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MEMORIAL ISSUE FOR ANDREW DUFF-COOPER

INTRODUCTION

Andrew Duff-Cooper died on 4 August 1991 at the age of forty-three. His death has been a great loss for all who knew him. The contributions that follow are from just some of the many friends and colleagues whom Andrew came to know through anthropology at Oxford.

This is not the place to review Andrew’s life and career, a task already performed in these pages by Rodney Needham (JASO, Vol. XXII, no. 3 (1991), pp. 197–200), but Andrew’s connections with Oxford anthropology (and JASO in particular) are worth stressing. He was a postgraduate student here from 1976 to 1983, during which time he completed both a B.Litt. and a D.Phil., and he maintained close relations with Oxford until his death. Andrew stayed on a little while in Oxford after completing his D.Phil., before moving to Japan. From there he remained a regular contributor to, and correspondent with, JASO. From 1983 until the time of his death, he published eleven reviews and six articles in these pages, and another review and three more articles have been published here posthumously. The ever-expanding correspondence relating to these publications and other matters led us to open a special ‘Duff-Cooper’ file, the only one of its kind in our offices. Further correspondence relating to the posthumous publications and to this Memorial Issue have meant that the file has remained open until now. The imminent closure of the JASO ‘Duff-Cooper’ file will mark the end of a fruitful relationship that we have been pleased to maintain beyond his death, and which culminates in this issue.

The contributions that follow are not intended as assessments of Andrew’s work. Rather, they are essays arising out of each contributor’s own work offered, individually and collectively, as tributes to Andrew’s memory. It is remarkable, however, the extent to which the authors have linked their contributions to Andrew’s own writings, a reflection indeed of his prolific output in which he
Introduction

touched on virtually every conventional anthropological topic...as well as on some unconventional ones.

Andrew relentlessly and vigorously pursued his view of anthropology in a succession of papers that together comprise a comprehensive account of the Balinese on Lombok, as well as a set of considered reflections on other matters that concerned him. Andrew died young, but in the ten years or so in which he devoted himself to writing for publication, he produced what for many would be more than a lifetime's work. We are pleased to be able to include in this issue dedicated to his memory a bibliography of his writings.

For those who knew him, no collection of essays is needed as a memorial; Andrew was truly unforgettable. We hope, however, that his family, and his many colleagues and friends around the world, will regard this special issue of *JASO* as a fitting tribute to his memory. Finally, we are grateful to Andrew's family and friends for their generosity in helping to defray the extra costs incurred in producing this issue.

The Editors
CONTEXTUAL INDETERMINACY: 
ON THE USE OF SURVEY METHODS IN FIELDWORK

GERD BAUMANN

The considerations that follow attempt to continue a conversation with Andrew Duff-Cooper in which I mooted the idea of 'supplementing' qualitative fieldwork with a quantitative survey. 'I suppose,' Andrew conceded in his best tone of supportive irony, 'doing what you're doing, you're going to have to.' What I was doing was ethnographic fieldwork, though not with villagers who shared in one 'form of life', as we both had pursued previously. Rather, my informants were London youth drawn from a plethora of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and growing up together in the post-immigration suburb of Southall. To do fieldwork in such a locale, Andrew knew, meant encroaching on ground cultivated by urban sociologists, policy researchers, and other social scientists who privileged quantitative data. The use of survey methods was thus politically opportune, if not indeed de rigueur.

Yet Andrew was sceptical about the benefits of data gathered by surveys. True, ethnographers had conducted censuses and used official statistics ever since the Rhodes–Livingstone scholars had shown them how, and Andrew was no exception. His own fieldnotes, too, contained tables on land tenure, domestic budgets, and even conviction rates in courts of law. But most ethnographies, on his bookshelves as on mine, persisted in clustering their statistical data in the early sections on 'backgrounds', demographic, economic or historical, rather than in the chapters that contained 'the meat', be it of insights encapsulated, structures made visible, or theories refined. The use of quantitative data in ethnographies seemed
limited at best, and the ‘real’ ethnographic enterprise was qualitative to a fault. It expected no insights from the peddling of questionnaires.

What I expected from the eventual survey was indeed not so much a source of new ethnographic insights, but evidence to assess the ‘representative’ quality of what informants had told me in face-to-face interactions. Over two years of part-time fieldwork I had, of course, encountered a wide variety of opinions and viewpoints, generalizations, and claims to speak for others, too. But precisely how many young Southallians might think as Narinder or Joshua thought was beyond ethnographic fieldwork to find out. Here, I expected, the survey method could make a valid contribution, and one more important than the ‘political’ legitimation of fieldwork in an urban arena. It may have been permissible once to write ethnographies of rural ‘communities’ where ‘the’ people all seemed to speak alike, think alike and even feel alike. Yet even village ethnographies had taken leave of such assumptions of uniformity, and in a town of 60,000 it was surely desirable to quantify how widespread a view or an opinion might be, and perhaps to point to the social patterns associated with its spread.

Yet the use of samples to gauge the ‘representative’ quality of opinions collected must face two debilitating criticisms. First, every ethnographer is bound to question any sample that statisticians might claim to be ‘random’ or, for that matter, ‘representative’. Both these terms implicate selective criteria that qualitative research can undermine at a stroke. Was a sample of Southall’s youth, for instance, to represent the town’s composition according to criteria of religion or of regional origin, of mother-tongue or of migratory history, of caste or social class? Empirically, these cleavages cut across each other, and which might be relevant when was a matter of context alone. Yet context, so the second point, is the one thing that questionnaires cannot capture.

Of the contexts informing hundreds of people responding to the same set of questions, nothing can be known. This is not so important when a survey asks respondents to report numbers or other information they may regard as value-free ‘matters of fact’. There is little point in breaking into an epistemological sweat over asking how many television sets or books there are in a house. Even how many people ‘live’ in a house may be taken as a perfectly innocuous question, so long as one specifies whether ‘living’ means, say, eating together or sleeping under

1. I thank my friend Dr Marie Gillespie of Brunel University for her invaluable co-operation in the phrasing, piloting and administration of the questionnaire and for her support and friendship throughout the fieldwork and since. Details of the questionnaire, which consisted of some 90 questions addressed to 12- to 18-year-old Southallians, are contained in her doctoral thesis (Gillespie 1992, II: xxi-lvii, 1-70). I should also like to thank Hazel Yabsley, Barbara Hawkes and Teresa McGarry, then final-year anthropology students at Brunel University, for their help in administering the questionnaire alongside their own fieldwork projects in Southall. The analysis of the quantitative data relied on the generous help of Lynette Clark and Dr Mozzy Hajian. Neither the questionnaire nor my students’ fieldwork could have been contemplated without the financial assistance of the Leverhulme Trust, which also provided funding towards my own fieldwork.
the same roof. Both under-reporting and over-reporting often tend to follow fairly straightforward sociological fault lines. If a sample is large enough, one can discount to a percentage point the effects of, say, ‘young males boasting’. The fact that questionnaires are filled out in a contextual no man’s land is important, however, when it comes to eliciting opinions, rather than information that informants consider ‘matter of fact’. These, of course, are the questions that interest anthropologists most. There can be no hope, I now consider, of ‘supplementing’ qualitative insights with quantitative corroboration. How many Southallians might think as, say, Narinder thought last Monday over dinner is not a question that questionnaires can throw any light on. For one, we do not know which Southallians might make a sample ‘representative’ or which of them might be ‘comparable’ to Narinder. Secondly, the mere fact of several hundred unknown people responding to the same question or statement must render survey data contextually indeterminate. If questionnaire data are to produce ethnographic insights at all, they must thus do so, not despite but because of their contextual indeterminacy. Consider, for instance, the responses of some 300 teenage Southallians to the following question: ‘Southall has many cultures. Please write down some cultures that are around.’

The point was not, of course, to produce a neat list of ‘cultures that are around’ in the town. Rather, it was intended to elicit data on how Southall’s youngsters might use the term ‘culture’ when no context was specified. The phrasing of the question copied the speech of scores of young Southallians observed over the preceding two years of fieldwork. Since they used the word ‘culture’ in a plethora of quotidian contexts, and used it in reified senses in many of them, the interest of the question lay in elucidating which criteria youngsters might use, in the absence of a specifiable context, to ‘tell’ one ‘culture’ from another. The question as phrased allowed each respondent to draw upon any of a variety of mutually independent markers of ‘culture’. It might be expected that each would compile a polythetic classification juxtaposing, for instance, a ‘Sikh culture’ on religious criteria with a ‘white culture’ on the criterion of ‘race’, and a ‘Pakistani culture’ on the criterion of nationality. Yet the results showed a remarkable degree of uniformity, as is shown even by the crude classification in Table 1 of the criteria used by each of the 312 respondents.

Three-quarters of all respondents used religion to define at least one of the ‘cultures that are around’. The fraction is even higher if one includes those respondents, probably the younger ones, who named a religious festival or ritual as the marker of ‘culture’ or who were unaware that ‘Rasta’ designates a religion no less than a sub-culture or life-style. I doubt that anyone could have expected, from qualitative research alone, that in the absence of a determinate context young Southallians of all religious backgrounds should show such a degree of convergence upon using religion as the criterion that demarcates ‘culture’.2

2. Though the result might have been expected from Larson’s (1989) qualitative research among Muslim children in Southall. At the time of her research, however, various national and
Criterion | Used Once or More by % of respondents
--- | ---
religion (e.g. Sikh, Hindu, Christian) | 75
nationality (e.g. Indian, English, Jamaican) | 31
region or language (e.g. Punjabi, Gujarati) | 11
a named ‘sub-culture’ (e.g. ‘Rasta’) | 9
a religious festival (e.g. Diwali, Christmas) | 8

| TABLE 1. Criteria Used by Southall Youth to Distinguish Local ‘Cultures’ |

‘But is your sample representative?’ Andrew might ask, to remind me of our shared scepticism, ‘and anyway, what does it show?’ The problem of representative sampling must, I think, be faced question by question. The sample that a survey has managed to catch may be judged representative for one question and misleading, biased or irrelevant for any other. The particular sample that so strongly focused upon ‘religion’ to demarcate ‘cultures’ in the absence of a specifiable context happens to mirror almost exactly the religious composition of Southall’s school-age population. The criterion evinced is thus consistent with the criterion of sampling that validates the survey itself. Sampling and result thus make sense of each other. None the less, for each question the relationship between sample and result has to be queried anew.

On the matter of significance, I would perhaps draw on Andrew’s attention to ‘the tone’ of ideology (Duff-Cooper 1987). What makes the consensus on ‘religion’ as the marker of ‘culture’ so telling is what it says about the ‘tone’ that underlies young Southallians’ classification of ‘cultures’. Southall, after all, is an ostensibly ‘multi-ethnic’ town, and its predominant civic ‘ideology’ is one of ‘multi-cultural’ coexistence across a wide variety of intersecting and mutually independent social and cultural cleavages. Yet when asked what demarcates ‘culture’, most Southall youngsters answer ‘religion’. The ‘tone’ of Southallians’ international developments had so exacerbated the divide between Muslims and others that it had come to overshadow all social cleavages cutting across the Muslim/non-Muslim distinction. The same could not be said about other religious categories.
multi-culturalist ‘ideology’ is predicated on recognizing religion as the chief distinguishing feature of ‘culture’. There is far more, of course, both in the way of qualification and confirmation, that cross-tabulations and sophisticated statistical techniques could make of such data.

The point, however, which should need no labouring here, is that data collected in a contextual no man’s land may yield insights of their own, so long as two conditions are met. First, the criterion that makes a sample ‘representative’ must be related to the question in hand, and secondly, there is a difference in kind between contextually indeterminate data and those collected in face-to-face ethnographic encounters. The survey does not show who uses ‘religion’ to distinguish ‘cultures’ in one context or another, rather, it shows that in the absence of a specifiable context, most young Southallians resort to ‘religion’ in preference to, say, nationality, ‘race’ or language. One may add a third condition that should be met if surveys are to prove ethnographically useful. The question asked should bear some relation at least to local usages, representations and conceptions. There is no further need, if ever there were any, to ask 12,000 ‘Asians’ in ‘Middletown’ whether they feel ‘(a) more Asian, (b) more British, or (c) a bit of both’. The answer, as any ethnographer knows, is ‘it depends’; and what it depends upon only fieldwork can discern.

Fieldworkers, moreover, know that what exactly it ‘depends upon’ is not only context, but the difference, across all contexts, between what people say, what people do, and what they say they do or would do. Ever since Malinowski, ethnographers have noted the difference between words and deeds, between norms and behaviours, ‘culture’ and ‘ideology’, ‘discourse’ and ‘practice’, or however else we may put it as we refine our lexical tastes. These ambiguities, though, must surely lie beyond the horizon of quantitative enquiry. They must be the preserve of the face-to-face ethnographer. But perhaps not.

One of the questions, put to young Southallians of South Asian backgrounds only, was to explore the contrast between norms and stated intentions in the face of ‘arranged marriages’: ‘Here are some statements that people have made to us. Please tick the ones you agree with.’ The results are set out in Table 2.

Three-quarters of the respondents endorsed the normative statement that ‘people should be free to marry whom they like’, and less than a quarter endorsed the rule of caste endogamy so vital to ‘arranged marriages’. Are these figures evidence of a cultural sea change, a normative abyss between generations? Reaching out for theoretical insights, one might consult Karl Mannheim’s (1982) classic deconstruction of ‘generation’ as a sociological concept. Drawing on qualitative insights, one would describe a case where an ‘arranged marriage’ in the South Asian mould shows far more understanding of the spouses’ wishes than could be observed in many a class-conscious English family. Focusing on the wording of the statements, each collected in the course of numerous fieldwork interviews, one might remark upon the distinction between ‘culture’ and ‘caste’ reflected in many responses to the normative statements. The qualitative research indeed shows an increasing awareness among young Southallians of an ‘Asian
People who marry should be of the same culture

People should be free to marry whom they like

People should marry in their own caste

I personally would prefer a marriage within my own culture

I would only enter a mixed marriage if my family agree with it

If I wanted a mixed marriage, I would do it against my family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total N=172/174</th>
<th>Boys 76/77</th>
<th>Girls 96/97</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People who marry should be of the same culture</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should be free to marry whom they like</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should marry in their own caste</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I personally would prefer a marriage within my own culture</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would only enter a mixed marriage if my family agree with it</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I wanted a mixed marriage, I would do it against my family</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Statements about Marriage as Endorsed by Southall Youth of South Asian Backgrounds (% of respondents)

Ethnographically, this is a frustrating point at which to break off. Yet for the dialogue with Andrew that this essay attempts to continue, it marks a better point.

3. The discrepancy of 1 in the number of boys and girls responding to some of the questions is due to an error in the keying-in of the data.
than the one at which Providence cut us off. Quantitative research may, I agree, be a 'political' necessity as often as an ethnographic one. It can, however, produce insights in its own right if it follows a few ethnographic imperatives. For one, questionnaires can be worded adequately only when qualitative research has been allowed to guide the questions. Who would bother to 'administer' the 'Middle-town' question to Southallians? It may be useful, none the less, to ask questions of similar intent but in phrasings informed by observing local parlance, concerns and conceptions.

Whether the sample collected is 'representative' will still depend upon the question in hand. Since different social and cultural cleavages will often cut across each other, especially in plural societies, no sample can be 'representative' regardless of the question in hand, and perhaps even of the answers obtained. It may be necessary, therefore, to consider an interpretation of quantitative results as an act of qualitative judgement in itself. It would be useful, in that case, to 'feedback' statistical data, that is, to resubmit them to the qualitative commentary of those who produced them in the first place. Finally, the more that questionnaires focus on matters of opinion and judgement, rather than concerns that informants consider 'matters of fact', the more they will produce data of a special epistemological status. Survey data differ from the data of participant observation in their contextual indeterminacy. They thus cannot replicate or, strictly speaking, even confirm or deny the 'representative' quality of observational and interview data. Yet this special status does not require them to be relegated to being a merely 'political' exercise in the legitimation of fieldwork results. Rather, the survey method produces data of a fundamentally different kind that provide insights, not despite, but because of their contextual indeterminacy.

REFERENCES


JASO is pleased to announce the reprinting of a popular volume in its Occasional Papers Series that has been out of print for three years.

JASO OCCASIONAL PAPERS NO. 4

CONTEXTS AND LEVELS: Anthropological Essays on Hierarchy
Edited by R. H. Barnes, Daniel de Coppet and R. J. Parkin

Contexts and Levels consists of a collection of papers commenting on the theories of Professor Louis Dumont concerning the problems of hierarchy and hierarchical opposition. These theories arose through his work on the nature of Indian society, and its subsequent comparison with Western society. The papers are based on those delivered to a conference held in Oxford in March 1983, and are by both French and English anthropologists. Most of them approach the question through the ethnography; the areas covered include the Solomons, New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal and Africa. Two other papers look at the linguistic notion of markedness and the philosophical notion of context, and general theoretical issues are discussed in one further contribution. The volume should appeal to all those interested in anthropological issues of hierarchy, ideology and ethnographic analysis.

Contributors:

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GARDENS AND THE WRAPPING OF SPACE IN JAPAN: SOME BENEFITS OF A BALINESE INSIGHT

JOY HENDRY

Introduction

From the summer of 1986 to the spring of 1987, Andrew Duff-Cooper and I were both guests, if in slightly different capacities, of Professor Suzuki Takao at the Centre for the Study of Language and Culture, Keio University, Tokyo. This was during the early period of Andrew’s stay in Japan when he was vigorously absorbing Japanese ideas, which he interpreted very much in a Balinese context and which he was always keen to deliberate. I was some two hours away by train, engaged in fieldwork on speech levels and politeness, a topic that later widened to encompass a broader range of phenomena I came to dub ‘wrapping’. During my periodic visits to Tokyo, and one memorable visit Andrew made to the seaside town where I was living, we had ample opportunity to exchange views on our respective interests. More formally, each of us was asked to make a presentation to seminars run by Professor Suzuki. Andrew’s contribution, which appeared later in an occasional publication of his subsequent Japanese university, Seitoku, not only drew on our conversations, but raised questions and ideas I still find stimulating in my own research.

Andrew’s paper, ‘Oku in Aspects of Japanese Ideology’ (Duff-Cooper 1991), is concerned with the notion of oku in Japanese thought, a notion which may be roughly translated as ‘depth’ but whose further interpretation occupies a large part of the paper, and which Andrew eventually concluded constitutes a ‘polythetic class’ (ibid.: 18), ‘not likely to prove useful in the structural analysis of social
facts' (ibid.: 20). He contrasted *oku* with the notion of 'centre', 'which can be defined supra-culturally in quasi formal monothetic terms; and which can be employed...in the comparative analysis of forms of life such as the Balinese and the Japanese which have almost no historical or linguistic connections with one another' (ibid.: 18).

It was the Balinese/Japanese comparison that was immediately most interesting to me, for reasons I will shortly elaborate, and I did not at the time find myself entirely in agreement with Andrew’s interpretation of *oku* and its lack of analytical usefulness. On a recent re-reading of the paper, however, and further down the line of my own thinking, I began to see new value in considering the two notions together. I have since carried out some research on Japanese gardens, a subject that takes up a substantial section of Andrew’s consideration of *oku*, and his paper once again gave me pause for thought. The present essay forms a kind of synthesis of these ideas, and adds (I hope) another layer to the supracultural theories of wrapping.

*The Significance or Otherwise of the Wrapped*

One of the important benefits of a consideration of ‘wrapping’ is that one builds up a resistance to what I perceive as a Western tendency to unwrap, to get at the ‘essence’ of everything, often throwing away the wrapping in the process. In the Japanese case, the paradigm for the idea was the wrapping of gifts, often multi-layered, exquisitely beautiful, and itself much more significant than the actual object inside, though the total monetary value should be clear. Parallel ideas can be applied to the wrapping of the body, to the wrapping of space, to language as a form of wrapping, and to the way social arrangements may be seen as people wrapping people (Hendry 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993). Interpretations of a social system may also be described as a form of wrapping (Hendry 1993: 6–7; cf. Ben-Ari *et al.* (eds.) 1990).

In moving the focus away from ‘unwrapping’ in order to concentrate on the wrapping itself, one is able to learn a great deal that may otherwise be overlooked. A question remains, however, about the relative value that should be given to the ‘wrapped’, and, indeed, about whether it is always necessary to pay attention to that which is being enclosed, if anything. Objects chosen as gifts in Japan are highly stylized, and their value well known, but they may often be replaced by cash, if suitably wrapped. Clothes must be worn by someone, but in formal situations the person inside behaves in a stylized manner so determined by the occasion and the garment they are wearing that they could be (and sometimes are) replaced by a substitute or even a machine. The uniformed figures who appear, bowing, on the screen when a card is inserted into a Japanese cash machine are just one electronic example. They represent the employee who previously would
stand in the entrance to the bank, and still does stand in the entrance to high-quality restaurants and department stores, to call out words of welcome to the customers as they arrive. The words these welcomers use are an example of linguistic wrapping, and small voices utter the same phrases as the figure in the cash machine bows. It is all part of the social wrapping that presents a company or enterprise to the world outside, and, at least in Japan, wrapping is regarded as an extremely important part of a package.

Companies have products to sell, of course, though their quality, provenance or reputation may again be more important than the nature of the goods themselves, but in a consideration of the wrapping of space, things are even less straightforward. Religious buildings in Japan provide a good example. Worship is very often carried out at the entrance to the building or even at the gate, leading one Western architect to observe that Japanese shrine buildings ‘are in effect not meant to be spaces to enter, but rather remote places to approach and arrive at’ (Bognar 1985: 44). Shinto buildings enshrine a sacred object, usually wrapped up very securely and further enclosed behind a series of doors, but sometimes it is a mirror that would simply reflect the gaze back out again.

Roland Barthes’ intriguing if not highly informed account of things Japanese includes a chapter entitled ‘Center-City, Empty Center’ (1983: 30–32), the idea of which has been reiterated by the better-informed Bognar (1985: 67). At shrines, one may buy a variety of amulets and talismans, for general protection and other more specific purposes. Many of these consist in little more than a couple of layers of folded paper, or a little cloth bag, perhaps wrapped only around a piece of card to give them shape (see also Maki 1979: 59). They may be further enclosed in other packets or cloth, and some are thought to lose their power if they become unwrapped (McVeigh 1991: 151–6).

In the Japanese view there is a certain power attached to the condition of being enclosed. Ascetics who shut themselves away are said to gain spiritual power, and a native concept of utsube, which describes the condition, has also been translated as ‘empty’, although this is qualified as ‘the empty in which, invisibly and supernaturally, a divine principle resides or can reside’ (Ouwehand 1964: 123). As is often the case, there is a Buddhist parallel to apparently indigenous Japanese ideas, for example those teachings that encourage the emptying of heart and mind, ‘the freeing from illusions and passions’ that is a necessary preliminary to receiving the benefits of Buddhism (see, for example, Grapard 1982: 208–9).

Without going any deeper into Buddhist ideas, it does suddenly seem reasonable to propose a system of thought that grants wrapping a greater degree of importance than the wrapped, although before committing ourselves it seems a good idea to look further into the notion of emptiness. I now turn to the Balinese insight Duff-Cooper was able to bring to the subject.
Early in his time in Japan, Duff-Cooper noticed that his representation of the ‘Structure of the Balinese Form of Life’ as a cone (Duff-Cooper 1990, 1991) was rather similar to descriptions he came across of Japanese society before the Pacific War. Maruyama Masao’s discussion of a ‘concentric ideology’ was the first example, but he then discovered that the German architect Bruno Taut had in 1936 used the same image of a cone, ‘a system resembling Mount Fuji in form’ to describe the social system in existence prior to Japan’s entrance into the modern period. Another Japanese commentator, Ishida Takeshi, later used the image of a ‘cone topped by the Emperor’ to describe the social structure created after contact with the West, a structure he described further as a ‘set of concentric cones’ (Duff-Cooper 1991: 2). In making a comparison between the Japanese and Balinese cases, Duff-Cooper asserts that ‘the notion of a centre is crucial to both’ (ibid.), and he goes on to consider whether this notion continues to be important in post-war Japan, and if so, how. By summarizing several examples, which he had previously adduced (Duff-Cooper 1988), he illustrates his contentions that ‘physical and/or ideational closeness to a centre is correlated with pre-eminence’ (1991: 4–6), and that although they constitute a ‘polythetic class...among which there is no common empirical feature...they may be defined artificially by reference to a common feature...in this case...centres being a point of reference’, a definition which is now apparently amenable to cross-cultural comparison (ibid.: 6). He then turns to consider ‘empty centres’ or, more accurately perhaps, centres that are simply a space or ‘a void’, and addresses in particular questions posed by a Japanese architect whose ‘Center Building’ is built around a space, or a plaza, which the architect suggests may be a ‘negative centre’. Here, the Balinese material is particularly enlightening, for the ‘supreme centre of Balinese ideology [is] Ida Sang Hyang Sunya, the Void’ (ibid.: 7). Although Duff-Cooper did not live long enough to make this comparison, and I do not have the ability to do it here, it would seem likely that Japanese and Balinese notions of emptiness could also be compared usefully at a more transcendent level.

Duff-Cooper argued that ‘centres may be devoid of content’ without being regarded as negatives: ‘this is still a point of reference which organises the surrounding buildings and space’ (ibid.). ‘In Japanese ideology’, he concludes, ‘centres are not absolute, as they are not in Balinese ideology...they may have content, which is highly various—hence their polythetic character...or they may be devoid of it’ (ibid.: 8).

Duff-Cooper’s application of his Balinese material to these Japanese questions provides me with a partial answer to my question about the relative value of the wrapped. Notions of wrapping, particularly where this is multi-layered, are quite comparable with ‘concentric cones’, and their contents or otherwise reasonably described as the centre. Thus, whether the wrapped is in itself important or not, it could reasonably be described as having value, at least in the sense that it offers a point of reference around which the wrapping is organized. This principle would
seem to apply whether the wrapping be paper, cloth or buildings, whether it be words or the human beings who utter them.

A problem arises, however, with Duff-Cooper's contention that 'physical and/or ideational closeness to a centre is correlated with pre-eminence'. This may be the case among Balinese in Lombok, where the Void is a supreme being, and it may work in the case of the Japanese social structure, topped by the emperor or a company president, and even in some of its physical manifestations like castles and palaces, but Japan's variety of examples of centres would seem not always to comply with this principle. The inner wrapping of a gift certainly could not always be described as the most pre-eminent, except in order of application, and the outer layers of a formal kimono are usually much more gorgeous than the inner ones. Is there something wrong with Duff-Cooper's contention in the Japanese case, then, or is it inappropriate to apply the notion of centre to these examples of wrapping?

A Glance at Gardens

It is at this point that a consideration of gardens in relation to Duff-Cooper's main theme, *oku*, becomes useful. During my consideration of the notion of wrapping in various different Japanese arenas, there were two examples that proved perplexing. Each gave ample opportunity for the application of the wrapping principle, as I came to describe the phenomenon, but each also posed problems. One of these was Japanese gardens, the other the tea ceremony, a highly ritualized practice that in its more complex forms includes the use of a garden. I have considered briefly elsewhere (Hendry 1993: 150-54) the case of the tea ceremony, but I am still working on the intriguing subject of Japanese gardens.

There is, of course, an important area of overlap between gardens and the tea ceremony, that is, the association with Zen Buddhism. Dorinne Kondo, in her symbolic analysis of the tea ceremony, describes this association as presenting "a unique challenge to the anthropologist, for...Zen is said to elude logical discursive analysis. Zen favours experience and intuition over intellection" and "the Zen arts...emphasise the primacy of transcendence through a-logical, non-verbal means" (Kondo 1985: 287). She goes on to analyse the ceremony and its study, among other things, as a journey from the mundane to the ritual world, a 'path to Enlightenment' which, according to Zen doctrine, leads to a state of 'emptiness' (ibid.: 291–2).

The garden plays an important role in this journey, for a physical move from the outer to the inner garden accompanies the symbolic journey 'from the mundane to the ritual' (ibid.: 294), and this is partially accompanied through the perception of *oku* (ibid.: 304 n.22). As Duff-Cooper points out in his paper (1991: 14), in Japanese gardens as in Shinto shrines, the path usually 'propels a person from one
vantage point to another...layering the space...fostering an impression of depth and mystery’. The architect Maki Fumihiko (1979: 59), whose writings about *oku* influenced Duff-Cooper, uses a metaphor of ‘unfolding’ to describe an approach to *oku*, a metaphor also chosen by Kondo (1985: 293) in her description of the tea ceremony. Maki (1979: 59) also describes *oku* as ‘nothing but the concept of convergence to zero’.

In considering gardens as an example of ‘the wrapping of space’, I had been influenced by the use of such metaphors as ‘folding’ and ‘layering’. I had also followed Maki, who liberally draws on the notion of wrapping (or *tsutsumi*), in both the English and Japanese versions of his discussion of *oku* (1978, 1979). The perplexing part was the lack of anything that could be described as the ‘wrapped’. The creators of Japanese gardens employ all manner of deception in creating the perception of ‘depth and mystery’, but at the same time completely conceal any rationale or logic for engaging in the exercise. The garden is a three-dimensional art-form in a Japanese view. It ‘represents’ the natural landscape (Condor 1964: 1) or the Buddhist cosmos (Hayakawa 1973: 10), but is it simply ‘leading to a state of emptiness’ as Zen philosophy would have us believe?

Gardens are certainly associated with religion in Japan. Indeed, it has recently become compulsory to take part in a half-hour religious rite before being allowed to visit one of the most famous—the Moss Garden at the Saihō-ji Temple in Kyoto—as an indication of this association. The earliest forms of garden in Japan are said to have been sacred spaces cleared and purified for the purpose of summoning deities, points of contact and communication with the spiritual world (Bring and Wayembergh 1981: 145; Hayakawa 1973: 27). They were literally spaces, though bounded or ‘wrapped’ with a straw-rope or bamboo fence, and very often covered in small pebbles, or moss, as depicted still in some Shinto shrines.¹

The representation in gardens of such natural features of the landscape as mountains and water also has religious connotations, since these were thought to be abodes of the gods. Some of the features still characteristic of Japanese gardens actually originated in China, but they reflect Japanese views. In tracing the possible development of the notion of *oku*, Maki (1979: 54–5) argues that it may have derived its directional attribute from the way villages from the earliest times nestle against a mountain, regarded as a special, sacred space, whose often forbidden depths provide the site of a shrine (*miya*) known as the *okumiya*. Another theory he cites (ibid.: 56) traces the word from *oki*, meaning ‘offshore’, which relates the notion to an idea that gods originated from over the sea, which in the case of those of Chinese legend would be accurate.

¹. A particularly fine example of this ‘landing place’ for the gods is to be found at the Kamowake–Ikazuchi Shrine, at Kamigamo in Kyoto. Not only does the shrine have a roped-off patch of moss, and a roped-off area of finely ground stones, but it also has several sacred trees and stones, which are enclosed on carefully bounded areas, marked again with a band of straw rope. The shrine was originally constructed in the seventh century AD for worship of the nearby Mt. Kōya.
In either case, the word is imbued with a sacredness, which it may or may not imply in modern usage, although Maki argues not only for the way *oku* gives 'a sense of depth to relatively narrow spaces' (ibid.: 52), and 'an impression of distance in a given space', but also that it is an esoteric concept that 'implies something abstract and profound', 'for expressing psychological depth: a kind of spiritual *oku*' (ibid.: 53). In this way, whether as 'zero' or 'emptiness', 'depth' or 'distance', *oku* would seem to imply pre-eminence of a certain kind, at least in that an approach in the direction of *oku* does seem to suggest a move from the mundane to the sacred, spiritual or ritual, as Kondo postulated.

*The Value of Illusion in Structural Analysis*

It remains, then, to relate the notion of *oku* to the notion of centre. Maki (1979: 58) opposes the two notions in an effort to contrast the organization of space in Japan with that found in 'the Western world'. His focus is on 'city spaces', and he asserts that while ancient European cities were built around a central area containing the church and city offices (ibid.), city space in Japan is organized in 'spatial creases' from which he gets 'the impression of penetrating the layers of an onion' (ibid.: 51). This impression he goes on to analyse in detail as concerned with *oku*.

Maki argues, furthermore, that the Western idea reflects an emphasis on 'verticality implying a link between earth and heaven', leading to what he describes as a 'tower' culture. This he contrasts with the Japanese emphasis on a horizontality which 'seeks its symbolism in an invisible depth' (ibid.: 58). The drama of a Gothic cathedral is to be found standing in front of it, or inside it, he argues, 'overwhelmed by the sense of a perpendicular scale'. A shrine, on the other hand, 'is the object to be seen, not a space to be entered' (ibid.): 'in many cases the *oku* has no climax in itself...One rather seeks drama and ritual in the process of approaching it' (ibid.: 59).

While drawing on much of Maki's material, Duff-Cooper (1991: 20) argues against his opposition between *oku* and 'centre', which he sees, probably quite rightly, as yet another attempt to highlight Japan's uniqueness. Instead, Duff-Cooper points out areas of similarity, and points of contact and comparison between the two notions. Despite the theory about *oku* being an 'invisible, unattainable zone', some examples, such as inner shrines, are clearly attainable (ibid.: 14). Others, like some centres, are devoid of content, so that both are context-dependent (polythetic) notions (ibid.: 18). Moreover, the idea of fostering an illusion of depth is certainly not peculiar to Japan, and some of the means found in European gardens and, one might add, cathedrals are comparable to those employed in Japan (ibid.).
Duff-Cooper argues, however, that some aspects of *oku* are more particularly Japanese, and that this and the polythetic nature of the concept render it unamenable to comparative structural analysis, unlike the notion of centre. He does, however, advocate analysing ‘the moves through space organised by *oku*,’ and ‘their concomitants that incorporated *oku*’ as ‘likely to be revealing’ (ibid.: 20). This would seem, at least in my interpretation of the matter, to bring us back to ‘wrapping’. As already argued above, wrapping can be seen as organized around a structural point of reference, a ‘centre’, which we have also seen is in many cases associated with some kind of pre-eminence, even if it is in practice void or empty. A consideration of the notion of *oku* has revealed an emphasis on the ‘process of approaching it’, the ‘moves through space’ organized by it, and in this case the wrapping as part and parcel (even literally) of the creation of the ‘illusion of depth’ and the ‘drama of approach’, which would appear to be the chief ‘abstract and profound’ constitutive elements of the concept.

In the case of gardens, there is usually no centre to approach, and the illusion is valued in its own right, so it is possible to argue that it is the notion of depth, or distance, which is associated with pre-eminence. Whether the organizing principle be a centre, or *oku*, it is therefore the wrapping which adds the value, and the wrapping itself which may be seen as the structural principle. It remains to be seen how far this principle is capable of comparative analysis. It is possible that I have also demonstrated the value of illusion for structural analysis. Or perhaps this is just an illusion created by the pre-eminence of void, emptiness and illusion itself. If only Andrew were here to add his comments.

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THE HOMELESS GODDESS: 
COSMOLOGY, SICKNESS AND WOMEN'S IDENTITY IN RAJASTHAN

HELEN LAMBERT

For a brother

My field notes from research in the mid-1980s on ethnomedicine in Rajasthan, north India, contain a plethora of references to various forms of the goddess Mātājī (mātā, ‘mother’; -jī, respectful form) and the activities and ideas associated with her. But the composite form of the goddess known as Sātobahin (literally ‘Seven Sisters’: sāt, ‘seven’; bahin, ‘sister’) came to hold a particular fascination for me and seems an appropriate topic for a contribution to this Memorial Issue. In Rajasthani characterizations, the band of deities known as ‘Seven Sisters’ are always on the move. The Sisters flow like wind into the houses, funnelling seven-strong through each gateway, across the courtyard, along the eaves, past the cleaning place and over the doorstep, on to the shelf of cool stored water. Then they move silently on and away, ruffling the leaves of the village trees as they pass beneath, only to return again and again to these special places.

Fieldwork was conducted as part of my doctoral research at the Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford. I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Science Research Council (now Economic and Social Research Council).

1. The name Sātobahin was always employed in my hearing as if referring to a single, composite being, and no one I asked could give individual names for any of the sisters or explain whether Sātobahin was indeed a group of seven individual deities. In accordance with this inherent ambiguity I employ the singular in reference to Sātobahin and the plural when using the closest English translation, Seven Sisters.
The following analysis unpacks this freeform characterization of one element of local cosmology through an exploration of the socio-cultural context of Rajasthani village life. Much of Andrew Duff-Cooper's published work is devoted to considerations of cosmology in relation to aspects of Balinese life. In an essay on duality he noted that Vidhi, the supreme being for Balinese on Lombok, 'is both a duality and a unity' (Duff-Cooper 1985: 16). Much the same could be said of the goddess in Hindu Indian cosmology as she has been analysed by scholars of Indian religion and society. The understanding of 'aspect', to which Andrew drew attention in an essay in these pages on the aesthetics of rice-growing (Duff-Cooper 1989), is also especially relevant to Indian conceptions of the goddess. My consideration of an aspect of one Rajasthani Hindu 'form of life' (as Andrew would have it) arises not from the selection of an ethically defined body of social facts, such as for instance 'religion' or 'ethnomedicine', but emerges from a locally salient configuration of ideas and practices. In local Rajasthani cosmology, there is a switching or oscillation between two 'aspects' of the goddess that are, at a pan-Indian level, understood as one unified manifestation. In turn this unified form is, in pan-Indian cosmology, one aspect of a further dualism in manifestations of the goddess:

Female Deities and Women's Life Cycles

There is no space here for a detailed consideration of previous academic work on Hindu female deities or on the position of women in Hindu society. In brief, all the innumerable local or village goddesses are regarded as forms of Devī or Mahāmāyā, the Great Goddess (see Fuller 1992: 44). Particular attention has been given to the opposed duality between her unmarried and married forms; characteristically the former are malevolent and destructive goddesses while the latter are benevolent and protective. Local 'mother' (māţā) goddesses such as Śītalā Mātā and Mariyamman usually fall into the former category. This duality has been interpreted as expressing Hindu ideological conceptions of female sexuality as vitally powerful and potentially dangerous but controllable though subordination to males. The dualism seen in manifestations of the goddess also replicates a pervasive contrast in Hinduism between the ascetic and the erotic, represented respectively in the unmarried (and necessarily virgin) and the married forms of the deity. In the social realm similarly, anthropologists have contrasted the purity, power (śakti) and auspiciousness of virgin daughters with the subordination and relative impurity of wives. Some have seen the dangerous aspect of the goddess as expressing the potential threat to the patriline of affinal women's putatively indiscriminate sexuality—the dark side of their reproductive ability to perpetuate the lineage (Bennett 1983).
In Rajasthan, a different set of contrasts between two aspects of the goddess becomes apparent. These contrasts are related to the characteristic circumstances of women’s lives within the patrilineal and patrilocal kinship system of northern India. Through examining local characterizations of the composite goddess Satobahin and her counterpart Matâji in their social context, a shift in perspective is gained in which the usual focus on both women and goddesses as either unmarried (daughters) or married (wives), is replaced by a female-centred, more empirically appropriate recognition of women’s dual identities as both sisters (and daughters) and mothers (and wives).

As members of their natal lineage, Hindu daughters in north India enjoy high status in their natal homes (pihar). They are necessarily temporary residents, though, since upon marriage they move to join their husband’s household in a different location (marriages within the same village are very rare). Yet on the birth of a child to her brother and sister-in-law, a sister must return to her pihar to ritually legitimize the child’s entry into her own natal lineage at a Brahmanical ceremony, when a new child is first exposed to the sun and is given a name. Women play an essential ritual role for their brothers, both by overseeing this incorporation of their children into the lineage and by providing spiritual protection (affirmed in annual festivals). Thus, as sisters, women should retain links with their natal families and care spiritually for their brothers, just as the latter should provide materially for them (see Jamous 1992).

Rajasthani girls are usually married very young. Child marriage is illegal but most families outside the highest castes continue to marry their daughters in childhood, from as young as two years upwards. Marriage of girls is imperative; in individual cases of disability that create problems of marriageability two sisters may be married to the same man. The first proper visit to the husband’s household (sasural) usually occurs soon after the girl’s first menstruation, and the shift in residence from pihar to sasural is accompanied by a radical shift in demeanour. In their sasural women must veil their faces completely in the presence of their husbands, or any man equal or senior in age to their husband, and remain silent or speak inaudibly. Children soon learn to act as interpreters when the women of their household need to communicate with men to whom they may not speak directly, a category that includes those with the most power over the conditions of their everyday lives. The company women keep is no longer that of their village sisters, real or fictive, but of female affines. After marriage women return to their natal homes, at first for quite long periods between the first few short visits to their husbands’ homes.

Married sisters are, then, also wives with relatively low status in their marital homes, where they are viewed as incomers of doubtful loyalty. They have no rights over the children they bear; in cases of divorce, the children remain in their father’s household. At the same time, wives are necessary vehicles for the perpetuation of their affinal lineage, they are responsible for the welfare of its young children, and they control the domestic space and domestic work. They become completely incorporated only in old age after bearing and raising children.
(especially sons), by which time they may have ceased almost entirely to make periodic trips to their natal village.

In Rajasthan many pan-Hindu and local forms of the ‘mother goddess’, generically ‘Mātāji’, are a focus of worship by mothers. The protection of specific village goddesses in particular is sought by women for the well-being of their children. Although the individuality of each ‘mātā’ is emphasized, they are none the less recognized to have a unitary quality, in that all forms of the goddess are held ultimately to be aspects of one great female divinity. Indeed one village goddess was known as Mahāmāyā, an epithet for the ‘great goddess’ (Mahādevī) of orthodox Hinduism (cf. Coburn 1982: 154–5).

Unlike the village goddesses and other local deities, the Seven Sisters are not called upon to fulfil requests (such as relief from illness) expressed as contingent vows (bolāra) by devotees. In certain contexts they are regarded as a form of Mātāji, at which time their protection is invoked for general future well-being, but in their specific aspect as Sātobahīn they are worshipped only when they cause harm. This composite aspect of the goddess has a particular relationship to domestic and village space, and propitiation of the Seven Sisters may be taken as simultaneously an expression and a placation of the tension between the dual identities of women as mothers and wives and as daughters and sisters.

The Seven Sisters are remembered and propitiated in certain ritual contexts and at all marriages; brides-to-be are given a silver amulet depicting the seven goddesses and their brother, which is said, however, to ensure the protection of Mātāji (rather than Sātobahīn) over the bride. This is the only form in which Sātobahīn is iconographically represented. Before painting her child’s hands with henna for a festival, one mother put seven spots of henna near the doorway on the outer wall of the room in which they were sitting (the reason for the location and form of this precaution will become clear below). This, she told me, was for Mātāji, so that nothing bad could come in and affect her son; she is, the mother said, seven sisters (sāt bahin), therefore she puts seven spots. Thus, Sātobahīn is often identified with (the generic) Mātāji; a major point of this essay is precisely that she both is, and is not, one and the same deity.

Space and Site in Local Cosmology

The Seven Sisters’ ambiguous position in comparison with other deities is symbolically expressed in their association with spatially marginal places within the inhabited village area (basti) and in their lack of a physical ‘residence’. The

2. These numerous village goddesses may perhaps be compared with local Catholic cults of the Virgin Mary that represent her in different aspects and individually attract long-term allegiance by devotees, although she is acknowledged as ultimately ‘one’.
Rajasthani village (gāṅv) is a territory physically and conceptually demarcated by the shrines of the village deities (grāmdevātā), usually simple stones under trees in the village fields and on the margins of the main residential area. These deities protect the territorial borders or frontier of the village as a sacred spatial unit. The grazing and waste ground (kāṅkad) and uncultivated land (jaṅgal) beyond the fields and outside the village boundaries is dangerous, literally ‘no man’s land’ where one might encounter malevolent ghosts and dangerous spirits, especially at midday or midnight when the deities become momentarily inactive. Within the residential area, on the other hand, are the temples and numerous shrines of benevolent deities, who protect residents and do not manifest themselves except when invoked by their priests and devotees.

Inside the village, domestic space is associated with forms of the mother goddess. All offerings to Mātāji are placed on the shelf where pots of drinking water are kept (the parindā), a place of exceptional purity located in the inner courtyard of the house. The goddess therefore has a permanent shrine within every home at which a lamp or incense is lit for her on all religious festivals. Offerings to Sātobahin of boiled grain and jaggery are also placed in the parindā. But uniquely among all the village deities, from the lowliest ‘village protector’ (kśetrapāli) to Laxminath in his temple, and in contrast with Mātāji qua Mātāji, Sātobahin has no permanent home. Like the malevolent ghosts who remain outside the village boundaries she has no established residence and may afflict those who accidentally come into contact with her, though unlike ghosts she enters inhabited space.

As suggested in my initial description, Sātobahin is envisaged as a band of goddesses who ‘roam’ (ghāmbā) or ‘play’ (khelba) on a circuit (pherā, chakkar) at dawn, dusk (literally ‘the times when the temple gong sounds’) and midday (dopahar, literally ‘second quarter’, which encompasses the early part of the afternoon as well as the moment of twelve noon). During their tour the Seven Sisters visit certain places: the parindā, where the drinking-water pots are kept; the uthyānā, where pots and plates are cleaned; the chailānā, the outer edge of the sloping roof or thatch where it extends from its supports; the māidā, the door lintels; and the gariyālā, the notional threshold of the house just inside the outer gateway. They also come under the bar (banyan, Ficus bengalensis) and pipal (sacred fig, Ficus religiosa) trees. This movement of the goddesses on their circuit is sometimes referred to as ‘Mātāji’s arrow’ (Mātāji kā bān). One informant compared it to a wind that rushes by; you cannot see it, but it comes past.

The places visited by Sātobahin are kuthām or kuthānv, ‘bad’, ‘wrong’ or ‘forbidden’ places. Most are clearly liminal, being on the threshold between inside and outside or between natural and domestic space (the māidā, gariyālā, chailānā and the trees, which are part of nature but are two of the only three species grown

3. Most Rajasthani houses in this region have a separate gatehouse with a sitting platform, beyond which lies an open courtyard separating the gatehouse from the rooms and kitchen of the house itself.
within the village residential cluster). There are associations with purity and the sacred; fig and banyan trees being considered sacred, the parīndā being a place that is kept particularly pure and is the site of Mātājī's shrine, and the uthyānā being the place where purity is restored by cleaning. Moreover, the house, and the parīndā and uthyānā in particular, is the province of women, in contrast to the gatehouse and beyond, which is the domain of men. The daily visitation of Sātobahin into these inner areas (maināi, inside, is used to refer to the inner parts of the house as opposed to banāi, outside) points to conceptual associations between women, the divine feminine and domestic space.

If a child is playing or sleeping in or beneath one of the ‘forbidden’ places when Sātobahin visits, this accidental encounter with the goddesses may result in sudden illness—diarrhoea, vomiting and fever, convulsions or paralysis. Sickness due to contact with Satobahin is known as pharāō (from pherāā, circuit) or (if diarrhoea and vomiting), belā. Sickness is most likely to result if a child approaches one of the wrong places at the dangerous time with milk or sweet substances in its mouth.

Treating sickness that results from contact with Sātobahin centres on propitiation and remembrance of Mātājī and is undertaken exclusively by the women of the household, usually on two successive days. At dusk a lighted clay lamp is placed in the parīndā and sometimes also at the uthyānā and chałīnā. The women sing songs to Mātājī, make an offering of boiled grain (gugri) and/or unrefined cane sugar (gur) to her and then distribute this offering to seven unmarried girls, ideally from seven different houses. The sick child is treated with dhūnī, a type of cleansing by fumigation (glowing coals are added to specified ingredients so that they smoulder), at midday and again at dusk. In one case I witnessed, older women told the child’s mother to sit on the edge of the verandah opening on to the courtyard—under the edge of the roof—before holding her child over the smoke; she then applied the dhūnī to her own breasts. These procedures were said by the mother to be for ‘bāl Mātājī’ (bāl is an alternative term for sakti, power or energy). The child’s sickness had been attributed to the mother going to sleep with her child at midday with her head on the door-frame (under the lintel) of a room.

Some of the items used in dhūnī (such as oil, turmeric and margosa) are common ingredients in many rituals, but others are employed exclusively in this form of healing and have interesting symbolic associations. They include a small piece of ghatti ki jharnā, the cloth kept in the centre of the household grindstone.

4. A child sleeping in an unusual position, with a hand twisted or face distorted, in such a place when the goddesses visit will suffer paralysis and be left permanently with this distortion. It became evident that cases of polio were attributed to contact with Satobahin; polio is endemic in the region.

5. In an additional ritual, a small grindstone was then passed over the sick child twenty-one times by two senior women of the household and the child’s hand was touched to the grindstone before fumigation was repeated.
for sweeping out the flour, a piece of gāri kā vāl, the rope-like plant greased with ghee and wrapped around the iron axle-pin of a cartwheel to stop it wearing into the wooden axle, and in some accounts a broom bristle and an eyelash of the child’s mother. All except the last are paradigmatic symbols of affinal women’s domestic duties—women do not perform the laborious task of grinding flour in their natal homes nor, usually, do they sweep up. The significance of gāri kā vāl is less self-evident, but I would hazard that it symbolizes a smooth passage from pihar, natal home, to sasurāl, conjugal home (see below).

Sātobahin/Mātājī

The Seven Sisters seem to resemble the composite group of goddesses described in the Mahabharata as the Matrkaś, ‘mothers’, represented in Hindu textual tradition as a band of seven or more malevolent goddesses whose members are individually insignificant and who are attracted to, but direct their dangerous natures primarily against, young children (Kinsley 1986: 151–60).6 Like the ‘mothers’, the Seven Sisters are a composite group of individually insignificant deities who are iconographically depicted as seven female figures on the silver amulets worn by brides or, as I saw outside a temple to Mātājī in western Rajasthan, in relief on stone tablets. Both types of depiction are usually accompanied by a male figure referred to locally as their ‘brother’ and identified in western Rajasthan, although not in my fieldwork region, as Bhairu. Bhairu is one manifestation of Shiva and is an important regional deity; his identification as the goddesses’ brother concords with the theological concept of the seven goddesses as saktīs, energies or powers that are personifications of the creative power of the divine and the active female counterpart of Shiva.

Sātobahin is known to everyone, but only affinal women concern themselves with her. Female informants from a wide range of castes gave detailed, uniform accounts of the Seven Sisters’ characteristics and attributes. They categorically distinguished between Sātobahin, even though she is often referred to simply as ‘Mātājī’, and Sīl Mātā (Hindi, Sītalā Mātā, literally ‘Cool Mother’) the goddess of pox diseases. It is specifically the Sātobahin aspect of Mātājī who visits forbidden places and is dangerous to children. The case of Sīl Mātā offers a useful contrast with Sātobahin/Mātājī. She is held to bring smallpox, chickenpox

6. Kinsley speculates that the Matrkaś in the Mahabharata represent the many village goddesses who are not found in the Vedic pantheon and are indigenes of a non-Brahmanic religious universe. They are depicted as dangerous and are associated with peripheral geographical places (Kinsley 1986: 155). This conclusion is tempting, but in Rajasthan the seven sisters are worshipped as a group along with other village goddesses who can be both malevolent and protective.
and measles, which are regarded as manifestations of the goddess within the human body: but she also brings relief to her victims, and worship of Sil Mātā is a necessary part of the treatment for these diseases. Sil Mātā thus incorporates both benevolent and malevolent aspects of the goddess.

