Pilgrimage shrines have a way of popping up in unexpected and sometimes unwanted places. This book is about a public dispute which arose when an English stately manor house, located amid verdant pastures, hedgerows and ruminating cows in the middle of the green belt in Herefordshire, and on the edge of a charming English commuter village designated as a conservation area, was transformed almost overnight into a major Hindu pilgrimage centre, attracting over 10,000 devout pilgrims during festival days.

The pilgrims arrived in large family groups to prostrate themselves before Krishna and other Hindu gods, to enjoy religious entertainment and drama and adore the cows wandering freely through the manor grounds. For the duration of such festivals, often lasting several days, the English village's pastoral calm is shattered by the noise and exhaust fumes emitted from the thousands of cars arriving from North London to enjoy a peaceful day out in the countryside.

The narrative has further bizarre twists which show how religion has a way of unfolding along unpredictable routes. The manor house was purchased by George Harrison of Beatles' fame for the Hari Krishnas, a 'new age' 1960s religious movement of young English and American hippy types seeking transcendental experiences through ascetic observance and meditation. Since the manor house had previously been a nurses' college, there was no need for planning permission to change its designated use when it became a 'theological' college for the Hari Krishnas. Matters, however, took on a momentum of their own when the Hindu gods and founder guru's image were installed and consecrated in the small temple. Their beauty and care became a magnet for Hindu immigrants who had settled in London.

Malory Nye tells the story about the dispute that inevitably arose over the unauthorised change in planning use by the college in a balanced tone, with a measure of restrained humour, and with close attention to detail. The theoretical framework in which the narrative is cast is, however, less clear. Although the book claims to be about 'religious pluralism' in Britain, the reality described is of a cultural clash: between English ideals of the countryside and village living as embodied in legislation that protects the green belt and conservation areas from change and development, and the vitality of Indian religious worship, with its unrestrained crowds, noise and effervescent devotion. Paradoxically, what drew the crowds was not just the shrine but its location amid green fields. It became a pilgrimage centre, 'out there' in Victor Turner's terms, outside and beyond the crowded urban areas where most immigrants live their daily lives.

In a series of local authority, public, ministerial and court hearings (including those by the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg), the Hari Krishna leaders appealed to 'religious freedom' and the evident public religious needs of the established Hindu community in Britain, as proved by the vast crowds attending the manor house at weekends and on festival days and glossing over the organisation's mainly non-Indian management. The villagers appealed to the ethos of the English countryside, undermined by the unauthorised change in planning use of the manor house. Ultimately, after twenty years of protracted procedural and legal disputes in which the stream of pilgrims was tolerated de facto, ISKCON, the Hari Krishna organisation in Britain, won the right to build a road directly to the Manor House, circumventing the village altogether. Its campaign drew generous financial and political support from the Hindu community; final victory was due to legal and political change, with Labour gaining control of the county council, and the impending 1996 elections (which Labour won from the Tories).

The complex bureaucratic, legal and political
manoeuvrings that characterised the negotiations and hearings, and led finally to the new road resolution (deemed by the Secretary of State for the Environment a legitimate ‘exception’ to green belt restrictions) tell a lot about the meaning of multiculturalism in modern democracies. The case study adds almost nothing, it seems to me, to the debate on religious pluralism, since at no point was the character of Hinduism as a religion, or the right of Hindus to practise their religion freely in Britain, ever disputed. Instead, it was the English quasi-religious devotion to the countryside which seemed under attack.

The fact that multiculturalism in democratic societies is mostly about negotiating the apparently petty, intricate details of planning permissions, road access, car parks, building facades, cemetery spaces, school meals or school uniform rules, is often missed in the more political philosophical debates on cultural pluralism. This book makes a very important contribution to understanding multiculturalism as a process of mundane bureaucratic and legal negotiation in which, to win, cultural and religious minorities must first master the rules and procedures already in place, and at the same time must learn to exert well orchestrated media and political pressure. The book is far less successful in setting up a theoretical framework for understanding the case’s implications, which are presented piecemeal, since the author gets tempted in the third part of the book into somewhat long winded discussions of tangential issues. Although these are interesting and informative in their own right, the issues (legal disputes worldwide over the definition of religion; the role of European Human Rights legislation on religious freedom, especially as applied to Jehovah’s Witnesses in Greece; and an admirably comprehensive survey of the current debate on multiculturalism) come at the expense of an opportunity systematically to evaluate the innovative potential of the present case as set out in an interesting way in the first two parts of the book.

