (taken by and mirroring the work of Victor and Edith Turner). Other materials, such as those on Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands, have been pulled together from photographs of museum artifacts and annotated from texts recommended by curators and scholars. Finally, some sequences, such as "Images of the Other in Western Imagination" were created specifically to address issues raised by the IBTWR itself. (See Media.)

13. To the extent that either the study of religion or the history of art and architecture try to think of themselves as singular disciplines, the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion challenges and undercuts the claim.
14. As a teaching tool, the Image Bank for Teaching World Religion is exemplary, not encyclopedic. A collection could contain 600,000 slides and still leave out important religious facts.
15. It is easier to distinguish between the broad outlines of the traditions, which is a different question than determining whether, e.g., the Sunni or the Shia tradition is normative within Islam itself, "Sikhism," for example, is neither Hindu nor Islamic, but represents its own religious context. Even here, though, practitioners of a religion may wish to exclude practices we have included. One Buddhist monk who is also a scholar of religion in Canada has complained that Chinese folk religion, which we have indexed under Buddhist Traditions as well as elsewhere, "has nothing to do with Buddhism."
16. Africa; Asia: East; Asia: Near East; Asia: North and Central; Asia: South; Europe; Mesoamerica and South America; North America; and Oceania.
17. We identified at least nine genders in contemporary North American culture, each with its own characteristic structure of body experience and imagery, role structures, metaphoric representation, and so forth. They are male, female, bisexual male, bisexual female, homosexual, lesbian, infant, male child, female child. One might ask about biological androgynes. One might also add questions of those who cross-dress in their public personae.
18. A corollary to this is that some religious phenomena in our own culture are so familiar that they have received little or no attention (the "fish in water" syndrome). For example, we had great difficulty finding images of church potlucks, although this kind of communal celebratory feast held under the aegis of religious authority would quickly be studied in a "strange" culture.
19. A group of Vodou practitioners in Haiti have a "gede" (a possessing spirit) known as "Kodak gede" which takes the form of a tourist behind a camera. In the Hindu celebration of "holi" Western scholars are routinely covered with paint, an indication both of ridicule and respect. Images of both of these can be found in the project.
20. People who live with these other maps may simply lack the power to make them politically and economically effective in the international arena, at least compared to professors in the liberal universities of the West.
21. The best single source on this issue is an exhibition catalogue. (Banta and Hinsley, 1986). Labelle Prussin (1986) is also eloquent on the way in which Western experience of space distorted European experience of African space, and the way in which this distorted experience was carried back to Europe via drawings, prints and photographs (and later through constructed environments at world's fairs).
22. The "other" is, of course, not exclusively "elsewhere"—it is in our own psyches, as well and in our culture, and in the international community to which we belong. We are only partly transparent to ourselves; we are also largely hidden from ourselves, and what is hidden is often other than, even repugnant to, what is clear. The same and the other interpenetrate.