In contrast, the local representation of Sātobahin/Mātājī is characterized by a splitting of these aspects. The Seven Sisters are the purely malevolent aspect, while the destructive consequences of their appearance (children’s sickness) are ameliorated by propitiation of the benevolent aspect, Mātājī. In her threatening form she is represented as sisters, in her protective aspect, as a mother. She is associated in her ritual offerings with unmarried girls. The offerings made to Sātobahin/Mātājī are unusual in that rather than consisting in the fried, pure, ‘cooling’ and expensive offerings made to other goddesses, they consist in raw or boiled, ‘heating’ and ordinary foodstuffs. Women emphasized that her offerings should not be given to boys. At the time, I viewed this statement as a rare instance of preference towards girls; in retrospect, it seems more likely to be the product of a view that boys should not be contaminated by such offerings. One interpretation holds that the enduring ritual importance of the married sister for her father’s and brother’s lineage lies in her role of removing inauspiciousness from it (Raheja 1988). It is possible to see the distribution of Sātobahin offerings to unmarried girls as a precursor of this role; girls are, after all, often described as temporary residents of their natal homes who must inevitably leave. They would thus be suitable recipients for substances that are imbued with the inauspiciousness of illness, which must be passed on to transfer the illness from the sufferer (see Lambert 1992).

Discussion

The dual form of the mother goddess in the domestic sphere, and the conflict inherent in it, mirrors the irresolvable dualism of women’s lives, which is managed through the spatial segregation of their identities as sisters and daughters (in their pihar) and as mothers and wives (in their sasurāl). The difference between this formulation of the relationship between local cosmology and social structure and that emphasized in analyses of orthodox, pan-Indian Hinduism is that the benevolent and malevolent aspects of the goddess are associated not with her marital status but with her enshrined, motherly form and her mobile, sisterly form respectively. Both Mātājī and Sātobahin seem to be independent in that neither is clearly represented as married; indeed, if the benevolence of female deities is contingent on male control, we should expect the ‘Seven Sisters’ rather than the ‘mother’ aspect to have this role, since iconographically at least, only the former is accompanied by a ‘brother’ deity. Yet it is the Sātobahin aspect of the goddess that is liminal, mobile and dangerous.
At the level of pan-Indian, orthodox Hindu mythology the Great Goddess oscillates between married and unmarried forms. From this perspective village goddesses seem to be manifestations of the latter type; although they are called 'mothers' they are not married and are generally viewed as destructive. At the local or popular level, this aspect in turn has two aspects: the enshrined, benign and protecting Mātājī and the homeless, malevolent Sātobahin. The Mātājī and Sātobahin aspects are themselves inherently unstable. With respect to her attributes and actions, Sātobahin is described as an independent, distinctive band of deities and never as Mātājī; when children are afflicted, however, worship and remembrance of 'Mātājī' is recommended, and sickness from contact with Sātobahin is sometimes described as 'Mātājī's blame' (Mātājī kā dos). The instability of these forms, at once distinctive and merged together, is reflected in the symbolism of transitoriness in the Sātobahin aspect.

Sātobahin and Mātājī as aspects of one goddess denote a split in valencies that are yet simultaneously identified as a unity, just as real women's simultaneous identities as mothers (with allegiance to their husband's and children's lineage), and sisters (with ritual and affective ties to their natal lineage) are segregated. The view that the independent goddesses' threatening character represents the powerful dangers of unconfined female sexuality undoubtedly has a place, but this view assumes a permanent transformation of this state through marriage. Actual women cannot be both married and unmarried—but like Sātobahin/Mātājī they can be, and usually are, both sisters and mothers. These identities are, like the goddess's aspects, separated in space.

The 'homelessness' of Sātobahin, in contrast to Mātājī's permanent residence in the home, is salient in this context. The symbol of true incorporation is, for all Rajasthani beings, a place of permanent residence. Thus, the transformation of the unsatisfied spirits of the recently deceased, who trouble their living relatives, into incorporated ancestors, who look after their family's welfare, is accomplished through a ritual the purpose of which is to 'establish' or 'put into place'—literally, 'to seat' (bīḥāno)—the ancestor. This entails providing and establishing it in a shrine within the family's house or fields or, more often, in a silver iconic representation that is installed ('seated') around the neck of a relative selected by the spirit.

The dual aspect of the goddess in the domestic sphere offers a powerful ideological message to women. The Seven Sisters are destructive to affinal women—they harm their children, who are women's primary means of incorporation into their husband's household and lineage. Women's first allegiance should be to their identity as wives and mothers within their conjugal household, with which their filial allegiance conflicts. In the early years of marriage, during the period of childbearing, perhaps the most personally valued aspect of most women's lives is their tie to their natal home. Women seek visits there whenever possible and remember with longing the freedom, security and affection of their lives there. In the form of the migrant Sātobahin, this valued aspect of women's self-identity is represented as threatening to their permanent security and well-being.
of their children when afflicted by the Seven Sisters employs items that are quintessentially associated with wifely domestic roles. The children, who alone can 'stabilize' and permanently incorporate them in their new home and lineage, are threatened by an unstable, permanently unincorporated band of childless goddesses. The imagery of Satobahin seems poignantly to evoke the situation of Rajasthani women; their place of birth and childhood cannot be a permanent home, while in their marital residence they remain, for much of their lives, outsiders who periodically leave and return. In this irreconcilable segregation of identities a circling sisterhood seems an apposite image.

REFERENCES


THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL GENEALOGIES: ROBERT HERTZ, VICTOR TURNER AND THE STUDY OF PILGRIMAGE

JEREMY MACCLANCY

THANKS to the well-publicized work of Victor Turner most anthropologists today consider pilgrimage a worthy object of study. Even though his particular approach has been incisively criticized, in their analyses many ethnographers still refer in a laudatory manner to his ideas. These and other ethnographers continue to regard him as a pioneer in this intellectual field. They persist in assessing him as a noteworthy practitioner, whose work may now be seen as somewhat misguided, but whose crucial role in at the very least initiating the debate over the study of pilgrimage cannot be questioned. For these people, Turner was an academic frontiersman actively pushing forward the boundaries of anthropological knowledge: he may have chosen the wrong path but, as far as they are concerned, he did set out in the right direction.

The trouble with this view of ‘Turner-as-trailblazer’ is that it ignores the work on the topic by Robert Hertz, work carried out more than sixty years before Turner’s. Since Andrew Duff-Cooper greatly admired Hertz’s work, it seems appropriate that a contribution to this Memorial Issue should seek to re-present the history of pilgrimage studies, to re-evaluate an otherwise relatively neglected part

I am grateful to Nico Momigliano for her help, and to Glenn Bowman, Rodney Needham, John Palmer and Robert Parkin for comments on a draft of this paper.
of Hertz’s writings, and to uncover the structural causes of this neglect. In order to appreciate the innovative nature of his work we need, however, to review briefly the ideas and errors of Victor Turner.

For Turner the purpose of pilgrimage is the creation of what he terms ‘communitas’, which is to be seen as the opposite of social structure. To him, the most distinctive form of this phenomenon is spontaneous communitas, which he defines as ‘the direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities which tends to make those experiencing it think of mankind as a homogeneous, unstructured, and free community’ (Turner 1974: 169). As people embark on a pilgrimage they are said to move from the familiar, or quotidian, towards the anti-structural; freed from obligatory everyday constraints, they are supposed to undergo communitas and then to return to their more common, structured way of life. Thus pilgrimage, as he portrays it, comes to represent ‘a mutually energizing compromise between structure and communitas’ (ibid.: 208). He argues that this style of communitas cannot sustain itself: ‘under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources, and the necessity for social control among the members of the group in pursuance of these goals, the existential communitas is organized into a perduing social system’ (Turner 1969: 132). This new mode of social organization, which he calls normative communitas, characterizes the most common social bond between the majority of participants at a pilgrimage.

It is not perhaps surprising that Turner, who first spoke of these ideas in the late 1960s, explicitly associated communitas with the hippies. According to him, these alternative characters emphasize ‘spontaneity, immediacy, and “existence”'; they stress ‘personal relationships rather than social obligations, and regard sexuality as a polymorphic instrument of immediate communitas rather than as a basis for an enduring social tie’ (ibid.: 112–13). Like optimistic pilgrims, they hoped to enter a creative communion with their fellows.

Turner’s notion of spontaneous communitas might have appealed to the hippies but, unfortunately for him (and for them), his ideas do not square with the

1. For laudatory references by ethnographers to Turner’s work on pilgrimage see, for example, Geertz 1983: 26–30, Graburn 1983, Daniel 1987: 245–87, Neville 1987, Mitchell 1988, Kendall 1991, and Pollak-Eltz 1991. For the latest—and perhaps most effusive—example of praise for ‘Turner-the-trailblazer’, see Naquin and Yu 1992. Hertz’s work on St Besse was so little discussed by Oxford anthropologists that even such an admirer of his work as Andrew Duff-Cooper seems to have been unaware of it when he wrote on Balinese pilgrimage (1988). As far as I am aware, the only paper in English to draw on the example of ‘St Besse’ is Bowman 1992. Even the latest general assessment of the anthropology of pilgrimage (Eade and Sallnow (eds.) 1991) fails to make any reference to it. Robert Parkin’s forthcoming intellectual biography of Hertz, however, does devote a chapter to it. I am grateful to Glenn Bowman for originally drawing my attention to the importance of ‘St Besse’.
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ethnographic record. Quite simply, communitas—as he conceives it—does not characterize what occurs during most pilgrimages. Sallnow, studying group pilgrimage in the Andes, found that pilgrims did not encounter one another in the direct, immediate manner prescribed by Turner. The focal shrines they visited may have been associated with a universalistic cosmology, but the behaviour of the pilgrims, far from expressing a sense of unrestricted fellowship, was characterized by nepotism, factionalism, endemic competition and inter-community conflict. The egalitarianism upheld during the pilgrimages Sallnow attended was not the equality of brotherhood but of opposition. As he summarizes it:

"Such divisiveness is a direct consequence of pilgrimage, which temporarily abrogates the pattern of structured social relations and creates a supra-local arena in which novel social alignments and configurations may arise. As the purported goal of pilgrimage the notion of communitas is spurious, and leads to a deterministic view of what is essentially a polymorphic phenomenon. (Sallnow 1981: 163)"

At times, Turner attempts to explain pilgrimage in psychologistic terms. He regards individuals in complex societies devoid of corporate matrices as obsessed with the problem of personal salvation. The increasing weight of responsibility for decisions the maturing individual must make becomes too much to bear on one's own. For wearied souls who wish to be relieved of such anxieties, pilgrimage is one of the solutions, one of the transcendental sources of support and legitimacy. Communitas is thus to be viewed as a form of 'release' or 'salvation' from 'the role-playing games which embroil the personality in manifold guiles, guilts, and anxieties' (Turner 1974: 200, 203). In other words Turner, who openly acknowledges his debt to Freud (Turner 1978), uses a particular kind of Western psychology to explain a universal social phenomenon. But to reduce a complex social event to general emotional terms is to ignore all other aspects of the occurrence and to discount their possible importance (Morinis 1984: 261). On top of that, privileging one specific type of psychology at the total expense of local forms, however developed, is to deny indigenous commentaries any validity. Any ethnography of a pilgrimage must take into account the ways the participants themselves speak of the event and how it affects them. Of course, any local explanation couched in terms denoting inner mental states could be compared with one framed in English psychological terminology, but that would be a very different procedure from the one Turner advocates.

Turner emphasizes that pilgrimage is a liminal phenomenon. Like rites of passage, it has an initiatory character. In tribal societies, the major initiation rites of puberty are the dominant historical form of ordered anti-structure. In patrimonial feudal systems they are succeeded by pilgrimage (Turner 1974: 166, 200, 203).

But there is in fact little evidence to back up the similarity claimed by Turner between these two ritual processes. Many pilgrimages do not evince any initiatory character and do not mark a change in the social status of the pilgrim (Morinis 1984: 258–9). Simply because Turner uses the same terminology to describe aspects of both sets of phenomena does not imply that they perform the same ritual function, and any possible value of the ritual parallel he has drawn disappears when his own model of pilgrimage is so gravely called into question. The greatest defect of Turner’s approach, however, is that he sees pilgrimage as an autonomous entity, independent of what is going on in the rest of society. He pays no regard to the distribution of power within society or to the possible ways pilgrimage may be exploited by those seeking hegemony. Thinking of it as a form of ‘anti-structure’ outside the realms of social structuration, he ignores the fact that pilgrimages may well be an integral part of the forms utilized by seekers of secular power. Moreover, Turner regards pilgrimages as symbolic forms whose meaning, if at times relatively opaque, is already given. But the elite controlling the performance of the ritual can manipulate the multivocality of the usually employed symbols and forms for their own interested ends. By exploiting the discourse they can try to dictate how the event is to be interpreted. In an attempt to further their ends, they may also alter aspects of the rite and introduce winning innovations. In other words, the performance and structure of a pilgrimage may well be affected by social forces beyond the immediate context of the event itself, and one must pay attention to these in order to be able to begin to understand what is going on.

In 1913—more than fifty years before Victor Turner had even started to analyse pilgrimage—the Paris-based academic journal *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* published Robert Hertz’s ‘Saint Besse: Étude d’un culte alpestre’. In the first paragraph of this long paper Hertz posed two questions: ‘What meaning do the faithful give to their annual presence at the Alpine shrine of St Besse, and to the rites they perform there?’; and ‘What is it that brings together in this solitary spot a whole host of people from the neighbouring valleys and even from the plain of Piedmont?’

On 10 August every year the inhabitants of two contiguous Italian Alpine valleys laboriously ascend, from different sides, a mountain pass on which is perched a huge block of shale called St Besse’s Mount. Attached to the rock is a chapel dedicated to the memory of the saint. The congregants attend Mass and then process round the Mount. In the procession, two women wear on their heads wooden frames decorated with brightly coloured ribbons and fabric; strong men...
carry a massive statue of the saint. Once they have finished processing, an auction is held of the valuable possessions donated by many of the faithful. The proceeds go to the treasury of the chapel. Before abandoning themselves to the joys of festive companionship, pilgrims chip off small pieces of the rock to take home; for the faithful regard their patron as a saint of great powers who bestows favours on all those who bother to make their way to his Mount on his feast day:

It would appear at first sight that nothing could be more tranquil or harmonious than the life of this little religious federation, all of whose members seem to be on a strictly equal footing. But this is an illusion. Closer observation reveals that the devotees of St Besse are torn by wranglings, by conflicts of ambition, by struggles sometimes concealed, sometimes open, violent and even bloody. (Hertz 1983: 63)

Five villages are traditionally associated with the rite: Campiglia, Valprato, Ronco and Ingría in the Soana valley, and Cogne in the contiguous valley. At the festival, villagers from Cogne, who have nothing to do with those in the other valley except on 10 August, feel isolated and fear being made objects of ridicule. They are perceived as intruders by villagers from the Soana, especially by those from Campiglia who, as the inhabitants of the oldest settlement in the valley and the one closest to the shrine, regard St Besse as their own special patron. Their claim, as caretakers of the ritual ornaments, to be the only people who should bear them in the processions has led at times to shouts, fights and knifings. As Hertz laments, ‘Poor St Besse! Was it really worth his while to come to settle so high up and so far from humankind, in the mountain wastes, only to become mixed up in the petty riots of his worshippers?’ (ibid.: 66).

Hertz then points out that St Besse is also one of the patron saints of Ivrea, the chief city of the diocese in which the Soana valley is located. He argues that the adoption by the city on the plain of the cult from the mountain was but a specific part of the expansionism of Ivrea’s rulers, as they were blocked—for geographical and political reasons—from extending the dominion of their home town in any direction other than westwards across the plain, towards the Soana valley. To back up his argument that St Besse was drawn into Ivrea’s web of influence rather than the city propagating the saintly cult across the plain and up into the Alps, Hertz adduces the local tradition of the theft of the saint’s bones from the Mount by common robbers and their eventual depositing in the vault of the cathedral of Ivrea: having Besse’s bones in its ossuary added to the symbolic capital of the diocesan capital.

Most villagers speak of St Besse as a pious shepherd who was thrown to his death from the Mount by a pair of jealous locals. In contrast, the people of Ivrea speak of St Besse as a Theban legionary who died for his faith, while in former times some Ivreans claimed he was an early bishop of the city. Hertz comments wryly, ‘Having enticed him into their midst, the townsmen have dressed him up to suit their tastes, without even being able to agree among themselves: for some of them have put a bishop’s crook in his hands, and others the legionaries’ sword and the martyrs’ palm’ (ibid.: 79). In other words, the historical personality of St
Besse has been presented in dissimilar ways by two disparate traditions, neither of which sheds any light on the real identity of their common hero, but both of which 'shed a sharp light on the habits of thought and on the psychology of the profoundly different social groups in which they were elaborated' (ibid.). Wherever he is represented, St Besse incarnates the ideals of the local propagators of his cult: to diocesan leaders based in the city he was an upstanding soldier in the ranks of a holy army, or an ecclesiastic who suffered pain and died for the greater glory of his faith; to the villagers he was, like the best of them, devoted to his livestock and persuaded that the highest virtue consisted in abandoning oneself completely to God's care (ibid.: 80).

As to why the faithful of two separate valleys should meet to keep up their common memory of one saint, Hertz points out that Cogne was settled by herdsmen from Campiglia and that, in former times, Cogne villagers maintained a series of links with people in the Soana valley; the walk up to the Mount is the last vestige of those links. As to why the cult is centred on a steep rock, Hertz notes that many rocks in the region have been made holy by their association with a local saint; what one is witnessing here, he argues, is a Catholic transformation of a more ancient cult of the sanctity of rocks. To the final query that he puts to himself—'Where then does the diffuse sanctity of the Mount stem from?'—Hertz provides a Durkheimian answer: the diffuse sanctity comes from 'the faith this obscure mountain people had in themselves and in their ideal, and their will to survive' (ibid.: 86). The rock is sacred because the rite is in fact a celebration by the local society of its own continuance.

Hertz predicted the 'impending disappearance' of the pilgrimage. But when, at my request, Dr Nico Momigliano telephoned the tourist office at Cogne, the folklorist of the town, and the parish priest of Campiglia, she learnt that the annual procession continues, indeed flourishes. If the weather is good on the day, as many as 2000 people may turn up, about 70 of them from Cogne and perhaps an equal, if not greater, number of tourists. Some years the Bishop of Ivrea graces the event with his presence. The statue of the saint is still dutifully carried around the Mount, but the decorated baskets are only taken out of storage on the day if those in charge of the ritual paraphernalia that year feel so inclined. None of the three locals Nico spoke to had heard of Hertz's article, and when she asked the folklorist exactly who carried the statue and baskets each year, the latter replied with a sigh, 'That's a long story.' She did not wish to tell the tale, and only stated that it was usually, but not always, the villagers of Campiglia. It seems that, eighty years after Hertz's visit, the contest over the right to control the cult of St Besse persists.

Given his conclusion, it seems that Hertz regarded his essay as a contribution towards the establishment of a sociology of religion. In his closing paragraphs, he argues that the intellectual fruits of his study show that those who wish to study hagiographical texts should, wherever possible, place the legends they are looking at in their social contexts, and that they should not be scared at the prospect of doing a little fieldwork. In these ways, apparent hagiographical inconsistencies,
such as the different identities of St Besse, could be felicitously resolved in a genuinely illuminating manner.

It appears to me very likely that Hertz avoided most of the pitfalls to which Turner was prone—misleading comparison, a universalizing psychologism, apoliticism—precisely because he was so concerned with the social contexts of the phenomenon he was studying, and with people’s competitiveness within those contexts. Turner, in contrast, was not so much concerned with the contexts of pilgrimage as with its internal structure; extrapolating from his work on the liminal period in Ndembu rites of passage, he interpreted pilgrimage as a process whereby pilgrims—supposedly not bothered by points of precedence or prestige—merge into some sort of unstructured, if temporary, community.

It would appear that rather than following Turner’s approach—generalizing in a precipitate manner, or postulating some quasi-mystical concept of communitas, which seems to owe more to the ambience of ‘hippiedom’ than it does to anthropological theory—it would be best to examine what people actually do in pilgrimage, how they experience and conceive of it, who controls its staging, how and why they do so, and how this ritual process fits into the rest of social life.4

It remains to be answered why Hertz’s paper has been neglected for so long. It seems to me that part of the answer lies in the way Hertz himself, and his contemporaries, appear to have viewed it. Another part of the answer lies in the selective manner by which the British champions of the Année Sociologique emphasized that movement’s intellectual style.

Marcel Mauss, writing in 1922, referred to Hertz’s ‘Contribution To a Study on the Collective Representation of Death’ and ‘The Pre-Eminence of the Right Hand’ as his ‘two famous papers’. Mauss also claimed that Hertz regarded ‘St Besse’ and two other papers as forms of intellectual refreshment, occasional works he had turned to as a break from his magnum opus—which he was never to finish—on sin and expiation. According to Mauss, Hertz would rest from his great work—of which the papers on death and the right hand were mere opening sections—by ‘entertaining himself with folklore and mythology’. Mauss calls the ‘St Besse’ paper ‘delightful’, but says that, for Hertz, it was but a pastime (Mauss 1969 [1922]: 494, 510). In other words, Mauss liked the paper, but because it dealt with a European, and not a geographically exotic, social phenomenon, it could not be ranked as anthropology, merely as folklore. By classifying it as a form of relaxation, and so playing down its potential importance, Mauss failed to state that Hertz’s analysis of the Alpine pilgrimage directly challenged Durkheim’s

4. One chapter of my forthcoming ethnography of the postwar evolution of the Spanish Carlist Party analyses in this manner the annual pilgrimage by the party faithful to the small Navarran mountain of Montejuarra.
characterization of ritual as solidary in effect: for Hertz saw the annual rite as not merely cohesive, but as cohesive and divisive in different ways at the same time. Mauss, however, has nothing to say on this point.

Hertz’s work became well known in anglophone academia thanks to its promotion by Evans-Pritchard and, later, by Rodney Needham. As Evans-Pritchard (1973: ix) stated in his introduction to Needham’s handbook on the right and the left:

here I may be allowed to take a bit of credit to myself, for what Hertz wrote seems, except here and there, to have been forgotten—I suppose totally passed by in the English-speaking world—until I brought him into circulation again... I included a lecture on Hertz every year at Oxford during my entire tenure of the Chair of Social Anthropology at that University.\(^5\)

Both Evans-Pritchard and Needham were mainly interested in Hertz because of his symbolic approach to the comparative study of collective representations. To Needham, who was then propounding his own version of structuralism, ‘The Pre-Eminence of the Right Hand’ was primarily a paper about asymmetric dualism, in which Hertz contended that polarity is a fundamental aspect of human expression (Needham 1979: 296).

According to Evans-Pritchard (1960: 16), the essay on St Besse was an attempt to relate certain features of the cult and its attendant myths to local and politico-ecclesiastical organization. In contrast, Needham, who was then primarily interested in rather formalist studies of a structuralist bent and in the isolation of natural symbols, thought Hertz’s deepest concern was not with the politicking over the possession of St Besse but with ‘the ancient, fundamental belief which sees in certain rocks the seat and hearth of a divine force’. On this reading ‘St Besse’ was but a precursor to another paper of Hertz’s, one on Athena and the cult of rocks. Needham planned to publish translations of the pair as a volume. But when Lévi-Strauss, after a thorough search, failed to find the Athena paper (which had very likely been destroyed by the German troops who ransacked Mauss’s apartment), Needham gave up the idea.

In consequence, while ‘Death and The Right Hand’ was read, debated, and written about, ‘St Besse’ was rarely mentioned. Unlike so much of the work of the Année Sociologique which was translated by students of Evans-Pritchard in the 1950s and 1960s, ‘St Besse’ was not put into English until the 1980s. Moreover, when it was finally published, its editor was not an Oxford-trained anthropologist, but a Cambridge-based social scientist who, in effect, buried the paper within a

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5. Louis Dumont claims that until he had been appointed, in 1952, to the lectureship in Indian Sociology at Oxford, Evans-Pritchard knew nothing of Hertz and did not even know that the library of his department held a copy of the French edition of Hertz’s collected papers (Dumont 1986: 225 n.14).
collection on religious sociology, folklore, and history, where it is probably a cause of great surprise to any anthropologist who chances upon it.

It is not, perhaps, surprising that Victor Turner makes no reference to Hertz. As a disciple of Max Gluckman and sometime lecturer in his Manchester department, he did not count the members of the Année Sociologique among his influences. Most probably, he had never even heard of ‘St Besse’.

If it is not by chance that certain articles are successfully revived, then nor—very probably—is it by chance that most contributions to academic journals are allowed to yellow on the shelf. The splendour of ‘St Besse’ is unsung because it did not fit neatly within the intellectual co-ordinates of inter-war French ethnology or of post-war Oxford anthropology: Mauss saw it as but a ‘delightful’ form of ‘pastime’ from the hard stuff—a comparative account of sin; Evans-Pritchard and Needham both liked it but neither ever gave lectures on it nor discussed it at length in print.

Of course, this disregard of a brilliant paper is a great pity. Maybe it is even more than that, for its neglect has meant that Hertz’s implicit but still incisive criticism of Durkheim’s approach to ritual has gone unrecognized, his (for its time) revolutionary analysis of the relations between political organization and symbolic interpretation has been unappreciated, and his genuinely pioneering fieldwork on pilgrimage has been ignored. What testimony to the confining power of the intellectual co-ordinates of one’s time!

REFERENCES


THARU MATS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

CHRISTIAN MCDONOUGH

In a footnote in one of his earlier publications Andrew Duff-Cooper summed up some of the main ideas that guided him in his work:

The phrase ‘holistic account’ means little more, in my view, than that, as Hocart...advises, as an ethnographer one should take nothing for granted in recording as faithfully and in as much detail as one can what the people with whom one lives do and what they say (and write) about what they do. In doing this I, at least, was guided by the view that every social fact, no matter how impressive or how seemingly trivial was potentially interesting and significant in the attempt to come to some understanding of the form of life of the people with whom I lived on Lombok. (Duff-Cooper 1984: 43)

I am grateful to the SSRC (now ESRC), the British Academy and the Life Sciences Faculty Research Committee of Oxford Brookes University for financial support for fieldwork in 1979–81, 1985–86 and 1993 respectively. I would also like to thank Jilly Dempsy who first made me think about mats and Dron Rajaure for his comments on a draft of this essay. An earlier version was given in the seminar series ‘Anthropological Approaches to Non-Western Art’ held at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford, in 1985. It is to be regretted that to date very little research has been done among the various Tharu communities in the Nepalese Terai. Fuller accounts of the Dang Tharu can be found in McDoaugh 1984, in Krauskopff 1989, and in several works by Rajaure (e.g. 1978, 1981). So far as I know there are no examples of Tharu mats in museums nor are there any published photographs of them. Should any reader be interested, however, I have several slides showing these mats being made.
There is a lot packed into these two sentences, but certainly one of the key notions for Andrew was 'form of life'. Throughout his work Andrew sought to trace linkages between diverse aspects of the life of the Balinese on Lombok, aspects that were shown to be related and ordered by fundamental structuring principles in Balinese collective thought. In a parallel but less thoroughgoing manner I seek in this essay to show how mats, and what people do with them, reflect or embody wider aspects of the social structure of the Dang Tharu caste group of Nepal, particularly with regard to the respective positions of men and women in Tharu communities.

Quite rightly, Andrew advocated that the ethnographer must record carefully what people do and what they say about what they do. To an extent I have tried to do this, but the analysis here goes further than the explicit statements about mats that I recorded in the field. In particular, the correspondences I draw between the structure of mats and gender divisions go beyond anything that the Tharu themselves said to me. This is not surprising, since the Tharu I know do not have much to say about mats in a general, synthesizing way. They do not spend much time reflecting on an aspect of everyday life that is instead taken for granted. Nevertheless, I have discussed the gist of this analysis with several Tharu men and women whose reaction tended to be quizzical amusement combined with comments to the effect that they themselves had not thought of relating together the various facts about mats in the way attempted here. The implication for me, however, is a familiar though important one, namely that 'social facts', on which Andrew placed so much emphasis, do not simply speak for themselves. To make sense of them the ethnographer has to arrange them into some sort of pattern.

Mats (gondri) conform to two standard traditional designs: the petir gondri made by women and the dhacyā gondri made by men. There is no room for variation or for individual expression. Some people produce a few mats for sale locally, usually to households of other castes, but mat production is not a significant economic activity, nor is it seen by the Tharu or other castes as a key defining feature of Tharu communities. Both men’s mats and women’s mats are required in a few specific contexts, as I shall explain below, but mats are also essential pieces of household equipment used in a wide variety of everyday mundane situations. The manufacture of mats is linked to the gender division in Tharu life, so I shall begin with a summary outline of the social structure focusing on the different structural positions of men and women. To highlight certain contrasts between the two types I shall then describe the design and production of mats. In the third section I explore the principal uses of mats, and in the conclusion I relate the design and use of mats to the wider social structure.
Structural Positions of Men and Women

At the most inclusive level the Tharu of Dang form a largely endogamous group, which like other such groups in Nepal is referred to as a jāt. As a jāt the Tharu have their place in the local hierarchy of castes, but like many other groups in Nepal they possess a number of cultural features that distinguish them from Hindu castes in the region. Internally the Tharu are divided into an indefinite number of patrilineal exogamous groups (gotvār). The gotvār is not a corporate group: it does not hold land or ritual sites in common, nor is it integrated by an overall lineage structure. Each gotvār is identified and distinguished by its deities. In theory each gotvār has a unique combination of these represented in every household of the gotvār. The Tharu have no substantive idiom for expressing kinship, for instance in terms of shared blood or bone as is common among other groups in the region. The agnatic kinship of shared gotvār membership is ultimately anchored in and conceived of in terms of a common relationship to shared deities. This has been aptly described by Krauskopf (1989) as filiation spirituelle. The relations between a household and its deities are of crucial importance, and it is the men and the hereditarily linked household priest who between them maintain relations with the deities through the performance of household rituals. The women of the household have virtually no role in these rituals.

The operative unit of the gotvār is the household, which is often joint, consisting typically of a man, his wife and their married sons. Within the household there is a hierarchy structured by seniority according to generation and age, with the position of household head (ghardhurryā) held by the father and then by his eldest son. The household head is responsible for representing the household in such external contexts as village meetings, for performing many of the household rituals, for apportioning daily tasks among household members, and for controlling cash.

Marriage is governed principally by the negative rule of gotvār exogamy; it is not structured by any ideology of transgenerational alliance. A woman leaves the house on marriage and enters that of her husband. At first, a married woman comes under the authority of her parents-in-law, but later her position in the household will depend on her husband’s place in the age order. Thus a woman who marries an eldest son will become ghardhurnyā and exercise control over domestic matters including the day-to-day use of food stores and the distribution of household tasks among the other wives.

A woman’s gotvār affiliation is ambiguous and transitional. She does not properly belong to her natal gotvār since she is destined to leave it on marriage. This is reflected in her exclusion from certain household rituals, particularly those

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1. The Tharu of Dang are only one of several Tharu groups that inhabit districts throughout the southern Terai region of Nepal, and which collectively number some 750,000 people. When I write of the Tharu here I am referring only to the Dang Tharu.
concerning death. After marriage a woman begins a process of assimilation into her husband's household and gotyār. This matter is complicated and to do it justice requires fuller discussion than is possible here. Certainly the marriage ceremony itself marks an important stage in this transition, as does the birth and later the marriage of her first son, but there is a sense in which a woman's incorporation only becomes fully complete after her death, when as an ancestor she is ritually seated along with the other ancestors in the deity-room of her marital household.

This brief account of Tharu social structure is incomplete, but allows us to point to fundamental differences in the structural positions of men and women. Men have a permanent and unchanging gotyār identity whereas women move from one group to another. Similarly, men remain in the household, while women move from house to house. In general, therefore, we can view Tharu society as composed of groups organized around men who occupy positions which in a structural sense are fixed, whereas women move between these groups and in a manner which is essentially unstructured, other than by the fundamental negative rule of gotyār exogamy. A woman's structural position within her marital household is dependent on that of her husband.

Naming, Manufacture and Design

Both types of Tharu mat are made from the same kind of pliable reed-like plant (gwān), which is grown and prepared by the Tharu themselves. The women dry the reeds and trim them to the required length. Generally speaking, women work singly when making petār mats. These may be made at any time of year, but most often women work on them in otherwise slack periods, especially during the hottest time of the year in April and May. Occasionally, a mat may be begun by one woman but then finished at a later time by a different woman of the household. The maker begins at one corner and plaits the reeds together so that the resulting structure is a criss-cross pattern with the reeds lying diagonally to the rectangular border. The mat has no orientating features: it has no top or bottom sides and no head end. In most cases these mats are not coloured, though occasionally single strands of reeds dyed red, green or purple may be woven in.

There was no clear view or consensus on the meaning of the name petār among the men and women with whom I discussed it. However, some of the local etymologies are interesting since they point to an association between this type of mat and women, belts (only worn by women), the stomach and birth. One man's suggestion was that the name derives from pyet, meaning stomach. And, indeed, women use this type of mat when giving birth, after which the midwife throws away the umbilical cord with the blood-stained petār mat. The term pyet is used to refer in a general way to the area of the stomach and abdomen and so, the
argument goes, since this mat is used for the birth, the blood and the umbilical cord, all of which have come from the *pyet*, the mat is called *petār*. Other suggestions were that the name is related to the words *peti*, meaning belt, and *petār*, meaning a horse’s saddle-belt. The associations here are unclear since *petār* mats are not used as belts or waist bands, but Dron Rajaune, a Nepalese colleague who has studied and written on the Dang Tharu, has suggested to me that the link is in the fact that in the recent past women’s belts consisted of narrow strips of cloth made from jute-like thread woven in the same kind of diagonal weave used in making *petār* mats. I do not know what the linguistic merits of such folk etymologies may be, and they were also no doubt prompted by my own line of questioning, but they serve to underline a view of this type of mat as essentially associated with women and, as part of this, with birth, an exclusively female event.

*Dhacyā* mats can be made by one man working alone, but much more commonly they are made by groups of men working together. They are made in the large, hall area of the house in the evenings, and sometimes friends and neighbours may gather to help the men of the house with the work. Unlike women’s mats, which can be made at any time of year, men’s mats are always made in the weeks leading up to the major Dasyā (Dasain) festival in September/October. The *dhacyā* mat has a more elaborate design than the *petār* mat. First, a warp of several strands of grass rope is stretched out on pegs set into the ground. Across these ropes a weft of reeds is threaded and set in place by a wooden bar lying across the warp. The resulting weave is thus rectangular. The *dhacyā* mat is most often made without any extra colouring, having only the natural colour of the reeds themselves. Occasionally, however, red, green or purple reeds are woven in to form a simple design of single strands of colour alternating with the natural reeds, or forming a chequered pattern with blocks of colour. Mats incorporating coloured designs are considered finer work than ordinary mats.

The finished mat is orientated in two ways: there is a head (*sir*) end, which is where the construction of the mat begins, and a tail (*puchi*) end where it finishes, and there is a top side marked by a double line of beading along both the long edges, and a bottom side marked by a single line of beading. It is considered inauspicious or unlucky (*alacchin*) to sit on a mat with its bottom side up, or to sleep on a mat with one’s head at the ‘tail’ end.²

The orientating features of the *dhacyā* mat are encountered in other contexts in which the ‘head’ is opposed to the ‘tail’ as senior to junior. The north end of the house is sometimes referred to as the ‘head’. This is where the kitchen and deity room are located and where the household head as most senior member

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² Similar ideas about the correct placing of mats have been reported in these pages for the Rai of east Nepal: ‘it is *kholo* [ill-omened, unlucky, taboo] to spread a *gundri* (rectangular mat made of rice straw) so that the part made first (the head end, recognisable by the shorter loops of the warps as they circle back to re-enter the weft) lies downhill’ (Allen 1972: 86). The head end of the Tharu mat is identified in the same way.
sleeps, usually in the deity-room. Similarly, in certain possession rituals (gurai) that require two officiants, the senior priest who invokes the deities sits in the ‘head’ position, while the junior officiant who acts as the medium, sits in the ‘tail’ position, always to the left of the senior priest. The contrast between the double and single line of beading is less clearly identified, but in rituals and in the transfer of certain prestations, offerings or gifts should be made in pairs (jor). Thus in the bridegroom’s marriage procession a small string of fish is carried, with the fish arranged in pairs: this is simply called sagun or ‘auspicious’. Although I cannot demonstrate it here, it seems that for the Tharu a whole or a complete unit should in many contexts consist of two elements forming a pair.

Uses

The uses of the two types of mat present a number of important contrasts. While both types of mats are used in everyday mundane or informal contexts for sitting or sleeping on, in general the petār mat is preferred. It is smoother, more pliable, more comfortable, more versatile (in that it comes in a greater range of sizes), and it is probably more durable. The dhacyā mat, however, is required for a range of more formal contexts. It is preferable, though not essential, to offer important guests a dhacyā mat for sitting on when they arrive, and for when they are later given beer and food. In many household rituals, particularly those that require the household priest, such a mat is provided for the officiant. In funeral ceremonies any mat may be used, but if a dhacyā mat is used for carrying the corpse it must be inverted. A new dhacyā mat is required in the Dasyā festival for the preparation of certain foods and for the ritual feeding of the ancestors. Special foods are laid out on the floor of the deity-room and a new mat is spread out for the ancestors. Finally, the dhacyā mat forms an essential part of the prestations transferred from the bridegroom’s household to his wife’s natal household and to certain other affinally related households. The only special use of the petār mat is, as noted above, for birth.

Two particular uses of the dhacyā mat explain why it is made in the period leading up to the Dasyā festival. First, a new mat is required for the ancestors, and second, it is in the period after Dasyā that this type of mat has to be given as a prestation. After marriage, which usually takes place in February/March, a series of prestations, including such objects as a bed, a stool and a rain shield are given at various times over the following months to the wife’s natal household. In the first year after marriage the post-Dasyā prestation consists of a cock, a pot of rice liquor and a dhacyā mat. In subsequent years, all the other prestations are gradually discontinued, but the post-Dasyā gifts are continued indefinitely, though in the reduced form of only a mat and a pot of liquor. It is also customary for a man to give a dhacyā mat when he participates in the festivities surrounding a
marriage or a first hair-cutting ceremony in his wife’s natal household and in certain other households to which he is related through his wife. As prestation, then, dhacyā mats, along with certain other items, pass in the opposite direction, so to speak, to women.

Conclusion

The gotyā and the household, the fundamental Tharu social units other than the village, are organized around men. In a structural sense men have a permanent and unchanging identity whereas women do not; women move from their natal household on marriage, when they begin a gradual process of assimilation into their husband’s household. In a parallel fashion, men make dhacyā mats, with their definite structure and series of orientations, in groups; women make their petār mats, which lack any orientating features, on their own. Linguistically these mats are not gendered, but they clearly are gendered in their manufacture and uses, which associate them with strongly gendered social contexts. Men’s mats are used in certain rituals, as prestation, and as seating for important guests, all social situations controlled by men. Women’s mats are used for a whole range of everyday household needs, and during birth, both areas of social life centred on women.

When we consider as a whole all these social facts concerning mats, which for much of the time could be taken as among the ‘seemingly trivial’ aspects of Tharu social life, it appears that, in their manner of manufacture and in their various uses, mats embody key aspects of the structural positions of men and women and underline the gendered quality of some of the social domains in which men and women play leading roles. In their manufacture and uses, mats embody aspects of the structural positions and gender roles of their makers, but when we consider the movement or lack of movement of mats, for instance the role of dhacyā mats in prestation, in relation to the respective structural positions of men and women, then the mats reflect a sort of inversion or reversal of the structural characteristics of their respective makers. Men do not move but the mats they make do, and their mats move in the opposite direction to women; whereas women move but their petār mats do not move in any ordered fashion at all.3

3. There are parallels here with weaving among the Tamang, another Nepalese ethnic group. In a discussion of Tamang writing and weaving in relation to gender, March has commented: ‘women’s weaving is uniquely associated with the flux and irregularities of marital exchange; men’s writing with the fixity and preordination of localised clan identities’ (1983: 729).
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SAVING OR ENSLAVING:
THE PARADOX OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

A. DAVID NAPIER

Eye of newt and toe of frog...

In the autumn of 1976 Andrew Duff-Cooper and I were among the new students enrolled to read social anthropology at Oxford under the mentorship of Professor Rodney Needham. Like a number of other incoming students, we had come to anthropology from other careers: in his case, the field of law; in mine, philosophy and art. In fact, the numbers of matriculating ‘mature students’ that year created an atmosphere of lively intellectual engagement in which previous professional experiences were examined through the lens of social anthropology. In the intervening years between then and his early death, Andrew and I would share many anthropological interests, including—though in different moments—fieldwork in Indonesia. For this Memorial Issue, however, returning to the legal domain that first concerned him seems both appropriate and timely.

As the age of ‘salvage’ ethnography gives way to one characterized by the absence of untouched tribal groups, the need to combine ethnographic experience with some awareness of the legal consequences of publicizing various forms of indigenous knowledge becomes evident. Indeed, few anthropologists realize that their own writing—the intellectual candour through which tribal knowledge enters the public domain—may actually be the very thing that denies tribal peoples their cultural and intellectual property rights. Even when intentions are clear, let us not forget that the legal issues of intellectual and cultural property are still much disputed within the cosmopolitan world itself. One cannot readily dismiss the general lack of agreement concerning the protection of inalienable property—for
example, the reluctance of nations that regularly import cultural property (e.g. Japan, Switzerland, Germany and Britain) to support the UNESCO Convention (on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property), or the long-standing refusal of the United States to join what has been called ‘the premier instrument of international copyright’ (Benko 1987: 6), the Berne Convention. Moreover, despite the fact that membership in the World Intellectual Property Organization is open to any member of the Paris or Berne Unions and any member of the UN, the age of technology transfer has enabled even the weakest link in any agreement to exploit for financial gain its independence and non-compliance.

What follows, then, is both a memorial to Andrew and an ethnographic view of intellectual property, with special reference to the patent rights of indigenous peoples. Though specific in certain details, it is meant to contribute to the sort of wider intellectual colloquy to which anthropology aspires and, indeed, to which Andrew was so devoted.

The irony of establishing what is meant by the term ‘intellectual property’ is that at least one common understanding of what ‘property’ means is subverted by the contemporary understanding of what is at issue when human knowledge is at stake. Webster’s Dictionary, for instance, defines as ‘property’ not only a thing or things (such as land or movable goods) owned by someone, but also ‘something that one has the right to use’ (as when ‘the contribution of one scientist becomes the property of scientists to follow’). In this essay I shall argue that the successful repayment for having utilized the intellectual property of indigenous peoples will occur (if it can at all) less through attempts to apply to indigenous peoples existing national laws and international agreements, than through fostering long-term moral relations among concerned indigenous and non-indigenous individuals or groups.

If a respect for difference may be said to be the first rule of diplomacy, then the appropriateness of any intellectual category for negotiating across cultures may in a similar spirit be quickly determined by assessing its capacity to help resolve actual problems and, through such an assessment, to isolate the conditions under which such categories are ineffectual. Like psychoanalytic categories (which may or may not be valid across cultures) those intellectual categories that function most successfully in more than one cultural setting do so not because they force diverse experiences into existing categorical frameworks, but because they help us recognize where and how actual phenomena deviate: where understanding the discrepancy between the category and the event it is meant to define actually results in a better understanding of what is at issue (Napier 1992: 194ff.). If, in other words, the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples are to be preserved, we need to hone the concept of intellectual property into something rigorous, and to do so by whatever trials best indicate its current limitations.
Though advertising a drug may depend upon reiterating all of the occasions on which its efficacy has been proven, assessing its range can only be done by examining its potential efficacy under new or novel conditions.

While there are a number of ways in which the flow of ideas from one individual to another may be controlled, most national representatives agree that patent protection is the single most important vehicle through which intellectual property rights may be secured. In order to assess what may be at stake for an indigenous group with a marketable commodity, we must first determine what kinds of intellectual property are patentable, not because copyrights and patents are the only means of protecting intellectual property, but because they are the primary means by which indigenous property is appropriated for financial gain. Identifying patentable property is in itself no easy task, for one must first accept the ineffectiveness of any existing international agreement to be truly international. As a rule, the more international the scope, the less powerful the legislation. No agreements can be legislated universally, and none of them provides any real protection for indigenous groups, which, by definition, are not politically independent from the nations in whose boundaries they reside. Second, one must come to terms with the universal tendency to employ national laws (which vary enormously) as if they had, or should have, international authority. Because of the ineffectiveness of international law, its inapplicability to indigenous groups, and the tendency to assume that national habits ought to be embraced universally, looking at international protective agreements is far less productive in assessing how humans actually behave towards indigenous intellectual property than is examining an actual set of agreed-upon national principles. Coming to grips with a local moral world may, indeed, be the single most important way in which the anthropological method differs in its approach to problems of intellectual property from those legal or political methods that rely upon international agreements that almost wholly bypass indigenous groups.

Though what follows can only be considered specific for the United States, we may at least get a sense of what is at stake in what may be the world’s most litigious nation. Employing, therefore, a set of guidelines provided for presumably ethical principal investigators at a major research university yields some useful generalities about how individuals (researchers, policy-makers, and corporate representatives) might actually respond to an indigenous intellectual property claim. These guidelines include the following items as protectable:

1. a *process*, such as a method of applying a vapor barrier to silicon materials;
2. a *machine*, such as a new instrument to deposit uniform layers of metallic compounds;
3. an *article of manufacture*, such as an assay kit for an infectious disease, or class of diseases;
4. a *composition of matter*, such as a new molecule (characterized by amino acid sequence or base-pairs), or a new chemical compound;
5. *new and useful improvements* of the above;
6. any *distinct and new variety of plant* which is asexually reproduced;
7. any *new, original, and ornamental design* for an article of manufacture. (Harvard University [HU] 1988: 43)
According to most nationally and internationally accepted standards for determining intellectual ownership, a patent application will be honoured if a product is: (1) new or novel ('the invention must be demonstrably different from any existing prior art; this means it cannot be described in prior “public disclosures,” which include publications and/or availability of the invention to the public, as a commercial product, for example' (ibid.: 44)); (2) it must be useful ('the invention must be useful in ways which represent improvements over existing products and/or techniques’ (ibid.)); and (3) it must be non-obvious ('the invention cannot be obvious to a person of “ordinary skill” in the art; non-obviousness usually is demonstrated by showing that practising the invention yields surprising, unexpected results’ (ibid.)). ‘Newness’ and ‘non-obviousness’ serve to define what is not in the public domain. Though ‘usefulness’ or utility is sometimes unclear (as when the scope of a molecule’s use is unknown), one’s chances for patenting a square wheel will be limited by what seems reasonable, as much as by formal law.

What sorts of local cultural conditions are most at risk from these criteria? From a multitude of potential hazards, I should like to isolate three areas of cultural concern: (1) the identification of the patentable thing; (2) its ownership; and (3) its causal agent (and, more broadly, its role in the indigenous cosmology).

1. Identification of patent

As the above conditions make clear, a patent cannot be obtained for a broad class of chemical compounds; an agent or agents must be isolable and even the patenting of a single compound will normally not be granted without some specific description of how it has been synthesized and the exact structure of its synthesis.

In the case of protecting an ethnopharmaceutical, therefore, we are immediately presented with two related problems. First, it is not enough to know the tree, the shrub or the animal from which a product is derived in order to obtain protection. Second, though a process may be patented, the definition of what is necessary and what is contingent is not very broad: though boiling a dog’s leg may not actually prevent a formula that contains atropine from stimulating the heart, it will not do to include it in applying for a patent, or to bring it to a court of law. As the famous biologist, Ludwik Fleck, once said, ‘It is easier to find one’s way in the woods than in botany. It is also easier to cure a patient than to know what his disease is’ (quoted in Löwy 1991: 64).

Since, therefore, the indigenous cultural description will, for any number of reasons, neither lend itself to chemical specificity nor conform to the procedures of laboratory practice, any discussion of how intellectual property rights can be established and maintained for indigenous peoples will necessarily focus on long-term educational avenues by which these groups may learn the necessary laws to which their property may be subjected in other cultures, or on the custodial goodwill of those who represent them or who function as their advocates. Ideally, such protection would comply with guidelines established by an international body.
(such as the World Intellectual Property Organization); but in the absence both of
an international body with real executive authority, and of the requisite time to
educate large masses of indigenous peoples about laws that are often at odds with
local moral orders, custodial goodwill is essential. Such goodwill necessarily relies
upon either the nation in which an indigenous group resides, or the ethnobiologist
who, or corporate entity which, isolates a particular compound and describes its
synthesis. For though the law may be unclear in many ways, what is perfectly
clear is that the one who does this is its legal owner and retains for varying
duration the right to sell or license its use. And who is to say, moreover, that the
ethnobiologist has not made a discovery? For the compound is new, it is useful,
it is non-obvious, and it certainly was not known (even though it functioned in
many cures) before he isolated it. And if this fieldworker has indeed made a
discovery, why shouldn’t he or she, too, enjoy legal protection?

To answer this last question, of course, we must first determine if the
knowledge actually was his or hers. And what knowledge are we speaking of?
Can an individual be said to possess a right to intellectual property if he or she
does not possess the intellectual categories to determine the scientifically
recognized active agent? Most laws say no, though morality may indicate
otherwise. Furthermore, if the biochemical knowledge does not ‘belong’ to the
ethnobiologist, whose is it?

2. Authorship

As the above discussion illustrates, the problem of identifying that which is
patentable is directly linked to the problem of ownership—and, by extension, to
whether we are dealing with an invention (which is unique) or an innovation
(which streamlines an existing art). Can a shaman be said to possess an
intellectual property right if he, as the user of a number of substances that include
one or more active agents, cannot isolate the active substance in his recipe?
Moreover, how can a tribal ‘inventor’ responsibly subscribe to the commodification
and scientific inscription of his idea when, even at major research institutions, ‘a
substantial majority of the faculty are not aware of what constitutes an invention’
(HU 1988: 42)? Those who would wish to find the matter less complex might
argue that the relationship between knowledge and ownership is intuitively
grapsed, that the perception of ‘knowledge as power’ is a human universal and
that, therefore, the concept of an intellectual property right is something that
should be readily understood by anyone. What is at issue in the case of
indigenous property rights, however, is not whether the human mind is capable of
producing and controlling powerful information, but whether or not the indigenous
categories that govern this knowledge in any way conform to the cosmopolitan
category of ‘intellectual property’ as a thing that is ‘new, useful, and non-obvious’.