Nye also gets distracted into needless discussions about postcolonialism, and uses concepts like ‘hegemony’ indiscriminately, despite the fact that the manor dispute shows the limits of majoritarian dominance. So too, his conclusion that multiculturalism is a ‘divide and rule’ policy invokes a hoary myth, long discredited, and clearly contradicted by the case study that shows multiculturalism to be a local order negotiated between a multiplicity of political actors. Yet this latter insight into multiculturalism is one he himself cites approvingly earlier in his discussion.

The Rushdie affair, a key narrative motivating many of the discussions of multiculturalism in Britain and Europe, seemed to raise hard and very painful questions about the power of religion to undermine and challenge liberal democratic assumptions. Global threats of violence, book burning, a deep sense of offence and the challenge to the sanctity of the cosmopolitan creative artist made the affair intractable and ultimately irresolvable. By contrast, this book is about pleasure and enjoyment: can one enjoy one’s religion at the expense of others’ pleasure? This is not a trivial question. Many multicultural debates hang on different perceptions of the good life held by different cultural groups and the exclusions and antagonisms these conflicting perceptions entail. But such questions need theoretical development.

The book is long, over 300 densely printed pages, and the third part, which addresses issues of human rights, religion and multiculturalism, is itself over 100 pages. In the general debate on multiculturalism I missed any mention of the struggle over state recognition for voluntary-aided religious schools established by ‘new’ religious minorities, although this has been a protracted and central platform of British Muslims, along with the demand for a law against religious discrimination and hatred. Although an anthropologist by training, the author relies mainly on documentation (he himself was drawn into the affair as an expert witness) and on part-time participant observation.

The book is very well produced despite minor, perhaps inevitable, typographical and stylistic errors such as a footnote (on p. 287) that tells us that both the Swaminarayan and ISKON sectarian forms of Vaishnavism predominantly ‘attack’ Gujaratis (presumably for ‘attract’).

Despite these limitations, Nye has written a book that is unique in grappling seriously for the first time with issues of cultural conflict as experienced by Hindus in Britain. It thus contributes significantly to our understanding of multiculturalism as an ongoing process in Britain and, perhaps more generally, in western democracies.

PNINA WERBNER
Keele University

Henry Reynolds writes from what our prime minister calls the ‘black armband view of history’, which is said to emphasise the negative aspects of colonisation and dispossession over the positive achievements of Australian settlers. His thoughtful book is at once a work in history, law and social science, and although intended for domestic readers, overseas readers who would like to learn about the situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians will also find it engaging.

In its 1991 Mabo decision, our High Court held that when the Crown acquired dominion over Australia, it did not by so doing extinguish any property rights that the indigenous peoples might have in land arising from traditional law and custom, but it did acquire the right to extinguish those rights. Where the Crown had not acted to extinguish property rights and where adverse acts had not extinguished them, indigenous property rights were recognisable by the common law as native title rights. At the same time, the Crown acquired sovereignty too, but this act extinguished any rights of sovereignty which indigenous peoples might have had under traditional law and custom. There is thus an inconsistency between the court’s position on property and sovereignty because it gives recognition to traditional law and custom with respect to the former, but not to the latter.

In Chapter 2, Reynolds reviews the writings of early observers and later ethnographers. It has always been clear that Aboriginal people had property in land and politics, but the courts have been slow to recognise the former and have yet to recognise the latter. In Chapter 3, he looks at the history of international law and finds an early tradition which recognised that small-scale societies were also polities; they were independent and they exercised both external and internal sovereignty.

