Constructing Local Theologies

30th Anniversary Edition

ROBERT J. SCHREITER, C.PP.S.







Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknollsociety.org.

Copyright © 1985, 2015 by Robert J. Schreiter

Published by Orbis Books, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302. Manuscript Editor: Lisa McGaw

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schreiter, Robert J.

Constructing local theologies.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Theology—Methodology. 2. Catholic Church—Doctrines. I. Title.

II. Title: Local theologies.

BR118.S365 1985

230'.01'8

84-14797

ISBN 0-88344-108-X (pbk.) ISBN 978-1-62698-146-1 (anniv. ed.)







Contents

	roauction to the 50th Anniversary Eattion	
	reword by Edward Schillebeeckx	
Pre	eface to the Original Edition	xv1
1.	WHAT IS LOCAL THEOLOGY?	
	A Shift in Perspective	
	The Varieties of Local Theology	
	Translation Models	
	Adaptation Models	10
	Contextual Models	14
	Who Is a Local Theologian?	1
	The Community as Theologian	19
	The Role of the Professional Theologian	20
	Prophets and Poets in Local Theology	2
	Outsiders and Insiders in Local Theology	2
	Toward Definition of Local Theology.	2
2.	MAPPING A LOCAL THEOLOGY	2
	Spirit and Gospel: The Community's Context	2′
	The Difficulties of the Beginning Point	2
	Previous Local Theologies	3
	The Opening of Culture	3
	Culture Texts: The Emergence of Themes	3
	The Opening of Church Tradition	3
	Tradition as a Series of Local Theologies	3
	The Encounter of Church Tradition and Local Themes	3
	The Impact of the Tradition on Local Theology	3
	The Impact of Local Theology on the Tradition	3
	The Impact of Local Theology on the Cultural Situation	4
	Other Issues in Reading the Chart	4
	The Audience of Local Theology	4
	Local Theology in a Universal Church	4
	Further Thinking in Ecclesiology	4



vi Contents

3.	THE STUDY OF CULTURE	45
	Listening to a Culture	45
	Tools for Listening to Culture	
	Cultural Analysis for Theology: Some General Characteristics	
	Functionalist Approaches to Culture	
	Ecological and Materialist Approaches to Culture	54
	Structuralist Approaches to Culture	
	The Semiotic Study of Culture	
	Toward a Semiotic Analysis of Culture	65
	Description and Perspective in Culture	
	The Semiotic Description of Culture Texts	
	Identity in Semiotic Description	
	Social Change in Semiotic Description	
	Cultural Analysis and Local Theology	
4.	THEOLOGY AND ITS CONTEXT:	
1.	CHURCH TRADITION AS LOCAL THEOLOGIES	97
	Theology and Its Context.	
	Theology and the Sociology of Knowledge	
	A Sociology of Theology	
	Theology as Variations on a Sacred Text	
	Theology as Wisdom	
	Theology as Sure Knowledge	
	Theology as Sure Knowleage	
	The Tradition as a Series of Local Theologies	
	The fradition as a series of Local frieologies	108
5.	TRADITION AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY	109
	Local Theology Encounters Christian Tradition:	
	Seven Problems	109
	Christian Tradition Encounters Local Theology:	
	Four Problems	
	The Functioning of Tradition in Human Communities	119
	Tradition's Contribution to Human Community	120
	Essential Aspects of Tradition	122
	Perspectives on Tradition	125
	Toward a Theory of Tradition	130
	Criteria for Christian Identity	134
	The Cohesiveness of Christian Performance	135
	The Worshiping Context and Christian Performance	136





Contents vii

	The Praxis of the Community and Christian Performance	136
	The Judgment of Other Churches and Christian Performance	
	The Challenge to Other Churches and Christian Performance	
6.	POPULAR RELIGION AND OFFICIAL RELIGION	139
W	hat Is Popular Religion?	141
Varieties and Characteristics of Popular Religion		
	Interpreting Popular Religion	
	Negative Approaches	
	Positive Approaches	
	The Seven Approaches in Summary	
	Areas of Need and Popular Religion	159
	Pastoral Approaches to Popular Religion	
Po	pular Religion and Local Theologies	
7.	SYNCRETISM AND DUAL RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS	165
	The Problems of Syncretism and Dual Religious Systems	165
	The Varieties of Syncretism and Dual Religious Systems	167
	Three Kinds of Syncretism	
	Three Kinds of Dual Systems	169
	Some Issues and Questions	171
	A Model for Understanding Syncretism	174
	A Model for Understanding Dual Religious Systems	178
	Dealing with Syncretism and Dual Religious Systems	180
No	otes	183
	1	