Though we might wish to think the issue straightforward, it is not. In fact,
without some understanding of the specifics of indigenous life (about such
concepts as agency, ownership and object relations), the practice of regulating intellectual property rights dissolves into empty rhetoric, or into unproductive narratives about saving tribal life, when what should be discussed are the potential avenues by which individuals may learn enough to stand a chance of negotiating their own entitlement. After all, certain indigenous systems of intellectual property protection (for example, esoteric magic) actually sensitize practitioners, as we shall see, to concepts very much like those that are essential for the successful international protection of intellectual property. The situation, however, is further complicated by the fact that, while shamans and other owners of exclusive knowledge in tribal cultures may be said to perform a balancing function in the daily affairs of their neighbours (say, in settling disputes, or in presenting requests to the gods), it can hardly be said that they always work in the common interest. To the contrary: their powers may depend, quite directly, on their ability to produce harm as well as good and, through whatever means, to fend off challenges to their authority. If an anthropologist or biochemist has a moral obligation to the indigenous people who have shared with him a certain form of knowledge that contains something patentable, how are we to proceed in ascribing intellectual property rights if the relevant knowledge is, for example, held by exclusive inheritance, or if the individual who holds that knowledge is considered a rascal by his more passive neighbours?

Part of the problem with international goodwill here is that little of it proceeds from any real understanding of local moral realities; what is worse, a great deal of this goodwill is predicated on the blatantly false assumption that all tribal peoples are egalitarian, that people in these cultures do not suffer from their own despots, and that, if given the choice, they would reject wholesale the bankruptcy and collective corruption of the Western world. At the other end, of course, stand those who are highly cynical about these stereotypes and who argue that we need only look at how goods sent as disaster relief are sometimes mercilessly bartered (for example, by some Third World tyrants to the Fourth Worlds they victimize, or by black-market profiteers) to realize how essential for intellectual property protection locally negotiated reciprocal agreements are.

These difficulties, however, could (were we critically prepared to examine them) lead to quite different conclusions; for, far from providing excuses for custodianship (for saying that we have to control their intellectual property so as to distribute fairly the aid it produces), they could also encourage us to rethink the extent to which we are asking others to participate in our cultural saga about lost golden ages populated by noble, fair and highly individualistic people whose ideas are always new, useful and non-obvious. Without digressing at length here, it is important to raise this problem because thinking about our own cultural myths leads us to examine, in general, just how unrealistic our dramas about others may be and, in particular, how unlikely are the scenarios we imagine about the preservation of their intellectual property. One might even argue that the power of such sagas to influence our collective imagination is such that we are incapable of recognizing the demise of other forms of life until they can be brought to
conform to the major plot in which a silent and innocent savage mind is rescued in the hour of its demise by a modern-day Rousseau flying a cargo plane or another such reconnaissance device.

The argument here is not only that we are incapable of controlling the desire to enrol others as straw men in this cultural drama, but that once the possibility of loss becomes real, the actual loss may already have taken place: Teddy Roosevelt embraced the idea of a national park system precisely at the moment when the mapping of the American wilderness had eliminated the true category; and he and J. P. Morgan subsidized the feverish, romantic and encyclopaedic photographing of Native Americans by Edward Curtis at the very moment in history when the eradication of all bellicose forms of 'otherness' in the United States had guaranteed that the swan song could go unchallenged. If the connection between our greatest and greediest capitalists and an earlier swan song does not convince us of the need to reassess what is at stake in the current debates over intellectual property rights, then perhaps the growing popularity of such concepts as 'cultural capital' (which, interestingly, was an invention of management specialists) and procedures like 'social price costing' (which addresses our felt need to commodify empathic relations) will alert us to this trend.

Obviously, the goal in this discussion is not to criticize the goodwill that has resulted in development concepts that are frequently unworkable, but to shape the concept of intellectual property into something realistic for indigenous peoples, or, failing that, to see it for what it is.

3. Agency

Patenting knowledge, as we have seen above, is highly dependent on the notions that property is something exclusively held—by one individual, by an institution, or by a definable corporate entity—and that what is held is not part of what is shared or obvious to members of society at large or to people outside the group. In this sense, authorship is synonymous with agency. The difficulty arises when a form of ownership is collective; for things which are shared are generally obvious, and, in order to secure an exclusive right to something patentable, one must demonstrate that one’s idea is ‘non-obvious’. Shareholders in a corporation are not collectively sharing obvious knowledge, but empowering the corporation to exclude others for its own gain. As long as ownership and agency are synonymous, obviousness is not a problem; but as soon as a patent begins to look like something already known, exclusive ownership (‘who owns what’) becomes contested. It is for this reason that ‘obviousness’ is most frequently cited by patent examiners as the reason an invention is not patentable’ (ibid.: 44).

In one sense, tribal shamans would have little difficulty with understanding the ‘non-obvious’ since, as we have seen, the non-obvious is usually demonstrated ‘by showing that practising the invention yields surprising, unexpected results’. For some shamans, this more or less accurately defines what they do. What is
‘non-obvious’ becomes complex when we marry it to the idea that in order for an invention to be non-obvious it ‘cannot be obvious to a person of “ordinary skill” in the art’.

Contrary to popular belief, magic—far from being a primitive system of hocus pocus—actually has a great deal in common with contemporary conceptions of how intellectual property is protected, and in particular provides some insight into how inventors actually regulate the use of their ideas in the absence of government interventions. First and foremost, magic is secret, except to those who have negotiated to share such knowledge (the analogy here is, of course, the licensing of patents). Indeed, one might even argue that indigenous priesthoods that control access to sacred magical knowledge bear an eerie resemblance to Western patent-pooling cartels (Suchman 1989: 1285). Furthermore, there is, in fact, no evidence to support the widely held belief that ‘the opposite to a publicly structured market for intellectual goods is no market at all’ (ibid.: 1290). Secrecy, as much in the West as elsewhere, is a primary technique by which intellectual property rights are retained, for within limits secrecy functions well (both for tribal priest and bench scientist) without government intervention. As the president of one innovative computer chip manufacturer put it, ‘in this business, only the paranoid survive’.

Remember, we only know what tribals tells us; let us not forget that we will not learn their indigenous ethnobotanies without a deeply cultivated sense of reciprocity, moral engagement and personal trust; it is here that the greatest challenge resides for both policy-makers and ethnographers. The problem, however, is complicated by the fact that, while the subject-matter of international law is extremely rich, cross-cultural comparative work on the legal content of indigenous ideas about property is so rare that ‘the ratio of empirical demonstration to assumption in this literature is close to zero’ (Suchman 1989: 1290). The problem with systems of magic and secrecy—i.e. the real reason why we very much need legal intervention—is that they promote well-known forms of non-productive behaviour in which rights are so protected that essential knowledge is denied to other potential innovators (ibid.: 1292). Tribal people are often no more willing to discuss their intellectual property with ethnographers than are academics to circulate unpublished manuscripts.

Ironically, the problems of securing their intellectual property rights arise at the exact moment when they consider their knowledge obvious enough to share openly. Those Arcadian tribal peoples we intend to ‘save’—i.e. not the bellicose ones, but the ones who engage in the peaceful gathering of nuts and berries and the unselfish distribution of common goods—are precisely those hunters and gatherers who, so social evolutionists tell us, live without cultural specializations and who, therefore, share knowledge of all tools and survival procedures. These are the ungreedy versions of ourselves that we hold up to the many fun-house mirrors that form the backdrop of our swan song—for the absence of greed is the thing that for us is, as it were, ‘least obvious’. They are also the models of the public sharing that, by definition, exempts them from any patent rights.
The unamenability of the concept of intellectual property to that of collective ownership is seen quite clearly, that is, in the difficulty we have in deciding what constitutes an ‘ordinary skill in the art’ in a tribal setting, and in the complexities of incorporating tribal groups who have their own criteria for establishing social boundaries—for determining who ‘we are’ as a function of ‘who we are not’. Though this is not the place to examine the general issue of how cultural property law has influenced the corporate identity of indigenous groups (e.g. among Native Americans or Australian Aborigines), it is worthwhile noting that when traditional peoples are forced to negotiate their identities in contemporary legal terms, what takes place is not at all unlike efforts to redraw municipal boundaries in advance of a local election.

What is far more culturally complex is the issue of assessing what is and what is not an ‘ordinary skill’. Is an ordinary skill, for example, the shared knowledge of how a medicinal plant is used? If so, the common knowledge in Guyana that nuts from the greenheart tree can limit fertility does not, at least presently, entitle the indigenous peoples who use greenheart nuts for that purpose to the patent for birth control that could result from the synthesizing of a molecule of greenheart. Non-obvious means what it says: the knowledge cannot be obvious to anyone except its owner. In other words, being moral does not simply involve admitting that it’s ‘their’ idea and not ‘ours’; for the concept of tribal egalitarianism itself excludes those very tribal peoples from competing in the patent courts: what they know is commonly shared, and if it’s not commonly shared we cannot be party to any squabbling, or (to invoke the children’s parable) Mr Gumpy’s boat will surely overturn: ‘Well, might as well secure custodial rights, no? At least I’m not greedy.’

Such a concern over misplaced ownership would be unwarranted were it not for the fact that even in our well-managed centres of consumption the concept of what is ‘non-obvious’ remains both the most complex of the three aforementioned requirements and the one most subject ‘to broad and often inexact interpretation’:

For example, it might be argued that a new method of controlling protein production in bacteria is obvious in the face of prior art because it relies on a collection of well-known, existing and proven concepts. Conversely, one could argue the same method is **not** obvious because certain specific elements of the method yield surprising, unexpected results. Judging what is obvious to one of ‘ordinary skill’ in an art is rarely straightforward, especially in technologically complex and rapidly changing fields. (HU 1988: 44)

This problem, finally, is most emphatically seen when the greenheart nut is perceived in Guyana as a gift of God or, more complex still, the gift of the gods in general who, among themselves, will not or cannot determine who first had the idea of using the nut to control ovulation.
One widely held definition of ‘obvious’ is ‘that which is taken for granted’. How, then, is one meant to embody a sense of ownership and self-interest if the knowledge in question is obvious, in the sense of being either self-evident or God-given? Our Guyanan native, who believes the greenheart tree to grow everywhere and the knowledge of its properties to be self-evident, will need to become cosmopolitan very quickly if he is to benefit from any commercial derivative of greenheart. But the very process by which he gains that knowledge may actually limit his claim to the privileges of tradition. In short, he can easily become trapped: as he adopts the behaviours that will allow him to become more familiar with an international commodity exchange, he becomes less traditional, since the negotiation of his intellectual property will require that he redefine a traditional religious framework in terms of a modern system of property. What is more, in making this transition, he will not only become less traditional, he may actually forfeit his claim to the minority rights provided to the disenfranchised.

Like the Hopi Indian now living in a Phoenix caravan park, he will have a very difficult time indeed convincing others that he should be allocated any particular privilege because he is Hopi (Napier 1992: 51). The more he looks and thinks like us, the more difficulty he will have—despite what he wears to court—convincing a judge that his collectively shared intellectual property is ‘non-obvious’.

REFERENCES


HUSEK (THE WILL):
A WICHÍ CATEGORY OF THE PERSON

JOHN PALMER

Among Andrew Duff-Cooper's many interests, metaphysics was one on which he wrote with his characteristic clarity and profundity (see, for example, Duff-Cooper 1985, 1987). I am very pleased, therefore, to be able to publish this essay on a theme of metaphysics in this issue dedicated to his memory. Andrew kindly read and commented extensively on a first draft of the essay while he was doing his doctoral field research in 1981, and his perceptive and encouraging remarks at the time have helped to bring it, after all these years, to its present state.

The material presented in this essay is based principally on my field research among the Wichí in 1976 and 1978-9. For their generous assistance in bringing the essay into being, I am very grateful to the many Wichí—in particular, Yilis—with whom I discussed its subject. I am also grateful to the Department of Education and Science, to Exeter College, Oxford, and to the Spalding Trust for financial support, and to Jeremy Coote, Barry Cottrell, Jeremy MacClancy, David Napier, Rodney Needham and Peter Rivière for their comments on earlier drafts. For further information on the Wichí, see the works listed in the bibliography in Alvarsson 1988. The phonetic system I have used to transliterate the Wichí language includes the following features: j as in Spanish ojo, thl as in Welsh ll, q as in a guttural k. An apostrophe after a consonant indicates a glottal stop, a tilde over a vowel or the letter y indicates nasalization, a diaeresis over the second of two vowels indicates that it is pronounced separately.
Introduction

The Wichí of the northern Argentine Chaco have a dualist conception of the person as comprising both a body (t’isan) and a will (husek). Although ordinarily invisible, the will, like other metaphysical phenomena in the Wichí cosmos, is not absolutely imperceptible, but only ‘difficult’ (ată) to see. Being immaterial entities whose true dimension is esoteric reality, human wills are visible—as human beings—in dreams (of which all Wichí have experience) and in shamanic healing, the Wichí’s two means of access to esoteric reality.

In Wichí thought, the will is an indispensable organ of the body, located in the heart, of which it is the metaphysical counterpart. Just as the heart is recognized by Wichí as the material vital factor in human life, they regard the will as the immaterial vital factor: the body, although a living organism in its own right, cannot maintain itself in an operative condition without a will. We might say that a body without a will is like a car without a driver.

Besides this explicit physiological function, the Wichí will also has an implicit sociological role. It maintains order in the individual not only as a physical being, but also as a social person, such that presence of will (husek ihi) is as important for the well-being of the social group as it is for physical health. These two aspects of the Wichí will—the (innate) physiological and the (acquired) social—correspond to our concepts of the ‘will to be’ and ‘goodwill’ respectively. For the purposes of the analysis, and at the risk of overformalizing, it is useful to distinguish between them as an individual (or physiological) will and a social (or moral) will.

In the same way that, as a physiological category, the Wichí will is beneficial, so too in its social role it is defined as intrinsically good. For the Wichí the notion of a bad will is a contradiction in terms: ill will among the Wichí is simply absence of will (husek ihi-hit’a or husek ta neyehi). In contrast to the English equivalent, which has negative connotations as the source of obdurate or domineering individualism, the Wichí will is construed as the socializing factor in the individual. It is taken to be the controlling influence on natural individualism, which for the Wichí is the denial of human society.

1. Hunt (1937: 28) translates husek as ‘soul, spirit, mind, angel’ and, under a separate entry, ‘intelligence’. Hunt’s uncertainty about the meaning of the word is one reason why an alternative has been settled upon here. More specifically, ‘angel’ has not been adopted because it is too detached from human experience; and ‘mind’ and ‘intelligence’ reduce the will to the faculty of cognition, of which, according to Wichí precepts, the will is independent. The term ‘spirit’ is used here as a generic term for a variety of metaphysical phenomena, of which a person’s husek is but one. ‘Soul’ is an obscure concept, on account of its divergent uses in different contexts; however, in order to respect the Wichí convention of redesignating the husek after death—when it becomes an ahat—the term ‘soul’ has been retained and applied to this posthumous form (as in ‘soul of the dead’). Whether or not the husek as it exists in life is adequately glossed as ‘the will’ depends on the usefulness of this term as an exegetical tool. This essay is, in one sense, an experiment to test its usefulness as such.
The constitutional importance of the Wichí will is implicit in their definition of it as the ‘centre’ of the individual. (Analogously, Wichí identify the headman (niyat) as the ‘centre’ of the community, both politically and spatially.) The will is the point to which all the physical and moral parts of the whole relate; it is the active principle underlying the unity and order of the person, both as a physical body and as a member of the social body. For the Wichí, the will is what turns human bodies into ‘human beings’ (wichí).

Using one example for each of its two aspects—the physiological and the social—I aim in this essay to illustrate the will’s centrality in respect of the two corresponding facets of Wichí personhood: individuality and sociality, or personal existence and the socialized ego, respectively. To the extent that the Wichí will underscores both these facets of personhood, it constitutes the interface between the individual and society.

**Fear, Loss of Will, and Infirmity**

Being an immaterial entity, the will’s relationship with matter—the corporeal body that is its ‘container’ (lehi)—is unstable. Out of place in the world of forms, the will has a propensity to vacate the case in which it is confined and return to its natural, metaphysical dimension (esoteric reality). Outside a shamanic context, the disjunction of will and body signifies potential disorder. _

Dreaming is a more or less quotidian instance of will-departure: while the body sleeps, the will leaves (t’isan imá, wet yik lehusek). Provided that the dream is not inauspicious—i.e. nothing fearful occurs and the will has a safe journey—the will’s separation from the body in such cases has no ill effects. The will reunites with the body, which then awakes, none the worse for its temporary desertion. However, the danger in dreams is that while the will is out and about (iche-tso) it might see something intimidating—i.e. something it does not recognize or recognizes to be nefarious. The will then will be shocked (iseltej) or afraid (nowaye) and, as a result, the body of the dreamer will suffer—because, for the Wichí, fear is pathogenic.

Moments of fear are the other main occasion, besides dreams, when the Wichí’s (physiological) will absconds. Characteristically timorous, the will is predisposed to flee in the face of danger. When it does so, this entails a radical severing of the will from the body and its permanent alienation, unless it is retrieved by a hiyawu (seer). Loss of will through fear, as distinct from during (auspicious) dreams, is harmful to the body, making it vulnerable to pathogenic agencies (ōcha tothlo). In short, fear facilitates illness.

Before looking at the consequences of fear, it will help to give a brief account of its causes. Fear can be inspired by anything that is höchai, ‘ghastly’, to the perceiver. Wichí apply the term ‘ghastly’ to (among others) four categories of
phenomena. The first of these is the savagely aggressive (*fwitsai*), epitomized by the jaguar. Second is the metaphysical–spiritual apparitions which, being the inverse of human beings, are generally encountered in isolation from human society, either at night or in dreams, or in the ‘centre of the forest’ (*tahyi chowey*) or in the ‘middle of the path’ (*nayij chowey*) (i.e. at the greatest conceptual distance from the cultural space of a village). A typical case is that of a Wichí who loses his way (*wetá*) and meets Tahyi Wuk, the forest god. Contact with a spiritual being is invariably frightening to non-specialists (i.e. Wichí who are unacquainted (*itajwelniyeta*) with such beings). For the specialist metaphysician, the *hiyawu*, it is an unavoidable occupational hazard that must be confronted squarely, because the only successful way to carry through dealings with the spirit world is by overcoming the fear that such dealings normally arouse.

The third category of the ‘ghastly’ is the anomalous, for example an uncorrupted corpse. If a person dies away from home during a period of seasonal migration, his body is given a temporary burial in the forest. It is later exhumed for interment in the village burial ground. Wichí know of cases where the corpse has been found intact (*imathliwek*) when exhumed (cf. Peramás 1868: 216)—a departure from the ordinary laws of nature that they regard as a ‘ghastly’ mystery.2

The final category is the aesthetically alarming. An example might be the sound of a violent thunderclap in the village clearing amid the still of the forest (to guard against which the mother of an infant covers the child’s ears with her hands during a turbulent rainstorm). Another example, from the perspective of a prepubescent girl, might be the sight of pubic hair: as one young Wichí girl said to her ‘elder sister’ (MZD), ‘you [are] ghastly; you [have] vagina-hair’ (*a hōchái, a su-wole*).

Besides being stimulated by external factors, fear is also correlated by Wichí with the subject’s own physiology, in that they understand it to be a consequence of ‘faint-heartedness’ (*t’otle t’un-hit’a*). A Wichí with a firm heart (*t’otle t’un*) is protected against fear, because a firm heart prevents the will’s escape: in other words, it pre-empts the main effect of fear (loss of will). When a Wichí has to brave a crisis, he is urged to harden his heart (*t’unhat’ otle*)—i.e. to have courage and so resist the will-depriving consequences of fear.3

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2. It is conceivable that a corpse could be preserved in the desiccated soil conditions that exist during the long dry season (April–October), the time when forest communities disperse.

3. For expository reasons, the following analysis is written in the masculine gender. However, except where gender-specific categories are mentioned explicitly (‘headman’, ‘husband’, ‘father’, ‘daughter’ etc.), the feminine gender can be substituted without any difficulty. Thus, where the point of reference is a ‘Wichí’, ‘person’, ‘seer’, ‘patient’, ‘victim’ or ‘ego’, ‘he/him/his’ can equally well be read as ‘she/her/her(s)’. There is no qualitative difference in the Wichí mind between the wills of men and women—apart from the fact that after death the wills of men and women retain male and female identities.
Wichí identify the initial effect of loss of will through fear as a psychosomatic disorder whose symptoms are a change of heartbeat, a sensation of coldness, weak speech, and mental alertness (yik haati, ‘sleep goes’). Normal physiological processes are thus modified, but not pathologically impaired. Will-loss does, however, admit of degree, relative to the causal agency’s capacity to expel—and incapacitate—the subject’s will. In particularly acute cases, loss of will may result in the victim fainting, i.e. succumbing to a condition described by Wichí as being both ‘like death’ (mat chi yithl) and ‘on the verge of death’ (tot’aye chik ileyej hohnat). However, this morbid state is transitory and the victim typically recovers ‘as though there were nothing wrong with him’ (mat chi tik lecha ihi). The important point for the present purpose is that loss of will is not in itself a direct and immediate cause of death: a will-less body continues—temporarily—to function under its own momentum.

It is more the chronic concomitants of will-loss that make it a pathogenic disorder. Wichí hold that a person who loses his will is left in a defenceless state that predisposes him to infirmity—meaning, in our medical terms, that his immune system collapses. In ethnomedical terms, a person without his will is an empty shell, a walking skin (tajthlame t’oj ta ichajthli, ‘he bears only his skin’). The void inside this deserted frame is open to invasion by a (metaphysical) foreign body (cf. Napier 1993). This intrusive element is typically a dart fired into the victim by a predatory illness-spirit, which can see the recess left by the absent will and has no hesitation—or difficulty—in occupying it. As Wichí succinctly express it: ‘if I am missing my will and a pain [illness-spirit] arrives, it invades my will’s place’ (ta tai ohusek, wet, chi nam aitaj, tiyajo ohusek lewet). In short, absence of will presupposes presence of ailment. And since ‘pains’ and their weapons are ‘hot’, the victim’s heart (the place of his will) is burnt (chayo aitaj, ip’o ot’ote)---in other words, his source of physical vitality is destroyed.

The victim is unaware that he has lost his will. He is conscious, though, that he is physically indisposed and therefore ‘approaches a seer’ (thla-chute hiyawu). The seer diagnoses the patient’s condition (he can detect a will’s absence by scanning the body, which is transparent to his sight) and then performs the dual operation of extracting the alien pathogen and restoring the dislodged will. In order to do the latter, he has first to locate and retrieve the will. He therefore releases his own will into the cosmos in order to discover which god, spirit, or celestial body has abducted his patient’s essential part. Having ascertained this, the seer’s will rescues his patient’s will or negotiates with its captor(s) for its release in exchange for a ransom. The hostage will has the form of an infant. After gaining possession of it—and after healing it if it has been injured by its captor(s)—the seer’s will (either in the form of the seer himself or, if it has to fly, as a bird) carries this defenceless and harmless being back to the patient, at whose side the body of the seer has meanwhile been chanting.

Once his own will has, as it were, docked, the seer exposes the rescued will to view. Under the influence of his breath and spittle, it materializes in the palm of his hand in the form of a firefly (a natural symbol of the will’s luminosity (see
below). This the seer then reincorporates in the patient’s body: by blowing both on the (entomomorphic) will and on the patient’s chest, he causes the will to re-enter the chest. In effect, it is willed—in Wichí terms, ‘charmed’—back into place. With this rehabilitation of the will, the ailing (dis-spirited) body will be revived.

None the less, fear as a cause of will-loss is not an altogether detrimental emotion. In a controlled context it can be a positive experience. First, Wichí share the view that it is human to fear (cf. Howell 1989) and that, conversely, to be impervious to the emotion is to lack the organ in which the emotion is located (the will). (It is important to distinguish between the involuntary fearlessness that is a deficiency in ‘real people’ (hānlīq wichí) and the voluntary courage required of Wichí seers in order for them to face the terrors of esoteric reality.) A second sense in which the controlled use of fear can be of value is that it can enhance presence of the social will in an individual. If a child misbehaves—that is to say, behaves in an unsocialized manner—the parents or adult kin may shock (istun) the child (i.e. cause it to feel fear) in order to make it aware of what is unacceptable behaviour. This process of socialization is what Wichí call will-induction (hanthlusek-ej, to ‘know will’): it induces in the child the social will (moral sense, or goodwill), which is an integral part of the child’s learning to become a socially responsible adult. Loss of (individual) will thus conduces to the acquisition of (social) will.

It is time, then, to address the question of the Wichí’s social will—henceforth, for the sake of clarity, to be referred to as ‘goodwill’.

The Will and Morality

(a) Presence of will

Consciousness, or the thoughts experienced by Wichí as occurring in the head, is independent of the will and can function without its support. But, if they are willless, a Wichí’s thoughts lack the guidance they require in order to operate adequately, like our car without its driver. The Wichí will co-ordinates and gives direction to untutored consciousness—the head’s innate cognitive capacity—enabling it, for example, to solve problems by examining (tetsan) and reflecting on (tichunejthli) a question in search of knowledge and understanding. It is through the intervention of the will that the head is able to apply itself to constructive ends—both intellectual and, more importantly for the Wichí, moral.

One of the Wichí will’s characteristics is brightness: Wichí speak of it as a source of light that illuminates intellectual darkness, suffusing it with lucidity. Another of the will’s defining features is coolness. By Wichí criteria, thought is naturally anarchic and ‘hot’ (chayo). It is through presence of will (goodwill) that
this antisocial raw material is controlled and organized—converted, that is, into culturally valued, 'cool' orderliness. Having goodwill subdues unruly passions in a Wichí and induces in him the ideal state of composure (_tansek ihi_), the composure of equanimity, or freedom from disruptive emotions (distress, fear, aggressiveness, excitation etc.).

The coolness of goodwill establishes a further connection between the will and the figure of the _niyat_ (headman). A _niyat_ is a person with an aptitude for 'cool words' that can tame human wildness: his words defuse conflictual situations by extinguishing the flame of ferocity that a dispute can kindle in individuals. Similarly, a Wichí's goodwill tempers the heat of his unbridled mind. It is his source of self-control, like a personal inner headman.

Two specific mental capacities are identified by Wichí as evincing goodwill: discernment (_han-thlusek-ej/han-chowek-ej_, 'knowing will'/'knowing centre') and right-mindedness (_tichunayaj ta is-athloho_, literally 'straight thought'). Discernment is explained by Wichí as 'knowing how to think' (_ohanej otichunayaj ta ihi_): i.e. knowing how to think as a socially responsible adult rather than as an unsocialized child. Right-mindedness is expressing yourself in words and deeds that promote the social good. For the Wichí, these two expressions of goodwill imply an understanding of what the society defines as right and wrong: in other words, they are what it means for a Wichí to have a conscience. Since this conscience is founded on a consciousness of others—principally ego's elders, from whom he acquires moral sense—Wichí morality consists firstly in being attentive to the wills of others, by heeding their words. Such attentiveness, both cause and effect of goodwill, eliminates from the subject naturally antisocial forms of behaviour and so fosters harmonious relations with others—which is the basic principle of social responsibility among the Wichí.

Given these restraints on the self in favour of the other(s), it is not surprising that obedience is an important feature of Wichí moral sense or goodwill: children should obey their parents, a daughter should not go against her father's wishes in her choice of a marriage partner, a son-in-law should be subordinate (_iwo-wuk-a_) to his wife's father. Such structures do not entail a complete denial of individual freedom: a girl can choose her own husband and refuse one recommended by her father; an uxorilocal husband's life is not ruled by his affines—his bride-service, for example, is a step towards his becoming an independent head of family himself. For Wichí, dominance is not desired—to subjugate a person would be like depriving him of his will, which is a form of homicide. Instead, they value complementarity, whereby decisions are made, and actions taken, by mutual consent between self-determining individuals (whose wills are their own, even though they are amenable to influence by other wills and to this extent, therefore, socially formed). Structures of authority and obedience represent moral parameters that it is wrong to cross—in either direction: excessive authority is as wrong, by Wichí standards, as disobedience. They are structures that mark the boundary between social responsibility and social irresponsibility, presence or absence of goodwill.
(b) Absence of will

Just as presence of goodwill (the social will) is apparent from socially responsible conduct—discernment and right-mindedness—its absence manifests itself in *amukweyaj*, asocial behaviour. To lack goodwill is to be centre-less (*naj-lechowej-a*); it is to be like a community without a central headman, lacking the agency that orders the thoughts, words, and actions of the body politic. It is to be divested of the Wichí cultural persona and to revert to natural man, the enemy of society.

The psychological corollaries of moral willlessness—*la pensée sauvage* as understood by Wichí—are the inverse of the mental capacities associated with goodwill: thoughtlessness (*tichunayaj ihi-hit’a*), wrong-headedness (*tichunayaj ta is-hit’a athlotho*, ‘devious thought’), lack of discernment (*han-hit’a-thlusek-ej/haniyejtaq han-chowek-ej*), foolhardiness (*iik nowai*) and, above all, aggressiveness (*fwitseyaj*). These cognitive deficiencies can be summarized as deficiencies in respect either of rationality or of self-control (i.e. undisciplined—‘will-less’—thoughts and emotions). They translate into forms of conduct that Wichí classify as social malpractices (*leqey ta niisä*), such as antagonism towards or derision of others, deceit, theft, adultery and wanton violence. Absence of goodwill thus amounts to a lack of moral sense, an ignorance of or disregard for the Wichí’s rudimentary principle of social responsibility, which, as already explained, is to suppress the savage in oneself (i.e. the unsoeialized ego) in order to avert others’ animosity (by not unduly inflicting pain on them).

The Wichí will is an innate virtuality of the person, but it requires fashioning by the community in order for the person to be able to belong to the community. Wichí society sustains itself by forming the wills of its new members—which is to say, by educating them to be individuals with goodwill (‘presence of will’). A child who behaves in an unsocialized manner, who shows a lack of goodwill (‘absence of will’), will be corrected—and this discipline is part of the process of socialization, of inducing goodwill (see above, with reference to fear).

Wichí speak, perhaps tendentiously, of the possibility of pathological moral willlessness in individuals who fail to be socialized, who never acquire goodwill. The concomitant of their not becoming social beings is that they become antisocial beings: they are made members of the society of Ahattaj, ‘Great Soul [of the dead]’. Ahattaj is characterized as aggressiveness incarnate (*ofwitseyaj t’isan*, ‘the embodiment of aggressiveness’) and, as such, represents the devil in Wichí thought, which views aggressiveness as the cardinal sin in human society. (‘Aggressiveness’ here means natural savagery—impulsive use of violence—as

4. The Piaroa of Venezuela have a similar system of ideas interlinking their moral philosophy and their theory of the person. They understand social continuity to be inseparably related to social tranquillity, which depends on individual tranquillity. Individual tranquillity is achieved through self-control, itself a function of the will (*ta’kwakomena*), which ‘tames’, ‘domesticates’, ‘masters’ and ‘controls’ the ‘unsocial, wild...forces’ of the self, such as desires and emotions (Overing 1988).
distinct from rational, retaliatory acts of aggression, which are a legitimate, cultural response to hostilities of the first kind.) Ahattaj recruits humans to do its work of destruction. The type of person it ‘likes’ (ihumin) and chooses as an agent is someone whom it recognizes as having ‘devious thought’ (is-hit'a-athloho letichunayaj), i.e. someone not in possession of his goodwill. It then turns the person into one of its own kind by appropriating his dispossessed will, either adopting it as a son (yen-thlos-a) or devouring it (tuj ethl lehusek). A seer can intercede with Great Soul in an attempt to save the person’s will—if it has not already been devoured (and if the person has not already been dealt with by the community).

Goodwill, or presence of will in its social guise, thus comes to be a precondition of sociality. By immunizing a Wichí against possession by the cultural devil of aggressiveness—who cannot gain hold of a well-instated social will (i.e. a socialized ego)—it makes his membership of the social group possible.

Conclusion

My conclusion is, not surprisingly, that presence of will is, for the Wichí, paradigmatic both of existential and of cultural order. Individual and social well-being both require the avoidance of its opposite—absence of will—which is paradigmatic of potential disorder, at both levels. During a Wichí’s lifetime, loss of his innate physiological will (principally through fear) endangers the individual himself. His lack of a social—moral will endangers the community. Both physical health and moral sense are premised on willfulness, in both Wichí senses of the term, namely, having both the instinctual will to be and also goodwill.

The Wichí will is thus at the interface between the individual and society, because both are interested in its possession and use. It interests the individual, to whom it naturally belongs, because its absence undermines his bodily existence. And it interests society (the social group that informs the adult individual’s will and to which this, therefore, culturally belongs) because its absence in the individual—i.e. its failure to receive the mark of society—undermines corporate community existence.

References


In addition to his wide-ranging scholarly interests, Andrew Duff-Cooper had a lively concern for the values of equality and liberty that have always informed the best anthropology. This was no mere lip-service by the intellectual in him: it shaped both the way he chose to live and the regard he showed for others in his personal relationships. He was, of course, too much of a scholar to allow these values to intrude crassly into his academic writings. None the less, when it came to the Balinese of Lombok, whom he lived with and studied for many years, he was ever keen to stress that, for them, equality was ultimately paramount. Although social divisions, hierarchies and categorical distinctions could certainly be found in their life and thought, they considered these things to be ultimately superficial and insignificant when compared with the common and collective humanity they all shared. Furthermore, their sense of equality was not linked to ideals of individualism and self-sufficiency, as in the West, but to ones of interdependence and mutual support (see, for example, Duff-Cooper 1985: 159, 161). He perhaps felt it especially necessary to drive the point home in view of the fact that the Balinese are counted among those Indonesian societies that have adopted some semblance of Indian caste society into their scheme of values.

Caste, as is well known, entails a very microscopic form of hierarchy, one which Louis Dumont (e.g. 1986) has regularly opposed to the individualism and egalitarianism of the West. These Western values often appear in a somewhat unfavourable light in Dumont’s work, and this, together with his insistence on the unavoidability of hierarchy, has led many to wonder where his own sympathies really lie. Writing in 1985 for Contexts and Levels (Barnes, de Coppet and Parkin...
It is well known that Dumont's view of hierarchy is more than simply a matter of social stratification, though this is obviously included (see his 1986: chs. 8 and 9, for particularly succinct statements). Rather, it entails the asymmetry, the difference in value, that necessarily, in Dumont's view, accompanies any differentiation—male-female, for example, or right-left, or white-black. This means that true equality depends crucially on the refusal to recognize difference. This approach is theoretically more elaborate than the conventional one that treats such oppositions as simply asymmetric, which Dumont associates especially with Needham (e.g. his (ed.) 1973). There has no doubt been much mutual misunderstanding of the two positions, but for Dumont the latter approach is inadequate because differentiation is initially seen as symmetric, the asymmetry being added on only subsequently. In fact, he says, differentiation and valuing form a single operation, not a two-stage process. Furthermore, the poles are not simply asymmetric in value but otherwise comparable. Together they form a universe of discourse of a sort that is normally represented by the superior pole alone, and this pole 'encompasses its contrary'. The result is what Dumont refers to as a 'hierarchical opposition'.

One of the handiest examples is 'man-woman' in the English language: 'man' is opposed to 'woman', of course, but it can also stand for both in contexts where the meaning refers to the whole of humanity, in which case it 'encompasses' the term 'woman'. Here, humanity stands for the whole to which both terms refer in different ways, this being another important aspect of the Dumontian approach. Evans-Pritchard’s work on the Nuer provides another example, one that involves right and left. The spear held by the right hand at the calling out of ox names is an extension of that hand and as such represents the whole person, and even the
clan to which he belongs. Right is also opposed to left, of course, but it is not a simple opposition—right is both part (opposed to left) and whole (including left) (see Dumont 1986: 228–9). Perhaps the best-known and most discussed example in Dumont's inventory is the opposition between Brahman and Kshatriya in India, in which the Brahman stands for the whole ideology but submits to the Kshatriya (representative of the royal function, and therefore of power) in certain situations that are, however, themselves subordinate overall (see especially Dumont 1972). Indeed, in certain contexts, or in Dumontian terms 'levels' of the ideology the subordinate pole regularly but temporarily becomes superordinate. In fact, it is only at such levels that the subordinate pole is even able to manifest itself.1

Dumont has not been left in isolation regarding this innovation. A significant if now fragmented group of his supporters in Paris has sought to develop these ideas in various ways, especially in turning hierarchical opposition into a dynamic device in the analysis of ritual. Their work can, of course, like almost any other, be criticized on epistemological grounds. What has particularly drawn criticism, however, is their—and Dumont's—insistence that this view of hierarchy applies to any and every asymmetric dyad, without exception. A number of the papers in Contexts and Levels took issue with this (Forth 1985: 114–15; Duff-Cooper 1985: 155, 163; Howell 1985: 169). Signe Howell, for example, could find little use for Dumont's ideas in her fieldwork among the Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia, a society in which, she says, dyadic asymmetry manifests itself but rarely. Contra Dumont, the recognition of difference does not necessarily entail attributing a value, and therefore equality necessarily results. Indeed, equality is the dominant difference in value here, although in crises, such as those caused by crossing categorical boundaries (eating two sorts of meat at the same meal, for example), some oppositions become value-laden, i.e. hierarchy is emphasized so as to return to order. Of course, a Dumontian would be quick to find another hierarchical opposition here, one in which equality is opposed to hierarchy and is the encompassing pole.

Duff-Cooper takes a broadly similar line to Howell's in his paper in the same volume. The essence of his comments (especially 1985: 155) is that while Dumont, in seeing caste as a strictly Indian phenomenon, concedes no more than 'quasi-caste' to the Balinese and Javanese, his own obsession with hierarchy none the less leads him to deny them, and anyone else outside the West, any true sense of equality. Duff-Cooper ends his paper by suggesting (ibid.: 163) that among the Balinese, as among the Chewong, equality is stressed as a value much as hierarchy is in Dumont's India. In a later unpublished paper, he again takes issue with the idea of the necessity of hierarchy and asymmetry against not only Dumont, but also James Boon, David Parkin and Leo Howe (Duff-Cooper no date: 3-4). He repeatedly stresses that whatever the differences of age, gender, genealogical

1. These subordinate levels do not involve encompassment, so the reversal between levels is not a simple one. Levels are not, for the Dumontian, the same as contexts, but that cannot be gone into here. See Tcherkézoff (forthcoming) on both these points.
proximity or even estate (warna) among the Balinese, all people in the village or kin group are fundamentally the same: ‘for most practical purposes...none of these distinctions are of importance...though they may once have been.... They are there to be drawn on if the need to differentiate arises’ (ibid.: 12). The ideal of equality is often expressed among the Balinese through an idiom of brotherhood: ‘disparity in people’s actual ages...may again simply be registered as difference, and “fraternity” hold among people of very disparate ages’ (ibid.: 27). And further, ‘it is not that these differences are muted and dampened: they do not exist among the entities that constitute these sets of “brothers”’ (ibid.: 14); ‘the members of such sets...are differentiated one from another as little as possible’ (ibid.: 15). More generally, ‘cultural differences will probably largely remain: it would be absurd to try to eliminate these. But they should be what “we” call Manichean differences, in which opposites or differences are equally valued...all are different but not differentially evaluated’ (ibid.: 27).2

Such statements remind one of the disclaimers that the English of all classes are inclined to make, to the effect that class does not matter in the last resort, disclaimers in which the denial points directly to its own contradiction. These are often produced to steer away the naïve and over-inquisitive foreigner from his ready assumption that English society is hopelessly class-ridden. Of course, as in most debates the truth lies somewhere in between. Power in England has not been the exclusive preserve of the monarchy or aristocracy for a long time, yet the legal distinctions still remain, are ceremonially marked in certain contexts and are sometimes even of practical importance. Perhaps more significantly today, despite the egalitarian veneer provided by universal suffrage, most effective political and economic power continues to remain in the hands of an identifiable middle class, admittedly a class that co-opts quite freely from both above and below, but a class none the less.

Historians have long been aware of the problem posed by protests against reality being disguised as or mistaken for representations of it. We might imagine an activist’s statement to the effect that all men are equal, regardless of the colour of their skin, being taken by a future historian as evidence for the equality of races in, say, South Africa under apartheid.3 But there is also the danger of the anthropologist taking the statements of his or her informants as the sole reality:

2. Copies of this paper are among those deposited, at the author’s request, at the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, University of Leiden, and at the University of Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. Similar comments appear in a still more recent paper (Duff-Copper 1993), which appeared too recently for detailed discussion here.

3. Compare Bernard Lewis (1971: 103) on the ‘illogical assumption that the reprobation of prejudice in a society proves its absence. In fact, of course, it proves its presence.’ I suspect that the often-repeated jibes against ‘Victorian hypocrisy’ might be dismissed for a similar reason. Tillyard (1943) blames this phenomenon for what he considers to be the falsity of conventional interpretations of Elizabethan society and thought. Hocart also warns us against it on occasion (e.g. 1970: 13, 68, 201).
again, a protest or a disclaimer can often suspend, distort or veil the truth. There are, of course, ways of handling this epistemologically, but first it has to be recognized for what it is; and often it is not. Distinctions may indeed lie dormant, being glossed over as insignificant, especially in conversations with an outsider; but for Dumont they do not exist without ultimate purpose, a purpose that is normally discriminatory in intent.

Such comments have not endeared Dumont to his colleagues, and, as already noted, Duff-Cooper was only one among many critics. These criticisms have tended to shift easily from the scholarly to the moral. Duff-Cooper’s erstwhile supervisor, Rodney Needham, has made a much more forthright attack on Dumont’s view of hierarchy on grounds involving matters of principle as well as epistemology, saying of Dumont at one point (1987: 144): ‘he is clearly against egalitarianism and individualism, as social ideals, and he is for hierarchy and totality’. Among other detractors, Berreman (1971), André Beteille (1986) and Keith Hart (1987) all take a similar line, one in which reasoned argument threatens to become overshadowed by their obvious exasperation at Dumont’s obtuseness in apparently preferring hierarchy to equality as the ideal that ought to be shaping social life. Dumont’s claim that even when anthropologists recognize hierarchy they do not fully understand it, because their own tradition seeks to suppress it wherever possible, seems to have been fully vindicated by some of the very reactions it has stimulated subsequently. And what for him is largely a question of avoiding inconvenient preconceptions often becomes for his adversaries a matter of temperament (cf. Needham 1987).

If Dumont sometimes seems to extol hierarchy above equality, it is simply because it is better able to accommodate conflict, to which it is clearly an alternative, if not actually preferable (see his 1986: 267). It is not that caste, for instance, is itself free from conflict; but disputes centre around the ranking of particular castes more than around the existence of caste itself. Although Dumont’s is not a simple consensus model, it does suggest that fundamental caste values are accepted throughout the hierarchy in India (Dumont 1957: 18; see also Moffat 1979, Fuller 1988). By being thus able to accommodate difference, caste is in fact more tolerant than the egalitarianism of the West: ‘while the West, under the logic of contradiction, approves or excludes, traditional India under the logic of encompassing attributes a rank’ (Dumont 1971: 76). In crude terms, the famous tolerance of Hinduism is little more than a philosophy of ‘a place for everyone, and everyone in their place’: despite all the prescriptions, within certain limits one can act as one pleases, at the cost, possibly, of being accorded an irremediably low status by the society as a whole. Moreover, a hierarchical order is infinitely extendable and can accept new ranks into it, as the extreme micro-differentiation of the caste system shows us.
Dumont’s view of Western egalitarianism, on the other hand, seems to be one that stresses not so much equal rights for all as equality in those respects that form group identity—an equality of qualities rather than of rights, so to speak, though all with the first also enjoy the second. In other words, those that meet the criteria are accepted, and treated as equals through the principle of the ignoring of difference; those that do not are rejected, being defined as qualitatively different. This is presumably why Dumont spends so much time talking about racism, in which race is seen as being the qualitative difference *par excellence*; that is, it is completely irremovable. As long as this difference continues to be recognized, there is no way of accommodating it without introducing hierarchy—which in itself violates the principle of equality. Hence the ‘separate but equal’ slogan is modern in the sense of being post-hierarchical, but still discriminatory. While caste, precisely because it is hierarchical, can integrate as well as separate, racism can only separate if it is to be able to discriminate and still remain within an egalitarian milieu.

Maybe here we find a reason why democracies, from ancient Athens to the modern United States, tend to ditch their democratic and freedom-loving principles as soon as they begin to expand overseas. This paradoxical nexus certainly characterized the recent colonial period. One aspect of the world’s current attempts to overcome this legacy are the direct claims of all ethnicities for equal access to political and economic power, claims that increasingly threaten the existence of many nation states and are rapidly replacing such criteria as merit or democracy as the goals of political action (see Tambiah 1989). A related but converse aspect, especially in Africa, has been the attempt to suppress tribalism in favour of identity with the post-imperial but multi-ethnic state. A third, identified recently by de Coppet (1990: 143–4) in developing an earlier point of Mauss’s, is the modern stress on human rights, which refers the individual directly to the generality of humankind without the society to which he or she belongs, and which lies in between, being involved. Indeed, the notion of human rights explicitly blinds itself to all social, cultural, national or racial peculiarities.

The success of such trends is piecemeal at best. Generally, however, we may say that the world is moving not back towards hierarchy but forward towards widening still further the criteria of equality by eliminating any remaining recognition of difference. The discourse of the international bureaucracy, in its relentless search for common ground, glosses over cultural differences as much as possible. And as far as race is concerned, it is rapidly becoming *de rigueur* not to allude to it at all, as the world strives to move beyond equality as Dumont sees it.
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no date. A Balinese Conception for Attaining the 'Full Life' from Western Lombok. (Typescript. See note 2 above.)


HUICHOL PRAYER: IMAGE AND WORD IN SACRED COMMUNICATION

ANTHONY SHELTON

How can we make any progress in the understanding of cultures, ancient or modern, if we persist in dividing what the people join and in joining what they keep apart?

Hocart (1970a: 23)

This essay has three objectives. First, to present the available data on the Huichol understanding of the relationship between words and images. Second, to enumerate a formal typology of the purposes of prayer so as to better enable comparisons to be made with other societies. Third, to propose that far from being an expression of subjection and resignation to a higher force, as found in both Christian and materialist interpretations, prayer among the Huichol is an active interjection that seeks to control nature as part of a more pervasive endeavour that Hocart (1970a: 52) has called the ‘quest for life’. Because of its focus on key metaphysical concerns and principles, prayer can provide access to the central axiomatic issues and preoccupations of certain types of cultures and is capable, therefore, of illuminating great swathes of social life.

Fieldwork among the Huichol was carried out between January 1979 and March 1980 under a grant from the Social Science Research Council. All the prayers quoted in this paper were collected by R. Mata Torres and published in the works quoted in the references. I am responsible for the translations from Mata Torres 1974 and 1980.
Andrew Duff-Cooper wrote that one of the objectives of his *Essay in Balinese Aesthetics* was 'to contribute in a very small way to the social anthropological tradition which holds it is the job of social anthropology, in the first place at least, to find out what the people in question do and what they say about what they do' (Duff-Cooper 1984: 2). This concern with indigenous exegesis and the holistic study of society was one of the hallmarks of Andrew's anthropology (see e.g. Duff-Cooper 1984: 34–6; 1986a: 224–5; 1986b: 165). Given these recurring concerns, and Andrew's own comments and discussions on an earlier unpublished version of this paper, I hope that this essay will seem an appropriate contribution to this Memorial Issue.

*Words and Images*

The *OED* defines prayer as 'a short and humble request to God or to an object of worship; a supplication, petition, or thanksgiving, usually expressed in words...a formula appointed for or used in praying...a religious observance, public or private, of which prayer to God forms a principal part; a form of divine service'. In this definition prayer is distinguished by four principal characteristics: (1) it is a form of communication; (2) it is directed from the world of men to the world of God or the sacred; (3) the content of the communication expresses adoration, supplication, petition or gratitude; and (4) prayer may or may not form part of a more comprehensive service incorporating additional forms of ritual speech and actions.

Even early on in the anthropological literature such a Christian-centred definition had constricting results, leading to the imposition of a Western typology that devalued the power and instrumentality of prayer by distinguishing it from spells. Codrington (1891: 145) was forced to minimize the prevalence of prayer in Melanesia because many supernatural addresses lacked a formal character and were believed to be efficacious. Nevertheless, despite this strict definition, many of the remaining examples of prayer discussed in *The Melanesians* all had clear instrumental ends. Hocart (1970a [1952]: 48–9) acknowledged that prayer often had more practical motivations closely tied to the moral welfare and material benefit of the community. In Fiji, he reported, prayers were said 'for rain, fair weather, in time of dearth and famine, in time of war and tumults, plague or sickness' (Hocart 1970b [1936]: 73). Nevertheless, like Codrington, Hocart chose to see Vedic prayers as spells because they were not simply requests for assistance or statements of gratitude or reverence, but expressions of creative force that 'put vigour into the gods and the world' (ibid.: 66–7). This startlingly modern view has been adopted, among others, by Annette Weiner (1983: 702), who similarly interprets Trobriand spells as a means of impregnating objects and activating their
latent qualities. Valid as this undoubtedly is, the relationship between prayer and spells remains ambiguous.

Jan van Baal (1971: 264) has criticized the use of the Christian notion of prayer with its emphasis on subjection and piety, to describe non-Western addresses that are intended as direct interventions in the world. Prayers, he argues, are not ‘man-made devices but divine gifts, products of revelation which may and must be used as means to ends’ (ibid.). In many societies, including the Huichol, prayers are similar to spells in their intention to intervene in the world, and as van Baal reminds us, whatever distinction remains may be limited to the relative certainty of their outcome (ibid.). Consequently, before it can begin to become a useful analytical category for comparison, the standard English definition of prayer should be enlarged to include at least three further criteria: (1) prayer may possess a supernatural efficaciousness capable of changing some aspect of the world; (2) unlike other forms of communication, prayer is often credited with having a supernatural origin; and (3) prayer may involve deeply felt sentiments and convictions that consequently make it a potentially highly emotive form of enunciation.

Among the Huichol, prayer is not limited to oral forms of communication. The priority the West reserves for words is not shared by the Huichol. Linguistic enunciation, by itself, may even be considered inadequate to communicate with the gods, and needs to be accompanied, or at times even substituted by, other devotional acts. Similarly, the response of the deities avoids language altogether and is transmitted through dreams or visions. The priority given to non-linguistic forms of communication is reiterated in Huichol myth which describes how in pre-creation times the saints were mute and prayers had to be made through pictures painted on magical boards:

Kauyumarie was painting prayers that he wished granted by the great gods. With beads and coloured wool placed in the wax on the board, he painted...[list of animals]. All the animals, hens, turkeys, and everything else in all colors he painted. The colored rocks of the five points were represented in the painting. Then Kauyumarie took out of his god house a branding-iron and pressed it against the board. An impression of Jesus Christ was left in colors. Thus also did he make Guadalupe and all the other saints. Finally he painted the Sun and the animals of the Sun—the tiger and the eagle. (Zingg no date: 316)

After completing the magical paintings (itari), the Sun allowed Kauyumarie to voice prayer on behalf of his people. In this account, images are considered older and more important vehicles of prayer than the recitation of words.