In Chapter 4, Reynolds finds that the legal monism (characterised by the terra nullius doctrine and the non-recognition of indigenous customary law) that emerged in Australia was contested in the last century before finally gaining sway. It contrasts with the legal pluralism that developed in other parts of the British Empire. Chapter 5 goes on to consider the question of how the Crown acquired sovereignty in Australia — whether by right of occupation, cession or conquest. He puts the case strongly that it was by conquest, but notes the reluctance of settlers to accept that representation.

He also reviews the argument that the rule of prescription (in international law) would operate to remedy any defect in title and vest it in the Commonwealth government. It would, however, require the acquiescence of previous owners, and in these days of moral politics, gaining the assent of indigenous traditional owners to their dispossession would not be an easy public relations task.

In Chapter 6, the author presents comparative material from America and Canada, where there is some formal recognition of continuing indigenous sovereignty, although it has different histories and takes different forms in the two countries. Chapter 7 considers various forms that Aboriginal self-determination might take: from the bottom-up acquisition of power at the local level, by the negotiation of regional agreements or through treaty or compact. Among Aboriginal people, there exists a gamut of opinion extending to autonomy and full independence, as represented by the Aboriginal Provisional Government.

In Chapter 8, Reynolds surveys the rights generally attributed to indigenous peoples by international law and in the views of scholars, and focuses on the forms that self-determination might take for indigenous peoples living in the territories of states they do not control. These range from secession and outright independence to various federal arrangements, as well as proposals for self-representation (as nations, but not as states) in the international order.

In the final chapter, Reynolds distinguishes nations (a kind of social group defined by culture and politics, which are defined by biological features) from states (a form of political organisation), and pursues the question of how three nations (two indigenous and one non-indigenous) might live together equitably under the Australian state without threatening one another. Reynolds suggests ‘that the Australian state is the irreplaceable protector of... [the] inescapably fragile nationhood’ of the two indigenous nations, and that its presence may be necessary ‘to underwrite their autonomy, to provide a secure arena in which they can operate’ (p. 179).

He notes too that sovereignty is partible, as witness the division of powers among the Commonwealth and state governments, and draws attention to Norfolk Island, an external territory whose people have autonomy and exercise some of the powers of the states and some of the federal...
government. These include their own parliament and the power to raise taxes. Reynolds has floated this proposal before, and it deserves more consideration. However, it remains difficult to be optimistic about the prospects for Aboriginal self-determination now that the federal and state governments have rolled back some of the gains made under Mabo and the Native Title Act (1993) through amendments, and their often ungenerous opposition in mediating and litigating native title claims.

BRUCE RIGSBY
The University of Queensland


The subject of this collection might seem somewhat frivolous but there has been an increasing interest in the anthropology of food during the past decade, linked very firmly with analyses of post-Fordist consumerism and processes of globalisation and localisation. A basic and undeniable premise is that an understanding of dietary preferences, attitudes towards food, and concepts of proper food and a proper meal are ‘central to the experience of everyday life and hence are integral to the maintenance of local cultures’ (p. 9). One of the justifications for this set of comparative studies of American fast-food outlets in East Asia (there are chapters on Beijing, Hong Kong, Taipei, Seoul and Tokyo) is that anthropologists in their search for people and culture have to go where people go, and ‘[i]ncreasingly, all over the world, people are going to McDonald’s’ (p. viii).

The interest in the cross-cultural study of the purchase and ingestion of hamburgers and french fries also entails much more than the examination of economic exchange and changing dietary preferences. As Watson proposes, in his exemplary editorial introduction, ‘McDonald’s sells more than food’; this quintessentially American product ‘has become a saturated symbol, so laden with contradictory associations and meanings that the company stands for something greater than the sum of its corporate parts’ (p. 2). McDonald’s sells a system of production and service, but it also purveys a set of multivocal symbols, identities, patterns of behaviour, and social values and attitudes. In short it provides the contexts and opportunities for ‘a social and cultural experience’.

