Afe Adogame, Magnus Echtler, and Oliver Freiberger (eds.)  

“Listening to alternative voices — in religions and in scholarship about religion — is a quintessential, although often neglected, activity in the academic study of religions,” state Afe Adogame, Magnus Echtler, and Oliver Freiberger in their editorial introduction to this Festschrift for Ulrich Berner (p. 9). In other words, scholars should pay more attention to dissent and diversity. Not only do we learn a lot more about empirical matters once we start looking for the differences and thus the complexities that such matters are composed of, but our methodological and theoretical projects also benefit from variety. To exemplify this, the essays in *Alternative Voices* are a grand mix of themes, questions, materials, methods, languages, genres, ideas, theories, and arguments.

Four parts give structure to a corpus of eighteen essays that together seem to transgress any attempt at strict classification. “Part one: ‘Religion’ as a contest-ed category” consists of three essays. The first is by Gregory D. Alles who poses an unorthodox but pertinent question: “Do *ādivāsīs* have religion?” Instead of presuming that religion is something that is found in all societies, scholars of religion should more often do grounded research into how different people make claims about having religion or not. Alles shows how revealing it can be to focus on how different actors in a field use different distinctions and translations. His discussion of the various perspectives and negotiations that he has observed, and participated in, in the Indian state of Gujarat, forces us to reflect again on how we as scholars use and understand the category “religion” in the different cases that we study. The second essay, “Erschriebene Religion” by Dirk Johannsen, is about Scandinavian literature from the movement and period that is sometimes referred to as the Modern Breakthrough, and particularly about a multitude of narrative voices who speak about religion in this literature. Johannsen also discusses connections and correspondences between authors such as Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and the early phenomenologists of religion W. Brede Kristensen and Cornelius P. Tiele. Thus he identifies critical mutual forms of influence between the pioneers of modern fiction and the pioneers of the modern study of religion. The third essay is written by Johannes Quack and bears the brave title “Aufgabe und Gegenstand der Religionswissenschaft.” The delineation of the task and object of the study of religion is, says Quack, a leitmotif in Ulrich Berner’s work. Quack argues that the study of religion should broaden its focus and take as its subject of study “the religious field”: a
contextually contingent and dynamic domain composed of all the different actors who engage in, with, or against religions. To challenge the all-too-common idea that religions are coherent entities composed of a fairly uniform group of adherents, he proposes identifying and highlighting different kinds of religiosity as a way to display the diversity of attitudes and practices that exists within groups or traditions.

“Part two: The plurality of voices in religious, cultural, and ethnic encounters” contains five essays, all case studies of how different actors have dealt with “others.” In “The slaves of Allah: Ifa divination portrayal of Islamic tradition — an intertextual encounter,” Jacob K. Olupona describes how Babalawos interpret and are influenced by Muslims and Islam. Based on his own observations in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan, Michael Pye writes about “Syncretistic positions in Chinese temples,” in particular about how divinities of different pedigrees are located spatially alongside or in relation to each other. Luther H. Martin discusses “The (surprising absence of a) Mithras cult in Roman Egypt,” and argues that it did not gain prominence there because the indigenous Isis–Serapis cult was too similar and too strong. In “Griechen und Juden — Skythen und Barbaren,” Lukas Bormann examines ethnicity, cultural domination, and marginality in the New Testament and suggests that Paul did not argue for universal proselytization but for proselytization among Greeks especially, and that the idea of proselytization among other peoples, such as the Scythians, or indeed among all peoples, developed later. Asonzeh Ukah’s “Prophets for profit,” the final essay in this section, sheds critical light on how Nigerian Pentecostal pastors preach the prosperity gospel in South Africa and how South Africans react and hold them accountable to their message and behavior.

“Alternative voices within religious traditions” is the heading of “Part three,” which comprises seven essays. These are also based on case studies. David Westerlund offers a preliminary survey of “Diverging Muslim Views on Health Care in Sweden” and shows a wide spectrum of positions and ideas that are formed in an interplay between transnational and local influences. In “Contested Shari’ah: One law, many interpretations, diverging interests,” Gabriele Cappai concludes that “there is no reason to see Shari’ah as a coherent system because indeterminacy and relativity are constitutive aspects of it” (p. 191). Ezra Chitando’s “Re-opening the canon” describes and analyses transformations of Shona indigenous religion in Zimbabwe as people try to deal with HIV/AIDS. Chitando shows how subordinate traditions have gained ground in the face of this crisis. “Was ist ein Heiligtum?” asks Jörg Rüpke, or rather: For whom, when, and how is a site sacred? Only by looking at the plurality of practices, in specific spaces and contexts (Rüpke’s examples are from