Conversely, linguistic formulas seem to be regarded as more important in the context of the creation and operation of the non-Huichol world, particularly the

1. Kauyumarie is a sacred deer-person. Both culture hero and trickster, he acts as a messenger or intermediary between the Huichol and their gods.
world inhabited by the Mexicans, Americans and Europeans. In this context, words are invested with an extraordinary importance and are believed to possess exceptional power. In the same corpus of myths, the act of naming itself brings the non-Huichol world into existence (see Shelton 1988: 49):

As Santo Cristo left he met the Mexicans. They were planting with sticks but nothing grew. He greeted them and talked with them. They had no names and were, therefore, still of the devil. They said, ‘If you know all this from our Tata, the Sun, bless this field so it will grow. Bless us also for our good health.’ He said, ‘I name this field the planting.... Let us see what comes up here.’ If he was from Tata Sun, he could make the sign of the cross in the same fashion as he had blessed the other people. Santo Cristo did this, and changed the names of things from grass to oxen, plow, straps, yoke, etc. Then he gave the Mexican some corn seed and told him to plant it. He went on until he saw a Mexican wasting time by planting grass-like squash seed. After blessing the grass he named it squash. (Zieg no date: 327)

The myth continues with a long list of fruit and vegetables, followed by tools, fields, irrigation ditches, houses, pottery, and so on, named and therefore created by Santo Cristo. Santo Cristo’s words are invested with a particular magical property. Naming is synonymous with blessing and is a generative act responsible for the creation of the non-Huichol world. At first, then, it appears that the powerful nature of words is to the non-Huichol world what the power of images is to the Huichol.

Nevertheless, despite this apparent exception to the importance of non-linguistic forms of communication, the power of spoken language, even when it is framed and restricted to the peripheral world, is still subordinated to older, divinely inspired modes of communication that depend on dreams, visions and images. Linguistic competence is based on a complex theory of reality that explains the deeper importance of non-material existence and older non-linguistic forms of communication (see Shelton 1992: 229–35). The sacred is not restricted to particular areas of life or associated with specific and limited acts, it pervades the whole of Huichol existence. Materials that are transacted and manipulated in everyday life, the routine activities connected with the home, field and community, ensure a continual and enduring relationship between the Huichol and their deities. Consequently, prayer does not stand alone as a solitary bridge between the human community and the divine. The world itself is thought to have been established by the self-sacrifice of the ancestral deities, resulting in their transformation into the local flora and topography. Through sacrifice, their non-material beings separated from their physical bodies, which became the earth, mountains, water, vegetation, sun, moon and stars. The Huichol universe is divided into material manifestations of the deities and ephemeral forms that exist as essences.

There are ample means and occasions for transmitting sacred knowledge between generations. The deities are invoked at birth, baptism, naming, curing and mortuary ceremonies, but complex mythological events are mainly narrated during
agricultural ceremonies. These narratives often rely on complex metaphors that are not always or even widely understood (Mata Torres 1974: 3). Such occasions include dramatic episodes and mimed performances that create images that guide one through the basis of religion. However, understanding and revelation are thought to result not through oral knowledge but through experience gained by devotional acts, pilgrimage, weaving and solitary introspection with the help of the divine messenger Kauyumarie or an animal intermediary.

In Huichol, prayer is called *nenevieri*, derived from *neni*, tongue or speech, and *iyari*, meaning heart or memory. *Nenevieri* means literally to speak with the heart. *Iyari* is the very basis for communication and revelation of the divine constitution of the world. *Iyari* is an immaterial quality made up of the memories or central truths that were inherited from the ancestors. Before the creation of the earth, in a solid world composed of mountain, the ancestral deities communicated through a sort of telepathy. Their thoughts were bounced off the mountain top and reflected back to their recipients (Negrin 1977: 79). The mountain is identified with Tatei Werika Wimari who, after the earth was created, was transformed into the solar eagle guarding the central region of the sky. She is credited with collecting together the thoughts of the deities and preserving them for future generations (ibid.). Tatei Werika Wimari is invoked at the baptism of Huichol children and is said to implant *iyari* into their young bodies. While *iyari* is planted into all children either at birth or baptism, it remains dormant and inactive unless developed and nurtured at the expense of the physical needs of the body. Pilgrimage, with its associated fasts, restrictions on drink, sexual abstinence and physical exertion, provides the technique, also inherited from the deities, to activate *iyari* and open the channel between men and ancestors that is essential for the maintenance and well-being of the Huichol world. In Huichol thought, *iyari* provides the source of revelation. Prayer does not rest on the ability to simply recite narrative formulaically. Its efficacy partly depends on the devotion of the supplicant who, without an active *iyari*, is ineffectual.

Religious devotion is measured by a number of indices. Generally, it is determined by the commitment an individual demonstrates in following the ideal path of life established by the deities. This implies making offerings, weaving, participation in and sponsorship of rituals, observation of appropriate behaviour and continuing the work of creation begun by the deities. A person may attain the grade of shaman, *mara'akame* (plural, *mara'akata*) after making a minimum of five pilgrimages to Wirikuta, a desert plateau in San Luis Potosí, but religious knowledge can be increased by making additional pilgrimages and by performing further acts of devotion. Pilgrimage deepens the relationship with the divinities and increases the individual’s understanding of their nature and work, while successively developing their personal *iyari*. The more *iyari* is developed, the greater will be the efficacy of the individual’s prayer.

Non-linguistic modes of prayer need to be guided by *iyari*. The most prominent of these are offerings (see Shelton 1992: 211–18) and, among women, such devotional acts as weaving. Offerings are prepared by individuals under the
supervision of the *mara’akata*. They are made for religious ceremonies, for prestations at domestic shrines and for local and distant pilgrimage sites associated with particular deities. Offerings are made to fulfil a personal obligation to care for and respect the deities, in return for which the devotee expects to receive good fortune or redress of an adverse situation or condition:

> We hope for many favours from you, we hope that each of us will receive from your hands the gift of knowledge, from your arrow, power, and from your candle, enlightenment. We hope that each of us may bring to you that which we obtained from you. (Mata Torres 1980: 73)

Offerings include votive bowls, ceremonial arrows, candles, foodstuffs, cigarettes and the sacrifice of livestock. Ceremonial arrows are sometimes attached to coloured miniature woven ‘mats’ (*itari*), decorated with animal and geometrical designs that identify the deity for whom they are intended and the reason for the supplication (see Shelton 1992: 214, fig. 9.2). Votive bowls are a very old form of offering, used at least from the eighteenth century when they were decorated with abalone and turquoise (see Navarro 1786). The insides of modern Huichol bowls are decorated with wax, beads, coins, grains of corn or yarns, sometimes representing the animals associated with the deity to whom the bowl is dedicated (Shelton 1992: 215, fig. 9.3). The sexual symbolism of bowls and arrows is obvious, and the identification of bowls with the womb and earth is explicit. These sexual connotations are entirely appropriate given that by far the greatest number of supplications are for agricultural and personal fertility and the health and well-being of family members.

*Style of Enunciation*

Prayer is offered both collectively and individually. The *mara’akame* officiates on important occasions, such as rituals connected with the round of agricultural ceremonies, those designed to promote harmonious relations between deities and between deities and people, as well as at personal rites of incorporation, crisis and dispatch. The recitation of prayers is not restricted to sacred sites. While temples, churches, shrines and ceremonial plazas often provide the stage for ritual events, prayers may also be said in domestic compounds and fields, or in the countryside.

Prayers made during agricultural ceremonies are part of a complex orchestration of ritual actions destined to gain a favourable resolution of natural phenomena that will benefit the whole community. They open with a fairly fixed formula through which the *mara’akame* attracts the attention of the deities to hear his entreaty. This may sometimes include references to their personal exploits during pre-creation times:
They will find our faces here. Our sacred arrows are covered with flowers. Our arrows have flowered like the mountains. The sacred mountain is covered with white flowers; is covered with divine flowers, divine like the place where you stayed, my gods. See, my gods, between the fields everything has sprouted anew. See that between the mountains everything has sprouted anew. Your sacred plants have also sprouted. What has been born for you is for us life. See what we have brought and offer because we believe that until now it is the best that you have given us.

My gods that exist in all the reaches, listen closely to our song. My gods that live in the place of the sacred deer, listen to our song in all the reaches. Our bowl has remained among you, my gods. And there it will remain as long as you arrange it. It will follow the darkness of my gods. It will follow the life of my gods. It will follow our darkness. It will follow our life. The gods that we find over there will drink the water that they need. In our bowl they will find the sacred flower, the flower of the gods, and we will call this place, the place of the water of the divine flowers. (Mata Torres 1974: 21)

The recitation will then remind the gods of the devotion they receive:

My gods that live in all the reaches, we have made new arrows, we have made new offerings. We will take them to the place of the sacred eagles, we will take them to the luxuriant place, we will take them to the place that supports the staffs, we will take them to the place of the red clouds, we will take them to the place of songs. See my gods that which you have said, that which you have asked or commanded, we have always fulfilled. (Ibid.: 22)

Finally, the recitation requests favour:

My gods, take our offerings in your hands and bless our descendants so that they can do the same as ourselves. Take in your hands our offerings and we will have no worries. Those of us who are here may perhaps soon have to leave. We will wash ourselves in the sacred waters, we will wash ourselves at the sacred places, we will wash ourselves in the place of the gods. (Ibid.: 24–25)

The community-based ceremonies include long dramatic recitations of ancestral histories recounting the creation and the events that predated the present world and on which the relationship between the living and the deities are based. The mara’akame usually elaborates on the central episodes of the narrative using his personal experience. Frequently he incorporates modern themes and examples into the recitation. The dramatic element is heightened by the use of dialogue in which the orator himself enters into conversation with different deities (cf. Preuss 1932: 450). These recitations may continue throughout the night, beginning after dark and lasting until sunrise, and may be repeated for up to five nights during the ceremony. The mara’akame is usually accompanied by two junior mara’akata, seated at either side of him. They may repeat the few final lines of a recitation and also take over while the principal mara’akame takes a rest from time to time.
The *mara’akame* accompanies the Huichol throughout their lives. As Mata Torres (1980: 21) succinctly writes, ‘he helps the mother so the baby will be born well; he baptizes it and initiates it into the mystery of the gods; he unites man and woman in marriage; he conducts the soul of the dead to its final abode’. In addition, he diagnoses and cures sickness and protects the individual from witchcraft. In all these roles he acts as the intermediary of the deities whose efficacy depends on the extent of his sacred knowledge and oratorical skills in addressing them.

**Objectives of Prayer**

Among the Huichol prayer can have at least eight closely related objectives:

1. To maintain concord between the deities and prevent their potential mutual antagonism endangering their creation. Zingg was the first to note that Huichol deities could be divided between the pre-eminently female deities of the wet season period and the male solar-related deities associated with the dry season. In Huichol myth these categories are frequently in competition, occasioning great cataclysms that are thought to have been responsible for the destruction of former creations (Shelton 1990: 156–7). Huichol prayer and offerings venerate both categories of deities, and by appeasing their mutual jealousy and rivalry assure the harmonious bipartition of the agricultural year that is necessary for good crops:

   With the devotion that lights our souls, we deposit our offerings. Behold them my gods of the north, those of the south, those of the east and those of the West. Here is your candle, light of our lives. Here are the crosses, symbol of the paths. Here is the fruit obtained by the rain you sent us. Here are our faces and all the other offerings we bring you, without thinking where or when our story will end, without knowing what end Wirikuta will have, cradle of the deities, without knowing what the way will be like, so many times retravelled, without knowing what your attitude will be when everything is finished.

   We hope that you are never destroyed. We hope that your cradle will remain forever inviolate. We hope that our offerings will remain with you to the end of time. We hope that your crown will shine eternally with the same brilliance and that the memory of you will animate all who inhabit this world. (Mata Torres 1980: 73)

2. Prayer is used to renew the contract between the Huichol and their deities and profess compliance with their mutual obligations. The existence of both the deities and the Huichol is dependent on the recognition of the reciprocal relations between them. In exchange for food and health, which the gods provide, the Huichol must,
in turn, sustain the deities with offerings. Their mutual existence is therefore dependent on reciprocal provision of sustenance:

Life, my gods, that on which we depend and on which our ancestors depended, continues and will always continue for all those that descend from us. The candle, the same light, will continue century for century illuminating the path and the thought of each person and each community. From the sacred candle our life was born. My gods, you who decide our end, do not permit that I am extinguished, do not let me disappear. The arrow, sacred symbol, weapon of the gods and divine offering, see it today. Nobody but nobody has stained the honour that it represents. Nobody but nobody has made it suffer change through time. It exists as you left it. It has the same figures and is venerated following the custom of our ancestors. The cane of Nakawé, the greatest goddess, the mother of the rains, the queen of goodness and our grandmother, is in its place. We invoke her in the midst of our anguish, we invoke her in the midst of our solitude. The staff, the people's eternal symbol of power, the work of the gods that inhabit all the reaches, we respect and venerate. Staff of Tseriekame, of Tunuwame and of Marrakuarfi, consider the honour bestowed on you that has forever lasted to the present. Look to the above, towards the centre, towards below, towards the right and towards the left, the people applaud you, the people respect you. The sacred offerings are taken to the gods. Your mission is great and favourable to us, those with such brilliance, to whom we make our offerings. My gods, in you we place our lives, the life that budded from you. (Mata Torres 1974: 41)

(3) At baptism, prayer extends this fundamental contract by incorporating newborn children into Huichol society, thereby providing them with the protection of the deities. A prayer recited at a baptismal ceremony opens with the familiar reassurances, before presenting the new-born baby to the deities:

My god, Tatei Haramara [Western Rain Mother], all my existing gods, see how everything you motivated, continues existing. Messenger of the gods, the message of rain, all the gods are attentive to that which you created and which today belongs to us and will never be extinguished. Your heart, be at peace, our elder brother, Ututawi, be at peace, our elder brothers, always sustain this which is our life. Do not worry about anything, my gods, everything will be done as you arranged, as you said. The Guardians of the gods, the Namakora, said thus. The customs will be the same at the end of time, our lives will be the same though all will be erased, though all will end. In the sacred arrow you will find that nothing has ended, that the death of some has in no way changed what you established. The sacred arrow will be lifted behind the mountain, at the foot of the sacred mountain. We implore our great grandfather gods, we implore Werrikua, the Sun, our great grandfather. You, my gods, be assured that everything will continue as it has until now. Our great grandfather Tseriekame, Witseteiwari, Turamukame, Kuyuaneneme and Türra-Teiwari, once again I am in your presence, I who mean nothing, I who am nobody. I, with your help, baptize this new being who comes to the world. I present him so that you receive him and wash him with the sacred
waters. My gods, leave their places, they come to this place, so the new being that arrives is of our same heart. Wash him so that he remains clean and pure before your eyes. For us who are about to leave towards you, this child is like a plant that germinates. Keep in your memory the name that this new being takes while he lives, Warrie-temai-uru-niuweme. My goddess, Tatei Yurianaka, protect him in your hand so that from now until the end you may converse and he will be found under your care. Look after his steps. May he follow in your footsteps. Here, I finish my words, here I retire, I who mean nothing, I who will soon return to the earth. I ask you, my gods, who rule in all the reaches, to you my gods who care for all the new born, to look after this new being, to watch him for life. Forgive my humble words that do not have so much knowledge as those of yours, my gods. Nevertheless, receive my heart, overflowing with happiness for allowing me to comply with my religion, for my own good and that of my people. (Mata Torres 1974: 63-4)

(4) Prayer provides a means of redress if the contract has been violated and one or other category fails to fulfil its obligations. The following fragment, part of a longer prayer, was said during an unfortunately unsuccessful ceremony to cure a sick child:

Today we know how everything had a beginning, we see that among us someone was born. The sacred candle was with her. The offering was with her. But today it appears that she is going to be forsaken. Today it appears that the little flower is going to lose its colour. My gods, Urukate, do not forsake her. My gods who abide in the sacred mountain, do not scorn the sacred offerings. Do not blow out the candle of life. (Mata Torres 1980: 72)

Prayer permits confession and the purification of the individual so they can be reincorporated into the ideal community.

(5) Prayer, including offerings and devotional acts, provides a demonstration of devotion and acceptance of the contract that ties humans to the deities. Submission to the divine plan is frequently reiterated in Huichol prayer:

From when we are born, from the first day of coming to the world, we have to serve with veneration and respect our gods of all the reaches. We have to please them because they will visit our fate until everything in us will have finished. It is because of this that we have to be religious from the moment of birth, because we could lose our life before we are baptized, or simply, because this is how we have been taught from generation to generation. (Mata Torres 1974: 48)

(6) Prayer articulates and reproduces the cosmology on which the world is said to be held in equilibrium. It serves, therefore, to socialise the uninitiated into Huichol ideology (see Anguiano and Furst 1978):
The first gods shaped Wirikuta, shaped our father of the centre and our mother, Nakawé. Here in this world, there is nothing for us which does not come from you. Watch over this world, then, which you shaped, and which you inhabit: watch that the peoples everywhere know to carry on a clean and happy life, without a moment of bitterness or weeping for anyone in the world. (Mata Torres 1980: 73)

Narratives recounting the creation story, the first peyote hunt and other rivalries between gods, the great flood, and the origin of agriculture and domestication of maize, to mention just a few, are annually recited at agricultural ceremonies. These long narratives have been recorded by Zingg and others and, for reasons of space, no examples will be given here. It is worth reiterating, however, that the act of reciting these narratives is a powerful invocation of the gods that is an essential means of preserving the world they created.

(7) Prayer opens up a two-way process of communication that enables the wishes and feelings of the deities to be communicated to the supplicant:

May the greetings of my brothers be stronger and clearer than those that will greet you after my death. May my voice be extinguished in the world if I did not say the words which you my gods inspired me to say. May my existence be forgotten and forgotten my pilgrimages to the places you inhabit if I take a bad course in ascending to you. If your offerings were not put in good hands, let there be punishment for whoever did not know what to do. If with your candle the way to reality is not lighted, may the world we inhabit be covered with darkness. My gods, you our fathers, watch over all of this. (Mata Torres 1980: 73)

(8) Prayer frequently communicates compliance with continuing the work of creation began by the deities and in perfecting the world and all the relations that maintain it.

Here we offer you our lives, that you in your glory may watch over this people which serves and worships you.... Permit the children, who represent the future of our race, to draw near to you, that the children may know you and feel you in their hearts, and thus become good fathers in the days to come, good bearers of this our religion which we cherish so much.... We wish, then, to obey, and that all may obey in the way those of the first generation obeyed, those of the second, those of the third, and those of the fourth generation which is the one we are living in now. (Mata Torres 1980: 73)

Prayers are made for practical ends. Whether these be for health, fertility, protection, guidance or to secure the necessary conditions for agricultural reproduction, prayer forms an important element of the quest for life. Prayer is an integral part of Huichol ritual whose object ‘is to make the macrocosm abound in the objects of men’s desires’ (Hocart 1970b: 202).
Prayer and Revelation

In the non-sectarian Christian tradition, prayer is a communication from man to the deity. It is considered unidirectional and gives little countenance to even the remote possibility of provoking a personal response. The Christian distinction between prayer and its contestation implies a discontinuity between God and man. There is no such abyss separating the Huichol from their deities, who co-exist side by side and whose individual fates are mutually intertwined and interdependent. The Huichol do not believe, however, that their easy access to the deities is shared by non-Huichol. Mestizos have access only to the Christian Jesus Christ and the saints who, though they are in some communities becoming identified with Huichol deities, were traditionally regarded as a newer family of deities under the tutelage of the Huichol pantheon. Native myth recounts that because the mestizos were unable to comply with the instructions of the gods in carrying out the first-fruit ceremony, complex rituals were entrusted only to the Huichol, while simpler, but less efficacious ceremonies were devised for others (Zingg no date: 346). A myth collected by Zingg (ibid.: 324–5), describes how Kauyumari, taking advantage of the Mexican people's former illiteracy, stealthily wrote and distributed letters to persuade them to worship Jesus Christ instead of the Huichol gods. Later, after being collected together, these letters formed the Bible. In the Huichol view, therefore, writing led Mexicans to a fundamentally erroneous understanding of the universe and humanity's place in it. The Huichol consider themselves to have a pastoral role in relation to other ethnic groups and practise their religion for the general good.

Huichol prayer not only allows the mara'akame to communicate with the gods but, through the intermediary of Kauyumari, enables the gods to respond to the supplicant. This two-way communication is made possible by iyári, which enables the disciple to communicate with Kauyumari through dreams and visions. Hikuri, peyote, the sacred plant of the Huichol, is conceived as the heart of iyári, which in pre-creation times grew in the hoof marks he left as he ran through the eastern desert (Wirikuta). Hence the path of the deities is sometimes metaphorically called the path of flowers. The Huichol communicate with their deities through iyári, an immaterial quality given to all at birth, but only activated among some through feats of physical endurance. iyári permits the proper recitation of prayer and elaboration of offerings in the manner laid down by the ancestors. Prayer, therefore, as van Baal suggested to be the more general case, is dependent on a prior revelation of its application and use. In contrast, the deities communicate with man through the iyári (identified with peyote) of the deer god, Kauyumari. The ingestion of peyote occasions an ontological shift that makes the supplicant receptive to the sacred message that is communicated, as in the first times, by images. These images, conveyed in dreams and visions, are the superior non-linguistic language of the sacred, a far more ancient and richer language whose purpose is to reveal the occult world of essences on which the phenomenal world and spoken language depend.
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MAGIC CIRCLES: AN APPROACH TO GREEK RITUAL

CHARLES STEWART

This essay attempts to account for the frequent appearance of circular imagery in Greek rituals ranging from church sacraments to local magical rites deemed 'superstitious' by the Church. It is concerned with time, cosmology, ritual form and teleology (sometimes in a very literal sense). The contention that ideological figures of thought such as the circle should be viewed and interpreted against the backdrop of a shared cosmology can be seen as consistent with most of Andrew Duff-Cooper's studies of Balinese life, especially those investigations where he delineated the architectural geometry of Balinese ideology (1986). I think that this similarity of orientation in our research can be traced to a common debt to Rodney Needham, whose studies of ideation (1972) and primordial figures of thought (1978) profoundly influenced us both.

Contemporary Greece

In Athens in 1982 a Cretan taxi-driver described to me how his brother had been bewitched by the evil eye and was unable to consummate his marriage. His family

For reasons of space the number of references in this essay has been seriously curtailed. A fuller version is in preparation. The references to ancient Greek works are given in the form usual in classical scholarship. I would like to thank Juliet du Boulay, Laurie Hart, Renée Hirschon, Gordon Howie and Sarah Illes Johnston for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.
took him to a sorceress in Khania who, among other things, recommended that he take seven skulls from an ossuary. She instructed him to take the skulls at night to a crossroads outside Khania and to draw a circle around himself using a black-handled knife. The ‘army of devils’ passed by, but so long as he remained inside the circle he was protected. This he did for three nights in a row, after which the Turkish woman pronounced him cured. He went on to have six children.

Such stories are legion in Greece. The motif of a ‘magic circle that protects against the devil’ is in fact common to world folklore, and versions of it are found from Iceland to China. I have even come across variants, collected in English among the Greek–American community of Tarpon Springs, Florida (Georges 1980), that tell of standing inside protective circles while beautiful, but dangerous, fairies dance around on the outside. In many parts of Greece, especially Crete, it is said that good lyre-players are taught by the neraides (female fairies, or demons). The lyre-player, however, must have the courage to go to a crossroads and draw a circle around himself with a black-handled knife. The neraides will try to coax him to come out and in a last resort they will ask him to pass his lyre outside the perimeter of the circle. They take the lyre and play it expertly. In one account the lyre-player accidentally lets the tip of his little finger protrude outside the protective circle and the neraides immediately chop it off (Politis 1904: no. 702).

The theme of circles protecting against demonic forces is discernible in everyday life; it is not just a folkloric story ‘motif’. The theme of instituting a sacred boundary is replicated, for example, when ordinary houses are built: prayers are read at the laying of the foundations, and when the house is finished an icon stand is erected inside. The prayers call for the stability of the structure, as well as for the protection of its occupants ‘from all harm and evil influence; from being overcome by night-time fear; from arrows shot by day; from the thing which moves in the night; and from the midday demon’ (Evkhologion to Mega 1980: 494). An exorcistic prayer for clearing a space of evil spirits (found in a cheap booklet of prayers evidently enjoying some ecclesiastical status) describes how the priest’s blessing establishes a circular ‘boundary of fire’ (phragmon pyros; Malamas 1986: 9) within which all terrestrial, aerial and astral spirits will be bound and rendered subordinate to Christ and the saints.

A fundamental opposition may be observed between the village (khorio), a secure and ordered space (khora), and the unsettled wilds surrounding the settlement, the domain of a vast array of demons generically called exotika (things outside). The village, with its church at the centre, represents the most fundamental and important oasis of the sacred in everyday life. It is perceived by its inhabitants as a divinely protected enclosure or circle (Campbell 1964: 332). An account from the Greek-speaking south Italian village of Rochudi relates that at

1. I have examined elsewhere various transformations and reflexes of the magic circle concept (Stewart 1991: 165ff.).
night the people would close the gates so that narades could not enter the village (Stewart 1991: 278).

Most of these rituals and beliefs belong to the sphere of local, unofficial religion. In some cases they are compatible with Orthodox Christianity proper, while in others, such as the magic circle in the Cretan taxi-driver’s story, they are evidently incompatible. In a number of rituals central to Orthodox Christianity itself, however, the symbolism of the circle is also prominent. The censing of the church, for example, is conducted in a circular counter-clockwise motion, as are the little and great entrances performed at every liturgy. Architecturally, the Byzantine church itself with its central dome was, according to Lazarev (cited in Ouspensky 1992: 41), ‘designed to be perceived by a viewer in the process of circular movement during which he moves from one branch of the cross to another’. At Easter, Christ’s flower-strewn bier (epitaphios) is taken out and carried around the church three times, again in a counter-clockwise direction. Similarly, at lianieies (processions) performed on Easter Sunday and on such other occasions as the celebration of a patron saint, the icons of the church are lifted from their position on the icon screen and carried in a wide circle around the village (Stewart 1985).

At baptism, marriage and funeral ceremonies the image of the circle emerges still more clearly. Generally completed three times by proceeding around towards the right, the circle is repeatedly actualized in the administration of the sacraments.\(^2\) Immediately after baptism the priest leads the sponsor holding the child in a circular procession three times around the font, while at the funeral laying out (prothesis) the mourners circle the bier while lamenting (Alexiou 1974). The most impressive and, I think, central instance of circular symbolism occurs at the wedding ceremony. There one may discern a complex progression of ever-expanding circles from the engagement ring, through the wedding crown and the tight circular dance of Isaiah (where the priest leads the newly-weds three times around a table set up in the nave of the church), to the large circular dance involving the whole village.

Two distinct but perhaps interrelated aspects of circles seem to be emerging. First, they may be used to create a sacred space. Circles thus appear prominently in rituals for keeping away demonic and other malevolent forces. An account recorded on Crete some fifty years ago explicitly draws this connection: ‘demons fear the circle’ (Phrangaki 1949: 43). Secondly, in church sacraments the circle apparently does not serve an apotropaic purpose, instead movement to the right simply amounts to the proper form of movement. The wedding ring and the circular dance of Isaiah have been interpreted by at least one Orthodox theologian as symbols of eternity (Ware 1984), an idea I now consider in greater detail.

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2. In Greece, ritual movement toward the right is always understood to be anticeclockwise. On Bali (Duff-Cooper 1990: 39), right-handed motion may proceed clockwise. As du Boulay (1982: 237) points out, this motion is foremost of all symbolic (of auspiciousness, ‘the right’); the actual physical direction may vary.
Through field research in the hamlet of Ambeli on Evvia, Juliet du Boulay (1982, 1984) has illuminated the significance of the circle in everyday life. She reports that circles formed by a right-handed, counter-clockwise motion represent auspiciousness. Villagers spoke of such motion as being 'like a dance' (san khoros) since this is the form which most Greek dancing takes. During the funeral vigil, nothing may be passed over the body, only around it. Should somebody, or something (especially a cat), pass directly over the body, this disrupts the journey of the soul on its path towards heaven and the deceased may turn into a vampire. Likewise, the rules regarding proper marriage (katameria), as opposed to incest, are thought of on analogy with a circle, or more correctly a spiral. Once a family marries off a daughter they must wait three generations before they can receive back a bride. For them to intermarry again too soon would be for the blood to circle back too quickly (du Boulay 1982: 543f.). This is incest (aimomixia; literally 'blood mixing'), the consequences of which are disastrous.

What is most interesting here is the elaborate analogy between the models for understanding marriage and procreation on the one hand and ultimate salvation on the other. As women spiral through society across generations, so also does the soul proceed to heaven in a spiral, illuminated by the spiral-shaped candle (isou) placed on the deceased's navel and burned over a period of three days (ibid.: 228). Du Boulay concludes: 'it appears that the principle of on-going right-handed movement...ensures not only the health of the living community but also the safe passage of the soul into the other world' (ibid.: 236). A good life does not only secure a good afterlife; a good life course is conceived as analogous to the course of the soul on its way to heaven.

The action of circling figures frequently and prominently in Greek ritual precisely because it is both an image of the proper flow of life and a means of protecting human welfare, and this is what rituals promote. In understanding ritual in general, and Greek life-cycle rituals in particular, I follow Hocart (1970: 51) who considered ritual 'a technique of life-giving' or 'a life-giving method'. The purpose of ritual in his view was to increase prosperity and well-being, both in the present and in the hereafter. In Greek Orthodoxy, rituals of birth, marriage and death accomplish just this. An unbaptized child, for example, is not inscribed in the Book of Life and is furthermore an invitation to disease and misfortune. To the Hocartian view I would add a straightforward expressivist view, namely that rituals in some manner symbolically represent what they are trying to accomplish. Frazer's delineation of sympathetic and contagious magic makes this point about actors' intentions and the objects manipulated, but I would contend that even the form of physical movement in the ritual emulates what is being hoped for. These rituals are models of desire that restructure the personal view of the world, and this is accomplished even at the level of simple choreography.

Rituals are not performed or believed to be efficacious in Greece because people consciously espouse a philosophy of circles and a conviction in their life-giving effect. My formulation is strictly an analytical one in that it sees such an interpretation as plausible in the light of the ethnographic data. Even so, it is
not at odds with the Orthodox Church’s insistence on the performance of the sacraments. It must be admitted, however, that neither clerics nor ordinary people regularly discourse on the symbolism of circles and their significance in rituals. I am not, therefore, examining an expressed folk model, as du Boulay was able to do (1982: 220), but rather a consistency of images, contexts and intentions in Greek life. The circle is here taken as an ideological element, an idea that interprets the flow of life. It is not necessarily the object of local exegesis, nor of conscious reflection, perhaps because it is ‘always already there’.

It is perhaps most accurate to consider such elements of ideology as the circle to be implicit rather than unconscious ideas. As Dumont contends (1977: 19f.), the task of the anthropologist is to show the links between this implicit subject and the wide range of manifest, expressed predicates that comprise the apparent social life and culture of a group. So far this is what I have done, collating a series of diverse texts and contexts relating to circles. In order to probe this hypothesis further I turn to examine historical materials in order to see if they help us broaden our understanding of the figure of the circle in contemporary Greek ideology. This is not a search for first origins but for insight into the transmission and transformation of cultural forms that may contribute to an understanding of their structural meaning in the present.

**Ancient Greece**

In Homeric thought the world was conceived of as a round, flat disc with the River Okeanos flowing around it. The world was also depicted as a circle on Achilles’ shield, and Okeanos furnished a border for both this world and for the shield itself. In other contexts the ocean was described as \textit{teleis potamos}, which can be argued to mean not ‘perfect river’ but ‘encircling river’ (Onians 1951: 443; cf. Aristotle, \textit{Meteorologica}, 346b 21ff.). The boundaries of the world were also the location of the underworld; it was the place where all dead souls went, whether blessed or accursed. In Book Four of the \textit{Odyssey} (563ff.) there is a description of the Elysian Fields located at the ‘edges of the earth’ (\textit{peirata gaies}). Here life was most easy for mortals because the River Okeanos made the wind Zephyros blow so as to ‘refresh souls’. The verb used here is \textit{anapsykhein}, a word that draws attention to the centrality of the concept of \textit{psykhē}, ‘soul’, in Greek conceptions of death. Nagy (1978: 167) has contended that the usage of \textit{anapsykhein} in this passage might even be translated as ‘re-animate’, and he has further argued for an

3. In this section I have drawn extensively on Onians’s fascinating linguistic study (1951: 426ff.) of fate and ritual in antiquity.
Evidence for Greek thought on the transmigration of souls is much more substantial from the fifth century onwards. Pindar implies in one of his Olympian odes (Ol. 2. 68ff.) that those conducting themselves sinlessly in three consecutive recyclings will be rescued from the round of rebirths and whisked away to the Island of the Blessed and crowned. Ultimate salvation was thus analogous to an Olympic victory. The richest source of evidence for this strain of thought undoubtedly comes from the overlapping cults of Dionysos, Orpheus and Pythagoras. A fourth-century inscription on a gold leaf buried in a south Italian tomb (classed as Bacchic; Burkert 1985: 294) records the speech of the soul supplicating Persephone for merciful reinstatement among the blessed: ‘For I too claim to be of your blessed race; but Fate overcame me, and the hurler of the lightning bolt. But I have flown out from the circle (kyklos) of heavy grief and stepped with swift feet upon the desired crown’.

West (ibid.: 22) reads this as indicating that Fate, enforced by Zeus, may punish a soul with consecutive rebirths from which it may eventually be redeemed (presumably through righteous rebirths). In Aristotle, the relation between time and circling was given a precise and formal expression (Physics, 223b 22ff.):

And so time is regarded as the rotation of the sphere in as much as all other orders of motion are measured by it and time itself is calibrated by reference to it. And this is the reason for our habitual way of speaking; for we say that human affairs and those of all other beings which have natural movement and are born and perish are, in a way, circular. This is because all of these things are judged with respect to time and they have their beginning and their end, as it were, according to a certain period; for time itself is conceived as a circle.

Again, this is because time and the rotation of the earth mutually determine each other. Hence, to call the happening of a thing a circle is to say that there is a sort of circle of time; and that is because it is measured by a complete revolution.

Clearly, the ancient Greeks did, at least on occasion, explicitly view their lives as a series of circular periods.

4. One modern Greek expression for ‘to die’ is xepysykho (literally ‘to give up one’s soul’). Du Boulay (1982: 224) contends that this is the expression par excellence for describing the moment of death when the individual is thought to release his or her soul, which leaves ‘like an infant’ with the last breath.

5. The Pythagorean word for reincarnation was anakyklosis (literally ‘re-cycling’).
Ritual and Teleology

The standard dictionary definition of *telos* is ‘an end, a completion, a fulfilment or perfection of something’, but it could also refer to a rite of passage. It was frequently applied to stages of life: *telos gamoio* ‘the celebration of marriage’; *telos hēbēs* ‘manhood’ (literally ‘the completion of adolescence’); or *telos biou* ‘death’ (literally ‘the end of life’). A formant, *teleutē*, also meant ‘death’. Partly misled by an erroneous etymology, Onians has argued that *telos* possessed a root sense of ‘turning or circling around’ (1951: 443). As Onians expresses it, ‘the band, circle, itself naturally symbolic of completeness and continuity would represent the complete phase of fortune’ (ibid.: 444). While this may not be true on strict linguistic grounds, Onians does present a number of contexts where *telos* and the idea of circling coincide and I think his suggestion that *telos* could refer both to phases of life and to encircling is worth considering.

It is well known that in ancient Greece athletic victors were crowned or garlanded. Often this circular garland was called the *telos*; it represented the particular deed or fortune and simultaneously expressed its fulfilment (ibid.: 445). There are also points of contact between *telos* as it applied to Olympian victors and *telos* as it applied to marriage. Both the athletic victor and the person married were said ‘to have reached fulfilment’ (*teleisthai*). According to Pollux, ‘marriage is called *telos* and those married called *teleioi*, and Hera is called *teleia* or *zygia*’ (3. 38).

The adjective *teleios* meant ‘full grown’ or ‘mature’. Its associations with marriage may have harkened back to a time when marriage and initiation occurred almost simultaneously at puberty. In the classical period this appears to have been more nearly the case for women than for men. In any event, marriage and initiation could be viewed as variations on a single theme of social transition; they both conferred a new fate. The words for ‘fate’ in Greek, *moira* and *potmos*, both have root senses of ‘a portion’. To say that initiation was the investment of a new fate, then, was equivalent to saying prosaically that the initiate would henceforth be embarking on a new portion of life.

There was, however, more to it. At the end of the *Republic*, in a section known as ‘The Myth of Er’ (614bff.), Plato presents a picture of the cosmos as encountered by the soul after death. Sitting at the edges of this universe, presiding over the circular spinning motion of the planets are the three fates (Moirai). All souls report to them to select the pattern and destiny of their next life before

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6. At the time Onians was writing the word *telos* was believed to stem from an Indo-European root *kʷel-* thus making it cognate with such words as *polos* ‘pivot, axis’, *pello* ‘turning, circling’ and *telson* ‘a place at the end of a field where cattle or chariots turned’. Even the noun *kyklos* itself could conceivably have derived from this root. In the light of the Linear B decipherment in the mid-1950s it is now commonly accepted that *telos* derives from its own separate Indo-European root *tel-*. It is entirely possible, however, that by folk etymology speakers of Ancient Greek may have associated *telos* with words like *telson* or *polos*. 
having their memories erased and being returned into the world. The very idea of fate connected ultimate destiny with orbital planetary motion, an idea already encountered in Plato’s student, Aristotle. In a concession to his teacher, Aristotle even allowed that there was a fifth element, ether (aëther), the realm of souls which displayed regular circular motion. Interestingly, the fates themselves were sometimes represented as spherical, just like the cosmos they administered (Brendel 1977: 73ff.).

The word for ritual, teletê (Modern Greek, teleti), is a close cognate of telos. For Pindar it was the ceremony at the Olympic Games. For later writers it may have referred to the Eleusinian Mysteries, the ceremony of marriage or any other ritual that signified a change in fate. This conferment of a new fate was all important, as the Homeric Hymn to Demeter indicates with respect to the Eleusinian mysteries: ‘Blessed is he amongst men who hath seen these things. But he who is without telos of the rites, who is without a portion, hath not ever a share of like fate though dead beneath the dark gloom’ (480ff.). To fail to receive telos was equivalent to ignoring the cyclic progression of life. One stunted one’s own growth. The refusal to participate reduced one’s possibilities in life as well as in the hereafter. This was precisely the warning that mendicant Orphic priests issued to non-initiated householders, much to Plato’s displeasure (Republic, 364bff.).

Conclusion

This essay began with an account of a magic circle ritual on Crete. It would have been tempting to assert that circles in all Greek rituals arise from the same ideological figure of thought and have a similar significance; ritual circles would thus have furnished another addition to the list of demonstrable examples where the great and the little traditions in Greece, religion and ‘superstition’, are paradoxically informed by the exact same principles (Stewart 1991: 244). Closer analysis has shown this not to be the case. The Cretan story does indeed typify the use and significance of circles in little tradition rites, especially demonic and magic rituals; this circle constitutes an apotropaic boundary against demons and it too has a history stretching back into antiquity, as evidenced for example in the circling movements one was instructed to undertake before cutting the mandrake plant (Theophrastus, HP, IX. 8. 8) or in the circulation of infants around the hearth fire, five or seven days after birth, in a rite called the Amphidromia (cf. scholiast on Plato’s Theaetetus, 160e).

To a certain extent this significance of circles does manifest itself in such Christian practices as the processions of icons (litanies) around villages in order to sanctify them. However, when we come to more central ecclesiastical rites—the sacraments—this interpretation seems unlikely. Here circular movements appear rather to be emulations of the proper flow of life. The outward form ritual takes
in Christian Orthodoxy and in unorthodox practices may be the same, but we must acknowledge this very real difference in what it signifies. Apparently, 'magic circles' tell us only a limited amount about Greek ritual.

Going on the scant exegesis of the circle in Orthodox practice—the comments of theologians, since I have not heard lay people reflect on such matters—the circle is interpreted as an image of eternity (Ware 1984). Historical research suggests that this Christian interpretation rests on classical conceptions of the circle or sphere as an image of perfection: 'the perfection of the sphere made it not only an image of God and the world (created in this image), but also of the human soul' (Brende 1977: 32). In the Orthodox sacraments the circle apparently evokes God. This is analogous to what it did in certain ancient rituals that appealed to the gods by imitating celestial movements.

Ritual circling and the cosmological principles that underpinned it were formalized in late antique magical practice, especially among the neo-Platonists who took Platonic philosophical ideas and operationalized them in ritual. The explicit purpose of these rituals was to gain access to and manipulate cosmic forces via straightforward sympathetic magic: everything in the divine world had its symbolon in the earthly realm and objects in the sensible world could be manipulated to effect changes in the noetic world (Johnston 1990: ch. 7). For our purposes, the most interesting of Neo-Platonist theurgic ritual practices was the use of tops (iynx, plural iynges), which were spun around to invoke cosmic forces because they emulated celestial motion and celestial sounds.

Early Christianity did work, to a certain extent, with Platonic principles and classical philosophical presuppositions regarding God. This common source led to an independent but similar logic of practice in rituals aimed at gaining access to God. The great tradition of Christian Orthodoxy is thus not a reworking of little tradition magic; it does not draw on boundary-inscribing, apotropaic ideas. Instead it proceeds according to ideas arising from what was arguably a high tradition of classical philosophy, ideas that also informed the practice of theurgical magic (itself a high tradition of practice compared to the body of beliefs and practices contained in the magical papyri). Ultimately—and here is an unanticipated irony—'magic circles' do offer us an approach to Greek ritual at all levels, but two very different traditions of magic are involved and thus two different sorts of magic circles are at issue.

Maurice Bloch (1977) has drawn attention to the cyclical (or static) notion of time that rituals comport, in contrast to practical time, which is linear and derived from contact with nature. He contends that for this reason ritual is a prime means by which the past hegemonizes the present; it serves to perpetuate such social structural distinctions as hierarchy. The long historical record regarding ritual and the vocabulary for ritual in Greece has enabled us to see how much of the past has indeed been carried over into the present. But Greek rituals do not seem to have much to do with social stratification. Many of the life-cycle rituals discussed above actually seem to create equality. Baptism, for example, validates all and sundry as human beings with an equal opportunity for salvation.
Bloch has, however, put his finger on something important in recognizing the cyclic imagery of ritual in contrast to the linear imagery of everyday life. But the circular imagery of these various rituals has less to do with the suppression of duration than with its recognition and celebration. In the Greek case, as perhaps in all salvation religions, life-cycle rituals are not crucially about maintaining the past in the present. On the contrary, these rituals picture the future in the present. They are glimpses of eternity periodically available to society as it moves along the inexorable and finite path of existence (Hart 1992: 271). There is, furthermore, no sense in attempting absolutely to distinguish practical time from ritual time since the two are mutually constituting (Gell 1992: 35). Rituals serve the dual role of punctuating duration, thereby rendering it perceptible—a function that they also accomplish by labelling stages of life—and of suppressing anxiety about duration by reminding participants of the escape from time that comes at the end of life.

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*Compilers' note:* In accordance with Andrew Duff-Cooper's wishes, complete sets of his publications, as well as copies of various drafts, will be deposited at the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, University of Leiden, and at the University of Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia.


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BOOK REVIEWS


The *Written Suburb*, the first volume in Stoller and Rose's 'Contemporary Ethnography Series', already has as dated a feel to it as the very word 'contemporary' has (as in 'contemporary music'). In part an ethnography of Chadds Ford, a small village-cum-township in Pennsylvania and in part a mapping out of the terrain of 'post-ethnographic' investigation, it is unsatisfactory in the first instance and somewhat tiresome in the second.

Chadds Ford is the most important (to its inhabitants and to Dorst) of a number of small townships clustered along the Brandywine Creek and is, for Dorst if not for its inhabitants, a 'Site': 'a complex ideological production—an ordering of texts' (p. 10). In traditional ethnographic terms its importance derives from two historical associations: as the site of a major battle during the Revolutionary War (and consequent 'colonial' associations) and as the home of the Wyeth family of painters (and the subsequent development of the 'Brandywine School'). It is the contemporary and near-contemporary artefacts and activities associated with these two sets of historical associations (craft fairs, tourism, museums, restaurant menus, restored houses) that make up the 'texts' that Dorst wishes to analyse. So far so straightforward, but the problem—the 'dilemma' of Dorst's subtitle—is that this Site experiences the conditions of postmodernity. That is, it is self-conscious in the reproduction of its own image and as such is its own ethnographer. The inhabitants of Chadds Ford produce texts about themselves consciously (such as a potted history of the settlement on the back of a restaurant menu card) and unconsciously (through, for example, mirrored glass surfaces on buildings that allow the spectator to tell him- or herself a story about their relation to the environment) and have no further need of a conventional ethnographer to interpret them: 'postmodernity seems to render the professional ethnographer superfluous' (p. 2). The 'dilemma', then, is about finding a new place for the ethnographer in the postmodern world.

Dorst is blatant about his disregard for many of anthropology's more central concerns: 'It should be apparent that I have not been particularly concerned with the lives of the people who inhabit Chadds Ford, nor with the social relations and categories of specific subjects. I confess my goal here to be unashamedly anti-humanistic.... In so far as I present informants, they should be taken as parables, as foci of textuality, as things spoken rather than speaking' (pp. 208–9). Dorst is not, apparently, an anthropologist and comes to the discipline just as it was undergoing its most embarrassing period of genuflexions towards the high priests of postmodernist literary theory. As a consequence he seems unaware that all societies produce and consume self-conscious representations of themselves, and
that since Durkheim and Mauss anthropologists have considered the ways in which the material and ideological environments have been used as a blackboard for the writing and rewriting of these texts. In the five years since The Written Suburb was published the discipline has begun to refound itself, leaving much of Dorst's vision of a 'post-ethnographic' future by the wayside. There is also an inherent paradox in Dorst's project itself. Consisting of an arbitrary series of 'fragments' of ethnography, a 'collage' as Dorst terms it, interwoven with a portentous narrative on postmodernism, the book's aim is to come to grips with 'the culture of advanced consumer capitalism' (p. 2), but as all modernist scholarly enterprises are now apparently bankrupt there is the paradox that the book is itself merely a text of postmodernity and can only be a 'one kind of response to the conditions of advanced consumer culture' (p. 206), rather than any form of analysis. Certainly, the fact that many societies have indigenous conceptions of 'consumption' (including, presumably, the inhabitants of and visitors to Chadds Ford) is a point of no apparent interest to Dorst, who constantly privileges his own readings of the texts produced and consumed in Chadds Ford.

There is no doubt that some parts of the book are well worth reading. The chapter on a 'reading' of two of Chadds Ford's museums (chapter 5) would undoubtedly be of interest to those involved in the new museology, while as an almost painfully self-conscious account of the postmodernist enterprise the book will no doubt be of use to future historians of academic trends and fashions.

MARCUS BANKS

JAN BRØGER, Pre-Bureaucratic Europeans: A Study of a Portuguese Fishing Community, Oslo: Norwegian University Press and Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture 1990. 151 pp., References, Index. £20.00.

In the opening sentence of this interesting book the author tells us that even though Nazaré, the fishing community studied, is situated on the Atlantic coast of Portugal, its culture and language are mediterranean. Later, he devotes much of the book to pointing out how unmediterranean (the author's word) the community is. This is one of many inconsistencies peppered throughout Jan Brøgger's new book.

The introduction dwells on the author's central theoretical concerns. These include: an interpretative ambition (following Geertz's 'thick description'); the process from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft (after Tönnies); social history and its small-scale insights into large-scale changes; the transformation from medieval to modern society; and the concept of pollution as to do with categories (as examined by Mary Douglas). These concerns are pursued throughout the book, which concentrates on the pre-bureaucratic organization of social relations amongst the
fishing community. This quality of pre-bureaucraticness, defined as occurring in
a face-to-face community where bureaucracy plays an insignificant role, apparently
explains why local beliefs and superstitions have remained unchanged.

One of the unmediterranean aspects of this community is the dominance of
women, a subject that the author meets head-on in the early chapters. Matri-
foecality, and the economic dominance of women through their monopoly of the
fish market, have left the men 'gentle, sometimes resigned, and somewhat
introverted' (p. 42). The author draws many such psychological conclusions from
his observations. For example, when considering machismo, he adds 'the absence
of this type of masculinity in Nazaré is probably due to the fulfilment of
masculinity at sea' (p. 42). This type of remark, easily refuted by comparable
examples, typifies many of the author's observations, which are hastily concocted
hypothetical reasonings.

In contrast to such descriptions of male behaviour, we learn that 'the
Nazarenos subscribe to common mediterranean ideas of male dominance' (p. 34)
and that 'the most successful fishermen sometimes manage to establish themselves
as masters of their households' (p. 37). Domestic superiority has been equated
with economic power, and the women apparently have the upper hand; unfortu-
nately, we do not learn enough about the nuts and bolts of this economic
relationship. Even though we are told that tourism is the second most important
industry in the community, that women exploit it, and that it has 'facilitated the
development of the two distinct strata in Nazaré, the bourgeoisie and the
fishermen' (p. 16), we learn precious little else about it. This is a major weakness,
as it is implied that the power relationship between the sexes is a result of
economic dominance and that, in turn, it is responsible for the organization of the
society and therefore its intellectual character: 'in order to change the people of the
"praia" into modern rationalists, nothing less than a basic change in the social
organisation of relationships would be necessary' (p. 126).

The bulk of the book is concerned with descriptions and analysis of family
structure, behaviour and communal living, supernatural beliefs, the structure of
relationships, and the social organization of fishing. In three out of the seven
chapters, there is an emphasis on superstitious beliefs, and there are explicit
illustrations of various witchcraft and sorcery activities and their impact on
everyday life within the community. Brøgger is also preoccupied with the
psychological aspects of the community, in both individual and group manifesta-
tions, a factor that lends substance to his descriptions. This combination of
qualities in a book concerned with a fishing community in Europe gives it a
uniqueness, and makes it a welcome addition to the corpus of material on this
region.

Most of the topics investigated are supported with examples, and there are
plenty of local accounts in the form of dialogue and narrative. These all help to
give the book an authentic quality, and together with the detailed genealogical
information and careful examination of the fisherman's lifestyle, form its
ethnographic strong points. At times there is an unnecessary quantity of
information, in particular with the pedantically technical details of fishing equipment (pp. 91–9), which may irritate non-specialist readers.

Overall, however, the book suffers from Brøgger’s overenthusiasm to be comparative both spatially and temporally, his tendency to draw unsubstantiated psychological conclusions, his willingness to promote the community as a ‘unique family system’ (p. 37), and his propensity to draw historical conclusions, as in ‘the modern bourgeois was born in pain and hardened through ruthless discipline. Maybe it is this strength which made the great transformation of agrarian society into modern industrial civilization possible’ (p. 146). This type of conjectural statement partly devalues this otherwise intriguing and provocative study.

DON MACLEOD


Ponam Island, a small community off the north coast of Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, is the subject of this innovative study. The authors extend the criticism within anthropology of ethnographies that attempt to analyse village communities without reference to the nations of which they are a part, and that equate the tradition and the exotic with the untouched. In describing the articulation between a peripheral village society and the national economy and institutions of a nation state, the Carriers have written a book that will interest all those concerned with social change and the anthropology of development.