For those of us interested in the culture, and specifically the symbols and behavioural patterns associated with consumption, there is not much to surprise us in this edited volume. But the five well crafted and carefully edited chapters, along with James Watson’s long introduction and Sidney Mintz’s afterword, bring to what has become a ubiquitous element of popular culture, modernity and globalisation an appreciation of the ways in which McDonald’s is appropriated, experienced and transformed by different communities and cultures. All the comparative contributions are concerned both to examine the reasons for the general success of McDonald’s in different socio-cultural and historical contexts and to understand the processes and effects of localisation of a global product and service.

As the several papers argue, it is difficult to sustain the argument that McDonald’s is merely an intrusive, disruptive agent of post-modern cultural imperialism. The first McDonald’s restaurant was opened over thirty years ago in Tokyo, in Hong Kong in 1975, in Taipei in 1984, and in Seoul in 1988; even in China the restaurant chain has been operating since 1992. The franchises are fifty per cent owned by local entrepreneurs, who all work assiduously to embed their restaurants in the local environment and psyche. Despite the common elements in service and product (relatively inexpensive burgers and fries; cleanliness; standards of service; fast, standardised and efficient production; predictability), in each case there are context-specific adaptations, so much so that McDonald’s progressively makes itself at home, and is made homely by local people who give meaning to, and shape, aspects of McDonald’s and American culture in terms of their own conceptions and cultural categories.

The localisation process is most advanced in Japan and Hong Kong where, as a long-established enterprise, McDonald’s ‘has become a routine, unremarkable feature of the urban landscape’ and ‘many younger consumers do not know of the company’s foreign origins’ (pp. 37–8). Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s chapter on Japan and James Watson’s on Hong Kong demonstrate how the ‘transnational is the local’ (p. 80), and the exotic restaurant becomes the commonplace, with customers served not by smiling, congenial staff but by competent, serious and calm personnel in a context of prolonged and sociable ‘snacking’. In Hong Kong, fish sandwiches and plain hamburgers
are popular; in Japan, iced coffee, iced oolong tea, hot oolong tea, corn soup, café au lait and bacon-potato pie.

In the other three more recently established locations addressed in this volume the reactions to McDonald’s demonstrate a more complex and contradictory process of global–local interaction. Yunxiang Yan, in his examination of McDonald’s in Beijing, argues that it is still seen as a recent import, representing Americana and ‘the promise of modernisation’ (p. 41). But rather than a place to take fast food and leave, it has become a venue in which to relax, hang out, chat with friends, read, hold business meetings and be seen, a place where personal interaction between staff and customers takes place and where a Chinese-style family atmosphere has been created (p. 58). In Taipei, given the sustained American presence there, David Wu shows how ‘consuming’ McDonald’s is a profoundly political act concerning ethnic and cultural identities. But as elsewhere in the region it also serves as a community centre for students, teachers and family. Sangmee Bak, in her chapter on Seoul, also argues for the transformation of McDonald’s restaurants into leisure centres, though there has been considerable adult resistance to hamburgers in the attempt to demonstrate a Korean identity, which – as with Taiwan – has much to do with the contested and contradictory post-war relationships with America.

I do not think that this volume advances significantly our knowledge of the anthropology of consumption, but this set of first-class ethnographic studies does tell us much about the social and cultural nuances of what is now referred to as McDonaldisation. Watson’s book is very readable, well-edited and cross-referenced, and it demonstrates the kinds of contribution that anthropologists can make to our understanding of globalisation and the interconnections between consumption, changing family, age and gender structures, increasing affluence and socio-economic mobility. For those of us who teach anthropology Watson has provided us with an excellent student text.

Finally, Sidney Mintz’s afterword and overview makes especially rewarding reading. It explores in a succinct and historically informed way the social and cultural consumption of food in cross-cultural contexts, and the consequences of the expansion of capitalist society, technological innovation and consumerism for changing diets and tastes. Mintz also leaves us with the thought that ‘involved in the introduction of institutions of the McDonald’s sort are matters more far-reaching than changes in familial food habits’ (p. 200).

VICTOR T. KING
University of Hull