

American women published between 1990 and 1993 appears in *Center News* from the Center for Research on Women at Michigan State University. An extensive bibliography will also be published as part of the occasional papers from the aforementioned seminar (available through the D'Arcy McNickle Center). One must be continually on the lookout for bibliographies produced by workshops and conferences to keep up with the rapidly and exponentially expanding number of writings by and about Native American women. *American Indian Women* is an excellent place to begin.

Sue-Ellen Jacobs
University of Washington

Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit. Edited by Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. 411 pages. \$50.00 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

The authors and editors of *Amerindian Rebirth* deserve sustained appreciation for a volume that is serious, scholarly, and profoundly engrossing for those who wish to search deeply into Native American religious beliefs—and their ramifications. The book examines the widespread and various expressions that North American Indian and Inuit peoples have given to the notion of reincarnation, as recorded from the seventeenth century to the present day. Furthermore, it makes clear why these notions stand at the center of Amerindian spirituality, ontology, and social formation.

The two grandfathers of this volume are Marcel Mauss (whose 1938 essay, "Une categorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de personne, celle de 'moi,'" drew attention to the significance of reincarnation concepts in the interplay between individual self and social person), and Åke Hultkrantz (whose monumental 1953 dissertation, *Conceptions of the Soul among North American Indians*, demonstrated the universality of "multi-soul" ideas throughout native North America). These two scholars made it clear that, when Indians have reflected on their eschatology—where the parts of their being "go" after death—they have been reflecting simultaneously on their nature—their birthed existence—within the context of the community of life.

What Mauss and Hultkrantz suggested, *Amerindian Rebirth* makes copiously palpable. The Trait Index and the assorted articles show where in North America indigenes have posited beliefs in reincarnation (rebirth of spiritual aspects within the human community); transmigration (transferral of properties between human and natural realms); metempsychosis (the cycle of transformations between the two realms); inherited guardian spirits and name souls; and what signs Native Americans have perceived to mark those instances of reincarnation: announcing dreams and shamanistic testimony, birthmarks, physical and behavioral traits, interlife memory claims, and the like. Antonia Mills's chapter on Gitksan pierced-ear birthmarks is especially informative in this regard.

It becomes clear that reincarnation beliefs are more common among northern peoples like the Inuit, the Indians of the Northwest Coast, and tribes such as the Navajo of the Southwest, who migrated from northern Canada in the last thousand years. In addition, "the most universal feature of reincarnation belief in North America is the notion that children who die may be reborn into the same families" (p. 27)—a fact that underscores the social dimension of this religious idea.

The earliest documentation comes from the Jesuit observations of the Huron, who believed that they possessed as many as five or more "souls," i.e., spiritual aspects of their personal being. The Jesuits were steeped in an Aristotelian-Thomistic worldview that insisted doctrinally on a single soul, the essential aspect of each human; hence, they had difficulty in grasping Huron soul-concepts, including the strategies for returning their plural spirit entities to the material world after death. As Christians, the Jesuits could not accept reincarnation as a possibility; as believers in a unitary human soul, they could not fathom the Huron notion of plural souls.

And yet, contemporary Indian Christians, e.g., the Kutchins of northern Canada, have no difficulty in balancing their belief in occasional reincarnation within their Christian faith. For many native peoples, belief in reincarnation is not only a "fact of life" (p. 156) but also a key to "deeply seated Native convictions and hopes" (p. 172). For example, the Inuit say that a limited number of souls passes down within lineages and thus constitutes, as it were, the genetic identity of a family line. The Kwakiutl state that each person is an "intertwining of the semi-autonomous destinies of bodies, souls, and names," with each person representing "a

human destiny reflecting the history of the group" (p. 187). Throughout the Northwest Coast, Indians imagine themselves to be transient manifestations of the stuff of the universe; for them, "the individual person is a temporary conjuncture of forces" (p. 202), "a matrix of elements drawn from the natural and social world and thus a microcosm of that world" (p. 207). In this light, we can see how reincarnation beliefs express fundamentals of Native American religious philosophy in the present day, Christianity notwithstanding.

In Christian theology, the ideal goal is for the human soul to attain heaven (union with God); in Hindu tradition, the goal is for the unitary soul to escape the cycle of rebirths and attain union with God. For American Indians, however, plural-soul and reincarnation concepts are ways of expressing the ideal of "connectedness" (p. 293) with the lived-in world and the human community within it. As Richard Slobodin concludes, both accurately and eloquently,

A goal, perhaps the supreme good, to Native Americans would appear to be the cohesion and survival of the matrix of statuses occupied by community members and by significant features of the community's world: plants, animals, and other natural phenomena. Reincarnation is an important dynamic in this survival-continuity, or it might be said, reincarnation is an expression of the felt need for survival-continuity. (p. 294)

Christopher Vecsey
Colgate University

Ancient Architecture of the Southwest. By William N. Morgan. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. 301 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

Heeding Marcel Duchamp's suggestion that critics should clearly state their personal biases and the limits of their knowledge, I confess to being an architect. My interest in Native American architecture, as in all architecture, is primarily formal. That is, I look for the logical method by which designers use materials, shapes, geometry, patterns, and proportions to solve physical problems and express ideas. The system of logic in design, by which many competing interests are resolved into relatively simple, straightforward solutions, is called formal structure. The