The frame that shapes this description is the relationship of village and town, the traditional and the modern. The lessons drawn bear on the necessity of seeing villages like Ponam in terms of their links with the towns, with wage employment, commodities and the state. In order to deal with this articulation adequately, Ponam economics is divided into three parts. The first is domestic economic activity, production and circulation undertaken by people living on Ponam Island. These sprang from the island’s and region’s endowments of land and sea, sun, wind and rain, and consisted mostly of fishing, the dominant conventional village-based productive activity, and market trade, by which islanders secured the necessities they did not produce for themselves. These were central elements of both Ponam economic life prior to colonization and of the way Ponam Islanders perceived themselves and their past.

Complementing domestic activities were foreign or overseas activities. The authors are not referring here to the sort of indirect involvement that comes with
being part of an integrated economic system, but to direct personal involvement with distant people and places. Foreign economic activities include migrant labour, cash-crop production, and other forms of petty commodity production. Even though this migration was both relatively recent and alien to what Ponam Islanders were accustomed to doing, its consequences had come to shape not only central elements of social life on the island, but also Ponam Islanders’ self-conceptions. At the same time that they maintained their traditional identity as island people who fish and trade, they established another, more contemporary identity, as people who must migrate to seek wealth.

The chief importance of the book, therefore, is in its discussion of the third area—the articulation of the domestic and overseas realms of Ponam life. The most explicit discussion is found in chapter 6, entitled ‘Internal Exchange’, as it conducts an analysis of these two areas and looks at the way ceremonial exchange mediated between residents and migrants. This mediation tied migrants to home and motivated them to save money and remit it to Ponam, a remittance that produced a number of important results. It subsidized life on Ponam, keeping it pleasant and attractive to migrants, and thus strengthened their commitment to home and their willingness to send money. As part of this subsidy, remittances enabled residents to cope with their deteriorating position relative to their Manus trade and market partners, and so helped maintain that area of local economic activity. It also increased the economic significance of ceremonial exchange, making it remunerative to residents in fact as well as in ideology. This appears to have led to an increase both in the frequency of exchange and in the proportion of resident adults participating in it. The result is a strengthening of the importance of the kin groups that play a central role in this exchange and the kin relations that shape people’s access to and place in exchange. In its turn, this strengthening helped these groups remain important in the other area of life in which they featured, the ownership of property, particularly property related to traditional fishing, the main element of domestic economic production.

Somewhat less explicitly the authors describe other important aspects of this articulation. Of concern here is the relationship between Ponam social structure and the island’s relations with the outside world. Briefly, prior to colonization, when the outside world was the rest of Manus, relations among Ponam Islanders were unequal, with the dominant position going to those people having the strongest control over the production and circulation of wealth within the region. However, as the outside world expanded, and as the economic importance of Manus for Ponam decreased, islanders lost their ability to control significant sources of wealth, particularly wealth from outside the island—they became dependent on the emerging national economy. Consequently, no group of villagers was able to control wealth to the exclusion of others, and relations among villagers became more equal.

In sum, the book logically and interestingly argues that although Ponam Islanders thought of themselves in terms of a separation between their island and the outside world, between island ways and town ways, these two realms were
joined. The customary daily round on the island was not independent of the existence of the outside world and the part Ponam Islanders played in it. On the contrary, the survival of Ponam tradition required that Ponam Islanders participate in modernity. The Ponam mix of migration, remittance and exchange was a glue that helped hold the society together, rather than a solvent causing it to fall apart.

DAVID A. MCCLELLAND


Previous studies of Malay shamanism have been restricted in scope due to their failure to transcribe and analyse texts from the Main Peteri or curing performance. As part of her study, which is based on two years’ fieldwork in Trengganu State, Laderman uses the texts of three complete seances to demonstrate the great variety of forms that Main Peteri can take. The book is divided into two parts. The first discusses the concepts and practices of Malay healing and prepares the reader for understanding the cultural context of the Malay shaman’s seance. The second comprises translations of three complete performances of shamanic seances, extensively annotated.

Malay shamanism and changing Western attitudes towards the phenomenon are discussed, followed by an outline of the Malay humoral system, which is the corner-stone of Malay medical and cosmological theory. Although the majority of illnesses are regarded as normal and are dealt with by employing a rational, scientific approach based on this humoral system, there are also unusual illnesses caused by incursions from the unseen world. These are the illnesses with which the bomoh (shaman) is concerned. A spirit attack, which will only be effective if the victim is already weakened in some way, most frequently consists of the spirits blowing on their victim’s back and upsetting his humoral balance. If the bomoh’s normal methods of counterbalancing the attack fail, then a Main Peteri may be deemed necessary. The attacking spirits are brought to the seance by the bomoh’s helping spirits (penggawa) and are coaxed and threatened into restoring the patient to health.

Illness may also be due to the patient’s personality. The Malays believe that an individual’s personality, drives and talents are determined by an inner wind (angin) that is present at birth, and Laderman’s discussion of *angin* represents one of the first attempts to understand Malay ideas about the self and personality. If the person is allowed to express his *angin*, i.e. his traits, talents and ideas, he will
lead an untroubled, productive life, but if these desires are thwarted, the angin is blocked, resulting in illness termed sakit berangin (wind sickness). Different kinds of sakit berangin are identified, each one having an archetype in a folk story. The task of the bomoh in the Main Peteri is to identify the thwarted personality and, by inducing the patient into trance, to get him to act out the repressed portions of his personality, and face up to it by moving into an altered state.

The study goes on to consider the performance aspects of the shaman’s seance, discussing its dramatic form, music, movement and props. The seance form of ritual drama is divided into scenes, much like a play. In its language, music, movement, themes and world-view, it is related to the Mak Yong dance theatre and to the wayang kulit (shadow play). For example, the dialogue between the bomoh (who is acting as a mouthpiece for the spirits) and the minduk (his partner who does not go into trance, and who often accompanies him on the Malay fiddle) relies heavily on metaphors from the Mak Yong and shadow play, as well as folk beliefs about spirits. This is clearly demonstrated in the transcribed dialogues that comprise the second half of Laderman’s book. The transcriptions further demonstrate ideas about the human body (often conceptualized as a house under siege) as a microcosm of the universe.

Overall, the book provides a fascinating description and analysis of a Malay belief system, particularly valuable in view of the increasing rarity of the Main Peteri due to opposition from the Muslim hierarchy. If it has one failing it is that it does not include the original Malay, but only the English translation of the seance transcriptions. In view of the importance of the spoken word and the power that words can carry, this is unfortunate.

SIAN E. JAY


Although Van Gennep’s representation of typical ritual structures has lasted better than many anthropological models of the period, one of its less happy legacies has been a certain tendency to demarcate too sharply from one another the different rituals of a particular cultural tradition. Although one can hardly throw this accusation at Van Gennep himself, ethnographic accounts of ritual often follow relentlessly the chapter headings of Les Rites de passage, without any clear recognition of the way in which different rites may implicate one another. For example, the coming together of different parental substances in the child through pregnancy and birth may have to be properly redistributed, or at any rate accounted
for, when the child, as an adult, eventually dies; similarly, relationships set up through marriage may have to be recognized at birth or death ceremonies; and marriage rites may refer back to, or even partly constitute, rites of puberty or initiation.

Thus such rites are often best examined as whole sequences, which is precisely the way the present book treats them as they occur in south India and Sri Lanka. Although its first two-thirds are exhaustively descriptive and concentrated mostly on Good’s own fieldwork in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, there is also a comparative chapter on the work of others in the general area, as well as further chapters dealing with rival interpretations and with the overall analysis of the entire ritual sequence. Much background data on caste composition and kinship are also provided, most of the latter having already appeared in print as articles (as has the critique of the concept of a ‘jajmani system’ in chapter 4). Among sundry ancillary features one might mention are Good’s attempt to apply to descent Needham’s three levels of analysis in the study of affinal alliance systems, and his confirmation of earlier observations that the Dumontian dichotomy between pure and impure is too global in that it does not really incorporate the alternative dichotomy between auspicious and inauspicious but must be supplemented by it. Perhaps this was especially apparent in an area where, Good says, nobody bothered much about untouchability, something indeed on which the people prided themselves.

But it is the ritual sequence, largely concentrated on women, that is Good’s main concern. The book’s title refers to the use in this region of a girl’s mock wedding to another girl to mark her menarche. This invites comparison not only with the real wedding she must go through later, but also with other examples in India where a form of marriage acts as a ritual instrument on occasions that are not marriages, or only dubiously so, from a Western point of view. Good discusses the famous Nayar case in some detail and touches on the use made of similar devices by tribal groups further north. Dumont has traced sporadic instances as far away as Nepal, and in Homo Hierarchicus he gives other examples in which such ‘marriages’ enable a woman to enjoy married status while undertaking sexual activities unusual in type or degree. As Good mentions, they may also occasionally give a dying or dead woman married status after a spinster’s life of seclusion. What he is mostly concerned with, however, are instances in which they form part of the regular ritual cycle that transforms a girl into a woman and a woman into a wife. The concept certainly deserves wider comparative treatment, for the purposes to which it is put are as varied as whatever and whoever it is one marries, and as whatever and whoever is being married, though the idea of an ersatz wedding links them all.

In order to interpret his material, Good rejects the psychological and ethnosociological approaches (the latter because it means ‘abdicaing the analyst’s role’) in favour of a basically structural approach. To it is added a consideration of symbols in terms drawn ultimately from Turner’s distinction between dominant and instrumental symbols, though bringing in a further dichotomy between import
and purport—by which is meant, roughly, symbolic values in the abstract versus symbolic values wedded to context. Good does not really exploit the performative jargon with which he starts, and he seems more concerned to push the idea of ‘instrumental symbols’ as something analogous to the chemical reagents he must have learned all about in his previous incarnation as a chemistry student, which in turn are said to be analogous to the capacity of these symbols ‘to effect particular kinds of transformation’. Ultimately, analogies always have more illustrative than explanatory value, though this one is more apt than many encountered in anthropology. So long as we are not being asked to witness the emergence of an ethnochemistry here, I suppose there is nothing much to worry about.

Finally, ‘controlled regional comparison’ is put forward as something ‘increasingly necessary to the advancement of anthropological study’. The idea is hardly new in itself, of course, having been advocated years ago by such figures as Evans-Pritchard and Fred Eggan, and the Dutch have long practised it in Indonesia. Good’s approach bears some resemblance to the latter, as later revised by P. E. de Josselin de Jong, in that the different case-studies are seen as transformations of one another, all being focused on a common structural theme. What is different is that for Good the theme is defined polythetically rather than substantively, which allows cultural variations to be taken fully into account, the structural core notwithstanding. Thus does Good, who has proved himself positivist enough elsewhere to claim that anthropology is a science, at least in the Popperian sense, make use of a model associated above all in anthropology with the philosopher Wittgenstein—the ethnosociological philosopher par excellence, one might say, in that for him the only real truths were cultural statements.

ROBERT PARKIN


The first volume of this projected trilogy was reviewed enthusiastically in these pages (Vol. XXI, no. 3, pp. 327-9). The present volume does for the ritual aspects of the cult what its predecessor did for the mythic aspects, and the standard is well maintained. This is high-class scholarship on a theme that merits it.

The range is impressive. Geographically the focus remains on Tamilnad, the ‘core area’ of the cult, but by exploiting the literature the author moves easily across the 1200 miles from Kerala to Bengal, with occasional sorties further afield, for example to the Indian community in Singapore. In the temporal dimension he ranges from contemporary fieldwork by himself and others right back to the Vedas,
and socially he is as much at ease with metropolitan centres as with villages. The notion of ritual covers, of course, not only what people do but also where they do it, and the effigies, altars, posts and other impedimenta that they use. Here the 38 black-and-white plates are a useful supplement to the text.

Draupadi festivals, like some others, may begin in the temple with the planting of ‘Gardens of Adonis’: seedlings are encouraged to sprout prematurely and are then discarded. Hiltebeitel seizes the opportunity for interesting comparisons with ancient Greece, as analysed by Detienne. Next, wristlets are tied and flags are hoisted. The flagpole provides an extraordinarily rich topic, being linked both with the Vedic sacrificial stake and with the mythical Pottu Rāja, a figure salient in folk narratives relating to the Mahabharata but absent from the Sanskrit epic itself. Here Hiltebeitel draws on the pioneering work of Biardeau, but he also argues that the Goddess’s temple is an intermediary form between two outdoor ritual sites, the ancient Vedic sacrificial terrain and the ‘battlefield’ that is laid out for some of the most dramatic events of the festival. The battlefield often contains large effigies of Duryodhana (leader of the demonic party in the epic) lying on his back. One such effigy, modelled from five tons of earth and painted from crown to heel, was nearly forty feet long, while another was ninety feet. Often, rites representing the death and revival of epic characters take place. Similar rites, widely distributed in South Asia, have been linked by Obeyesekere with the Frazerian theme of dying and rising gods, and he suggests that they diffused from West Asia; but Hiltebeitel relates them, more cautiously, to the Vedic Asvamedha ritual. Sometimes the notion of battlefield is replaced by that of fortress, and a structure is built with walls four feet or four inches high. However, the culminating event is usually the celebrated fire walk, in which participants cross a shallow pit filled with smouldering embers. A variety of interpretations have been offered, and Hiltebeitel’s is catholic, emphasizing the pervasive theme of sacrifice.

From the point of view of general anthropology, the very richness of the material and the catholicity of approach may limit the book’s impact. The interpretation of ritual and its relation to myth are mainstream anthropological concerns, and here we have a substantial case-study that might offer general lessons. However (perhaps because the author was originally a Sanskritist rather than an anthropologist), the theoretical and methodological implications are left to the reader. One implication seems to me to concern the scale on which one should be looking for interpretations of ritual. I suspect that many of us have left for the field thinking that to understand a ritual all one needs is an understanding of local life, a good description of the event, a forthcoming local exegete (like Victor Turner’s?), and some general theoretical background. This is certainly a start, and may be all that time allows, but the resulting analysis is likely to be highly vulnerable to such comparative and historical approaches as Hiltebeitel’s. Probably this is as true of ‘tribal’ areas as of literate civilizations.

Elements of the author’s theoretical position can be put together from his scattered criticisms of others—and of himself (p. 456f.) for some earlier Freudian
formulations. Thus the German Orissa Project wrongly attributed to tribal origins much that was essentially Hindu (see pp. 99, 125); Heesterman, as Trautmann has also observed, arbitrarily interpreted as ‘pre-classical’ the agonistic aspects of Vedic sacrifice (p. 139 n.); Obeyesekere did not need to call on diffusion to explain revival rites (p. 367); and Parpola carried speculation too far with his hypothetical pre-Vedic Dāsa religion, supposedly linking the Hindu goddess to West Asian city goddesses (pp. 385ff.). In other words, we need a more inclusive sense of Hinduism before we postulate outside influences. I would agree, arguing that a good deal of what appears ‘alien’ can be conceptualized by means of a Dumézilian fourth function.

We can now look forward eagerly to the concluding volume of this major work.

N. J. ALLEN


This book can be taken on two levels. First, it is a welcome contribution to the ethnography of South Asia, providing data from a number of interesting contexts on the way emotions are ‘constructed’ in the subcontinent. Secondly, there is an argument, stated explicitly by Lynch in his introduction, and taken up and endorsed to varying degrees by the other contributors, for what he calls the ‘social constructionist’ position in the study of emotion. This is defined primarily by its opposition to physicalism, a position Lynch traces back to Descartes, Hume and William James. Physicalism presupposes that emotions are the effects of physiological causes and frequently makes use of a hydraulic metaphor: emotions ‘well up’, are ‘blocked’, or have to be ‘controlled’. This is perhaps the commonest folk model in the West.

Lynch takes his own social constructionist position to be a variety of Lévi-Strauss’s cognitivism. He summarizes it in six main points. ‘Emotions,’ he writes, ‘are essentially appraisals, that is, they are judgments of situations based on cultural beliefs and values’ (p. 8; point 1). As such, they are ‘constitutive for the individual’ (point 2), ‘implicate in some way agent responsibility’ (point 4), ‘involve moral judgments’ (point 5), and ‘have consequences for the way individuals relate and for how social systems are variously constructed and operate’ (point 6). Much of this is very helpful, and is undoubtedly a salutary warning against the assumption that emotions can be compared unproblematically across cultures. More controversial is his third point: ‘as cultural appraisals, emotions are learned or acquired in society rather than given naturally. They are, therefore, culturally relative, although theorists differ on the degree to which this
is so’ (p. 9). The key admission lies in the subordinate clause: cultural relativity is a matter of degree. The emotions experienced by people in other cultures, for all that they are ‘constructed’ differently, are not entirely different, as the ethnography presented in this book clearly demonstrates.

Most of what Lynch says is sensible; but in failing to see that there are different types of emotion, and that while some may be entirely culturally constructed, others are so to varying degrees, he falls, without seeming fully aware of it, into an indefensible relativism. ‘There are probably no universal, objective situations,’ claims Lynch, ‘that, without agent appraisal, automatically trigger in humans innate emotional responses such as humor or fear’ (ibid.). Surely small children all over the world are frightened by loud noises.

India has its own traditional ‘high culture’ theory of emotions or rasa, as Lynch notes, and this is relevant for the chapters of the book that deal with Vaishnavism, the religious system that gives salvific value to prescribed types of love felt for Krishna. The full implications of this are not worked out, however. Since the book is a collection of conference papers, the coverage is not systematic. Of the nine ethnographic chapters, five deal with Vaishnavism (including Marglin’s piece on rituals in the temple of Jagannath, Puri). From these one gets considerable insight into internal Vaishnava debates about which emotions are most salvific, and whether sexual ones are permitted. Three focus on the family, and one on the mutual appraisals (especially in relation to feelings of honour and shame) of immigrant and north American convert Sikhs in Canada. Unfortunately, none of the papers deals with those significant South Asian religious traditions, to which Vaishnavism is a reaction, that emphasize the suppression of emotion, though hints of this are found in Trawick’s subtle analysis of love within the Tamil family, where there is much stress on the need to hide and control love.

Vatuk’s paper comparing old age in India and the USA is perceptive and moving. She tacks on some remarks about social constructionism at the end, but does not convince; if anything her data highlight similarities in the emotional experience of old age, for all the well-known different expectations about living arrangements. Kolenda’s long and detailed paper on the use of humour, based on data collected in the 1950s among low-caste Chuhras, is also excellent. Peter Bennett’s paper, like Marglin’s, focusing on the role of emotion in Vaishnavite ritual, is very good. Lynch’s own ethnographic paper on Krishnaite Brahmans in Mathura is also fascinating, since they overturn many of the normal stereotypes of the Brahman.

In short, there is much excellent ethnography in this volume, and Lynch has certainly performed a service by stating so explicitly the presuppositions of social constructionism. However, the material is by no means uniformly marshalled to support the conclusions Lynch draws from it, nor can the volume be said to constitute a study of the ‘the social construction of emotion in India’ as such. Rather it provides fascinating glimpses of how some emotions are viewed and used in some contexts and some places in India.

DAVID N. GELLNER
PAUL HOCKINGS (ed.), Blue Mountains: The Ethnography and Biogeography of a South Indian Region, Delhi: Oxford University Press 1989. xiii, 376 pp., Bibliography, Index, Plates, Maps, Tables, Figures. £22.50.

This book, consisting of fifteen papers, is intended to provide an interdisciplinary introduction to the Nilgiri Hills or Blue Mountains of Tamil Nadu, south-west India. Only seven papers are purely ethnographic, the remainder dealing successively with the environment, primatology, prehistory, language, an urban study of the town of Gudalur, colonial history and cultural ecology; there is also an introduction by David Mandelbaum. I concentrate here on the ethnographic papers, many of which follow the Dumontian view that groups like the Toda, Kota, Badaga and Kurumba, formerly classified as 'tribals', have rather to be treated within the conceptual framework of Hindu society. This perspective is developed above all by Mandelbaum, but also by Walker, Hockings, and to a certain extent Hockings and Kapp, although the Kurumba groups pose special problems. In fact, the interactions of these various groups might rather prompt a re-evaluation of some leading theories about Hinduism and caste, though this is not attempted by any of the authors.

David Mandelbaum's paper, a reprint of his famous essay of 1956, showing in detail the relations of the Kota with their neighbours, concludes simply that their social system is in most respects close to caste. Anthony Walker's paper on the Toda describes their traditional features and the modern developments they have undergone. Paul Hockings' paper on the Badaga includes data on their history, economy and ecology as well as ethnography, and he also deals with their myth of the ancestress Hette. Although he notes the connection of this theme with the Puranic literature, I would not call the myth 'a parochialized version' of it; the directions of influence are not so obvious.

A joint essay by Hockings and Dieter Kapp shows that within the Kurumba category, which defines the 'outsiders' in this remote area, are found at least seven separate ethnic groups, each with its own habitat, language and culture, though all live variously from shifting cultivation, hunting, gathering and the exchange of forest products. Aspects of the religion and ideology of the Alu Kurumba are described briefly, based mainly on data collected by Kapp, who has published extensively on them. The authors argue that they have quite elaborate rituals and mythology that cannot be regarded as isolated from the surrounding culture. However, Nurit Bird-David's treatment of another group of Kurumba, the Naiken or Jenu Kurumba, differs in stressing the low degree of importance they give to ritual and religion generally, though her further argument, that what for a Badaga or a Toda is a ritual service might for a Kurumba be just another economic transaction, is not entirely convincing. The essay by Noble and William Jebadhas on the Irula, who live on the eastern slopes of the Nilgiri, is concerned with their traditional economy and modern changes.

All in all, the book is to be recommended to anyone interested in the anthropology of this region and of South Asia generally.

LUKAS WERTH

With his 1974 dissertation and its first published version in 1980, the American anthropologist Daniel Neuman gave Western students fresh impetus for investigating the organization of Hindustani (North Indian classical) music. Neuman spent two years (1969–71) as a practical student of music in Delhi, and during and after this time he used his close association with Hindustani music circles to collect a large amount of information on the artistic as well as the familial and social character of his musician subjects, including also centres other than Delhi. His book showed the contribution that 'ethnomusicology' might make to our appreciation of how Indian music is propagated and practised, and his amalgam of music-technical and socio-cultural study has been a most effective model for a number of successful works published more recently. Ten years later, the book has been reissued in paperback with a new preface and a few supplementary bibliographical references. To the latter many more might (and should) have been added. Merely as an illustration of the kind of response the first edition received I would mention Regula Qureshis's highly positive review essay in *Asian Music* (Vol. XV, 1984).

The main body of Neuman's text remains essentially unchanged. Though ideally he would have taken account of subsequent research, which has improved our understanding of the history of Indian music, he argues that the major conclusions that he reached earlier remain largely intact. These concern the social grouping of hereditary and professional musicians, the changes brought about by modern patronage systems, and the impact of the urbanization of classical music traditions over the last hundred years. Rereading this book, one has a sense of returning to a primary source, such is the currency of several of Neuman's themes. Some of these have now become such familiar stuff that, if treated as new ground, they would appear to verge on the banal; we must remind ourselves that Neuman really was one of the first Western scholars to publish good accounts of what he calls the 'enculturation' of Hindustani musicians—their training, their becoming artists, their remaining at the forefront, their riaz (practice) procedures, and so on. The chapters on musicianship are thus to be viewed as essential and stimulating reading for Western newcomers, students perhaps not only of Hindustani music and musicology but even other fields of Indian culture that bear scrutiny from a sociological perspective. One might also say that it is due to Neuman that something new is now needed. Other chapters have weathered excellently, and it is refreshing to see how well observed and well expressed is so much of Neuman's material on the 'organisation of specialist knowledge' and the 'adaptive strategies' of musicians in the modern world. It has been scarcely possible for serious writers on Hindustani music to ignore his work, and often enough the sociological arguments subsequently presented by Western scholars have been prefigured by those in 'Neuman 1980', even when these have had to be modified.
If there is an underlying problem in the method, it comes in any attempt to generalize, to proceed from observation of one social and professional part of the mesh to statements about the whole Hindustani musical culture. But here we must be fair to Neuman, as he is himself careful to draw attention to this problem in the preface. He comments that his focus is that of the Delhi Muslim scene, and that he has made claims that ‘probably overemphasize the Delhi reality’. He remains convinced, however, that other areas are ‘derivative from the Delhi tradition’. Differently focused regional studies have already begun to test and modify his conclusions, and will continue to do so.

There is a related snare inherent in the use of terminology. Such concepts as ‘community’, ‘caste’, ‘professional group’ and ‘lineage’ are, as Neuman himself knows, and others have tirelessly emphasized, fluid; questions have to be open enough for informants to be able to represent their own concepts uninhibitedly, and nothing ties the answer down more than the supplying of a supposedly specific, but in reality ‘polysemic’ term like gharana. Neuman is in fact quite judicious in his conclusions about the range of meanings to be accorded to such terms, and a careful reading shows that he is aware of the limits to their usefulness, but one sometimes suspects that his arguments about such categories as kalawant (artist), biradari (‘brotherhood’, but often, he believes, an important concept of endogamous and professional community) and khandan (lineage), and the interrelation of these, might have had a different shape if his questions had been formed differently.

Despite these problems, however, Neuman’s book remains an important source, a valuable introduction for students, and a delightful read for any enthusiast of North Indian music.

JONATHAN KATZ


The Hidden Musicians is an ethnography of music-making in Milton Keynes. It describes ‘an invisible system structuring and maintaining local music up and down the country’—a hidden world that none the less involves staggering human and material resources, and binds together (from the point of view of the musicians and their audiences) the social fabric of the town. This system is discussed by Finnegan in terms of more or less discrete ‘musical worlds’, namely classical music, brass bands, music theatre, jazz, country and western, folk, rock and pop. These worlds provide ‘pathways’ through the city, means by which people can organize urban time and space and consequently develop a sense of ‘personal
meaning and control’ (p. 304) in an environment that is for most a monument to faceless modernism.

The book starts with the premise that music-making is first and foremost social activity and not a corpus of disembodied texts encapsulated in musicians’ memories or written scores. This focus on process rather than product is hardly news to ethnomusicologists, but what distinguishes *The Hidden Musicians* is an ethnographic approach that is both detailed and sensitive to the nuances of local musical life. Perhaps the most immediate theoretical point (both a conclusion and a premise) is that local-level music-making should be the object of ethnographic study at all, that careful and systematic observation about the role of music in urban English social life is generally lacking, while its significance is widely discussed.

Seeing musical worlds as systems of practices, Finnegan delineates the common patterns of rehearsal, organization of venues and audiences, and performance, and argues on this basis that music-making in Milton Keynes is characterized by a ‘plurality of equally authentic musics’, a fact that constitutes ‘one major conclusion of this book’ (p. 181). This formulation alerts the reader to the slippery notion of ‘authenticity’, a word with a long history in musicological writing and cultural theory. To see musics principally as processes that organize time and space in more or less similar ways is to attribute less significance to their cultural and ideological loads: for example, rock, with its aesthetic of anti-authoritarian ‘authenticity’; country and western, with its ‘Wild West’ mock shoot-outs; brass bands, with their collectivist and highly competitive ethos; and church choirs, with their quiet dedication to the rituals of the ecclesiastical year. All of these musics have histories (of which their practitioners are usually highly conscious) and technologies that bring people together in specific ways and in response to specific values, and in which the notion of ‘authenticity’ itself is constituted in quite different terms. Clearly, there are significant ‘authenticities’ to be distinguished, a fact that renders Finnegan’s notion of ‘equal authenticity’ highly problematic.

The equality of authenticity shared by these worlds is underscored by Finnegan’s assertion that class is on the whole not a relevant factor in local-level music in Milton Keynes. This is argued on the basis of the fact that rock musicians are not predominantly working class (p. 312), that local classical music involves people from a wide range of backgrounds (p. 313), and that musicians as a whole deny a class component in the constitution of their bands and audiences (p. 314). Country and western bands and audiences, however, appear to be a notable exception. They are predominantly train drivers, lorry drivers, bus drivers, gas, electricity and water workers, builders, factory line-workers, or unemployed. Significantly, they interact less with other musical worlds. It might be argued that the formation of musical tastes, values and practices in this particular context has a clear class referent. Class might indeed, as Finnegan argues, be too vague and general a concept to explain involvements of particular people in other musical genres. Without crudely mapping genres on to class (a position explicitly rejected,
for example, by the Marxian theorist Adorno), one can still argue that musical activity is shaped by the play of power in the wider society, and can be understood in relation to it, if not simply read off it. One is left with the impression that parents push musically gifted children through Associated Board examinations for reasons more to do with the accumulation of cultural capital than the construction of pathways through the city, and that country and western, with its kitsch glamour and shoot-outs, more than any other pathway, will be ‘particularly emotive for individuals regarded in some way as “marginal”’ (p. 328).

In the tradition of the best ethnographic writing, this is a book that is so rich in accessible detail that readers can construct and follow their own critical pathways through the text. The book’s scope, technique and style have already set an agenda for popular music studies; it is ‘ethnomusicology at home’ at its best and will provide a significant model for anthropologists interested in the ways in which music shapes the experience of urban living.

MARTIN STOKES


Is this the book we have been waiting for? Margaret Kartomi has collected together many different classification systems, both from literate and oral traditions, to explain ‘how various of the world’s cultures classify their musical instruments and instrumental ensembles, together with the concepts of instrument upon which the schemes are based’ (p. xv).

The book is divided into three main sections: ‘On the Nature of Classifications of Musical Instruments’, ‘Classification in Societies Oriented toward Literary Transmission’ and ‘Classification in Societies Oriented toward Oral Transmission’. In the first section Kartomi explains and outlines various aspects of classifications. In the first chapter, ‘Any Classification Is Superior to Chaos’, she deals with the needs for classification and the ways in which the response to these needs shapes the perception of the classified. In the second section Kartomi describes systems from China, India, Sri Lanka, Tibet, ancient Greece, Europe and the Arab world. In studying literary transmission, she is able to examine classification over a long period of time and to show, especially for the Chinese and Greek cases, continuity and change. In the case of the Javanese system, she considers both the oral and the more recent development of literary schemes. Kartomi sums up a surprising number of schemes with admirable lucidity and succinctness. Chapter 11, ‘The Expanding Concept of Instruments in the West during the Nineteenth and
Twentieth Centuries’, contains brief abstracts of each of the systems that have been devised in the course of the last hundred years, that is, eighteen different examples. In this chapter alone she provides the first clear and impartial guide to the subject ever compiled.

In the third section, the oral traditions described are those of Mandailing, Minankabau, T’boli, some West African systems, the ‘Are’are and Finnish Karelia. These examples are drawn primarily from her own fieldwork. Not surprisingly this is a far shorter section, 69 as opposed to 176 pages, but it only serves to demonstrate the very different concepts that can underlie classifications and how these relate directly to the ways in which the instruments themselves are perceived.

Throughout, one is constantly being made aware of the limitations of the systems used by the literate ‘West’: indeed, not only their limitations but the ways in which they have stultified research by encouraging investigators to present their fieldwork in their own terms, rather than to discover the indigenous schemes that can teach us so much about concepts of musical instruments, music and even social organization. Kartomi also explains how these literate systems of Western academe were compiled mainly by museum curators out of a desire to classify material, often badly documented, in their collections. For this reason, these systems all suffer by being exclusively ethnocentric. This has been to the detriment of any fieldwork collecting that has relied on them exclusively. Many of those collecting musical instruments have used only Western systems as their guides, and the resulting fieldwork has often been insensitive to, or ignorant of any considerations of indigenous schemes of classification.

*On Concepts and Classification of Musical Instruments* is both a thought-provoking exercise on classification and a useful source-book on the subject. It has a good bibliography, which deals with literate classifications from many different traditions. One element of this that I find inconsistent, however, is Kartomi’s inclusion of primary sources in some cases and translations in others. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Latin treatises. It might have been more useful if she had included both the original text and the translation. Also the attribution of masculinity to the late Claudie Marcel-Dubois, eminent French musicologist and collaborator with Rivière on the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires I find a whimsical mistake. But Kartomi’s thoroughness in finding published classification systems, even those in the newsletter of the ICOM Committee of Music Museum Curators is remarkable.

Each section of the book is well provided with diagrams and charts illustrating the different systems. This, together with the clear text, goes a long way to helping the reader to a closer understanding and appreciation of the many different ways in which instruments can be classified. Yes, with a few minor provisos, this is the book we have been waiting for.

HÉLÈNE LA RUE


These long-awaited volumes have at last been published and together mark a significant step in the first half-century of the discipline of ethnomusicology. The ever-growing numbers of musical ethnographies are now complemented by a standard reference book for the student of ethnomusicology and an outlet for British academics to publish scholarly work in their specific areas. Together they will provide valuable research materials not only for ethnomusicologists but also for anthropologists, musicologists, sociologists, linguists and others.

*Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, one of the New Grove handbooks in musicology, brings together contributions from seventeen authors, ranging from some of the founding figures of the field in the early 1950s to younger researchers who are setting the trend for the years to come. The four parts to the volume—"Introduction", "Theory and Method", "Ethical Concerns and New Directions" and "Reference Aids"—provide an essential source for the student of ethnomusicology and clearly explain the basic theoretical and practical problems that are likely to be encountered during research and fieldwork. All the basic and essential points concerning the discipline are covered, many of which will be of particular interest to anthropologists and others working in related areas. The topics covered include ethnomusicology, fieldwork, field technology, ethnography of music, transcription, notation, analysis, historical ethnomusicology, iconography, organology, the biology of music-making, dance, ethics, gender, commercialism, preservation and new trends. Clear explanations of issues that have concerned the field since its beginnings, together with more recent ones, are succinctly deliberated with a full chronological bibliography at the end of each discussion.

While anthropologists generally have shunned the study of music systems, perhaps because they consider it to be the work of musicians, this book provides an initial frame in which the fieldworker may approach the study of music. Even when the analysis of musical style is considered (Blum, pp. 165–218), it shows that the researcher does not have to be a musicologist to attempt to understand music. In particular, the analysis of the structure of music is shown by many means other than staff notation.

Of particular relevance to students of ethnomusicology are the five reference aids that examine and list research resources, instrument collections, instrument classification, pitch measurement and national mains frequencies and voltages together with television standards. Each of these sections provides reference material in one complete volume that would otherwise be spread among several publications in the discipline.
Ethnomusicology: An Introduction is sure to become a standard textbook and reference aid for all ethnomusicologists for the foreseeable future. It summarizes the theoretical aspects of the discipline in a way previously unmatched in a single volume.

The new annual British Journal of Ethnomusicology replaces a former Bulletin and, according to its editorial preface, ‘is intended primarily to provide a professional forum for UK-based ethnomusicologists’. The first volume includes reviews of books and recordings, and eight scholarly articles ranging from analyses of distinct genres and musical instruments to a discussion of music education and ethnomusicology. The inclusion of indigenous notation systems, instead of the large amount of staff notation that is used for examples and transcriptions, would have been a welcome sight and might do much to draw a larger readership, especially from anthropologists and specialists of specific cultural areas. Still, the music examples are generally accompanied by good textual descriptions. The publication of a British journal of this type will be welcomed by the growing numbers of musicologists, anthropologists and sociologists interested in the musics of the world and in the way that the study of music can contribute to other fields.

HENRY JOHNSON

JAMES MCLAUGHLIN, My Friend the Indian (with an introduction by Robert M. Utley), Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1989. xvii, 434 pp., Index, Illustrations. £10.35.

James McLaughlin was the agent of the Sioux agency at Devils Lake in Dakota Territory from 1876 until 1881. It was he who ordered the Indian Police to arrest Sitting Bull in December 1890, to bring an end to his ghost dance crusade. This incident resulted in several deaths, including that of Sitting Bull. For a quarter of a century from 1895, McLaughlin served as US Indian inspector, during which time he became familiar with every tribe and reservation and, according to Robert M. Utley’s introduction, made friends with hundreds of Indians. He was a stern moralist, paternalistic, confident of the superiority of White civilization, and convinced that the policy of allotting land in severality (giving each Indian head of family an individually owned farm) was the right path for Indian advancement. He was very much a man of his times, which comes through in his writings and the opinions he expresses.

Sensibilities easily offended by such opinions may not find this a congenial book to read. Nevertheless, it is graphically written, with accounts of incidents in Indian life based on firsthand knowledge or information derived from the Indians concerned. He relates the Battle of the Little Big Horn as remembered by the Sioux who survived it. He gives a lengthy description of the events leading to Sitting Bull’s death and of course a justification of his own involvement, which
came under criticism after the event. He recounts his own role in negotiating several treaties, many of which have been reviewed in the courts in recent years. One chapter describes Captain Jack and the Modoc war of 1873. Perhaps the most gripping part of the book is the story of the flight of the Nez Perces through Idaho and Montana in 1877 in search of the Canadian border and under the leadership of Chief Joseph, who told his version of the incident to McLaughlin in June and July 1900.

The original was published in 1910. This version includes the chapters left out of the original, two of which have to do with Sitting Bull.

R. H. BARNES


The aim of this volume is to overcome the excessive specialization and parochialism that has resulted from an increased intensity of research into southwestern archaeology, the history of which is now over 100 years old. The twenty-three papers of this collection are divided into five sections relating to specific topics: 'Hunters and Gatherers', 'Transitions to Sedentism', 'Elites and Regional Systems', 'Protohistoric Period: Transitions to History' and 'History of Southwestern Archaeology'. The individual articles are diverse and, of course, their evaluation requires specialized knowledge. The authors cover such matters as residential mobility, inter-regional exchanges, disease episodes and their consequences, increased dependence on maize cultivation, and population growth. The final chapter describes the clash between Jesse Walter Fewkes and Harold Sellers Colton in the 1920s in which Fewkes defended nineteenth-century approaches against the later, more chronologically oriented, archaeology.

Among the views expressed are that the interpretation of hunters and gatherers derived from the Man the Hunter symposium and distilled in Sahlins' essay on the 'Original Affluent Society', an image 'spawned by the idealism of the 1960s', diverted attention from some critical sources of stress brought to light by more recent work. Debates about élites and social complexity have come full circle, but complexity is difficult to define, in that complex social systems exhibit many behaviours that are irreducible to a single structure and are highly unpredictable. Furthermore, the available data do not easily fit the archaeologists' formal and abstract models. The level of social complexity of the protohistoric Western Pueblo people has not been demonstrated. It is not known whether nearby villages were politically integrated, nor whether there were alliances between village
groups. Beyond a knowledge that goods were exchanged, there is no understanding of how the exchange systems worked. Furthermore, the similarity of ethnographic and prehistoric social institutions cannot be taken for granted or dismissed.

R. H. BARNES
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OBITUARY NOTICE

LYNN TESKEY

7 January 1949 – 1 March 1995

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the death of Lynn Teskey, a former student of social anthropology at Oxford, on 1 March 1995 at the age of forty-six. We hope to publish an obituary in a future issue.

The Editors
HIERARCHICAL REVERSAL TEN YEARS ON
(AFRICA, INDIA, POLYNESIA), PART I:
CONTEXTS AND LEVELS

SERGE TCHERKÉZOFF

(translated by Robert Parkin)

Foreword I: Contexts and Levels

In 1983, a number of British and French anthropologists organized a conference in Oxford with the intention of examining certain propositions in the ‘holistic’ method of Louis Dumont. Contexts and Levels, the JASO Occasional Paper in which the conference papers were published, has recently been reissued. This event has encouraged me to clarify here an aspect of my own contribution to that volume.

I have profited from numerous discussions with Raymond Jamous and Dominique Casajus, both of whom read an early version of this text. I have benefited from our common interest in ‘two-level’ models of the relation between the ideological and the empirical, in which the second term is seen to be fully recognized, a far cry from any holism that would be forcibly reduced to the translation of the cosmological discourse of a given society. My views on ‘reversal’ as a type of relation between these two terms have their origin in a previous work (Tcherkézoff 1983; cf. 1987), which had itself benefited from the collective reflections of an earlier group (RCP 436, CNRS) then under the direction of Louis Dumont. The Samoan example, only invoked in passing here, was discussed in detail with my colleagues in the seminar ‘Identités et Transformations des Sociétés Océaniennes’ (GDR ‘ITSO’). I am also grateful to Robert Parkin for translating the original French text of this essay into English. This article is in two parts. The second part will appear in the next issue of JASO (Vol. XXV, no. 3).
I put forward there a formal and general definition of 'hierarchical opposition'.

My article concerned white/black dualism in the sacrificial code of the Nyamwezi of East Africa. Written specifically for the conference, it summarized an analysis dating from 1979, the year in which the manuscript of *Le Roi nyamwezi: la droite et la gauche* was completed. Using a limited number of examples, the article presented one of the general results of the book, namely the three forms of a hierarchy of levels that the actualization of a hierarchical opposition might assume in social practice. One of these forms, reversal, must now be presented differently, because it has since become clear to me that many of us formerly had too narrow a view of this type of reversal (also called 'a change of level', at least in a top > down sort of model).

As regards hierarchical reversal, the ambiguity developed on two planes. To begin with, it is something that occurred to me while observing the hierarchy of levels in Samoan society from 1984, and more clearly from 1987. On this plane, the discussion remains within the domain of holistic anthropology. It leads to the following question concerning hierarchical reversal. When passing between two relations that are formally similar, do we have simply a reversal of superiority between them, or do we have a reversal that is simultaneously a change in the nature of the asymmetric relation? It seems to me that we are in the second situation: we pass from a relation of 'encompassment' to a relation of 'inequality', from an asymmetric reference that is itself a relation, to a substantialist reference.

On the second plane, the ambiguity is situated in whether or not we distinguish between a model with 'contexts' and a model with 'levels'.

These two forms of ambiguity, above all the second, appear in the commentary that Needham, in his work *Counterpoints*, addresses explicitly to Dumont and myself concerning the idea of 'hierarchy' (Needham 1987: 140–42 and chs. 7 and 8). Needham firmly, and rightly, criticizes a particular model of reversal, concerning which he says that Dumont has completely missed the goal he had set himself in putting it forward, for there is nothing new and nothing hierarchical in it—and that I had naively adopted it in order to analyse Nyamwezi ritual. The problem is that the model has nothing to do with what actually constitutes 'hierarchical reversal' (see below, section 3). Certainly, an inattentive reading of Dumont, followed by one of Tcherkézoff, might lead one to a cultural reversal in terms of contexts (such is the logic that Needham puts forward in the spirit of his own critical processes) as well as to a reversal one might call structural (a

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1. I have retained the name given to this relation by Dumont (1972). However, I continue to be interested in the search for a formal definition of a structural character, as can be seen from my 1983 work on dualistic classification, while Dumont put the accent more on the hierarchy of 'ideas' (when one idea becomes 'important', it 'acquires the faculty of encompassing its contrary'; see below). At the same time, Dumont has contributed greatly to progress in the formal search through his examination of the logic of encompassment between two ideas (Dumont 1979a, 1979b, 1982).

2. The publication of the French edition of the work (Tcherkézoff 1983) was somewhat delayed.
two-level structure) and which is the only one that appears to me to be useful. But I believe these two interpretations must be very firmly distinguished: only the second belongs to holistic logic, which is itself a tool of social anthropology, at least when this is choosing to view ‘societies’ as Maussian ‘totalities’.

Thus in striving to clarify the presuppositions and consequences of the concept of ‘hierarchical reversal’, I will offer at the same time a response to the main criticisms that Needham has addressed explicitly to myself over many pages of his book.3 These criticisms have been described by Beidelman, in his review (1989) of my book, as ‘devastating’ (a joke, let us hope) and as putting an end to Dumont’s ‘dubious’ ideas, which I have mistakenly searched for the slightest grain of common sense.

The discussion I will be pursuing here has two aspects. On the one hand, we will see that Needham has not understood at all the analytical potential of the Dumontian idea of hierarchy, since he reduces the notion of level to that of context. On the other hand, the model of reversal certainly needs some clarification, being accompanied as it is by presuppositions that, so long as they remain unspoken, seem capable of promoting a false interpretation, as has perhaps happened with Needham.4 The explanation is equivalent to presenting a choice.

3. The intention of this work is to examine ‘the idea of opposition’, but a reading of it soon shows that its central concern is its critique of Dumont 1979a and 1982 in chapter 7, and Tcherkezoff 1983 in chapter 8. In these works Dumont and Tcherkezoff had criticised that method of analysis that takes the form of binary tables, in respect of which certain of Needham’s works (1960, 1967, 1973) had appeared exemplary. Needham freely accepts the lessons of the Nyamwezi ethnography that I had analysed (he contests my critique of his own analysis of the Meru case), but he regards the holistic model as burdening it without offering any advantages, a complex vocabulary concealing a conceptual void. He criticizes in advance any attempt to develop Dumont’s ideas, for when all is said and done, the model Dumont proposes will be nothing more than a new vocabulary resting uselessly on the obvious, i.e. the possibility of a reversal of an inequality when one changes context (a > b in C1, but b > a in C2). We will see here that Needham actually reduces hierarchical reversal to a symmetric or converse reversal and, therefore, levels to contexts. His critique tilts at the windmills that his own imagination has set up; at any rate, they are not found in either Dumont or Tcherkezoff. At the same time, it is revealing of the substantialist view that all too often arises spontaneously when faced with the idea of hierarchy, and can lead to blindness when faced with the propositions of holistic anthropology.

4. In criticising my analyses in chapter 8, Needham’s explains that this critique arises directly out of the one he has raised against Dumont’s model in chapter 7. Here, then, is where the debate is situated. The book stems from a series of lectures on ‘Opposition’ given by Needham in 1984, an important part of which, I am told, was dedicated to this double critique. Needham had in fact just read my book, in French. Most of the other English commentaries on Le Roi nyamwezi are recent and follow the appearance of the English translation (1987). Apart from Beidelman (1989), who refers to Needham’s critique, these commentaries are not on the same plane as Needham’s (a theory of reversal between social practices) but limit themselves to suggesting that a linguistic model such as marked/unmarked would suffice to give expression to the project. As might be expected, this criticism assumes that questions of value and
Is one concerned with types of cultures or with types of structures? Is hierarchy an ordered list of references conceived in a particular world view, all situated as such in the representation of the members of the culture, or is it a structure of levels that necessarily results from the 'comparative' situation (that arising between 'observer' and 'society')?

These points will form the first and main part of the discussion here. In the second part, I shall deal with the other criticisms that Needham has formulated against my statements on the 'binary method' and its 'symmetrical' aspect, and against a particular remark of Dumont's concerning two forms of hierarchy, one in which the whole problem of ideology is confronted. This second part will conclude the present discussion and, as far as I am concerned, finally close a debate that began fifteen years ago (Tcherkezoff 1977, Dumont 1978), was extended in my book in 1983, and was transformed into a polemic by Needham in his book Counterpoints.

Foreword II: On 'Hierarchy'

For purposes of the present discussion, let us recall that the expression 'hierarchical opposition' defines the only dualistic oppositions in which one term encompasses another. Encompassment does not signal only superiority. Two elements can be in a relation of superior/inferior in reference to something else, something ‘outside’ them. In this case, one element can ‘have’ more access than the other to the nature of this reference. But encompassment is a difference that does not make reference to the outside; one of the two terms reveals itself as constituting the reference for the whole of the relation. An opposition that is simply ‘distinctive’ (for example, right/left, given initially to a child as a geometrical pointer to enable him to orient himself on a blank page) is not hierarchical. The distinction invariably refers to an external reference, whether this concerns a universe of discourse, once contextualized (the universal geometric distinction of the space-plan formed by a sheet of paper), or any substantialized concept that properly defines the nature of the two opposed terms, differentiating them secondarily as to the amount of this nature that they possess ('more' or 'less' blue, big, etc.).

This difference, between encompassment and distinction, is itself a binary model constructed, it must be realized, as a distinctive opposition; and every analysis progresses in stages, each formed of binary schemes. But we are then at
a metalevel, that of the analysis of models, where social ‘science’ discourses with itself, using the means that the history of ideas in the West has given it. We are no longer standing at the viewpoint of a particular society seen as a totality. This analytical difference distinguishes on the one hand the hierarchical opposition, and on the other—and conjointly—distinction, and substantial inequality and equality, all three being statements of difference or identity in reference to something else.

The essential consequence for anthropology, one that is rather unexpected and thus often neglected, is that hierarchy is neither substantial equality nor any substantial inequality such as social stratification. These are all distinctions and inequalities with a substantial reference: one term possesses more than another of a part of the quality that forms the reference. Hierarchy is a difference in the reference to the whole that defines the relation. One of the two terms therefore is the whole. An unequal superiority may be at work from one end of the society to the other, but none the less it does not refer to the ‘society’ as such, i.e. it does not refer to a whole.

In France, for instance, the means of access to knowledge, power, material wealth etc. are unequally distributed, something that gives us one of the most non-egalitarian social systems in western Europe. But this is not the point of observation from which France appears to form ‘society’ in terms of comparative social anthropology. In fact, for all Frenchmen—those who draw profit from this inequality as well those who try to suppress it—the ‘system’ of this state of affairs resides elsewhere: one invokes ‘the capitalist system’, ‘the Western economy’, ‘the price paid for democracy’ (in liberal discourse), etc. Where, therefore, is the ‘France’ in question? This ‘society’ makes itself visible, at least in part, in the political domain. This is what is supposed to institute and perpetuate the value of ‘equality’ (in universalist–individualist terms, the rights of ‘man’, ‘natural’ equality etc.), which can then be contradicted by economic inequality. It thus appears that the contradiction is secondary, since inequality appears as one of the inevitable consequences of political equality, which is only an equality of access to those arenas in which competition is located. This equality is, for a Frenchman, a universal value, one that France considers itself to illustrate better than other societies, thus becoming the model of what the others ‘ought’ to be. It will therefore surprise no one that the representation of the ‘system’ of reference of political France, throughout the longue durée still with us today, has been situated beyond French territory, whether it is a matter of the Enlightenment, ‘the West’, ‘democracy’ or, more generally and quite simply, ‘Man’.

What our tradition calls politics, and can only be feebly represented as such elsewhere, is here the location of central values, the mainstay of the representation by the French of France as a whole. One can therefore expect to find hierarchical oppositions here. Thus we should not be surprised if Dumont’s analysis (1990) of political relations in France reveals the existence of a hierarchy between the left and the right (the first term being the encompassing one) for the modern period (i.e. 1789 to the dawn of the Fifth Republic, with extensions up to today). This hierarchical opposition defines France in comparison with its neighbours.
Let us illustrate this with reference to a recent problem. In France, the value accorded to the defence of the rights of man (the view of the ‘left’, i.e. identity of the human race, from which one arrives at equality as a principle and at solidarity as action) does not prevent the existence of another level in which certain immigrants are differentiated through inequality and thus constitute the lowest stratum in French social stratification, as ‘immigrant workers’ (the view of the ‘right’, i.e. the maintenance of an unequal real access to substantial values). Stratification can function freely, since it is not opposed to the dominant ideology. This does not constitute rejection, in which those concerned would be regarded as ‘non-human’: the racist attitude in the economic arena (refusing employment by invoking the applicant’s origin) and elsewhere is forbidden, since it would contradict the primary level. Similarly, France has achieved the dishonour of being the last European colonial power, or nearly so, since the stratification between citizens of metropolitan France and those of ‘overseas’ France, while strongly marked, does not contradict the ideology of the ‘left’ at the level where this is mainly situated. One can take the natives’ land, as long as one avoids racism towards them, which is a statutory offence. It is clear that French ideology ignores the fact that ‘delocalization’—to slip into the technocratic language that disguises the real problems—can mean for others the negation of their existence. Indeed, the problem is seen precisely as ‘technical’ and ‘local’ in nature, not global (see Tcherkézoff 1995b). A reading of Needham’s critique will lead us back to these questions of levels.

The three forms that can model the actualization of a hierarchical opposition are unity, conjunction and reversal. I represent them here with a slash to indicate the difference of level: $a / a$ or $b; a + b / a$ or $b; and a > b / b > a$ (Tcherkézoff 1987: 66-8).\(^5\) I still consider these three minimal forms to be appropriate in accounting for the different examples of hierarchy, whether one is dealing with Nyamwezi or other data, but the third form needs clarifying in a major respect. I will start by illustrating the first two forms again. Although they do not entail any ambiguity, they have yet to acquire currency in anthropological analysis, so that one cannot refer the reader to these models as ones long since having found unanimity in the profession. Another difficulty concerns the polysemy of the term ‘hierarchy’ in the discipline. It will therefore be useful to begin with a brief remark on vocabulary.

The only social ‘hierarchies’ with which we are concerned here are orders generated by hierarchical opposition (in the sense of encompassment, which implies that experience is ordered on two levels). This generative process is formally etic (it concerns a model supplied by the observer) and culturally emic.

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5. This formula (‘$a$ or $b$’) goes back to my analysis of the Nyamwezi. Today, I would write ‘$a : b$’ (or ‘$a \mid b$’), the colon (or vertical bar) representing the distinctive opposition in general, which can be ‘$a$ or $b$’, ‘$a > b$’ in terms of inequality, and even $a = b$ in terms of substantial equality (‘...as blue, big, rich etc. as...’). These formulae designate the ‘second level’ of a hierarchy, or more exactly, the ‘reversal’ of a hierarchical opposition (see below).
(the members of the society explicitly refer their differences of status to this opposition). While for the observer the second level 'contradicts' the first, the society sees in it only a context outside the ideology, 'outside the rules', beyond or below the domain of 'status'. Through status, we can designate an explicit system of reference to and membership in the society as in a concrete whole (see below, Tchërkezoff 1989 and 1994–95). Let us note in passing the generality of the fact of 'status' in this definition. In France 'status' is acquired through politics, which is why French politics is engrained in the longue durée of social organization, in history, in land, in kinship networks etc., as we know better these days (Abélès 1989, 1990).

Other 'hierarchies' appear in anthropological works, such as those that rest on substantial inequalities (stratification) or classifications that work by subdivision (for example, genus/species, clans/lineages/families, and other interlocking forms, like segmentation). But it seems that only hierarchies generated by encompassment can construct a 'total' order, the type of order that those concerned represent as an exhaustive enumeration of the society. It is therefore a materialization of value, which in its turn is the place where the society actually reproduces itself partially, yet considers conceptually that it has reproduced itself totally. Here, exhaustiveness does not mean that the order includes the ultimate plane of the most tenuous differentiation—for subdivision readily achieves that if one pushes it far enough—but that the hierarchy includes its possible contradiction in advance. This is why what might appear to be limited to a hierarchy of status under the form of a scale is in fact a hierarchy of two levels, with status being developed on the first level, and hundreds of different positions if need be, while a consecutive but different distinction will dominate on a second level.

The hierarchy that occupies us here, different from any sort of substantialist asymmetry, concerns 'holistic' models of the anthropological conceptualization of the social—society as a 'whole'. This 'whole' is what leads the observer to perceive that the different social relations he encounters are ordered in a non-reciprocal fashion, in which some relations determine others. Instead of having only analogies ($a : b$ 'is like' $c : d$) or a circular order of distinctions ($a$ is to $b$ as $b$ is to $c$ as $c$ is to $a$), we have an order of relations. Hierarchical reversal is one of these holistic relations between relations.

We are in the habit of opposing substantialist models to those that take account of structures. In the former, the distinctions are in nature (see above), and the modification of one term does not necessarily entail the modification of all the others. The enrichment of a class $c$ in an economic stratification of three terms, for example, does not modify the economic weight of $b$ and $a$; if the augmentation experienced by $c$ does not reach the plane of $b$, the order itself remains identical. From the point of view of structures, the element acquires meaning through the relation, and a modification of the first implies that an overall modification is produced upwards. But in social analysis, if the structure goes no further than analogy or circular transitivity, it allows no value to be perceived. In addition to the system of differences, one must also take the trouble to observe
encompassments. In the rest of the discussion, ‘hierarchy’ is to be understood in the sense of holistic hierarchy.

1. Unity: $a / a : b$

One of the two forms that the realization of an encompassment can take is ‘unity’ or ‘hierarchy in the strict sense’. The fundamental principle appears here clearly: one term is the whole ($a$ alone occupies the first level). But on another level, one sees that a part of this whole is distinguished from the whole by means of a distinctive opposition $a : b$, which then confers on the whole the status of a simple pole opposed distinctively: as soon as the analysis encloses within this level the data it has collected on this plane, $a$ becomes simply ‘non-$b$’ and the ‘complementary’ of $b$, as if this plane were the whole or at least a context and thus a domain to which one attributes a meaning by itself. A ‘level', by contrast, only has meaning in a structure—a hierarchical structure—of two levels.

In his 1978 article, which inaugurated, in its second part, a formal approach to the ‘theory of hierarchy’ (to cite the title of his subsequent article, the ‘Postface’ to the 1979 edition of Homo Hierarchicus), Dumont speaks of ‘hierarchy in the strict sense’ (1979a: 812, 1979b). The double status of the ‘part’, at once identical with and contrary to the whole, is emphasized in the ‘Postface’ (1979b). In effect, the first level ($a$) is at once the holistic reference and a relation of encompassment, the ‘principle of unity’ that provides the hierarchy. This last term is taken here in a basic sense to mean an order that is referred to the whole (‘status’ in the broad sense; one notices subsequently, from the fact that this order is ‘observed’, that it generates a hierarchy of levels; see below). The reference is a ‘whole’, it is ‘holistic’ and not universalistic in the substantialist sense (see above). If, with Dumont, we consider (but solely as a metaphor) the linguistic example of Adam and Eve in relation to ‘man / woman’, and then follow him in simultaneously invoking the Indian example of the social position of women (although he does not clarify it ethnographically), we arrive at the following (Dumont 1979a, 1982: 225). On one level, men and women are identified (the human species). On another level, they are opposed (the ‘distinctive’ opposition between the two sexes). It may be that, for the author, this subdivision, so simple in appearance, has to be understood according to a different logic of two levels: there is identity because

6. Substantialism appears when the reference is nothing more than a collection of elements, i.e. when it is the nature common to each element that defines the collection, in short, when it is the element in itself—in Dumontian language, ‘individualism’ as a sociological synonym of philosophical substantialism (Dumont 1966: 49). In view of the ambiguity in culturalist comparison borne by the other term I will retain here the term ‘substantialism’ (see also Tcherkézoff 1993c).
there is unity, but the principle of this unity can be ‘outside’, on a different level, and it can be holistic. One and only one of the two terms ‘is’ (represents) the unity; here ‘man’ = Man. This, in its turn, will be of consequence when we transfer our attention from the pair unity / opposition towards the different contexts of superiority. The ‘unity’ will often be realized as a superiority, that of the term that stands for the whole. At another level (‘empirical’, ‘outside the ideology’), the term that was inferior can become superior. But at this point, one encounters the ambiguity of reversal (see below).

Let us leave on one side the question of universality, which would concern the holistic structure within the ideology (in other words, the ‘sacred’). When the members of the group refer their identity and their interrelations to this ‘group’, will the principle of unity, which will be ‘outside’ the plane of distinctions, always be holistic and, consequently, a source of hierarchy? I believe that it will, but this implies that the ‘holism’ may, to begin with, be extended as a sociological method applicable to any society and will no longer be the label of a type of ‘traditional’ ideology whose consideration then brings about criticism of our spontaneous sociocentrism (even if this view is initially necessary to enable us to envisage a structural-holistic generalization). This also implies generalizing notions of ‘status’ (which was invoked in the discussion of France above) and, as will be attempted later, generalizing the relation of reversal between the two levels, which are always present when an observer, justifiably advancing a universalist project, is observing a total social fact (a society or a part thereof that makes a totality with regard to the question being posed). Here, it will be enough to distinguish, using gender differences as an example, an initial logic in which the whole is a collection defined by the sum of its parts (the human being = man + woman) and another in which the components find their identity (and the definition of their differences) according to their different relations with the same whole (man = man + woman). One term is or represents the whole (more or less), which the other term cannot. Hence we arrive at the paradoxical formula $A = A + B$. We thus distinguish a logic representing ‘methodological individualism’ (see n. 6, above) and another that we shall qualify as ‘methodological holism’ (see Dumont 1982: 222 n.1, on the ‘holon’; 1986: 279, on ‘holism’, second definition obtained ‘by extension’).

As I said in *Le Roi nyamwezi*, every ‘opposition’ encountered in the ethnography should be submitted to this double possibility, instead of being treated immediately as if all the classifications of each culture were organized in a substantialist fashion, whether this be the complementary distinction, which leads to the construction of a binary table, or ‘hierarchical’ subdivision in the usual sense of genus / species. We must also seek the possible unity from which the distinction derives. Possibly we should always do this, if we accept that every social opposition is integrated in some manner into a whole that overrides it. We should then examine this ‘unity’. It might be conjoint (see below), or it might take the form of a single element; but it would be a mistake to reduce it immediately to just one pole and limit ourselves to the search for its complementary pole. Let us consider, for example, those cosmogonic themes in which the two sexes are
supposed to come from a single ancestor. If the latter proves to be ‘man’ (Adam) or ‘girl’ (Sina, in Samoa), it means that we are being invited to listen to the next part of the story. When the two sexes enter the stage, will one of them be presented as a part of the other (Eve, or in Samoa a sister’s brother), without reciprocity? If so, we will understand that the distinction is being preceded and determined by a hierarchy.

Following the 1983 Oxford conference, I met with a very clear example of this configuration on Samoa, namely the hierarchical opposition sister / brother. In both ritual and daily life, the relation between opposite-sex siblings is called feagaiga, which is also the term by which the sister herself is commonly called. In legend, she appears most often with a proper name, which itself never varies, ‘a girl called Sina’ (Sina meaning ‘white’, as a source of light). Nothing similar appears for the brother, and it is significant that, in the same legends, Sina’s brothers have different names. The lesson provided by their exchanges should also be retained: sororal goods (fine mats) wrap, complete and conclude the giving of masculine goods (cooked food). The side of the sister is to that of the brother (i.e. groups of descendants from a brother–sister pair) as God (both the former god, Tagaloa, and the God of today) is to men, the mental source of efficacy (mana, tapuata). On Samoa, although the side of the brother may have power and hold the ancestral ‘title’ that defines his family, it can only ‘make’ power. The side of the sister, on the other hand, is that which ‘gives life’ to the title by allowing transmission between generations and the efficacy of the goods that maintain the status of the title in the village. In the ritual of compensation for murder, the human person is defined as a cooking pig wrapped up in a fine mat, an image that condenses the whole hierarchy between sister and brother.

On the superior level this relationship, defined at the same time as a brother–sister unity (as shown by the kinship terminology) and as the encompassment of the brother by the sister, can be represented by a particular sign: a » b, in which the » represents the idea of one figure contained in the other and thus reminds us of the concentric scheme used by Dumont, partly following Apthorpe (two circles or two rectangles, one inside the other; Dumont 1979b, Apthorpe 1984; see also Dumont 1972: 384 n.118a, Tcherkézoff 1987: 106–12). Let us note that this unique relation includes, in the Samoan example, two cycles of goods that are entirely independent, the mats going from sister to brother, and cooked food (pork; also fish, taro) from brother to sister. In both myth and ritual, the mats wrap the other goods, both literally and figuratively, just as the sister encompasses the brother. Thus level one is broadened out by an internal hierarchy that in a sense announces the possible reversal to us (Fig. 1; and see below). Here, the ‘sister’ suffices to define level one. As a person who ‘is’ a relation (feagaiga), she defines, through her existence, every conceptual space in which the brother himself can find existence and social significance.

The Samoan example is equally instructive for the hierarchy of levels. The second level is very different from the first level, and dependent on it. Each of the two terms appears under a ‘sexual’ aspect in the Samoan sense (male / female,
in homology with the animal world, with the addition of presuppositions concerning the sexual activity of the woman). The superiority then changes in direction and in nature: the brother, as a man, dominates his sister (here, the language of 'strength / weakness') when she is in the situation of being a woman or female. This arises if she commits the error of entering the ‘sexual’ domain (e.g. being accused, as someone unmarried, of maintaining relations with a man, or committing the error of marrying 'at home', in the village where she is a 'daughter', even if the marriage is not incestuous in the usual sense). The brother can and even must then dominate her, through his bearing and his words, and even with blows in the case of an unmarried sister, because, they say, he is the male. The brother–sister relation unfolds in the status system, i.e. the system of titles, which is basically an order of all the ancestral names that have founded a line, a system of reproduction in which everyone is classed, through the name he or she is attached to, as a descendant of a brother or a sister. On this plane, entering sexuality (in the aforementioned sense) breaches a major prohibition for the sister. Once this boundary has been crossed, one enters the world of the distinctive opposition of the sexes, one of great inequality, a setting that, being outside the status system, is not restricted by hierarchical references and is therefore open in part to violence. Everything takes place as if certain adjacent properties qualifying the brother on level one become autonomous (and substantialized) on level two. In both exchanges and ritual the brother certainly possesses the 'strength of the male', which he places at the service of the relationship (he does the gardening and ritual cooking). His relation with the pig defines his 'nocturnal' aspect (the animal, the forest, the raw, the connection between pigs and 'spirits'), but it is he who transforms this aspect into 'light' and who brings to the day what is present in the 'night' (the hunt, stockraising, cooking, service in the house at mealtimes). On level two, 'strength' becomes a characteristic in itself and is no longer at the service of a relationship in which the brother is a part: one finds here, for instance, the strength of the brother towards his sister if she demeans herself, of the man in search of conquests (seduction is an enterprise that men represent and pursue like the chase).

This second level is 'outside the ideology', at least if one understands by 'ideology' the first level of the hierarchy of relations between two terms (here, the whole system of titles, which forms the 'status' structure). But this formal definition of global ideology (global for the totality being considered, since it
defines level one) must be clearly indicated. Otherwise, one leaves for the second level, as Dumont has done, the problematic definition of an ‘unconscious’ or ‘less conscious’ state, something that risks reducing the hierarchy of levels, the effect of a social logic of relations, to a psychology. It can easily be seen that the Samoans are entirely conscious of the fact that the ‘nocturnal’ side of life exists (the vocabulary of ‘night’, ‘the dark’, ‘the black’ and ‘the hidden’) and has its properties (war, relations with the spirits, ‘sexuality’, the homology with animals), just as the ‘diurnal’ side (‘day’, ‘light’, ‘truth’, ‘evidence of understanding’) has its properties (the system of titles, the reference to God, sister » brother relations, and other relations modelled on the latter).

Given this example of an apparent cosmological dichotomy, the errors into which an analysis might fall that contented itself only with a binary table, that sought only ‘analogies’ between the pair day / night (ao / po) and other relations, as Needham and others have done with other examples in Right and Left and elsewhere (Needham (ed.) 1973, Needham 1980), can be imagined. In doing so, one would not notice the specific configuration of the Samoan social relationship between individuals of different sex, in which the male / female relation modifies, on another level, the sister / brother relation.8

Let us summarize what we have said concerning hierarchical ‘unity’. If we return to the example of right / left, we will say that hierarchy is at work whenever we encounter two terms that apparently form a pair of complementary opposites, though in reality, on a certain level, the term ‘right’ (or ‘left’) is at once the whole of the body and its right (or left) side.

2. Conjunction: \(a + b \neq a \cdot b\)

The second form represents configurations in which the whole appears as such, as a third term. In addition to \(a\) and \(b\), there is ‘\(a \text{ and } b\)’. Clearly, the parts are still hierarchized if they belong to the same whole. I have indicated that this type of attachment has as its necessary consequence a difference in the level of attachment. Two identical attachments would signify that we have in fact only encountered a single term, since, in holistic logic, identity is nothing other than the ‘place’ occupied in relation to a whole (Tcherkezoff 1987: 113–16, 1986a, 1986b, 1989). Let us consider systems of titles, with or without ranks, in Polynesia, the caste system in India and all ‘status’ systems, provided we agree thus to extend the term

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7. Dumont has used this terminology a great deal; see his 1966: 16 n., 58 n., 91 n., 106, 295, 319, 323, 355; 1983: 236 n., 255, 258.

8. Shore (1981, 1982: appendix and passim) provides an example of an analysis of these Samoan data in binary mode which might have found a place in Right and Left. For a critique, and an analysis of the sister–brother encompassment, see Tcherkezoff 1992a, 1993b.
and to oppose status (holistic reference) and stratification (substantialist reference) in a distinctive way. On Samoa, the ‘place’ of everyone in the society (in our terms, the limited totality of the individual’s strategic choices, constituted by whatever he enters into in his relationships with various other individuals) depends on the *tulaga* or ‘sitting place’ of the family head in the village council, which is, within the ceremonial village ‘circle’ (the circle of ‘titles’), the position of the ‘title’ defining the ‘family’ to which the individual in question belongs.

It was conjunction that attracted me towards reflecting formally on hierarchy when, in 1975–7, I analysed an East African ethnography in which a given term (in this case, the sacred king) is at once the sum of all the distinctive oppositions in the thought of the society and something more than the simple sum or collection of these terms. What is entailed by the fact that the Nyamwezi king is simultaneously the first personage of the domestic domain and the first figure of the wild domain, the consecrated ‘cattle’ and the murderous ‘lion’, this giving him efficacy in his sacrificial work, in which he transforms the external powers of death into domestic powers of life (Tcherkézoff 1980, 1981, 1983, 1985b, 1986a, 1986b, 1989)? In a sense, a way of reversing the usual order that prevails in the analysis of sacred kinship must be found. Instead of limiting ourselves to modelling royal symbolism in such a way as to ‘unify’ a posteriori all the differences represented in the vision of the day-to-day world, we must examine how the terms of these diverse oppositions are represented as the parts of a king who is himself considered to be a whole (the well-known equivalence between the sacred king and the world). Moreover, this view applies very generally to all places that enjoy ritual efficacy, to all *mana* objects and *mana* persons (Adler 1987; Tcherkézoff 1986b, 1989, 1991b).

On one level, we have ‘*a* and *b*’ as something ‘more’ that *a* adds to *b*, for ‘*a* and *b*’ is the source of differentiation between ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’. Thus the holistic conjunction should not be confused with addition (sum, collection, complementarity). For example, it does not constitute the human race, which regroups men and women, but it can constitute an androgynous ritual figure, as is the case with the Nyamwezi king, or with a pair of twins differentiated by sex or by order of birth, as in Dogon cosmology, or in the Nyamwezi court ritual concerning twins. The difference is then posed within the unity. This, at least, is what the ritual demonstrates. The unity is there from the start, but by itself it is unproductive, for it is only a singularity (perfect twins, cosmogony with a single gender, etc.). Once the difference has been established, the unity becomes productive of life and consequently productive of numerous distinctions, while, retrospectively, it is established as a holistic unity (Tcherkézoff 1981; 1987: 67–8, 89–92, 127–31, and see references to unicité in index; 1986b).

By way of contrast to these propositions, let us refer to Needham’s article on ‘unilateral figures’ (mythical personages whose bodies consist only of a half, whether right or left). The author fails to posit the difference between singularity and unity, as if, once again, ‘symbolic’ unity and duality could be considered outside their social references, in a landscape in which the sole indicators the mind
has to observe are here ‘ones’, there ‘twos’, ‘unilateralities’ and ‘dyads’ (Needham
1980: ch. 1). This criticism has been formulated elsewhere by Héritier-Augé
(1991), who accuses Needham of contenting himself with the statement that the
existence of symmetric forms must be complemented by the existence of such
asymmetric forms as those of the one-sided body (the idea of the symmetry of the
human body would lead naturally to the idea of a cut into two symmetric halves).
Héritier-Augé sees something else here, a statement of the asymmetry of the sexes
(these bodies are in fact masculine), with respect to the total idea of the two sexes
that the whole body can represent. We might think here of the Dogon example,
in which each empirical body, each individual, carries within himself the two sexes
and their asymmetry (in the representation of the fundamental ‘grains’, situated in
their collar-bones; see Tcherkézoff 1987: 90–91). It is appropriate simply to add
to the singularity the possibility of its sometimes being also a unity and therefore
a sign of totality (see ibid.: 63–4, on Nyamwezi ancestors with one foot). In any
case, the presence of asymmetry is fundamental and is not derived from symmetry:
if can signify the presence of totality, in either the form $a = a + b$ (the singularity
then indicates that one side determines, by itself alone, the space of meaning, and
encompasses the other), or under the form $(a + b) > (a) + (b)$ (the singularity is
a primordial lack of distinction in which asymmetry appears in order to create
movement and life (see ibid.: 63–4, 89–92 and n., 128–31).

In his brief remarks in 1978 and 1979, Dumont did not pay any particular
attention to these ternary systems (body / right / left; the body is not only the right
but also right-and-left). Some Nyamwezi examples, as well as that concerning the
chief in ancient China and the Osage case, have shown what is at issue
(Tcherkézoff 1987: 46ff., 58, 97–8, ch. 5 (section 3), see also references to
totalization in the index). The Osage example is a particularly clear one. The
society is a system of moieties (right / left, heaven / earth, etc.) and, moreover,
represents itself to itself, in its totality, through the features of ‘a man’. When the
whole tribe is assembled, the ‘man’ faces the sun, but when, for example, it is time
to make war, he turns round: the moieties change position, around an east–west
axis. At the same time unity, the first form of hierarchy, is at work. Within one
moiety, it can be seen that one and only one sub-moiety has the same name as the
whole moiety. Again, considering the two moietyes, it can be seen that certain
symbols, like the sun, are at once above the two moieties (this is conjunction: in
the numerical associations, the sun is 13, the moieties are respectively 6 and 7) and
the representatives of only one moiety (one is Earth, the other Sky; the Sun
belonging to the latter).

Despite these few differences, unity and conjunction permit the presence of
reversal in identical fashion. Conjunction is reduced to unity as soon as, instead
of remaining with the relation between the whole as such and its parts, the relation
between the parts is considered: one represents the whole, the other does not, or
at any rate not on the same level. Aside from representations of a whole as such,
like the ‘man’ of an Osage tribe, such configurations as the chiefs being of one
moiety but having authority over the whole tribe are often encountered. There is
also the famous Bororo case (Lévi-Strauss 1944). Thus although we may always encounter the reversal of an asymmetry \((a > b \rightarrow b > a)\), with conjunction the reversal appears when consideration bears on the parts. It will be remembered that there are two configurations of levels, tied successively to each other: (1) the whole // its parts, and (2) the principal asymmetry \(a > b\), reflecting the superiority of the global representation of one part, which can be reversed on a secondary level. We encounter this distinction in Dumont's 'Postface' (1979b), where the author notes that the level of the 'principle of unity' is outside the level on which the terms can be considered in themselves (this exteriority is the basis of the hierarchy) and where he adds that this hierarchy 'simultaneously introduces' the possibility of a reversal (ibid.: 398). The interest of the example of Nyamwezi sacrificial codes was in showing that the three forms, unity, conjunction and reversal, appear in the taxonomy issuing from the same ritual ensemble (Tcherkézoff 1987: ch. 3, sections 2 and 3). We see it equally at the meta-level of models. Unity includes reversal (but this presents us with the problem of distinguishing between the ideological and the empirical; see below) and conjunction includes unity: even when the 'body' is affirmed as such, as a totality, the 'right' side (or equally the 'left') represents it more than the other side does. And the difference is not one of degree: one will represent the whole, but the other will never be in a position to do so, or else it will be on another level (we will then have three configurations ordered among themselves). But this representation of the whole by a part will take place in a second-rank configuration, following an initial configuration where, as among the Osage, the tribe is 'one' body, 'one' man, something standing above the two moieties.

Can we then say that reversal is clearly defined in the theory of hierarchy? Apparently not, since as soon as we leave symbolic writings in order to tackle the princeps example, that of king and priest in India dealt with by Dumont, we encounter an ambiguity, one that led Needham to view the example in a substantialist fashion and to conclude that Dumont's theory 'adds nothing' (1987: 141). What is it about the 'absolute' authority of the priest that brings about a reversal 'on another level'? In what respect is there a level, i.e. an order of situations, and not a context? The answer is that the first asymmetry is an encompassment, while the 'reversed' asymmetry is no longer one. This distinction is crucial, but Dumont's formulations, and mine at the Oxford conference and in Le Roi nyamwezi, did not make this clear. I will try to do that here, in the hope that this clarification will prevent further erroneous interpretations like Needham's in Counterpoints.

The discussion will underline the difference between contexts and levels. It will be seen that Needham's critique is addressed to an object of his own imagining, and that this imagining is, if one may say so, characteristic of a logic of 'contexts'. Thus the present essay returns directly to the Oxford conference and proposes to add something to it. It will then turn towards the remaining ambiguity in the theory of hierarchical reversal: is it a question of culture or of structure? A reply in terms of structure will require us to define formally the orientation of
contexts that turns them into levels. Reversal defines a descending (top-down) *transformation* and not simply the recognition of a second, less important ‘idea’ that we encounter without having to ask about its formation, which is thus present and acts within the field defined by the initial idea. In brief, do we have a reversal of asymmetry, this asymmetry being found binding two different ideas (one dominating here and the other there)? Or do we, of necessity, have a reversal of the first idea, in the sense in which any global ideology in a totality (a social space defined by holistic relations) is contradicted at a given moment? In this case, we have not two ideas but one, not several values, but a hierarchy generated by the fact that there is always a reference to the value.

3. Reversal

The hierarchical structure is a configuration of two levels. ‘Level’ is distinguished from ‘context’, first by being defined by a relation, not a substance. But this structural condition does not suffice to make a structure ‘hierarchical’: it is still necessary that these relations be interdependent and that this internal connection be orientated. The first level is a part–whole relation that, viewed from the second level, appears as the integration of a distinction. The second level is this distinction, which presents itself as the reversal of the first level.

The first level is a relation of the type ‘sacred » profane’ or ‘divine » human’, in which the first term defines the whole space within which the second term is able to exist. In taking the example of the sacred, some clarification is immediately called for. It is a matter of the sacred in Mauss’s sense (‘everything that qualifies society’) and Durkheim’s (that which contains all the rest, without finding itself to be contained in anything) (Mauss 1968 [1906]; Durkheim 1912). It is therefore not a matter of the distinctive or substantialist pair of the functionalist sociological tradition, of two sets of contexts, whose collection forms the social space, disjointed, and in contact along a frontier whose crossing, first in one direction and then in the other, forms the ritual act. The second level is the one in which the term that was the ‘part’ on the first level becomes the determinant of a relation with its complementary term (which was the ‘whole’ on the first level), whether this relation is simply distinctive or is defined as an equality or inequality. The heart of the matter lies in this last formulation. The fact of encompassment (the first level) implies a ‘part’ whose meaning implies in its turn another plane of consideration and of experience, namely that of the distinction of that part. In my view, this is the only way of formalizing the orientated interdependence between the levels: the second level is then ‘hierarchically’ dependent on the first. The ‘hierarchy’ is this ‘sacred order’, where the ‘sacred’ encompasses the profane instead of being simply the distinctive complementary of the latter. The term is appropriate because—as the ethnography seems repeatedly to demonstrate—the
social order, which appears 'sacred' to us (because it is the most global; we would say 'status') is generated by a logic of encompassment (a 'hierarchical opposition'), not by a dichotomous distinction or a series of distinctions fitting together.

As a result, the relation on the second level is very different from the relation on the first. We pass from encompassment to distinction (the latter includes substantial equality or inequality): \( a \rightarrow b \rightarrow b: a \). The second level can be specified as an inequality \( b > a \), in which we then find the figure of reversal proper: \( a \rightarrow b \rightarrow b > a \). But we do not have a symmetrical reversal between two inequalities (\( a > b \rightarrow b > a \)). Hierarchical reversal is not a symmetrical reversal, contrary to what Needham thinks he has read in Dumont's work and in my own.

3.1 The view in 'contexts'

Let us see what Needham has to say on reversal in *Counterpoints*. He does not, he says, intend to raise the whole set of problems linked to the holistic method but will limit himself to published remarks concerning dualistic classification in Dumont 1979a and 1982, and in Tcherkezoff 1983. He might have added Dumont 1979b, where, more than anywhere else, Dumont invokes formal problems. Needham writes:

In the lecture on value, Dumont returns to the topic of reversal.... The example he gives is that of the relationship between priest and king: in matters of religion the priest is superior, but in matters of public order the king is superior. In the outcome to this very brief illustration....Dumont...concludes: 'This chiasmus is characteristic of hierarchy of the articulate type' (1982: 225). The situation he appears to have in view can be represented... [as in Fig. 2 here]. Something of this kind must be figured, or else the chi (Gk. \( \chi \)) that is formed by the intersecting lines will not appear. That a merely grammatical chiasmus, in which the second phrase is an inversion of the first, is not what is in question is made sure by the connection with levels; here, religion is in some sense (Dumont asserts that it is a 'logical relationship') 'absolutely' superior, while matters of public order are 'subordinate'. (Needham 1987: 140-41)

Needham continues by pointing out that the logic of Dumont's remarks is clearly not the only conceivable one concerning the relationship between priesthood and royalty. He points out that the 'kind of “reversal”' that Dumont presents is 'entirely familiar', and that he himself has already dealt with it in the collection *Right and Left*; but he also says that Dumont's conceptual apparatus is unfamiliar. He concludes by saying that despite everything, it is 'probable' that the scheme he has thought up 'is in a direct correspondence with Dumont's intention'. The conclusion imposes itself, says Needham, that Dumont brings 'nothing at all' to the problem, save that this reversal is characteristic of an articulate type of hierarchy—'what is either obscure or disputable', adds Needham, without developing the point (1987: 141). In any case, he says, 'the graphic
chiasmus, with its levels...is produced within the kind of binary scheme that elsewhere Dumont so much rebukes in the work of his colleagues' (ibid.: 142).

Let us leave aside for the moment the distinction between an ‘articulate’ hierarchy and any other sort of hierarchy. Dumont makes this distinction only very briefly (1982: 225), and it has no bearing on the logical nature of the reversal (see Part II of the present article). But the discussion of the orientated character of the reversal, which is itself the result of the ‘absolute’ character of the first asymmetry (the first level), is independent of these distinctions; this must be posited at the outset. Needham’s scheme allows us to clarify things. In effect, if hierarchical reversal were what this scheme indicates it to be and if, as a result, it belongs to binary logic—for Needham is right in saying that the scheme he draws here belongs in its entirety to the logic illustrated by the studies contained in Right and Left—it would indeed bring us ‘nothing’ new. Needham would be perfectly justified in saying so, were it not for the fact that nothing here corresponds to the lessons to be drawn from Dumont’s Indian studies, even though the compression and unclarity of Dumont’s expression in his formalist texts may sometimes allow—but only by forgetting the whole of Homo Hierarchicus—a binary interpretation such as that shown by Needham’s scheme.

What does that scheme tell us? We have two contexts, one positive, the other negative, and the possibility for each context to contain a positive term and a negative term. The priest who is ‘+’ in religion is ‘-’ in public order, and the king behaves in 'symmetrically reverse fashion'. It matters not at all that the context of ‘religion’ is placed on the first line of the scheme, nor that it is assigned the ‘+’ sign. The signs respectively modifying the two contexts are not organically linked to the chiasmus; and in any case, the first level of the scheme might be that of public order. It is therefore not a level. The reversal of signs that characterizes

\[ + \quad : \quad - \]

RELIGION (+)  PRIEST  KING

PUBLIC ORDER (-)  KING  PRIEST

Figure 2. Chiasmus of Sovereignty (after Needham 1987: 141)

9. ‘Symmetrical’ reversal (for example, a reversal of inequality: \( a > b \rightarrow b > a \)) is distinguished from hierarchical reversal. In the second case, the reversal reverses the terms and shows that we have passed to the second relation, that which is ‘contrary’ to the logic of encompassment: a distinction (by this latter term we understand a substantialist distinction).
the terms in each relation is independent of the signs (or of the order of presentation) of each relation.

We shall call this view of reversal the substantialist view, a view ‘in contexts’ and, therefore, a culturalist view. It views things as if the situation were as follows. Reversal is a thing, a purely logical thing: if ‘religion’ and ‘public order’ are opposed to each other (as ‘+’ and ‘-‘, whatever the context in relation to which they are ‘+’ or ‘-‘), the two terms that represent respectively each of the two contexts are opposed in the same fashion (according to the same logic) once they are united within each of the contexts; and the orientation of asymmetry between the two terms will be reversed with the passage between contexts. Furthermore, the affirmation of the absolutely superior character of religion and of the subordinate character of public order are a different thing, which Needham transcribes with the signs ‘+’ and ‘-‘ placed beside the term that defines the content of each of the two contexts. The question of value is thus separated from the fact of distinguishing—it follows it. Value is a secondary addition to the order of the facts.

Dumont’s assertion concerning ‘absolute’ superiority is thus reduced to a statement that religion is more important than power. It remains gratuitous, even peremptory, like a prejudice according to which religious ideas are more important than political ones. All this constitutes a culturalist interpretation: for all societies, or perhaps just for India, religion is whatever is superior. But formal proof of this is lacking. The different social relations are presented as formally identical (‘+’ / ‘-‘), which leaves one thinking that everything then rests on the observer’s interpretation, on his translation of the different contexts (what we call ‘culturalism’). The relation ‘+ / -‘ (in which the priest is ‘+’) is religious, and because it is religious, it will be superior to the relation in which the ‘+’ represents the king. And even if one were then to assert a logic of the ‘encompassment’ of religion over what remains, this would entail an encompassment between two ‘ideas’, while social relations would all remain ‘analogous’, sometimes oriented in the same direction, sometimes in the opposite direction, to each other. Thus, in effect, from a structural point of view, it is still ‘analogy’ that would remain the only solid aspect of the analysis. But this conclusion of Needham’s is no more than the automatic result of a method that has placed the question of distinction above that of value, reducing the second to the status of being simply the valuing of a pre-existing state of fact.

3.2 The view in ‘levels’

Let us therefore abandon the scheme that effectively tells us ‘nothing’, nothing at any rate concerning the identity of a society, a notion that has to be represented as an order of relations (a hierarchy of social facts, in the holistic sense) if one wants to avoid turning it into the result of an interpretation of a conception of the
world (whether interpreted well or badly); and let us quickly reread what Dumont has to tell us in the text referred to by Needham (Dumont 1982: 224–5):

Now let us suppose that...we agree not to separate an idea and its value but to consider instead as our object the configuration formed by idea-values or value-ideas... First about ranking [sc. hierarchy]. ‘High’ ideas will both contradict and include ‘low’ ideas. I called this peculiar relation ‘encompassment’. An idea that grows in importance and status acquires the property of encompassing its contrary. Thus I found that in India purity encompasses power. (original emphasis)

One might be misled by considering just these few lines. One might think that two contexts are being presented (‘purity’ on the one hand and ‘power’ on the other), because an encompassing relation has been established (perhaps historically) between these two cultural ‘ideas’.10 Dumont continues (ibid.: 225):

We have already alluded to the second characteristic, reversal. The logical relationship between priest and king, as found in India or, nearer to us, in Christianity itself, five centuries after Christ, under the pen of Pope Gelasius, is exemplary in this regard. In matters of religion, and hence absolutely, the priest is superior to the king or emperor to whom public order is entrusted. But ipso facto [du même coup] the priest will obey the king in matters of public order, that is, in subordinate matters. (emphases added)

One may notice immediately the difference between this passage and Needham’s summary of it: ‘the example...of the relationship between priest and king: in matters of religion the priest is superior, but in matters of public order...’ (1987: 140), whence the schematization in the form of chi. Only then comes an examination of the fact that, for Dumont, religion is ‘absolutely’ superior. For Needham reading Dumont, it is the distinction between two contents of experience that is primary. Possibly one might then ask oneself about the relative valuation of these contexts (why is religion absolutely superior?). This attitude is the result of refusing to consider the existence of value as a social fact, from which arises an improper distinction between fact and value, as if social thought were first distinguished and only then hierarchized. In short, value is something added.

For Dumont, on the other hand, the initial superiority is absolute from the outset. Doubtless it is absolute because it is religious, but ‘religion’ is for Dumont the central status system (the most global attachment)—here, caste. It is therefore the Durkheimian and Maussian sense of the concept, the sacred, i.e. ‘society’ represented to itself as a global order. This superiority links one term (here, priest), which, when taken alone, represents the whole principle of the ‘religious’ system (the system of castes in the primary sense, the distinctions and interdepend-

10. In the sense of ‘values’ from the point of view of a hierarchy with (more than two) values: \(a / b / c / d\ ...\)
encies in the name of the least impurity; this appears throughout Dumont’s work on India, with another (the king or his equivalents). This other is at the same time a caste, therefore an element of this system, and a caste defined, in contradistinction to the others, by an intrinsic property, namely power (Dumont has often mentioned the historical equivalence between the royal function of the past and the dominant caste, that which possesses rights to the land; see his 1972: ch. 7 and appendix C). Then, ‘ipso facto [du même coup]’, the priest also has a relationship in terms defining the intrinsic domain of the king (he ‘will obey’), when the plane of experience being considered is the domain of the king. This inferiority speaks volumes, for we see it (as we must) as the immediate concomitant of the first relation.

This dependence of the second relation with reference to the first is clearly confirmed in the example from the European Middle Ages cited frequently by Dumont as a parallel to the Indian case. This concerns the text in which Pope Gelasius defines the relations between the two powers. The priest’s obedience to the king in matters where the king rules is justified, because the royal power itself, in its entirety, is in the last resort received from the hands of God. The second, royal power is distinguished from the first, divine power, but it exists because the first exists (the converse proposition being untenable):

> There are mainly two things, August Emperor, by which this world is governed: the sacred authority of the pontiffs and the royal power.... In things concerning the public discipline, religious leaders realize that imperial power has been conferred on you from above, and they themselves will obey your laws, for fear that in worldly matters they should seem to thwart your will. (Dumont 1986: 46, citing Gelasius, after Carlyle and Carlyle 1903; emphasis added)

As Dumont says, ‘priests are superior, for they are inferior only on an inferior level’ (ibid.). This commentary summarizes two points of view in Dumont’s work. On the one hand is that often cited, which would appear culturalist if left to itself: ‘the reference to salvation clearly indicates that Gelasius deals here with the supreme or ultimate level of consideration’ (ibid.). On the other hand is this observation, which immediately follows the preceding one and is not redundant but supplements another, formal point of view: ‘we note the hierarchical distinction between the priest’s auctoritas and the king’s potestas’ (ibid.).

One might also read the remarks that follow (ibid.: 47–8), where Dumont puts into relief the distinction between this ‘hierarchical’ disposition and an interpretation that would see only a symmetric distinction between the ‘two powers’. This passage ends by citing a recent author, Father Congar, who thinks that for Gelasius the Empire is in the Church (the Emperor is a believer) in the same way that, moreover, the Church is in the Empire. One could also differentiate this case with another discussed (ibid.: 49ff.), where, nearly three centuries after Gelasius, the popes arrogated to themselves political authority over a part of Italy. This introduction of the Church into the world creates a spiritual monarchy uniting terms that hitherto have been definitively separated. From that point on,
the distinction between the two powers is no longer hierarchical but substantial; and one notes that ‘the spiritual [becomes] conceived as superior to the temporal on the temporal level itself, as if it was a superior degree of the temporal.... It is along this line that later on the Pope will be conceived as “delegating” the temporal power to the Emperor as his “deputy”’ (ibid.: 50, 57; original emphasis).  

As will be seen below, one thing in Dumont’s remarks perhaps still needs clarifying: the second state of inferiority is different in nature from the initial state of superiority. The Brahman’s obedience to the king is something quite different from the avoidance of those who are a source of impurity through contact (the gaps that define a ‘caste’). There is a contrast between, on the one hand, an inequality of access to valued substances (here, power) and, on the other, an encompassment in which one of the terms is the whole for the other; the Indian priest is caste, i.e. the principal ‘caste’ vis-à-vis all the others. The necessary clarification is provided by reading the ethnography concerning caste relationships on the plane of purity, and then comparing it with the ethnography of relations of domination with respect to differential access to the ownership of the soil (1972: ch. 6; cf. ch. 7).  

In a study of royalty, which first appeared in 1962 in English and was then reproduced as an appendix to the French edition of Homo Hierarchicus (1966: appendix C), Dumont speaks to us of ‘the relationship’ between priest and king. This unique relationship ‘concretely...has a double aspect’:  

While spiritually, absolutely, the priest is superior [to the king]...he is at the same time, from a temporal or material point of view, subject and dependent.... The former, ideological aspect of the relation is not unknown in the West on the level of values, but it takes on in this case a particular form, largely because the spiritual element here is embodied in a person. It is obvious that the second, the ‘practical’ aspect is important in fact. (Dumont 1970 [1962]: 65)  

The first level describes the aspect that Dumont calls ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’ or ‘absolute’ or ‘ideological’. A little further on, he cites texts that describe the relationship on the first level, the aspect of absolute superiority (the Brahman is to the others like a god to men; because he teaches sacred knowledge, he is ‘a human god’; thus the relation is ‘>’, that of the type ‘divine » human’); and the texts also describe what we call here the ‘second level’, the aspect of domination (the priestly office is the livelihood of the Brahman).  

To summarize. Needham’s critique neglects precisely what defines holistic hierarchy: (1) the second relationship must be worked out in a context the very

11. Father Congar’s interpretation takes the form of a symmetric reversal. The second example, that of the political popes, is characteristic of addition (in the sense in which we have distinguished it from conjunction). With this addition, hierarchy is transformed into stratification or inequality: the asymmetry spiritual > temporal no longer depends on a question of level.
existence of which is a consequence of the existence of the first context (and therefore we no longer speak of ‘contexts’); and (2) the first relation must be of the ‘part–whole’ type (which is not the case for the second relation). Needham neglects what constitutes Indian hierarchy: the dominant are only dominant in so far as they form a caste. This aspect of ‘caste’ thus includes power, even ‘encompasses’ it, once it turns out that the second aspect defines a ‘contrariety’—here, the fact that the priests can be inferior (but they are so ‘on an inferior level’). And the system is on the side of caste: the non-dominant are also castes. In the same way, Needham neglects what forms the hierarchy invoked by Gelasius. If the king has a power distinct from that of the priests, he none the less holds it ‘from above’, an ‘above’ represented by the priests.

It is certainly strange to see the discussion apparently stumbling over the evidence. For the simple fact of distinguishing between a hierarchy of relations and an analogy of relations should not constitute an obstacle. It is true that, for Needham, the idea of ‘hierarchy’ designates solely a classification by branching, an interlocking (1980, 1987). And this classification can be generated by a distinctive opposition alone, or else one can have analogies between different binary oppositions contributing to the construction of a taxonomic tree. In any case, the objects before us entail other difficulties, more real and above all more useful to examine, like the examination of different forms of dependence between two relations (cultural order or structure, only two levels or more, existence of partial wholes, etc.?). Let us therefore leave the false problems in order to be able to see the true ones more clearly.

4. The Holistic View

4.1 From culture to structure

As will now be realized, we are faced with a very clear choice in interpreting the logic of ‘hierarchical’ configurations. One might think, in forgetting the ethnography and retaining only some of Dumont’s formulations, that the question is one of societies (or of a sociology) privileging the plane of religious ideas (beliefs). Here, where the relation touches the world beyond (the ‘salvation’ Dumont refers to concerning Gelasius), we are on the superior plane (value or ‘ultimate’ level, as Dumont says again). This view brings us nothing but disadvantages. It submits the comparison to a culture-centric interpretation: we declare to be ‘religious’ and superior what would be considered religious if it arose with us (see Pouillon 1979 for this criticism). It cuts society up into contexts, in which the religious and the political each function for themselves. This removes any possibility of studying the organizing capacity of the ideology; whereas any ‘social organization’ is a system of ‘representations’, a bidimensional system
between the what-ought-to-be of organization and fact, the facts (i.e. the interpretation of the facts by means of representations defining the ought-to-be of organization) constantly coming to contradict the ought-to-be and to be enclosed within it (unless some upheaval enters, completely modifying the representation of the 'ought-to-be'). Why must we say that the facts also come to 'contradict' the idea of the 'ought-to-be'? For, without this contradiction (which anthropology calls the relation between ideology and practice), all social systems would stay put, without history. The hyperfunctionalist analysis ('everything functions') would be right, though the opposite has long been noted (Augé 1975).

The other choice is structural hierarchy, i.e. the order of relations, not the order of ideas. What is important in the definition of the Brahman is his relation with other men as an encompasser. For he is 'like' a god to other men, that is, the representative of the idea that presides over the most extensive classification in this society, that of the least impurity that defines a 'caste' group, those who protect themselves (downwards) from all the others. The first definition does not reside in the fact that the Brahman is within the religious sphere, in the sense of this observation informing us, in terms that are solely distinctive, that the Brahman is not 'profane', that he is not a 'man of power', etc. It follows—and this is a point that has still not entered sufficiently into the analytical practice of anthropology—that we must draw the immediate consequence of encompassment: 'ipso facto [du même coup]' there is another place of consideration defined by whatever permits the encompassed to be encompassed and thus distinguished from the whole. But this implies that the second level is always a place of substantialist relations: it is defined by the intrinsic nature of whatever distinguishes the encompassed. Thus, if it conceals an inequality that appears as the 'reverse' of the relation on the first level, we must be careful not to set this inequality and the asymmetric relation of the first level—which is, in respect of the former, an encompassment—in the form of an 'analogy' (as in a binary table: '+ / -', 'right / left', etc.)

Let us reflect for a moment. We might have merely a 'collection' of groups closed in on themselves, each with its idea of purity. Or we might have a system, but simply a system of gaps, with neither beginning nor end, a flat system. One of the elements of this collection or of this system is then found to contain a property—here, power—allowing it certain relations, ones of domination, over other elements. This surplus will be a simple addition to the collection or system. We will remain on the same level, for there is only one possible plane of consideration for all that can exist in this collection or flat system. Let us turn to reality, which is quite different. We have a status system, i.e. the enumeration of an attachment 'to a whole', an attachment in which each depends on one or several others in order to 'be attached', in which each is attached differently.12 The

12. This has already been emphasized (Tcherkézoff 1987). Two 'equal' attachments reduce the whole to a collection, and each member element must then find in substance its reason for existing. This is the situation with the 'modern' individual in respect of the ideology he calls
collection becomes an orientated system with a beginning (or, if one wishes, an end). At this point, whether initial or terminal, we no longer find inclusion, but the sacred, the maximal sacred. From this point, we can turn back and see all the other attachments. But as soon as the view ‘redescends’, it must in some way realize what allows the elements to be distinguished in this differential attachment. Looking ‘upwards’, one sees only the whole, so to speak. Looking ‘downwards’, one sees distinctions. To put it differently, in entering the ‘sacred’, one becomes uniquely defined as more or less sacred; when one is in the ‘profane’, on the other hand, one is this or that, ‘right’ or ‘left’, man or woman, etc. But, because we are considering a society, the sacred encompasses the profane. The system of inclusions encompasses the system of distinctions, the attachment encompasses the empirical difference between individuals. At the same time, the latter must reappear at a particular level.\(^\text{13}\)

In order to mark clearly the contrast between the two methods, we can summarize roughly what would be the ‘culturalist’ and the ‘holistic’ views of India. The culturalist view ‘of the holism of India’ would be as follows. On an initial plane, that which counts in the scale of values of the people, relationships are a matter of purity. Everyone is obsessed with this religious idea (the ideal of purity or the fear of impurity), the local version of those prestige systems that anthropology sometimes tells us about when it encounters a gradation that certainly does not appear to be expressible in economic terms. Let us note straightforward the contradiction: there will be only separation, and we will search in vain for the interdependence that makes a society out of all these groups. Now, one knows how much the system of castes becomes not only a collection of avoidances (gaps of least impurity) but also a set of mutually rendered services (ritual acts of purification, exchanges of goods and services in terms of occupations, etc.). The culturalist view goes on: elsewhere, on another plane, power will intervene on its own, ‘modern’, ‘Western’, ‘human’, etc. But if this concerns a whole (like a ‘society’), the elements are parts, since this whole is like a ‘body’. ‘Status’ as social attachment is a universal fact, even if its forms vary. Its presence—and this differential attachment of which we speak—does not indicate that we have located a specific type of ‘status-oriented society’ but that, in the cultural area being considered, the sociological unity we are speaking of ‘makes a totality’ for those concerned. In the Nyamwezi area, which comprises several kingdoms, it is a matter of what constitutes a kingdom; in the ‘French’ ideological-cultural area, it is a matter of the national political community; in the Samoan area at the present time, it is a matter of the ‘village’ as a circle of titles (see Tcherkézoff 1992b, 1993c).

\(^{13}\) I am leaving aside one difficulty here. Is the distinctive domain that appears when the view of hierarchical gaps of least impurity reverses itself in a ‘contrary’ sense, impurity as substance (material, bodily etc. distinctions), as source of impurity, or is it power, or both? The real difficulty remaining with Homo Hierarchicus is that there are two encompassments (purity / impurity and status / power). The model evoked here (i.e. sacred (the inclusions) / profane (the distinctions)) is entirely Durkheim’s and Hertz’s, assuming one is reading these authors without privileging the binary scheme (see Tcherkézoff 1995a).
usual scale, based on unequal access to valued resources (here, mainly land). One
will note that, as regards the India of the texts, the first domain appears more
important, though contrary indications can also be found. Each observer is then
free to advance his own interpretation of the necessary relationship (in ‘his’
sociological universal) between religion and power or economics.

The sociologically holistic view of India—and holism is a method, not a type
of society—consists, for its part, in picking out the encompassing relation(s)
(whole / part) and not forgetting that each encompassment is accompanied ‘by
reversal’ on a second level. It then encounters the relation of caste, the separation
of least impurity on the one hand and the interdependence of ritual services on the
other. This interdependence is the social relation, which rests on the one hand
on the least impurity—the officiant must be superior—and on the other on
‘domination’: the householder is the officiant’s ‘employer’. The particularity of
India is that the relationship between employer and employee is hierarchically
inferior to (logically dependent on) the relationship between officiant and client
(sacrificer / sacrifiant) in the ritual.

14. As Raymond Jamous has remarked to me, Dumont did not make this duality of aspects and
their underlying relationship his main object of study. It is the first aspect that largely prevails
in his work, since his critique was aimed at the school of social stratification, and it was
necessary to bring to the fore the structure, the ‘structural’ gaps in the Lévi-Straussian sense.

15. He is so in the proper sense where the Brahman is concerned, but also in all other cases,
in the sense that the officiant is employed by the householder. Whatever the mutual caste
relation between these two may be on other planes (the marriages or funeral practices etc. of
each one), which might well indicate a reversal of superiority, in the ritual employment the
officiant is assimilated to the Brahman and the householder to the Kshatriya (the ‘royal’ varna).
This can be seen in the way every ritual relationship is expressed in ‘sacrificial’ terms, which
are (were) those of the relation between these two varna (i.e. Vedic categories that form the
conceptual model, historical or not, of the castes (cf. Dumont 1972: ch. 4)).

16. Dominique Casajus has remarked to me that with Dumont, the inferiority of the first relation
results from a methodological choice, namely to take an explanation accounting for the whole
system, and to begin with what occurs at the extremities (here, Brahmans and Untouchables),
hence ‘caste’. One then sees that, in the centre, the order one expects is disturbed, and one
encounters power. If it were just a matter of accounting for the centre, the primary position of
power would be acceptable (whence, let us add, the tendency to place royal power first in studies
centred on ‘the local kingdom’; see the discussions raised by Pouchepadass (1990) and Toffin
(1990)).

More exactly, we are anxious as far as possible to avoid taking an intuitive approach to
what constitutes the ‘whole’ in an ethnography, so as to avoid culturalism. If two references
appear to be in play, we must try and see if one of them functions with a holistic logic (in which
the differences are generated by an opposition of the type A = A + B), while the other only
functions with a substantiaist logic. If such is the case, before concluding that the one is being
encompassed by the other, we must verify that what is encompassed in the encompassing relation
is found again (through the dynamic of a ‘transformation’ that can be a ‘reversal’) as a
‘distinctive’ determinant in the other relation. Only then will we have a hierarchical structure,
and only one. It remains to be seen to what extent the inferiority of the first relation in India
The central social fact, fulcrum of any comparison between societies, is one relation that indicates simultaneously attachment for all, and a gap between this collective representation of the group as a system of attachment (together with associated practices) and other practices (where the observer notices a discordance). In India, this relation, the relation of caste, is the relation of ritual services between castes: A is superior to B, in that he effects the rite, but A also serves B, who employs him. These are two inseparable aspects of the same relation, but the specific inseparability is the fact that one aspect depends on the other, while the reverse is not true. In effect, caste membership is a function of a relationship with purity (more exactly, a function of a certain distancing of oneself from sources of impurity) and not a function of proximity to means of payment, employment, power and the ability to command. The culturalist error, concomitant with a symmetric view affixed to the Dumontian reversal, would end up seeing in the caste relation, if this is regarded as central, the relation of a search for purity, a gradation towards an ideal of purity without interdependence with respect to *(ritual) service*. Now precisely, this is only met with in India when the individual 'leaves' the system of castes by 'renouncing' interdependence to seek an individual state of devotion—another reversal of attachment. And we will not be astonished to read in Dumont that power (in its ‘encompassed’ manifestation: ‘contractual’ royalty and ‘interest’ theorized as *artha*) has, in its evolution, worked hand in glove with the renouncers (Dumont 1966: 362–3, 373).

It matters little whether Dumont's formulations ('spiritually' *contra* 'the temporal point of view') permit a culturalist interpretation or not. One thing is certain, and he has said it sufficiently: everything rests on his interpretation of Indian society. Here again, it is necessary to leave aside polemics between Indianists. Although clearly important, they do not touch on what is at issue in the present discussion. The logical hierarchical structure that can be formalized from what Dumont tells us he has seen in India and that might appear useful in the analysis of all societies is, in my view, that of hierarchized levels. Now, as I showed in 1983 (see Tcherkézoff 1987), this configuration is antinomical to the binary table on the logical plane and with regard to the evidence of African and other facts, and it is antinomical to reversal between contexts. For Needham’s scheme (i.e. Figure 2 above), I would therefore substitute the scheme represented in Figure 3.

All caste relations borrow from this 'hierarchy', which brings to prominence the two main figures of the traditional varna model, which, Dumont tells us, seems to be the model for the logical genesis of a complex system integrating hundreds of castes and sub-castes. And if, in the ritual that forms the life of the community (Dumont 1972: ch. 4), the relation of payment for employment is inferior to that of purification (along with the sacred gift that comes in as a compensation), it is

*(employment, domination) is also linked to the presence or transfer of an impurity when we know that the second relation ('sacrifice') is a purification (see Tchérkézoff 1994–95).*
priest >> king or dominant ‘caste’

('caste' relation : '>>') ('>>' : ENCOMPASSMENT)

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king or ‘dominant’ caste > priest

(relation of ‘domination’ : ‘>’) (‘>’ : INEQUALITY)

FIGURE 3. Hierarchical Reversal in India

not because the people of India include in their conception of the world the despising of material goods and base everything on religious ideas, but because the relation of purity functions according to an encompassing logic (in matters of purity, superiority is ‘absolute’), whereas the relation to money and food (both representing land) function according to a substantialist logic. One can then decide to call ‘religion’ or ‘sacred’ any domain of encompassing relations. This would be a positive step, a way of extending Mauss’s aim in a perhaps more rigorous fashion, certainly a way of distinguishing the global analysis of a society from the substantialist one (or ‘individualist’ one on the methodological plane), which first divides things into contexts in order to find subsequently a law of composition. The latter has the disadvantage that it then reflects the cultural identity of the observer more than that of the society encountered.

4.2 An oriented structure

Let us add two corollary remarks to what has just been said. The first concerns the encompasser. One can see that this, when it becomes inferior upon attention

17. At this point, we have been brought beyond the distinction between structural analysis and analysis that considers the terms from the outset. The choice is no longer between the structural system that is caste (where a group is not ‘pure’ to the nth degree but less impure than M, N and P by certain criteria, at the same time as B, C and D are less impure than it by other criteria) and the stratified system, which constitutes a scale of commands and/or access to substances (‘power’). We are, in the structural universe, at the stage of asking ourselves by which type of opposition the system of gaps is logically generated, a hierarchical (encompassing) opposition, or a different one? Let us add that a grammar or lexicon of proper relations generating social orders is a task that by and large has still to be carried out.
being transferred on to the second level, none the less escapes total inferiority. This is a logical consequence, from which we can draw profit, of the fact that the second relation is a (hierarchical) transformation of the first, that it is logically generated by and dependent on the first. In the case of India, one notes that the priest—and he alone—even when falling under the law of royal power, automatically escapes certain punishments and, in principle, taxation too.\(^{18}\)

Another remark, leading us to the same conclusion, concerns the notion of ‘value’. Properly speaking, there is no hierarchy ‘of values’ in a given society. There is only one value, the value of attachment, more exactly, that which implicitly concerns ritual action, which is itself a construction or reaffirmation of this attachment. For what would appear to constitute a second value is the ‘contrary’ of the first, precisely in the sense of a hierarchical reversal. This statement is at least valid for each partial whole (each hierarchical structure uncovered). We must leave open the question of whether a society can contain several ‘wholes’. This putting of ‘value’ in the singular thus commits the analysis to a systematic search for the points of articulation, according to this logic of encompassing of the contrary, whenever it encounters several apparently heterogeneous values. Only if these points of articulation are discovered can we say that the two values encountered are hierarchized and that they therefore constitute a unique configuration. The articulation itself takes its bearings from the fact that (1) the terms of the relation that define one value are found in the relation defining the second value, and (2) they find themselves being modified (see below).

Thus the second level is not simply ‘other’, but a plane of experiences that becomes significant when contrasted with those on the first level. Thinking of contemporary India, Dumont notes the interest in a remark of Tambiah’s: the individual appears, amongst other things, as if in ‘an alert pursuit of personal advantage...disengaged from any abstract ethic of the common good...[in] a frantic quest for power and money’ (Dumont 1979b: xxxii). But this banal, reputedly universal trait assumes a particular (i.e. comparative) colouring when it is presented in the analysis as one of the consequences (the second level) of ‘the non-valorization, in a sense the non-moralization, of the individual’ that characterizes the castes. This moral non-individualization of the empirical

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18. ‘The Brahman...is inviolable (the murder of a Brahman is, with the murder of a cow, the cardinal sin), and a number of punishments do not apply to him: he cannot be beaten, put in irons, fined, or expelled. The learned Brahman (\textit{srotiya}) is in theory exempt from taxes, and the Brahman is specially favoured by the law about lost objects, which generally, when they are found, revert mainly to the king, and which only a Brahman finder may keep in part or in whole; similarly, if a man dies intestate, only if he is a Brahman do his goods not accrue to the king (here one can see a certain mixing of the two functions)’ (Dumont 1972: 109). Logically, if the inferiority of the encompasser is only applicable on an ‘inferior level’, one would expect that the exercise of domination on this level would be limited by elements that are on the boundary of the first level or which belong to it. (I thank Raymond Jamous for drawing my attention to the privileges of the Brahman.)
individual on the principal plane is an aspect of caste membership, expressed through a comparison centered on the West. The presence of the latter would be misleading if it had to serve to define the first level and thus the caste ('absence of individualism' and other negative traits); on the contrary, like any other status phenomenon, caste must be defined by the pair difference-interdependence, which defines social belonging, meaning here protecting itself from impurity from below and having a reciprocity oriented towards the ritual 'service' of the jajmani occupations. But it becomes useful again in expressing our recognition of these 'non-ideological' concomitants, as Dumont calls them, which accompany but also contradict the principal level, in short, of a second level, itself necessary to make comparison meaningful (Dumont ibid.). It is not enough to describe the status principles of the caste. We must also describe everything else, both as we grasp it and as it 'emerges' against the backdrop of the castes. In India, this will be renunciation, and the relation of the individual to gain, and also politics again.

We can therefore now clarify Dumont's remarks. Having indicated what seems to us to be indispensable to the concept of hierarchical reversal, we can indicate what, with Dumont, is asserted clearly and what not so clearly in the formulation of the theory. It is quite obvious that the binary scheme is nowhere to be found in Dumont's remarks. On this plane, Needham's interpretation in terms of '+' and '-' is inadmissible. On the other hand, what seems to me to be essential, namely the transformation of the encompassment into inequality, is not affirmed as such, even though the ethnography indicated by Dumont appears to me to demand this formulation. In his 1978 text, Dumont emphasizes that the 'symmetric opposition' (the simple distinction, or complementarity) is not indicative of a place in the whole, since it can be 'reversed at will; its reversal produces nothing'. Dumont continues:

On the contrary, the reversal of an asymmetrical opposition is significant, for the reversed opposition is not the same as the initial opposition. If the reversed opposition is encountered in the same whole in which the direct opposition was present, it is evidence of a change of level. In fact, it announces such a change with maximum economy, using only two hierarchized elements and their order.

On the contrary, the reversal of an asymmetrical opposition is significant, for the reversed opposition is not the same as the initial opposition. If the reversed opposition is encountered in the same whole in which the direct opposition was present, it is evidence of a change of level. In fact, it announces such a change with maximum economy, using only two hierarchized elements and their order. (1979a [1978]: 811; emphases removed)

In this text Dumont contrasts, on the plane of reversal, the distinctive relation and the asymmetric relation. But the text can be read to mean that the significant asymmetric reversal is of the type $a > b \rightarrow b > a$. For all that, one does not end up with Needham's schema, for Dumont also adds: 'it is highly probable that one level is contained within the other (encompassing the contrary...)' (ibid.).

The ambiguity that remains is thus perhaps this. The two relations are of the same nature, and the first level encompasses the second. At this point, we are again presented with a clear choice between an anthropology of interpreted ideas and an anthropology of structures. If this is reduced to saying that reversal signals a change of level and that one of the two levels encompasses the other—but in order to know which is the encompassing one it is necessary to interpret the scale.
of cultural values expressed and to observe that in India, for example, religion counts for more—then we lose the advantage of formal proof in order to fall back into culturalist interpretations. It therefore matters to the utmost degree that the reversal indicates formally which level is the encompassing one. This is why we retain only reversal of the type $a \succ b \rightarrow b \succ a$.

We have said that, beyond the statements contained in Dumont’s theoretical exposé, the ethnography suggests this formulation. But if the second relation is thus a transformation of the first, its dependence on the first is still stronger than the example of priest–king allows one to realize. The Indian theory of power (artha is within dharma) and that of Gelasius (the source of political power is divine) bring out the possibility of a contrary idea being included in the first. The space in which the contradiction has its effect is more restricted than the global space of the first idea—thus we speak of a second level. And this is not the result of a choice made by public opinion when confronted with two initially independent ideas: one proceeds from the other, in the minimal sense that the reference that authorizes the second idea in order to obtain experience belongs to the first; we thus speak of levels. But in addition, we must admit that with the transformation of the relation, the terms themselves (A and B) are transformed in crossing the barrier between the levels, as must be the case in a logic in which the terms acquire meaning and existence from the relation that unites them. The man of caste A becomes an employee, the man of caste B an employer. Equally, A who protects himself from the impurity of B (by which he is defined as a man of the caste) becomes he who treats B’s impurity ritually, just as B, also defined simply as a caste and thus at a distance of less impurity from C, etc., is now considered under the aspect in which he is charged with impurity (body, food, dirty clothes; life-cycle events, births, funerals). For not only is the system of gaps structural, it is not as disjunct from matter as a phonological system, which, in structural linguistics, is just that, a system of gaps. Impurity in India is not only what others can communicate, even if contacts with others (concerning food, water, clothes, but also marriage) all contribute to this dynamic of impurity and are regulated mainly with respect to this idea-value. Or again, on Samoa, in a striking epitome, the ‘sister’ who is served like a goddess by her brother (and like a virgin whose brother would love her to be a virgin with child, in order to allow him to reproduce the ancestral name) can become a ‘female’ whom her brother—being the ‘strong’ sex—corrects, and whom other ‘men’ seduce.

This needs stressing. Hierarchy can be a very powerful tool in anthropological analysis, provided certain traps are avoided. It is not a matter of decoding a scale of references, deciding that what counts more is the pantheon, or the theory of the person, or the circulation of the constituents of the person, etc., under the pretext that these are the domains that transcend individual life—as if value was always opposed to the individual, as if anthropology’s societies had decided to be anti-modern even before the term had been invented. Nor, having been decoded, is it a matter of indicating that, because we are in a whole (the notion then being reduced to a synonym of ‘a particular culture’), the scale of references possesses
a logical or topological particularity and that, two by two or according to an
infinite segmentation, the superior domain ‘encompasses’ the following one(s), the
term ‘encompassment’ then becoming a slogan for relativism rather than a tool of
comparison (Barraud 1990, Barraud and Platenkamp 1990, de Coppet 1990). On
the contrary, we will say that the ‘transcendences’ we are seeking are the formal
encompassments of distinctions observed by us ethnographically (cf. Dumont
1979b: 403, 1982: 222–3 and n.) and that, as a consequence, the opposed terms
must be deduced from what they stand for in the relations that transcend the
oppositions.

Hierarchy is therefore not simply the logical decomposition on two planes of
a double and contradictory statement of the type: at once \( a > b \) and \( b > a \).
Hierarchy is the logical decomposition on two planes of the statement of a single
attachment. And as the essential thing in anthropology consists in comparing the
modes of attachment of the empirical individual in the socio-cultural set of which
he is a member, hierarchy is a tool of vital necessity. It allows us to recognize,
under the form of a relation, the two aspects of the social fact, the empirical
individual and the socio-cultural group. The first must be present in the model,
lest we enclose anthropology within the idealism of a Durkheimian society reduced
to the ‘sacred’. But it must not be forgotten that the anthropology concerned is
‘social’, that it has ‘societies’ as its object and not collections of individuals
(‘collective’ behaviour), and that consequently it must deduce the individual from
the group rather than ‘collect’ individuals together in order to analyse the ‘group’.
Reversing the encompassment allows this deduction to take place. It is still
necessary to avoid deciding a priori where value is to be found. Here it will reside
in what appears to us as religious (India), elsewhere in what appears to us as
political (France) or economic (the exchange of goods in Oceania)—it matters
little. It will be wherever we discover encompassing relations: unity, conjunction,
superiority ‘reversing itself’ into inequality, and other forms, doubtless, that
anthropology will isolate in the course of its comparisons, provided that the view
it brings to bear on each society be the most global possible.

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CONTEXTS AND LEVELS: Anthropological Essays on Hierarchy
Edited by R. H. Barnes, Daniel de Coppet and R. J. Parkin

*Contexts and Levels* consists of a collection of papers commenting on the theories of Professor Louis Dumont concerning the problems of hierarchy and hierarchical opposition. These theories arose through his work on the nature of Indian society, and its subsequent comparison with Western society. The papers are based on those delivered to a conference held in Oxford in March 1983, and are by both French and English anthropologists. Most of them approach the question through the ethnography; the areas covered include the Solomons, New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal and Africa. Two other papers look at the linguistic notion of markedness and the philosophical notion of context, and general theoretical issues are discussed in one further contribution. The volume should appeal to all those interested in anthropological issues of hierarchy, ideology and ethnographic analysis.

Contributors:

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Introduction

When the British Centre for Durkheimian Studies was founded in October 1991, its members were told that there were a few letters written by Durkheim and Marcel Mauss in the archives of the University of Oxford’s Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology. They are in fact to be found in a collection of material given to the Institute by Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955). Whilst none of the letters is of earth-shaking importance to Durkheimian studies, it seemed worthwhile bringing them to the attention of academics interested in Durkheim and the Année Sociologique school, especially anthropologists concerned with the history of their discipline. Amongst other things, these short letters offer some insights into the way Durkheim and Mauss viewed British anthropology.

Editors’ Note: This is the first in what we hope will be a series of occasional articles drawing on the archives of Oxford’s Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Pitt Rivers Museum. We expect that for the time being at least only these archives will be mined, but we should be interested in the longer term in publishing related material from other archives, especially (though not exclusively) where there is a connection with Oxford anthropology. Anyone interested in consulting the archives of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology should write to the Tylor Librarian, ISCA, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6PE.


Letters by Durkheim and his colleagues are now being published with increasing frequency. A mass of letters written by Durkheim to Mauss, enough to form a largish book, is due to be published in Paris soon. Such publications point to a growing interest in Durkheim and his school amongst scholars in the social sciences, an interest sparked off in part by Steven Lukes’s well-known study (1973). The British Centre for Durkheimian Studies is another manifestation of that interest.

One reason why the Centre is located in Oxford and under the auspices of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology is that from the days of Radcliffe-Brown, who was the first Professor of Social Anthropology there from 1937 to 1946, he and his successors in the chair have been influenced by, or at least have acknowledged the importance of, Durkheim. Radcliffe-Brown was converted early in his academic life to Durkheim’s sociological method; though while he lectured on him he published nothing about him. Radcliffe-Brown’s *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1952) clearly bears the stamp of Durkheimian ideas. In 1913 Radcliffe-Brown had sent Durkheim a copy of his article ‘Three Tribes of Western Australia’ and received back from Durkheim that November a letter in which Durkheim admitted that in the light of Radcliffe-Brown’s ethnographic evidence he must rethink his conclusions about matrimonial rules (see Peristiany 1960).

The small cache of letters published here reminds us that for Durkheim anthropology and sociology were not widely differentiated disciplines. Indeed, their closeness, even mutuality, is demonstrated in the twelve volumes of the *Année Sociologique*, edited by Durkheim, where reviews and articles by anthropologists and sociologists jostle side by side. The point is substantiated in Durkheim’s letter here, where in writing to the anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown, he could say that the latter’s lectures were ‘new proof of the understanding that exists between us on the general conception of our science’. There is a similar reference to this ‘science’ in Durkheim’s first letter to Radcliffe-Brown. And Mauss, of course, was just as much at home in anthropology as he was in sociology, indeed some would probably argue that he was in fact more of an anthropologist (of the armchair style) than a sociologist. As is well known, his knowledge of ethnographic material was enormous, and he was one of the founders of the Institut d’Ethnologie in Paris in 1925.

Durkheim might well have been saddened by the development of the social sciences in Britain and elsewhere in which anthropology and sociology took separate paths (inevitably perhaps, as both disciplines expanded and became increasingly professionalized). In Britain in recent decades sociology has become more allied with social administration and social policy than with social anthropology. And after Durkheim’s death, anthropology was never again to be taught alongside sociology in France. Those departments in Britain and the United States in which anthropology and sociology are taught as complementary subjects maintain the spirit of Durkheim and of the *Année Sociologique* he founded.
1. Durkheim to Radcliffe-Brown, 12 January 1914

Transcript

12 Janvier 1914
4, Avenue d'Orléans, XIVe

Cher Monsieur,

Vous m'aviez fait espérer votre visite pour les fêtes du premier Janvier. Elles sont maintenant passées et il me faut, sans doute, renoncer à faire votre connaissance. Je le regrette vivement et je souhaite que vous puissiez, une autre fois, donner suite à ce projet.

C'est parce que je comptais vous voir que je ne vous ai pas remercié plus tôt des votre précédente lettre et de l'obligeance avec laquelle vous voulez bien vous mettre à ma disposition. J'ai lu avec beaucoup d'intérêt votre programme de cours à Birmingham. Il m'a apporté une nouvelle preuve de l'entente qui règne entre nous sur la conception générale de notre science.

Croyez, je vous prie, cher Monsieur, à mes bien dévoués sentiments.

E. Durkheim

Translation

You had led me to expect a visit from you over the New Year's holidays. They are now passed and doubtless I must forgo making your acquaintance. I deeply regret this and wish that you may be able, on another occasion, to carry out your plan.

It is because I was counting on seeing you that I did not thank you sooner for your earlier letter and for the courteousness with which you are very willing to put yourself at my disposal. I read with great interest the programme of your course at Birmingham. It has brought me new proof of the understanding that exists between us on the general conception of our science.

Commentary

This is a handwritten postcard. The first paragraph is self-explanatory. Radcliffe-Brown had proposed to visit Durkheim over the New Year and had failed to turn up. They were never to meet, for Radcliffe-Brown went to Australia later that year and did not return to Europe until after Durkheim's death.
The second paragraph needs a little elucidation. Radcliffe-Brown had returned from Australia in 1913 and was living in Handsworth, Birmingham, presumably with his wife and close to his family who had moved there in 1890 on the death of his father. In 1913 and early in 1914 he gave a course of lectures, similar in content to those delivered at Cambridge in 1910, at the University of Birmingham under the title ‘Social Anthropology’ (see Firth 1956). This course was an introduction to Durkheimian sociology (see Stocking 1984a), and it is not surprising that Durkheim should react to the outline of the course by referring to ‘notre science’.

2. Mauss to Radcliffe-Brown, 2 January 1935

Transcript

Marcel Mauss
95 Boulevard Jourdan
Tél. Gobelins 40-54
Paris, Le 2 Janvier 1935

Mon Cher Radcliffe Brown,

Veuillez trouver ci-inclus ma réponse à Miss Rosenfels. Ces études sont en effet importantes et de toute urgence, et d’un intérêt capital pour l’Administration. L’enregistrement de ces faits est évidemment un devoir pour nous, qui permettra de mieux asseoir la politique présente et l’histoire future. C’est d’autre part un sujet où peuvent s’exercer non seulement les indigènes dressés par nous, mais aussi ceux de nos jeunes ethnographes qui ne sont pas tout à fait capables d’un travail sociologique approfondi. Ne le leur dites pas, mais c’est bien ce que je pense. La science comporte d’ailleurs des degrés et c’est plutôt les générations qui nous suivront qui seront jugés que nous.

Je sais le despotisme de Malinowski. La faiblesse de la Rockefeller vis à vis lui est probablement la cause de son succès. La faiblesse, dûe à l’âge et à l’élégance des autres Anglais, ceux de Londres aussi bien que ceux de Cambridge et d’Oxford lui laissent le champ libre en Angleterre; mais soyez-en bien sûr, même les jeunes qu’il protège savent le juger. Ce sont des royaumes qui ne durent pas. Son gros ouvrage sur la Magie et d’Agriculture sera surement une très bonne exposition de faits. C’est là qu’il excellie. Et les subventions de la Rockefeller à toute une armée de nègres qu’il a eu à sa disposition lui permettront certainemment d’en avoir fait quelque chose de très complet. Seulement à côté de cela il y aura une théorie très pauvre de la nature magique de cette chose essentielle. Enfin il
va faire un grand livre sur sa théorie fonctionnelle de la Société et de l’organisation familiale. Ici sa faiblesse théorique et son manque total d’érudition se feront encore mieux sentir.


Je vous enverrai ainsi qu’à un certain nombre de gens de Chicago une série de mes récents travaux extraits en particulier Nouvelles Annales Sociologiques.

Best regards and wishes
Votre devoué

Mauss

Translation

Please find enclosed my reply to Miss Rosenfels. These studies are indeed important and of great urgency, and of capital interest for administration. The recording of these facts is clearly our duty, which will allow better the establishment of the present policy and the future story. On the other hand, it is a subject that not only the natives trained by us, but also those of our young ethnographers who are not entirely capable of a sociologically profound work, may undertake. Don’t tell them, but that is indeed what I think. Besides, science admits of degrees and it is the generations that follow us who will be judges, rather than us.

I know of Malinowski’s despotism. Rockefeller’s weakness with regard to him is probably the cause of his success. The weakness, due to the age and the elegance of the other English, those in London as well as those of Cambridge and Oxford, leave the field in England free for him; but you may be sure, even the young whom he protects know how to judge him. There are dynasties that do not last. His big work on magic and agriculture will surely be a very good exposition of the facts. This is what he excels at. And the subventions from Rockefeller for a whole army of stooges which he has had at his disposal will certainly have allowed him to have done something definitive. Only, alongside it there will be a very poor theory of the magical nature of this essential thing. At last he is going to write a great book on his functionalist theory of society and family organization. Here his theoretical weakness and his total lack of learning will make itself still more obvious.

I have as well bad news of brave Hodson whom I saw at the Congress greatly suffering as before. Péri is very ill. Might you not make inquiries about them? I think Evans-Pritchard has some chance at Oxford. Seligmann’s half-chair is not
filled, except by Firth in combination with a part of Joyce’s chair. As we say here, go for it. I would also wish to see you return to the old country.

I will send you, as to some other people in Chicago, a range of my recent offprints in particular from the *Nouvelles Annales Sociologiques*.

**Commentary**

This is a typewritten letter with a handwritten valediction. The Miss Edith Rosenfels to whom Mauss refers in his opening sentence was a student of Radcliffe-Brown at Chicago and was later to marry the applied anthropologist, Philleo Nash. In 1935, Mrs Nash was secretary to a seminar on Race and Culture Contacts, and in this capacity she had written to a number of people, including Mauss, soliciting their co-operation. (Mrs Nash is still alive and living in Wisconsin. My correspondence with her, together with some other letters and a description of the seminar, has been deposited in the ISCA archive with Mauss’s original letter.)

Mauss expresses the view that the collection of ethnographic facts is important but can be left to natives and ethnographers incapable of sociological analysis. It then becomes apparent at the beginning of the second paragraph that he has Malinowski in mind, and there are indications that he and Radcliffe-Brown had previously corresponded on the funding of anthropology by the Rockefeller Foundation and Malinowski’s influence with it. The competition, indeed rivalry, between Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown for Rockefeller funds has been documented by Stocking (1984: 165-8). Mauss ends the second paragraph with an almost wicked hope that Malinowski will bring about his own downfall by exposing his total lack of learning in a book on his theory of functionalism.

In the penultimate paragraph, Mauss refers to Thomas Callan Hodson, who was at the time the first William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge. Mauss makes it sound as though Hodson was at death’s door, but in fact he retired from the Chair in 1937 and lived until 1953. It is not easy to find biographical information on Hodson. No obituary of him appeared in *Man*, despite the fact he had at one time been Secretary of the Royal Anthropological Institute, as well as in turn a lecturer, reader and professor at Cambridge. It is not known from what illness he was suffering when Mauss met him in 1935, but he may have been dogged by ill health, having retired for this reason from the Indian Civil Service in 1901. Péri, referred to in the next sentence, may be W. J. Perry, the diffusionist anthropologist at University College London.

The question of who was to get the newly founded Chair in Social Anthropology at Oxford had become a matter of interest. Mauss is indicating to Radcliffe-Brown that he should go for it.
3. Mauss to Radcliffe-Brown, undated [22 September 1936]

Transcript

Mon Cher Brown,

Votre lettre m’est parvenue pendant de grandes souffrances et pendant une cure que j’ai faite à Contrexéville, dont je suis revenu il y a peu de temps. Il m’était en particulier difficile d’écrire, et j’avais besoin d’autres renseignements.

J’envoie, par le même courrier, à Balfour, Membre du Board qui doit décider de la question, le testimonium que vous me demandez, et je vous envoie une copie; pour de sûreté, j’envoie encore une autre copie à Seligman, pour qu’à l’occasion il puisse la faire circuler. J’espère qu’elle arrivera à temps.

Je suis heureux de pouvoir faire cela pour vous. J’espère que vous serez élu, et cela me fera grand plaisir de vous voir vous rapprocher de nous.

Je suis heureux des nouvelles que vous me donnez également ainsi que de celles de votre voyage en Chine. Vos faits m’intéresseront et intéresseront Granet certainement.

J’ai vu Ogburn qui m’a donné des nouvelles de votre santé et de votre succès à Chicago.

Excusez-moi de ne vous en écrire davantage. Votre affaire m’occupe déjà un long courrier avec toutes sortes de gens.

Avec mes meilleures sentiments et [...] de [...] 
Votre devoué

Mauss

Translation

Your letter reached me during great suffering, and while I was taking a cure at Contrexéville, from which I returned a little time ago. It was in particular difficult for me to write, and I had need of other information.

I am sending, by the same post, to Balfour, a member of the Board which has to decide the question, the reference for which you asked me, and I am sending you a copy; for safety, I am sending moreover another copy to Seligman, in order that in case of need he may circulate it. I hope it arrives in time.

I am happy to be able to do this for you. I hope that you will be successful, and it will give me great pleasure to see us brought closer together.

I am happy about the news you give me, also that about your journey to China. Your information will interest me and certainly interest Granet.
I have seen Ogburn who had given me news of your health and your success at Chicago.

Excuse me for not writing more to you. Your concerns already cause me a long correspondence with all sorts of people.

Commentary

This is a covering letter, typewritten except for the handwritten valediction, for a copy of the reference that Mauss wrote in support of Radcliffe-Brown's application for the Chair in Social Anthropology at Oxford, which he obtained. He also sent copies to Balfour, then Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, and a member of the Electorial Board, and to Seligman who was by then retired. The journey to China referred to relates to Radcliffe-Brown's position as Visiting Professor at Yenching University in the autumn of 1935.

Marcel Granet, the sinologist, was a colleague of Mauss in Paris, and William F. Ogburn, a sociologist at Chicago.

Mauss refers to the fact that he has been unwell (Contrexéville is a thermal spa in the Vosges), and there is more than a hint that he found preparing the reference a burden. This may account for the fact that the testimonial is rather superficial and at no point goes at any depth into Radcliffe-Brown's achievements.

4. Mauss's Reference for Radcliffe-Brown

Transcript

COLLÈGE DE FRANCE
Paris, le 22 Septembre 1936

Monsieur le Professeur Arthur Radcliffe-Brown, de l'Université de Chicago, que je connais depuis très longtemps, et dont le Docteur Haddon et le Docteur Rivers m'ont fait faire la connaissance, est candidat à la chaire d'Anthropologie Sociale que l'Université d'Oxford va fonder.

Il me prie de le recommander à l'attention du Board chargé de la désignation du futur professeur.

Je pense—et je ne crois pas indiscret—ayant eu l'honneur d'être en 1898 à Oxford, sinon l'élève, du moins le disciple du regreté Sir E. B. Taylor [sic]—de dire à quel degré A. Radcliffe-Brown est capable de continuer la tradition dont mes deux amis, le Professeur Balfour et le Docteur Marrett [sic] ont été les continuateurs.
Le livre de Brown sur les Andamans est un des plus importants livres d'ethnographie et de sociologie descriptive que je connaisse. Il a éclairci, autant que les choses se peuvent, une série considérable de faits concernant des populations dont l'observation était urgente, et dont la position dans l'histoire de la civilisation est encore une des plus controversées.

Ses recherches et surtout ses directions de travaux en Afrique de Sud ont été également, comme son enseignement, couronnés de succès.

J'ai eu le plaisir de voir à l'École des Hautes-Études d'anciens élèves à moi devenus ses collaborateurs: Mrs Tucker, actuellement Professeur Hoernlé à l'Université de Johannesburg, et le Professeur Schapiro.

L'ensemble de ses travaux sur la famille chez les Bantus Sud sont extrêmement importants.

Depuis, il a dirigé pendant longtemps les travaux d'Anthropologie Sociale, et d'anthropologie de l'Université de Sydney, et la publication d'Océanie.


Puis c'est le succès qu'il vient de remporter en Chine, au Shan-Si.

Comme scholar, comme professor, comme chercheur, comme travailleur sur le terrain, comme directeur de travaux et animateur des sciences, A. Radcliffe-Brown me semble être l'un des meilleurs vivants.

Je me fais un plaisir de l'attester,

Marcel Mauss

Professor au Collège de France,
Directeur d'Études à l'École des Htes Études,
Secrétaire Général et Professeur à l'Institut
d'Ethnologie de l'Université de Paris
Paris.

Translation

Professor Arthur Radcliffe-Brown, of the University of Chicago, whom I have known for a long time, and of whom Dr Haddon and Dr Rivers made me acquainted, is a candidate for the Chair in Social Anthropology which the University of Oxford is going to found.

He has asked me to recommend him to the attention of the Board responsible for the appointment of the future professor.

I think—and I believe not imprudently—having had the honour to be in 1898 in Oxford, if not the pupil, at least the disciple of the late-lamented Sir Edward Tylor—I can say to what extent A. Radcliffe-Brown is capable of continuing the
tradition of which my two friends, Professor Balfour and Dr Marett have been the continuators.

Brown's book on the *Andamans* is one of the most important works of ethnography and descriptive sociology that I know. He has elucidated, as far as things can be, a considerable range of facts concerning people of whom the observation was urgent and whose position in the history of civilization is still one of great controversy.

His researches, and above all his direction of work in South Africa, have also been, like his teaching, crowned with success.

I have had the pleasure to see some former students of mine at the École des Hautes-Études become his collaborators: Mrs. Tucker, now Professor Hoernlé at the University of Johannesburg, and Professor Schapiro.

The collection of his works on the family among the Southern Bantu is extremely important.

Later, he directed for a long time the work of social anthropology and anthropology at the University of Sydney, and the publication *Oceania*.

His two series of researches on Australia, those before the War on the tribes of the West, and those after 1926 on the tribes of the Centre, East and North, are definitive.

Then there is the success that he has just gained in China, at Shan-Si.

As a scholar, as a professor, as a researcher, as a fieldworker, as a director of research and as a stimulator of science, A. Radcliffe-Brown seems to me to be one of the best alive.

REFERENCES


To many a student beginning a postgraduate course, the prospect of pursuing research without set reading lists from a supervisor may seem daunting. Where to look for sources, how to follow up interesting articles and how to be certain of keeping up to date with the latest findings are questions that threaten to undermine the student's confidence in the first months of a course. The problems facing the researcher resemble some of those faced by the anthropologist who has just entered the field. There are means by which to carry out efficient and exhaustive literature researches, just as there are guide-lines for carrying out successful fieldwork. Recently there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of information systems designed for this purpose; indeed, the advances have been so great over the last five years or so that an uninitiated browse through what help is available may overwhelm and confuse the student even more. This article intends to provide a jargon-free introduction to the types of service on offer to the researcher. It hopes to persuade the more conservative student that computers and terminals really are there to help and are not reserved for hard scientists. It is, in effect, a report on preliminary fieldwork conducted among Oxford's libraries and on-line terminals.

This article was prepared as part of an ESRC-funded project, 'Kinship and Language: A Computer-Aided Study of Social Deixis in Conversation’ (grant number R000233311).
Most students starting postgraduate work will be familiar with the electronic cataloguing systems in libraries. Almost all universities are converting their traditional card indexes into computer records; in Oxford, for instance, all books and journals catalogued by the University’s Bodleian Library after 1987 are entered on ‘OLIS’, the Oxford Library Information System. There is no physical (‘hard’) record for these entries, though some departmental libraries still operate the traditional card cataloguing system. It is, therefore, a matter more of necessity than convenience that users are acquainted with such systems as OLIS. Access to such systems is gained via the numerous terminals distributed throughout libraries, each offering the user a prompt by which he or she makes a choice. While these systems are easy to use, most libraries will also offer assistance and introductory courses. Throughout, I shall be referring to a working example in order to show how the systems available can be used in combination to provide an extensive literature search on a specific topic, namely ‘Divination in Sub-Saharan Africa’.

Library systems such as OLIS provide a useful first round of inquiry. With it one can search the library holdings according to author, title, subject and publisher. The system will tell you the location of the book or journal and offer brief details about it. Searching by subject provides a useful way of browsing the book-shelves: tap in a keyword and it will display a list of all books stocked that concern that subject. A useful keyword to tap in for our example would be ‘divination’. This provides several references, but the list becomes much smaller when we restrict ourselves to Africa. Two books appear to be of immediate interest. These are Philip M. Peek’s edited collection *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) and William Bascom’s *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 [1980]). Both these books have extensive bibliographies, which can provide the reader with an initial grasp of the literature. One of the pitfalls of OLIS, however, is that searching by keyword will not guarantee an exhaustive list: for example, the classic work on this topic, Evans-Pritchard’s *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937) is not listed under ‘divination’, though it is found under ‘oracle’. Other works of importance can be found under such keywords as ‘magic’ and ‘spirit possession’.

OLIS suffers from two major limitations. First, the material (‘database’) it covers is somewhat restricted. It offers information about the titles of books and journals, but it cannot grant access to their contents; nor does it cover articles in books and journals. Second, since there is often a year’s delay between a book’s being published and its being catalogued, the information that can be gained from the system is not completely up to date.
There are systems available that can provide information to fill the gaps in such systems as OLIS. One of the most impressive in Britain is called BIDS, 'Bath Information and Data Services'. To take advantage of this service, one needs to be a user of a main-frame computer, for example, the VAX in Oxford. This is free for most students and provides access to many more information services and extra communication systems. Courses in using the main-frame are held frequently and are to be highly recommended.

The database to which BIDS provides access consists of journal articles and book reviews for all disciplines, along with conference papers, symposia, seminars and so forth for scientific and technical subjects. It is updated every week. The scope of the database is not constrained by the holdings of any one library; it covers a vast array of academic disciplines and all bar the most obscure journals. It is designed to help the researcher find out who is publishing work in particular subject areas, to follow the work of specific authors, and to view the progression of ideas. BIDS allows the user to conduct searches by author, title and keyword, in a way similar to OLIS. Its main advantage, however, is that it can perform searches according to citation. That is, it can find any article that cites a particular reference, and display its publication details along with its bibliography. For instance, the student can find any article, published up to the previous week, that cites 'Evans-Pritchard 1937'. This line of inquiry has enormous potential for accessing the most recent literature, and also for providing a rough guide to the impact an article has had in a particular field; there is perhaps greater reason to read an article cited more than 100 times than a similar-sounding article cited only three times. 'Evans-Pritchard 1937' has been cited in 206 articles at the time of writing (in the social sciences database alone). Information overload is a common drawback of such extensive databases.

BIDS has many useful options. Searches can be limited by language, journal, subject and year; it can display bibliographies; it can also perform 'proximity searches', so that even without knowing, for example, the exact title of an article or the initials of the author, the student can still locate material. BIDS can even provide information regarding sponsors of conferences. This may give the student clues as to where to look for the next round of funding, though at the moment this is restricted to the hard sciences. BIDS holds extra advantages for the more intrepid explorers who have more advanced facilities, such as electronic mail (see below) and a bibliographic programme on their computer (e.g. EndNote Plus). For researchers so equipped, BIDS can save the chore of retyping references by downloading information directly to a personal computer, from where it can be transferred into a personalized bibliographic library.

BIDS is easy to use since it offers a menu of command choices and HELP options at all times. However, since it is so powerful and extensive, an introductory course is advised. In our example, we can not only follow up any article/book of importance by doing a citation search, but we can browse the most
recent issues of journals. A simple search provides a number of book reviews (including some of books not listed in OLIS) and a number of articles of possible interest.

As with all information systems, however, BIDS has its limitations. Still in its early development, it cannot be guaranteed to find all relevant articles, and its database is restricted to articles published after 1980. Most importantly, though, it offers little information regarding the content of the article. It provides the title, author (with departmental address), and the journal issue in which it is published, along with the language and subject words. Clues regarding its coverage may be gathered by a glance at its bibliography, but BIDS does not provide any text from the article itself.

CD-ROM

There are, however, information systems available that can provide the user with the abstracts of articles. These catalogues are contained on CD-ROMs, compact discs that are operated at special terminals distributed throughout libraries and that are available to all library users for free. There are over 100 CD-ROM products available in Oxford, each with its own coverage and special features. Usually one or two suffice for a particular discipline. One advantage of this facility over BIDS is that the coverage extends to articles within edited books. Where available, abstracts can be accessed, so the reader can be far clearer as to what is or is not appropriate to read before making the effort to obtain a hard copy of the actual article. This aspect of CD-ROMs is especially welcome in that it stems the information overload that can easily arise when performing literature searches. All the usual search options are available, and most terminal stations have printers to provide customized reading lists. These systems are so user-friendly that no special introduction is required, but users must be aware of the limitations regarding the boundaries of their database. Lists of CD-ROM holdings, along with advice as to which are the most appropriate, should be readily available at library information desks.

A search on the 'Sociofile' CD-ROM gives us 58 references for the key word 'divination', from the period January 1974 to December 1992. This list can be whittled down to about 13 once the abstracts are read. Searching the citations of these articles using BIDS will reveal more articles of possible relevance. A similar search on the 'Modern Languages Association' CD-ROM, which includes anthropology in its database, yields a few more articles from other journals as well as some chapters in edited books.
Finally, it should be mentioned that a wealth of information of a more informal nature is accessible through 'electronic networks'. Students wishing to have access to these need to be registered on the main-frame computer and to have an 'electronic mail' account. Electronic mail is a system by which subscribers can send messages to each other from their computers. With access to 'E-mail', the student is able to communicate with colleagues all over the world efficiently and for free. It also gives the student access to a plethora of 'bulletin boards' (or 'discussion lists'). Subscribers create an agenda for discussion and post their contributions on a list that is distributed to all other subscribers, who are free to add their own comments. In this way issues can be raised and debate pursued effectively without anyone actually having to meet. There are now thousands of these bulletin boards covering a full range of interests (academic and non-academic). Regulations regarding registration and contributions vary, but most offer interesting information regarding new books and forthcoming conferences, as well as academic debate. If, for instance, one is stuck on a specific issue and needs advice or help, suggestions may be more readily forthcoming from this source than from a busy supervisor. E-mail can open up a multitude of new possibilities and research threads, all at a reasonably informal level—a must for the more advanced postgraduate.

These, then, are the major ways in which library and information technology can be of help. Each path has its own advantages and limitations, but used in combination they provide a most powerful set of research tools. Just about everything is free to the individual user and very easy to operate: the biggest difficulty for many is appreciating just how much can be achieved. What is required of the student is the willingness to become accustomed to a different language, to ask questions that will seem basic to the informant, and to be prepared to spend some time becoming accustomed to 'other' types of relationship mediating our contact with books. Such injunctions should not be strange to anthropologists preparing for the field.
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Douglas H. Johnson, a historian, is a Research Fellow at St Antony’s College, Oxford. He has worked in the Southern Sudan since 1972, the same year he began his research on the Nuer. He is the author of Nuer Prophets (Oxford, 1994).

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In the last five years museum studies has been established as a respectable and popular quasi-discipline: the literature is already burgeoning and some academics are even preparing courses on 'critical museology'. What is surprising is not that this new academic domain has recently appeared but that its emergence has taken so long. After oil and the manufacture of cars, tourism and leisure comprise the third largest industry in the world. In the UK a new museum opens almost every
week and museum managers vie with one another and with the curators of poorly budgeted state museums, for visitors. The idea of Westerners practising an almost obsessive ‘museum culture’ was already so well established twenty years ago that contemporary composers (such as Harrison Birtwhistle), performance artists (such as Antony Howell), and other leaders of the subversive edge of the avant-garde were even then parodying its consequences. It is equally surprising that the academic study of the problematic nature of ethnographic museum display has taken so long to be included on the anthropological agenda. For anthropologists have been well aware for some time of the difficulties attendant on attempting to represent other cultures. The two new brick-heavy tomes produced by the Smithsonian should not, therefore, be seen as particularly innovative, but rather as developing an already established debate.

Both books are internally divided into parts, each prefaced by several pages of commentary from one of the editors. So many issues are discussed in these two volumes that I can only deal with a very few here. Some contributors discuss the ways the medium—the museum exhibition—affects the message—the portrayal of another culture. As Svetlana Alpers points out, it is difficult for visitors to be uninfluenced by ‘the museum effect’: the laying out of objects in such a manner that people scrutinize them more for their aesthetic qualities than for the stories they may be made to tell about other forms of life. At the same time, the contrary type of exhibition, presented in a strongly narrative manner, runs the risk of reducing visitors’ potential interpretations into one, supposedly authoritative storyline. One exit from this apparent impasse is to exploit ‘the museum effect’ by exhibiting the objects in such a way as to reveal the aesthetics of a different culture, by suggesting to visitors that items of material culture can be categorized, viewed, and appreciated in terms and sensations other than those of industrialized Western society. Another exit is for curators simultaneously to proffer alternative and not necessarily complementary readings of the material on view; a further possibility is to present different parts of the same exhibition in different ways: either way the dangerous tendency towards authoritativeness on the part of the presenter is deliberately undercut and the visitor is provided with a sense of potential creativity. In this way visiting a museum exhibition holds the promise of becoming a thoughtful encounter, rather than simply a tour of objects on parade.

Michael Baxandall chooses to concentrate not on the exhibition itself, but on the making of exhibitions. In other words, the process by which the different participants (the producers of displayed objects, the exhibitors, the sponsors, the intended audience etc.) negotiate and try to work together over what is to be displayed, and how. This is contested—at times highly contested—terrain, where the interested parties argue over who has the right to project the identity, or identities, of a culture within the museum space. For example, three contributors debate the exhibition Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters and Sculptors, held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and other venues from 1987. Its organizers argue that their primary concern was to re-evaluate positively the work of several artists of Chicano background; Tomas
Ybarra-Frausto, himself a Chicano, counter-argues that its organizers homogenized the variety within the Chicano artistic community and muffled the challenge its members present to Western notions of aesthetics—another form of ‘the museum effect’? The underlying tension here concerns the terms on which the art of a people is to be exhibited in the temples of Western culture: by having their art seen as aesthetically valid as that which fills the Louvre, the National Gallery and the Met, or by questioning the very notion of art embodied by such once-venerable institutions?

According to various contributors, some curators try to resolve problems surrounding the making of exhibitions by inviting the audience for which their shows are intended to participate in their organization. Some try to involve the owners or producers of the objects in the exhibition process itself. But thorny issues quickly arise. Who is to have the ultimate say in what is shown? How is one to resolve the dilemma of pleasing a previously denigrated minority culture by exhibiting aspects of its ways of life without at the same time ignoring unpalatable—aspects of its past? The potential scope for inflamed debate is huge.

One solution is simply to give the objects back to the descendants of their original owners and to allow them to display them in whichever way they choose. For if, as Carol Duncan demonstrates in her essay, the grand national art museums in Washington, France and the UK are physical embodiments of national identity, and if visiting them is a ‘ritual of citizenship’, then an indigenous group, newly enriched with its repatriated objects can, if its members so wish, display their own sense of identity by exhibiting the returned items in a manner they consider culturally appropriate. The two Northwest Coast museums run by Northwest Coast Native Americans, discussed by James Clifford in his contribution, are a case in point. Of course, grave questions about the notion of ownership then emerge to trouble this politically corrected scene, for who exactly ‘owns’ what? If repatriation is not to cause as many problems as it is meant to solve, then possible answers to these questions need to be very carefully researched before any ‘handing back’ is considered. Clifford’s essay is indeed a case in point, for further work in the same area by Barbara Saunders of the University of Utrecht has revealed how the indigenous museums have become part of a local power-play, one where the latter-day possessors of the objects are using their ownership of them to boost both their own (contested) position and their own (contested) conception of their group. For those who know what they are looking at, a tour of these two museums does not simply tell us about Northwest Coast portrayals of Northwest Coast ways of life, it also tells us much about contemporary inter factional differences expressed via the exhibition of objects (see Saunders forthcoming).

The main strength of these two books is that they can serve as compendia of the way issues in museum studies are being debated now. Their various contributors repeatedly underscore the essentially political and problematic nature of museum display and the complex arena within which decisions about exhibitions are made. They do not provide any easy answers, because there aren’t
any. What they do provide is a guide to the sort of negotiated solutions that curators and others are today attempting to achieve. Instead of authority and timelessness encased in an Anglo-Saxon domain, they stress compromise and provisionality in a multicultural world. The main weakness of the books is that they are unnecessarily long. Given that the quality of the essays is very uneven and that the message of several of them is somewhat repetitive, it is hard not to feel that the editors could have been much more harsh in their selection. Two slimmer books, with fewer papers, would still have contained the same essential points and would have presented them in a more effective manner.

Michael O'Hanlon's *Paradise* is a very different sort of book. Admirably concise and unrepetitive, it was written to accompany the eponymous exhibition which he has organized at the Museum of Mankind. In his book O'Hanlon sketches the 'crash course of modernity' undergone by the Wahgi (the New Guinean group with whom he lived as a doctoral student) since the first arrival of Whites sixty years ago. But all has not been sudden change among the Wahgi for, as O'Hanlon demonstrates, they had been adapting to altering circumstances even before the Whites turned up, and they continued in the same adaptable mode afterwards. With the end of the Pax Australiana, for instance, skirmishing has reappeared, but this time with guns as well as with spears, and with shields decorated with both traditional border patterns and stylized representations of advertisements and beer-bottle designs.

What makes *Paradise* different from the usual run-of-the-mill exhibition catalogue is not just O'Hanlon's concern to correct any popular stereotyping of the Wahgi as Stone Age jungle-dwellers, but his desire to portray the process by which he collected the objects for the exhibition. He wishes to show how Wahgi principles simultaneously constrained and aided his efforts, how local agencies and perceptions influenced what he could collect. His account does not stop there but goes on to describe the process of putting the Wahgi artefacts on exhibition in the Museum of Mankind. Here an alternative set of principles and constraints pertain, determining what can be shown, in what way, and at what time. O'Hanlon is right to wish to remind us that the final outcome is not the simple product of a single-minded curator but the negotiated result of a complex procedure during which he/she has to operate in a successive variety of contexts, each with its own habitual practices and proscriptions. In recent years there have been many personal accounts of fieldwork; O'Hanlon's essay is, to my knowledge, one of the first personal accounts of the nature of collecting and of its endpoint—in a national gallery in the heart of London.

And the exhibition itself? A triumph of perseverance and imagination over economy of means. O'Hanlon would have liked to have shown more, in more space. But there wasn't the money, so we must be grateful for what we get. Despite this obstacle, the exhibition achieves its aim, for only the most blinkered or resolutely prejudiced of visitors could come away from it without gaining some idea of the ways in which Papua New Guinea is developing. True, old trading shells and some traditional ritual structures are on view, but so are a modern trade-
store, gorgeous net-bags bearing contemporary designs, and bullet-holed shields painted in the colours of local lager companies.

Survival International used to complain about the Museum of Mankind's habit of mounting exhibitions which represented a people as living in some timeless, supposedly traditional manner, and rightly so. This time I am sure they would only wish to cheer.

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BOOK REVIEWS


Yoruba *oriki* comprise a literary genre that parallels Yoruba society in many interesting ways: they celebrate difference and social hierarchy at one and the same time, and achievers are praised and their competitors denigrated by being equated with a natural order or hierarchy. *Oriki* praise individuals, places of origin and deities (*orisa*). By chanting an *oriki* the performer both enhances the status, power and reputation of the addressee (of whatever kind) and affirms her own allegiance to that person, place of origin or *orisa*. Everything is possible in this individualistic melting-pot, but the goals achieved time and again across the generations recreate familiar social structures. Karin Barber traces the way *oriki* are part and parcel of the fabric of Yoruba life. This book is far more than an analysis of a ‘mere’ literary genre. At the beginning of the book she asks what *oriki* can tell us about Okuku (the town where she conducted her research) and what Okuku told her about *oriki*. The answering of these questions makes for fascinating anthropology of the best, and very readable, kind.

*Oriki* comprise a genre to make most literary critics despair. They lack most sorts of unity; the women who chant them are *bricoleurs* of the first water, using elements from other *oriki*, proverbs and other Yoruba genres. Performatively, they are distinguished by the insistence with which they are chanted (shouted or screamed) at the individual being addressed (which may be a living individual, ancestor, household, lineage or deity). The performer weaves a web of allusion by combining many disparate elements. The more skilful the performer the more radical the breaks and twists she can succeed in introducing, while continuing to maintain the thread—the frail links between one phrase and the next: ‘any kind of resemblance (including opposition and strong contrast) can be used to bring two utterances into conjunction: syntactic, semantic, lexical, tonal; through sound, through structure or through meaning’ (p. 269). A performance may increase this still further. For example, a performer may be addressing an *oriki* at one man when a more a senior man arrives. Without a clear break, she will switch to the newcomer’s *oriki*. Where then the unity of performance or narrative? The notion of a dialogic, which Barber takes from Mikhail Bakhtin, proves helpful. In *oriki* there is a continual shifting of the inferred voice: the first person moves without pause or comment from the woman speaking, to the addressee, to either or both of their ancestors, their lineages as a single unit, and then may change into second or third person and back, with all of this being done in the space of five lines (p. 260). The performance of *oriki* is also part and parcel of both the acquisition and maintenance of status and power. Indeed, the performance of *oriki* is (in part) constitutive of status and power; to understand *oriki* in Yoruba society one must
understand status and power, and vice versa. It is in this reciprocal (though indirect) relationship that the dialogic lies. A similar fluidity may be found in the different types of history that Barber explores. The history of the town is intermeshed with the history of the Oba and the royal family. The history of the place leads to that of the people resident there and vice versa. Oriki exploit and explore all such possible intermeshings.

The title of Barber's first chapter, 'Anthropology, Text and Town', could well have been used for the entire book. A later chapter discusses oriki orile, the oriki of the place of origin (orile). The residential/domestic kin groups that comprise the town identify themselves with, and distinguish themselves from one another by referring to their places of origin. An oriki orile, therefore, is about the residential units in the town by which individuals are identified, and through which, for example, they gain rights to land (and, for some, through which they may inherit titles).

Oriki orile lead Barber to a protracted discussion of the Yoruba ile (pp. 153–65). She discusses both P. C. Lloyd's account of them as patrilineal descent groups and Jerry Eade's more recent residence-based analysis. Her discussion is anthropology at its most sensitive; both to the particular and to the need to generalize. Ile in Okuku (at least) emerge as units of identity in which both residence and kinship play vital roles. Different elements are important on different occasions, so the overall picture is complex. At the core of each ile is a (small) agnatic descent group—among whom titles are transmitted. (How significant is it that despite this kin group at the core, Okuku people talk of them in terms of their common town of origin?) To this may be added strangers and cognatic kin, who acquire rights to hold and to transmit land by dint of long residence. They need not, however, be fully merged with the core kin group—separate origin accounts may be preserved (in oriki orile). Moreover, rules of exogamy may also distinguish core members of an ile: co-residence implies exogamy, so no one in a compound may marry. However, this principle extends back in time, so that groups that were once co-resident do not intermarry long after they have ceased to be co-resident. This means that two groups from one town who become attached to two different ile in Okuku may not marry, although other members of their ile may. Conversely, co-residence alone does not imply unity. Barber records cases of different ile occupying the same compound for generations and retaining separate identities. The final twist (pp. 165ff.), which links this anthropology firmly to the text, is the way in which oriki orile, the oriki of each ile, are shown to be constitutive of ile membership—knowing and reciting a particular oriki orile demonstrates and (in part) creates membership of the ile.

Another chapter explores the concept of 'bigmanship' in its Yoruba incarnation, from the period of warring uncertainties of the nineteenth century to the entrepreneurial possibilities of the twentieth. Oriki were a mark of success, and give clues to how the big men wished to be seen. There were 'big' women too, but they tended not to have oriki. Barber gives a sensitive account of why and how this came about. In the course of this she mentions Fakemide, who became
a babalawo (ifá diviner), not only knowing the ifá verses but nevertheless actually practising as an ifá diviner (p. 289). None of the other literature on ifá has described female practitioners.

It is unfortunate that a number of the index entries, especially those indexing items in the end notes, refer to the page before the actual reference. That the index is occasionally correct makes this all the more irritating. Readers unfamiliar with Nigerian English should be told that ila, which Barber translates as ‘okro’ is Hibiscus esculentus, called ‘okra’ in other parts of the English-speaking world.

DAVID ZEITLYN


This innovative collection of essays is the product of a workshop held in April 1989 at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. In their introduction Ruth Barnes and Joanne B. Eicher assert the significance of the role of dress in marking both ethnic and social identity and gender roles. They note, for example, that before they are old enough to dress themselves infants are decorated appropriately by their elders. Their characterization of ‘gender distinctions’ as ‘a crucial part of the construction of dress’ (p. 2) is, though, somewhat surprising as it leaves room for doubt as to which they think is the more deeply rooted category.

Most contributors to the book happily avoid this ambiguity. Given their concentration on particular ethnographic material, it is perhaps easier for them to demonstrate the way in which it is gender identity that is at least partly constructed by conventional modes of dress. This is evidenced not least by the way in which dress is shown to change over space and time in accordance with changes in the conception of gender roles. In his essay on ‘Continuity and Change in Hindu Women’s Dress’ O. P. Joshi notes that women from agricultural castes in rural areas in central India wear a form of dress that is slightly different to that worn by urban women, allowing them greater freedom of movement in the fields, yet also allowing them quickly to become modest in the presence of men. The way garments are produced is often itself gendered. Cherri Pancake documents male and female production of different kinds of textiles in Guatemala, noting that while ‘male weavers typically generate quantities of repetitive items, such as yard-goods, linens, and blankets...women...are likely to weave highly individualistic garments or decorative cloths’ (p. 86). A third category of ‘generic garments’ and ‘tourist products’ exists, and these are produced by both men and women. Writing about
the Naga and Southeast Asian contexts, Ruth Barnes identifies what she sees as a complementarity between women's textile production and male head-taking, with its associations of fertility, acquisition and expression. In her essay on the ‘Jewish Kia’ Susanne Baizerman discusses a context in which two systems of meaning operate. One surrounds the production and giving of this kind of skullcap to men by women. The other relates to its use by men to make religious and political statements about themselves. The social context is shown to be definitively important, with the same kippa sruga being capable of expressing more than one kind of meaning. Conventions in dress encode many meanings on different but interacting levels. The fundamental gender division is highlighted and then qualified by the indication of religious, social and political differences.

The theme of authority or power recurs. Julia Leslie documents the way in which for orthodox Hindu women, dress can be read predominantly as an assertion of their religious and social subordination to their husbands. It is this same relationship, however, which offers them a certain amount of authority in the context of the home. Helen Callaway identifies the British colonial ritual of ‘Dressing for Dinner in the Bush’ as having a twofold political objective. First, the ‘asymmetry of gender roles’ was reinforced, and second, ‘the uniforms and prescribed clothing brilliantly enhanced the imperial spectacle and the dominant power this represented’ (p. 246). It is, however, in the two essays on Western societies that the issue of power is most clearly articulated. In her discussion of maternity clothes in the USA from 1850 to 1990, Rebecca Bailey shows that the clothes deemed appropriate for pregnant women were those that fitted with the new medical ideology of pregnancy, controlled by almost exclusively male doctors. Pregnant women were discouraged from wearing the kinds of garments that would allow them to participate in whichever new and popular activity they had just been advised against. This physical constriction is reminiscent of the injunction on Hindu women noted in Joshi’s essay: ‘the sari encourages them to neither walk quickly nor run, but to move with dignity; it enhances the view Indian society has regarding women’ (p. 225). The marginalization of pregnant women in America is matched by the marginalization of women in the British police force as presented by Malcolm Young, police officer and anthropologist. His sometimes shocking essay demonstrates that the appearance, and therefore the identity, of women in the police force is controlled by competing men. These male peers and superiors are privy to an unofficial, as well as an official, discourse relating to women within the organization. Abuses of power and the manipulation of the identity of the marginalized female group are therefore possible. Perhaps more than any other contributor, Young engages squarely with the gender issue in a way that never subordinates it to the theme of dress.

Overall this is a rich and diverse collection of essays, with a wide ethnographic and historical range that makes it a valuable and useful book for those interested in either dress or gender, and indispensable for those interested in both.

TANIA KAISER

Writing on popular culture and popular music has moved into the academic mainstream, but it has remained awkwardly poised between the mass cultural critiques of Adorno and Horkheimer and romantic celebrations of ‘popular’ resistance. In spite of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies’ advocacy of ethnographic techniques, there are surprisingly few accounts of band life based on detailed observation of groups of musicians. As the title of Sara Cohen’s book suggests, it is the ‘making’ of popular music that has been ignored consistently in this field. The need for an anthropological voice has consequently become more and more pressing. Cohen’s ethnographic study of two Liverpool bands, The Jactars and Crikey It’s the Cromptons!, is a highly persuasive demonstration of the existence of a gap and the means by which it might be filled.

Cohen’s choice of Liverpool, as well as her choice of ‘alternative’, ‘hard’ and ‘angry’ bands, means that the book focuses on the post-punk ‘Indie’ aesthetic in a local context that has an intense commitment to popular culture, in particular music and sport. Cohen first situates Liverpool’s extraordinary musical creativity; there are currently some 1000 bands in the city. Until its relatively recent economic decline, the city of Liverpool was an outward-looking port. Courtesy of the American servicemen stationed nearby after the Second World War guitars and records found their way to Liverpool to an extent unrivalled elsewhere in Britain. Liverpool’s relative wealth and the transient nature of much of its population resulted in a vibrant nightlife that was highly receptive to the influx of recorded North American popular music. After the heyday epitomized by the Cavern in the 1960s and Eric’s in the 1970s, economic decline in the 1980s did not lead to any appreciable diminishment of the city’s musical life. If anything, the success of The Beatles and other Liverpool bands, the respectability that rock had attained among the city’s working class, and the time made available by mass unemployment were highly conducive to the formation of a new rock culture. As Cohen points out, this rock culture is one which thrives on thrift and making-do. Much of the creativity of the bands studied by Cohen was channelled into keeping in touch (when no band members had telephones), organizing rehearsals, travel and gigs, and raising funds for instruments, amplification and demo tapes (when most band members were unemployed). The social fabric of band life, the ties of friendship, shared musical experience, kinship and debt, forms the core of Cohen’s ethnography. Their music making ‘not only unites, but divides’ (p. 43), constituting a medium through which a wide-ranging net of relationships are reinforced, explored and deconstructed.

Cohen’s book focuses in turn on the organization and management of bands, on performance, and on the efforts to secure a contract with a recording company. The contradictions experienced by both the bands studied between imposed, media-industry values and locally generated constructions of aesthetic worth
emerge from the ethnography in terms of a number of pressing practical problems. Later chapters widen the theoretical frame, looking at the musical and lyrical organization of performance and at the construction of meaning, in particular the contradiction-laden aesthetic of organized ‘disorder’. Post-punk Indie rock musicians have encoded what Simon Frith has called the ‘rock ideology’ in ways which relate directly to, and emerge from, the social circumstances of the musicians. An ethos of ‘non-musicality’ prevails, in the present case in opposition to the bands in a rival studio contemptuously referred to as ‘musos’ and the technological sophistication of ‘commercial pop’. Ideas about musical style and the powerful experiences of performance underpin the band members’ social relationships, enabling them to say things about one another, and to one another, which could not be said in any other way, and positively transforming a contradictory relationship of exclusion from and dependence upon the world of music commerce. The book concludes with a discussion of the ways in which women are excluded from Liverpool’s rock culture, and develops a critique of the gender-blindness of subcultural theory.

Cohen’s discussion of the ways in which musical disorder is organized focuses heavily on performance and rehearsal techniques. The discussion here is slightly marred by an uncertainty about where to draw the line between anthropological and musicological analysis (p. 90), suggesting that there might in fact be an appropriate moment for musicology to step in and complete the picture. The affective experience of musical performance is undoubtedly a key to why the bands Cohen studied keep at it, in spite of repeated failures. What allows this experience to attain its full significance is the pattern of social relations it organizes and articulates, and the metaphorical (verbal) languages spun round it. There is little here that an anthropologist cannot do, and Cohen’s book demonstrates this admirably. Understanding composition, and the performance moment, may indeed require a more detailed technical discussion than Cohen ever provides, for example how Tony’s ‘upside down’ aesthetic (p. 167) is worked out in constructional details, but this is a relatively minor criticism of what constitutes an effective anthropological analysis.

The detail and thoroughness of Cohen’s ethnographic approach constitute a significant challenge to those academic disciplines engaged with ‘the popular’. The significance of this kind of local-level study lies partly in demonstrating the sheer quantities of time, effort and social creativity involved in music-making in contemporary British cities, and partly in reminding theorists of popular culture of the significance of performance as a medium through which the often contradictory experiences of identity are simultaneously formulated and transformed.

MARTIN STOKES
LIBBET CRANDON-MALAMUD, *From the Fat of Our Souls: Social Change, Political Process, and Medical Pluralism in Bolivia* (Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care), Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1991. xix, 267 pp., Glossary, References, Index, Tables. $45.00.

If there is a book that has been on the shelves of every recherché medical anthropologist of social persuasion since its publication, it must be *From the Fat of Our Souls* by Libbet Crandon-Malamud. The souls in question are the 1000 or so living in 'Kachitu', a windswept municipio in the altiplano of Bolivia, where the author spent eighteen months from February 1977 in the company of her daughter, whose drawings illustrate the book.

The book represents medical anthropology's attempt to take the intellectual high ground. Medicine is one of Paul Unschuld's 'primary resources [which] are, like capital, fungible. They can be used to acquire something else or transformed into something else. Secondary resources are those things acquired or created through primary resources' (p. ix; repeated p. 11). Dominant amongst such secondary resources is the enhancement of social status, which is premised on class, which is in turn premised on ethnicity. All are fluid. Medical choice in Kachitu, Crandon-Malamud argues, is principally motivated by the process of identity negotiation rather than by any belief in efficacy. Thus, 'medical dialogue can be used to both redefine the content of ethnic and religious identity, and to create alliances across boundaries that are, in fact, permeable, and effect changes in social class—to redefine cultural identity' (p. 22).

The 'can' in this statement should be noted, as should the 'a' in the following: 'a principal means by which people negotiate identity and shift affiliation is through medicine' (p. 202). Later, Crandon-Malamud is forced to temper further the boldness of her argument: 'medical traditions are as much a dynamic of Kachitu as are other aspects of culture, such as the economic, political, legal, and religious processes that inform them and are transformed by them.... The physicians in Kachitu demonstrated as much as anyone else that through medical dialogue, shifts in medical beliefs are frequently made, and as a result, nonmedical ends are achieved' (p. 204; emphases added). No attempt is made to evaluate the relative importance of medical traditions in the Kachitu dynamic, or in the achievement of secondary, nonmedical ends. Other roles of medicine tend to be underplayed by Crandon-Malamud in her emphasis on medical dialogue as a quest for identity. There is ample evidence from other parts of the world to suggest, for example, that people may also go to medical practitioners because they are sick.

Thus it is not for its theory, nor for its analysis, that the book might be lauded (even though many medical anthropologists might want to believe that what Crandon-Malamud says is true). Instead, it is because much of the ethnographic writing it contains is richly evocative. Indeed, it is tempting to believe that the book's rather long gestation period was necessitated by a misguided attempt to patch together these often excellent vignettes with a somewhat overstretched theoretical overlay. The book is obedient to narrative and reflexive imperatives,
and those who like such headings as ‘Cast of Characters’ and ‘Locating a Theoretical Perspective: Or How the Physician, the Preacher, the Peasant, and the Khan Achachi Came to Terms with One Another’ will be charmed by its structure and approach. There is undoubted craftsmanship and vitality in the narrative style. There is also an admirable reflexive candour. High spots include an unfortunate episode with local dogs, which forms the personal context for Crandon-Malamud’s experience of a boy blowing off two fingers and a thumb with a firecracker, and the explication of her economic relations with individuals in the community, which creates a backdrop to the illness and death of her research assistant’s father.

The ethnographic vignettes amply illustrate the thickness and multifacetedness of medical experience in Kachitu, where ‘the determinants of etiological and diagnostic choices are a complex set of elements that form an open and flexible system’ and ‘the relationship between these elements and their significance within the systems change over time as they change in the lives of the individuals concerned’ (p. 150). Unfortunately, when this same imprecision impinges outside the domain of narrative ethnography it is less appealing. For example, there are problems in trying to use the appendixes for any kind of quantitative or comparative work. One wonders about the ‘Catholic cholos’, an ethnic category that forms 37% of the adult population of Kachitu according to Table 1 (p. 212), but which is barely mentioned in the main body of the text. One also wonders about such random characters as the ‘young European volunteer’ (p. 162), who appears in the amputation incident but is not mentioned elsewhere.

There is also some sloppiness in the editing, which is surprising considering the prestigious series in which the book appears. For example, a kinship diagram (p. 165) is untitled, and a reference (p. 262) to an article by Allan Young, which all socially inclined medical anthropologists should read, is incomplete. It is actually to be found in American Anthropologist (Vol. LXXVIII, no. 1 (1976), pp. 5-24).

ANDREW RUSSELL


This book is a wide-ranging tour de force of feminist anthropological analysis, comprising a collection of articles by some of America’s most prolific anthropologists. In her introduction, Michaela di Leonardo gives an overview of the writings of feminist anthropology since the early 1970s. As she points out (p. 30), one of the developments has been the realization that women cannot all be lumped together and studied in isolation, or even in relation to men only. She writes: ‘In
any particular population, major social divisions—race/ethnicity, class, religion, age, sexual preference, nationality—will cross cut and influence the meanings of gender division' (ibid.). It is also abundantly clear, from this book, that feminist anthropology cannot all be lumped together either, as each author in turn presents a thorough rethinking of previous theories and interpretations, overturning and replacing them.

There is always the problem of whether to refute the definitions that have been imposed on women's supposed attributes, activities and ways of operating, or to assent and provide explanations for them. So Stoler, in a very interesting article about the shifting perceptions of women, both native and European, in the colonies, writes that the 'universally negative stereotype of the colonial wife' has been challenged 'either by showing the reasons why they were racially intolerant, socially vicious...or by demonstrating that they really were not' (p. 65). Thus Peacock, in a discussion of work and reproduction among the Efe, writes that 'models derived from feminist perspectives, in an effort to negate earlier emphases on sex differences in physical strength as determinants of task assignment, have tended to ignore the very real energetic constraints imposed by pregnancy and lactation' (p. 354). By carefully measuring what pregnant Efe actually do, she finds that they do in fact carry loads less often than their non-pregnant counterparts.

The book is divided into four sections of three chapters each. The first section examines gender as it has been viewed in history, anthropology and archaeology; the second examines the part played by gender in studies of cultural politics; the third examines gender and labour, including 'development' in the Third World; and the last (does this signify its devaluation?) examines issues to do with childcare and labour, kinship (deconstructing the kinship deconstructors), and whether the recent reproduction technology represents control for women or 'anxiety-provoking responsibility' (Rayna Rapp, p. 389). Throughout, the reader is rightly reminded, in good postmodern fashion, that 'no ethnography is entirely non-evaluative' (di Leonardo, p. 27), that 'technology is not autonomous and neutral' (Warren and Bourque, p. 300), and that 'ethnographic inquiry begins and ends as a value-laden act of comparison' (Scheffler, p. 367).

It is also pointed out that self-reflexivity is needed to enable analysis 'that does not take white, middle-class women as its normative subject' (Patricia Zavella, p. 332). This last point is interestingly argued by Warren and Bourque in their discussion of Lim and Salaff's work. Lim and Salaff, in separate studies, argued that in the 1970s the multinational companies in Hong Kong gave young single women the relative freedom of wage labour, while at the same time enabling them to remain within the framework of the traditional Chinese family structure, albeit with a slightly elevated status. Warren and Bourque contrast this view with that of Fernandez-Kelly and Nash, who maintain that in Mexico multinationals have not provided women with any long-term possibilities, but have merely reinforced the iniquities characteristic of industrialized and industrializing countries. While Warren and Bourque point out that the two places are very different, they fail to
mention that whereas the young women in Mexico must surely measure their standard of living against that of their equivalents in the USA, in Hong Kong the point of comparison (at the time) was the limping economy and restricted society of China, from which many of the young women’s parents were refugees. Salaff pointed out that the workers’ point of reference was not their brothers, who were undoubtedly more privileged than they, but their mothers and grandmothers who had extremely restricted lives.

This thought-provoking collection of articles will be read with great benefit by anyone interested in feminist perspectives in anthropology. Its very valuable lessons are that the ‘same things’ look and are totally different in different contexts and that it is crucial to try somehow to sort out what is out there from what we want to see out there.

DIANA MARTIN


The author describes this volume as ‘a case-study of a regional enclave of traditional culture which has retained its character despite the impact of the ideology, economics and politics of the Soviet Union’ (p. 1). It is based on fieldwork conducted before the recent dramatic changes in eastern Europe, which occurred only after this review was accepted for publication. The traditional culture in question is that of rural Georgia. At the national level, universal education has facilitated a popular discourse that stresses Georgia’s role as a birthplace of (Indo-European) civilization, its ancient links with Greece and Rome, and its early conversion to Christianity (around AD 337; 600 years before Russia). Such facts are deployed in a context of self-assurance about Georgia’s cultural superiority over its Russian master. The links to classical civilization are indeed borne out by much of Dragadze’s ethnographic description. Thus, virilocality and the co-residence and co-operation of brothers, the authority of age, gender roles, the complexes of patronage and spiritual parenthood, the importance of modesty and reputation, and the features of vernacular Christianity and morality, all take fairly recognizable Mediterranean forms. The book should thus be of interest to those interested in Mediterranean comparativism. Dragadze is well-aware, however, that ethnographic descriptions that simply assert cultural continuity would remain implausible, given Western perceptions of the strength and iconoclastic nature of the Soviet state. She therefore tries to show how the conditions of Soviet life in Georgia have facilitated and unwittingly encouraged the persistence of the
traditional form of social structure and the ethic it supports. These are the most interesting parts of the book.

Economic conditions within Soviet Georgia make the traditional family structure a highly effective outfit. The family elders deploy the labour of family members so that some are in wage labour and some fulfil the collective farm obligations, while others are free to cultivate the private plots from which most fresh food is obtained. Though family unity and village life are cherished, it may be decided to send a son into education and the city, both for the money he will make and the contacts he will establish. The joint family also serves as a resource pool in a context of few banking facilities. In particular, the erratic Soviet distribution system often necessitates having large sums available to buy in bulk when some product does at last turn up. Such sums are also needed in a bureaucratic system lubricated by bribery. Family continuity is also bolstered by Soviet law. The system of residence permits makes mobility difficult, while inheritance law, notably of rights to a private plot, attach to residence in a household rather than to unilineal blood ties.

Overall, Dragadze makes a reasonably persuasive case that structural features of the Soviet system make villagers’ reliance on traditional family units both morally desirable and materially feasible. Nevertheless, Dragadze’s argument would have been strengthened had she not restricted her focus so closely to domestic life. If she had explored in more detail the local manifestations of the State her claim that its ideology and apparatchiks have a negligible impact on people’s ideas and values would have been more convincing. We are told that the villagers are nervous of bureaucrats and use appeals to shared Georgianness, that tensions arise within the home concerning the delicate matter of both encouraging children to be pragmatically fluent in the political discourse they learn in school and to disabuse them of that discourse’s wider claims, and that villagers view grass-roots political participation as opportunities for self-promotion. Yet in fact we are told little about contacts with bureaucrats and cadres, or the attitudes of schoolteachers, or the nature of political participation. Aside from the broadest features of its economy and a few statutes of law, the socialist State retains such a shadowy presence in this monograph that one wants to know far more about its impact in everyday life and the praxis of villagers’ response to that impact. For instance, many villagers go to work in light industrial plant, but there is no mention of their roles in, or responses to, the inevitable workers’ committees and rallies. In short, we would have understood more about both cultural continuity and the phenomenology of socialist life had the family structures Dragadze describes been placed more intimately within a detailed account of the state’s presence and intervention. This would have made this interesting volume a more genuinely Soviet Georgian ethnography.

JULIAN WATTS

Until now the best published bibliographic guide to the eastern Indonesian island of Sumba has been Raymond Kennedy's *Bibliography of Indonesian Peoples and Cultures* (New Haven, 1962), with its seventy-four entries. This new bibliography extensively supplements Kennedy's material and is in a number of other ways a considerable improvement. It deserves to stand beside Kevin Sherlock's *A Bibliography of Timor* (Canberra, 1980) and the various specialized bibliographies of specific regions of Indonesia commissioned by the Koninklijk Institute voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden, The Netherlands, though Goh's bibliography is shorter than they are. This may be due, in part at least, to the untimely interruption of Goh's work in 1988 when as a young ethnographer working on Sumba he unexpectedly died after a short illness. Necessarily his bibliography ends in that year, though a supplement brings it up to 1991. In his Foreword, James Fox notes that Goh had every intention of updating his work and, in a previous version he had circulated, he had already requested additions. In this spirit I offer an item from my own shelves: 'Door Soemba' in Herman ten Kate's *Over Land en Zee: Schetsen en Stemmingen van een Wereldreiziger* (Zutphen: W. J. Thieme, 1925, pp. 150-88).

R. H. BARNES


As its sub-title indicates, this study is concerned to compare pre-industrial societies across Eurasia in terms of the relationship between their political economies and their systems of marriage and inheritance. It concentrates also on the mass society rather than on 'peripheral tribal groups', with major sections on China, India, the Near East, and the Greece and Rome of antiquity. This means—as was intended—that the social systems being examined are hierarchical, in the sense that unequal rights in land are intimately linked with status. Although a macro-study, Goody explicitly eschews grand theory in the manner of Marx, Weber or Lévi-Strauss in pursuing his argument, preferring to content himself with something more akin to Merton's middle-range theories which, he says, 'might well constitute the upper limit of fruitful hypotheses in the social sciences'. A
major concern is to counter the academic and other ‘primitivization of the East’ which the divergent development of modern Europe has encouraged. This in effect means that the further west we come the more historical becomes the study, as Goody seeks to find in the past the correlations lacking in the present. More specifically, the book ‘is aimed at modifying notions of uniqueness in respect of modes of reproduction, just as elsewhere I have tried to do with modes of production and modes of communication’. One aspect of this unsatisfactory dichotomy has been the conventional treatment in anthropology of kinship as ‘a thing in itself’. This is partly reflected in the traditional concern with tribal societies, in which kinship has seemed all-important—wrongly, according to Goody, since ‘it is difficult to point to a specific kinship domain that is not also an economic, political and religious one’. This charge is developed not only against Dumont and other structuralists, who are often accused of stressing the underlying at the expense of the surface, but also against such culturalists as Fruzzetti and Östör, who in a sense privilege the surface at the expense of the hidden (by which I mean the systems theory aspects which the actors may be aware of, but only dimly, rather than the subconscious mentalities beloved of the structuralists). The charge is also thrown, rather more surprisingly, at Meyer Fortes, presumably for his over-sharp distinction between the politico-jural and domestic-kinship domains. For Goody, in fact, both descent and alliance theory stress the lineage at the expense of the household or family. The ‘tribal society—industrialized society’ dichotomy that tends to result from this isolation of kinship from other factors, and which in other discourses may become one between traditional and modern or primitive and civilized, also leaves out ‘the enormously important “intermediate” category of agrarian states...the very gap this book tries to fill’.

It is particularly the position of women in such societies that interests Goody, and he is also concerned to relativize the usual conceptual boundary between marriage payments and inheritance. The two strands implicate one another in these stratified and supposedly purely patrilineal societies, since women ensure the reproduction of groups but are often accompanied by property when being transferred between them. This has adverse implications for seeing inheritance, at any rate, as basically patrilineal. Goody also seeks to soften this view of extreme patrilineality by challenging the idea that women are so firmly incorporated into their husband’s group after marriage that they lose all ties with their natal families. In fact, they frequently retain not only ties with but also claims upon the latter, and in particular can acquire property in the form of their dowry, which amounts to their ‘lot’ or ‘portion’. Their ability to do this reflects the status of their natal families but dilutes the sense of lineal continuity through inheritance. This in its turn means that the usual dichotomy between brideprice and dowry is also unsatisfactory: what happens to marriage payments after their transfer is equally important, since the brideprice received by the father may help make up the daughter’s dowry. As a result, Goody regularly speaks of ‘indirect dowry’ instead of ‘brideprice’, the latter often being considered unsatisfactory, of course, for other
reasons. The fact that in India and elsewhere some of a woman's dowry may come from the bride's mother in itself indicates the extent of a woman's possible control over it. As regards the correct interpretation of dowry, it is clear that Indian thought itself provides a conflict: in the Dumontian view, "dowry" is seen as an affinal prestation, a concept in keeping with Brahmanical notions of marriage, but quite out of keeping with sastric conceptions of stridhana. In Goody's hands, the apparently exceptional bilateral inheritance of Sri Lanka becomes just the extreme end of a spectrum involving essentially parallel inheritance in South Asia generally.

Still with India, Goody develops his theme by arguing, against the normal assumptions of alliance theory, that the brother-sister tie remains important after a woman's marriage, at least until her brother himself takes a wife. Even in upper-caste groups he is to some extent an exception to the normal rule whereby no wife-givers should visit or accept hospitality in the house of their wife-takers, and Goody brings from his own personal experiences of Gujarat the story of how, at the festival of Rakshabandhan, women move wholesale from their conjugal homes back to their natal ones in order to honour their brothers. For Goody this tie has an extra meaning in South Indian kinship: with cross-cousin marriage, 'it is not continuing affinity that is stressed [pace Dumont]...but...the reaffirmation of the tie between siblings of a different sex, separated by their own marriages but united by the marriages of their children'. While acknowledging the importance of affinity, Goody is clearly trying to steer the rudder back towards descent theory, or at least towards an equal assertion of consanguinity; the continuity, if any, now becomes a matter of sibling ties, not affinal ones, as with Dumont. In Europe and the Near East, the tie becomes significant as the ultimate form of in-marriage, now a historical phenomenon as regards siblings but one which has given way in the Near East and North Africa to FBC marriage, equally endogamous of unilineal descent groups. Goody links this with women having access to land, not just to movables, as dowry, as is usually the case in South and East Asia. In such circumstances the integrity of any lineage whose identity is at all territorial would be threatened by exogamous marriages, which would lead to the loss of at least some of this land. Here we also see close marriages being defined unequivocally as endogamous in Europe, not as cross-cousin marriages and therefore exogamous, as some have been misled into thinking from some of Goody's previous work.

Throughout Eurasia, therefore, the marriage-inheritance nexus has certain basic similarities, which invite a structural explanation and cannot be seen as culture-specific, despite acknowledged ideological differences at a more conscious level. The whole book is really about 'societies where women inherit or act as channels for status and wealth'. This contrasts with Africa, 'where the type of agricultural production, the nature of technical and knowledge systems, and the oral mode of communication make for significant differences not only at the level of the political economy...but also at the level of family and marriage'. This basic difference comes down to the greater surplus obtainable from plough agriculture compared with hoe agriculture, which means that there is less differentiation in
Africa in property terms; thus women are of equal value in transactions between groups, and there is a more exclusive stress on marrying out. In Europe, on the other hand, surpluses generate inequalities, which are mediated or expressed through women, who themselves attract different values. This causes the conjugal unit to acquire more value in itself, and not just the natal unit, as do women in themselves, despite the very real patriarchal dominance. This produces, among other things, a greater stress on mutual love between partners, as well as meaning that in certain circumstances marriages become endogamous in order to retain property within the group. A further difference relates to the strategies adopted where there is no male heir. In Africa this leads to the taking over of rights and duties by collateral lines, but in Eurasia this is avoided in favour of adoption, concubinage, uxorilocal (or in Goody’s phrase filiacentric) marriage, etc., according to status. It is for this reason, says Goody, that anthropologists’ occasional application of African models to Asia, though less ethnocentric than applying modern European ones, is still problematic—a welcome recognition, one might think, given past conflicts between descent and alliance theory, which were also largely ones between Africanists and Asianists.

This massive, well-researched and intelligently written book, the result of some twenty years of thought and research, deserves to become a major work on its theme. It will inevitably attract the criticism that it has over-corrected ‘exchangist’ explanations of the marriage–inheritance nexus in a ‘descentist’ direction. Viewing bridewealth as indirect dowry or dowry as inheritance will seem equally problematic to many. This is because they are generally conceptualized as single events—the exchanges may take generations to complete, but they are all of a type. But Goody is taking the long-term view, charting not only transfers between affinal groups but also their ultimate destinations. This processual view is at once a reflection of the acknowledged example of Bourdieu, who has advocated a similar revision of Mauss’s treatment of gift exchange, and of the approach in terms of whole social systems, which Goody chooses to follow. This acts to distance him from the structuralist, exchangist approach to the analysis of kinship systems, since his holism is not of the kind which incorporates symbolism and other values (as with, for example, Needham). In this sense, Goody represents the Durkheimian rather than the Maussian part of the tradition of the Année Sociologique.

ROBERT PARKIN


In her own contribution to Mortality and Immortality (London etc., 1981), the volume she edited with Helen King, Sally Humphreys remarks that while there is
plenty of ethnography concerning death itself, we lack much in the way of a true ethnography of dying. It is this that Jennifer Hockey seeks to provide here, based on different periods of fieldwork in a residential home for the aged, a hospice, and with a bereavement support organization, and partly through working herself as a helper and counsellor. The project arose out of her own experiences in having to face bereavement earlier in life, and the subjectivity this gave her is freely exploited in her interpretation, as an alternative to the more usual objective and policy-oriented studies of ageing and dying. The main purpose is identified as determining ‘how concepts of death, and their associated ritual or institutionalized forms, actually work to produce a particular quality of experience in people who are ageing, dying or bereaved’, and the main conceptual material is envisaged as sets of structured but flexible metaphors arising out of shared cultural experiences.

In a society that no longer ritualizes death overmuch, nor has any clear, generally accepted eschatology, a focus on the process of dying and the psychological readjustment of the bereaved is perhaps to be expected. This is not to be found in the same way in all Western societies, as earlier work by Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalfe on the USA and others on Mediterranean Europe has shown. But Britain clearly exemplifies a trend towards anticipating the necessity of separating the living from the dead—something which all societies must face—by isolating the dying from the society at large, and largely even from those shortly to be bereaved. This is partly traceable to the loss of meaning the absence of death ritual brings about, but it has also been encouraged by what Illich calls the ‘medicalization’ of death, and the influence of science and bureaucracy generally over its administration.

One can still find parallels with the treatment of death more often encountered in non-Western societies in this material, though the motivations may differ. There may still be the isolation of the bereaved as well as the dead, not in order to associate them temporarily with the dead but to allow them to cope with their grief out of the public eye. This coping is itself often said to necessitate a recognition of the need for readjustment, something which in non-Western societies is more usually signalled by ritual than achieved through grief-counselling. Of course, such counselling is itself a response to the inadequacy of the bureaucratic and scientific taking-over of death, though it can hardly attempt to restore meaning to death in the manner of a true eschatology. It is, of course, also individualized, focused on private, intimate, face-to-face interaction between counsellor and grief-stricken, and in this sense maintains the ‘social invisibility of death’ that Martins has identified as characteristic of the modern West. This very individualism can be seen as parallel to the case-by-case control of sickness, fatal or otherwise, that scientific method makes possible, but which has aided the very desocializing of death that makes counselling necessary for some.

Hockey also deals with the place given to serious illness in relation to death in the West, showing how the resistance to curing of such diseases as cancer and AIDS challenges what she calls ‘the myth of medical infallibility’ and encourages officialdom to shift the blame on to life style or environment, that is, on to the
victim or on to society generally. Certainly the medical profession may itself contribute to the growth of taboos surrounding such illnesses, which are just as strong as those surrounding death itself in Western society, although other conditions, such as heart disease or alcoholism, may equally lead to the victim being blamed without such evasions taking place. The difference is perhaps that cancer and AIDS, like death, are given an image of finality and helplessness which is all that a rational, scientific approach can find to replace the cultural meanings that non-Western societies are wont to apply to such cases, where death is commonly seen as a transition to another existence and may even be exploited as a metaphor for change in other rites such as initiation.

It is here that the hospice movement finds its justification, in that it removes the taboos by exploding the myth, thus freeing both patients and carers for the task of improving the quality of life rather than its quantity, which is what a purely instrumental, medical approach does. In this, the hospice also differs from a conventional old people’s home, where the nearness of death is typically glossed over, with consequent tensions for staff and patients alike. Yet there were also tensions between staff and patients in the home where Hockey worked, the patients being on the whole more ready to admit the nearness of death, while the staff regularly tried, mostly through humour, to counter such admissions as subversive of officially imposed taboos. In the hospice environment, it was the staff who not simply encouraged but demanded that the truth be recognized: indeed, such recognition, which initially took the form of the explicit diagnosis of a terminal illness, was a prerequisite of admission. However, this key difference, namely that patients in the hospice are more likely to have such illnesses than to be merely fading out of existence, as in the home, may itself have triggered the difference in philosophy that Hockey tends to see as purely ideological in an abstract sense. In other words, the old people’s home and the hospice can only really be compared in terms of their association with impending death. For the cancer patient the alternative to the hospice is most likely the general hospital, whose focus is primarily curative, not terminal. For the merely infirm the alternative to the residential home is their own homes, which they have had to leave not because of illness so much as a growing inability to cope. The difference thus lies not simply in the philosophy of handling those close to death, or in the middle-class and Christian ethos of the hospice versus the working-class and agnostic ethos of the residential home. It lies on the one hand in the attribution of a painful and horrific cause to the foreseen demise, and on the other in the inability to fix any specific cause for it beyond the generalized notion that we must all die some time and that the older we get the nearer it comes. Of course, both institutions have a degree of control over those in their care. But while the hospice must base this on the administration of drugs—a very clear purpose that involves specialist knowledge—in the residential home this becomes generalized care whose expertise is less visible, involving cajolery not always backed up by clear necessity from the inmates’ point of view, and thus blurring the distinction for them between care and control.
The identification of ageism, which relegates the elderly to increasingly low statuses and which the idea of 'care' can all too easily patronizingly reinforce, is only one of the messages to emerge from the book. The hospice that Hockey studied was certainly different from the home in its clearly structured space, which literally increased the association with death from the front to the back of the building, and in its clear signposting of a future boundary between life and death which all must cross. Those involved in hospice work did not in a general way seem marginal themselves, but they could be distinguished from the staff in the home by their willingness to transcend the boundary, if only, for them, conceptually; and in order for it to be transcended, it must be recognized. It is in such senses, rather than in its vaguer association with Christian tradition, that the hospice movement seems to represent a return to a pre-scientific approach to death. Yet it is just as deeply involved in modern medical techniques, at least as regards the relief of pain. More accurately, then, it represents not a rejection of modern medicine but a frank recognition of its limitations, of its inability ever to control death, of the ultimate temporality of its claims to cure that are its central justification. It also surely suggests that in introducing 'the social invisibility of death', the West has, here as in other respects, gone too far in a dehumanizing direction.

Lastly, a remark about the book's cover, which carries a photograph of a sitting and forward-leaning figure that is obviously intended to summon into our hearts the idea of grief over a death. Grief-stricken she may be, but on closer examination she proves to be begging. The painting is actually Russian Female Mendicant by the German artist Ernst Barlach. Publishers do take liberties sometimes.

ROBERT PARKIN


Ladislav Holy's study of the Berti of Northern Darfur in Sudan is a detailed account of the interdependence of customary and Islamic ritual and belief in a society that has experienced Islamicization and Arabization over the last two centuries. Amongst the Berti, customary rituals, ‘ada, are distinguished conceptually from Islamic prescriptions, din, but it would be misleading to assume they exist in juxtaposition to one another or embody the antithesis of one another since, as Holy illustrates, they are to some extent indivisible in Berti consciousness and each often serves to reiterate the sentiment afforded by the other.

Holy attempts to divorce his analysis from an Orientalist agenda that reduces community studies to a compendium of Islamic versus traditional, and hence pre-
Islamic, beliefs and practices. There is little point, he suggests, in making assumptions about origins, or in classifying societies according to how closely they embody a textual ideal. He attempts to explore the parameters of local orthodoxies and the ways in which custom and religion are seen as interdependent amongst different sections of the population. The plurality of orthodoxies results from differential access to religious learning, the most salient determinant of which is gender.

As in many Muslim societies, custom is generally viewed as the arena of women, in contrast to the male world of religion. Although he premises his discussion on this complementarity, we discover that amongst the Berti men participate extensively in customary rituals, and that although women are equally members of the umma they generally observe the five pillars with greater laxity. Although the two systems are viewed as harmoniously guiding the social order, they appear to be based on disparate conceptions of gender roles. This apparent contradiction is of central concern to Holy as he asks how custom, which is premised upon the conception of the dependence of men upon women, is reconciled with Islam, which may arguably be understood amongst the Berti as a male model. In an exploration of gender relations through myth and ritual symbolism, he proposes that the sexes are involved in a form of mutual deception whereby each sex possesses its own view of gender relations. By the very fact that custom is regarded as the domain of women, it poses no threat to the perceived male model of Islam. While customary rituals accompany the agricultural cycle, 'ada and din operate in conjunction with each other throughout a series of life-cycle rituals, accompanying birth, marriage and death. In viewing these three events as rites of passage, Holy attempts to show how within both customary and Islamic ideology a transition is made from a state of ambivalence (or even danger and pollution) to one well grounded in the moral order—a transition into social and hence religious life as a member of the community of believers.

Doubts about Holy’s account of the harmonious alliance of 'ada and din begin to arise when he attempts to explain those few customary rituals that cannot be accommodated within Islam. Circumcision is set aside from other life-cycle rituals for two reasons. First, because although popular opinion largely regards the practice as Islamic, it is not supported by Qur’anic evidence. Secondly, with awareness derived from an active campaign in the Sudan against circumcision, it is regarded by local religious scholars and pious community members as unIslamic. Holy might have done well to pursue the significance of the greater intolerance shown towards circumcision than towards other rituals, as well as the challenge this poses to his presentation of a harmonious system of ritual and belief. This might have been explored with reference to what he notes in his final chapter, namely the differential access to religious knowledge, particularly predicated on gender.

With growing literacy, attendance at Qur’anic schools and labour migration, the disparity between the educated and literate and the non-educated and non-literate is primarily developed along gender lines. If Holy had portrayed something of a
less static and complementary system, he might have been able to suggest that it is increasingly likely that other customary elements will come to be regarded as antithetical to Islam. Without any historical evidence, we have no way of measuring the extent to which customs have lost meaning or validity in Berti cosmology, or whether existing customs in fact developed concurrently with the adoption of Islam. Without contextualizing his study with reference to larger political movements in Sudan, we have no indication of the pressure potentially exerted by the National Islamic Front to eradicate elements of ‘pagan’ or ‘folk’ Islam.

The final set of rituals Holy analyses are those he terms ‘retributive’, in opposition to the previously discussed preventative rituals designed to circumnavigate potential danger and harm. As with circumcision, Islamic orthodoxy is unable to accommodate this body of ritual, which concerns itself with accidental and unintentional transgressions between social versus asocial states. Unlike preventative rituals, retributive rituals, which aim to restore the natural order, implicate everyone in the community, including religious scholars and the pious. They are thus seen as posing a threat to Islam insofar as they are seen to affect the entire social order, and are subsequently dismissed as superstition.

By leaving those rituals of circumcision and retribution aside until the end of his discussion, Holy seems to treat those rituals that are less tolerated by the system as residual elements. In effect, they do not fit sufficiently into the model of Berti cosmology that he has developed. It may be more meaningful to start with those rituals that are incompatible with Islamic ideology and attempt to explore the implications of this. Despite a plea to regard Berti cosmology as being founded on a system that is not more heavily weighted in favour of din than 'ada, by leaving until the end those customs that challenge or conflict with Islam, Holy provides us with an implicit assessment of rituals according to textual orthodoxy. The analysis does not allow for the obverse assessment, that is, measuring these elements of Islamic practice as somehow deviating from customary orthodoxy, and there may be as much utility in understanding the operation of Berti cosmology in these terms.

Holy’s analysis provides us with a somewhat static and ahistorical account, which merely leaves us to speculate about the implications of this particular current configuration of ‘ada and din. We might infer that the unequal values attached to customary rituals, their graded incorporation into Islamic ideology and the differential access to Islamic scholarship within the community indicate a transitional stage in Berti cosmology. Although systems may in fact best be viewed as involved in a continuous process of negotiation and modification, Holy’s analysis, lacking information regarding recent local history and recognition of the wider trends in the religio-political climate of Sudan, gives us no context in which to understand or even accommodate change in the religious life of the Berti.

CAMILLA GIBB

The reader might not be prepared by the title of this book for what he gets. This is not a run-of-the-mill bit of speculative archaeology. Instead, it is an exhaustive and determined attempt to establish the existence of Dravidian kinship terminologies among Athapaskan-speaking peoples of northwestern Canada and to describe their role or roles. It is deeply influenced by, among others, Thomas Trautmann’s book on *Dravidian Kinship* (Cambridge, 1981) and takes as one of its starting-points Asch’s recognition of the formal identity between Wrigley Slavey terminology and Dravidian systems. Above all, it attempts to relate Dravidian terminologies, and deviations from them within Athapaskan communities, to the substantial variation in local group formation along a continuum, the poles of which Ives labels as Slavey and Beaver.

The Beaver variety is one in which small local groups are comprised of people grouped around a core made up of opposite-sex siblings. Older men practise polygamous gerontocracy by marrying younger women. Despite his reference to the distortion of Dravidian logic through intergenerational marriages, Ives does not strongly emphasize sister’s daughter marriage, which figures prominently in the ethnology of similar systems among the Tamil and in Amazonia, although it is plain from his evidence that it does take place. Over time Beaver groups naturally fluctuate fairly widely in size, from small families to large groups with ten to twenty conjugal pairs and ancillary relatives. They have, therefore, a potential for significant growth, and for enduring beyond a single generation. Such groups favour group endogamy over inter-group alliances. Political control of the group resides with a single or very few senior men, who control marriages. Such groups are at least potentially hostile to other local groups, including neighbours to whom they are related. Such hostility stems in part from their endogamy and weak facility for alliances, from the economic demands on the environment made by a growing group, and from the expression of personal power through medicine fights.

Slavey groups tend to be focused on same-sex sibling cores. They do not practise intergenerational polygamy, and the children of these groups regard themselves as unmarriageable. Such groups are relatively exogamous, readily forming alliances with similar groups. Senior men do not have coercive powers over marriages, but alliance decisions are arrived at by consensus. They have relatively peaceful relationships with neighbouring and distant groups. Unlike Beaver groups, Slavey groups have restricted growth potential and are transitory, self-destructing as the adults age. They range in size from between two and ten conjugal pairs with ancillary relatives.

Both Beaver and Slavey communities exhibit Dravidian terminologies and practise bilateral cross-cousin marriage, which Ives takes to be the basic
Athapaskan arrangement. However, some Slavey groups terminologically assimilate cross-cousins to parallel cousins and siblings, and also prohibit cousin marriage. Ives interprets this situation as a distortion of the underlying Dravidian logic, which is a concomitant of an emphasis on group exogamy and the value placed on establishing alliances with other groups.

Some Beaver groups, on the other hand, make cross-generational equations among the affinal categories in medial levels. Thus, the term for sister’s daughter may be applied to female cross-cousins, while that for female cross-cousins and brother’s wife may also be applied to father’s sister, mother’s brother’s wife and spouse’s mother. Ives relates this shift to group endogamy and inter-generational marriage and draws attention to Trautmann’s discussion of South Indian parallels. Among the Fort St. John Beaver, young men typically marry older widows (father’s sisters and mother’s brother’s wives), while older men typically marry younger sibling of a previous wife or girls of a first descending generation, whom they call saze, i.e. ‘sister’s daughters’.

Ives sets out the following eight empirical generalizations (pp. 301–6): (1) ‘where unlike sex sibling cores are allowed or favoured, the local group will be predisposed toward endogamy’; (2) ‘where like sex sibling cores are favoured, local group exogamy is virtually ensured’; (3) ‘when local group endogamy prevails, local groups will have a significant growth potential’; (4) ‘when exogamy is the objective, local groups will ordinarily have attritional and structural limitations over their growth’; (5) ‘when significant local group endogamy takes place, there are insufficient affinal ties available to fashion systematic external alliances’; (6) ‘when significant local group exogamy takes place, affinal ties will provide the basis for intensive or extensive external alliances’; (7) (in the Beaver pattern) ‘endogamous growth potential is emphasized, so that the people required for political and economic accommodations come from the local group itself’; and (8) (in the Slavey pattern) ‘external relationships between local groups are stressed, so that the source of people required for political and economic accommodations is the regional group’. Ives infers that the Slavey groups along the tree line preferred to gather together seasonally in larger numbers in order to undertake specialized communal hunting, involving the driving of game. Beaver groups too small for communal hunting would forage in the forests, but as they grew in size communal hunting became an option. Both patterns should leave archaeological evidence. In the Beaver case, there should be signs of decreasing breadth of diet and increasing sedentism around hunting locations. In that of the Slavey, there might be evidence of increasing duration of seasonal gatherings. Despite the poor archaeological record and conditions, Ives discusses the possibilities that his propositions may be put to archaeological test, about which he is moderately optimistic.

The virtues of this study include the fact that it very considerably advances our knowledge of the evidence for Dravidian or symmetric prescriptive terminologies in North America. Although earlier generations of anthropologists attributed bilateral cross-cousin marriage systems to some Athapaskan peoples, the evidential
bases for their claims were always extremely poor. Published terminologies were fragmentary and failed to include decisive specifications, while the evidence for marriage patterns was at best anecdotal and never systematic. Perhaps these faults were in part the result of the conditions under which the ethnographic work was done. Bands were small and widely dispersed. Nevertheless, there was typically little idea that terminologies and marriage systems had to be investigated holistically. Furthermore, some of the terminologies that were available contained features that were incompatible with cousin marriage. Ives has now analysed, and in some cases made available for the first time, a fairly extensive range of evidence that puts the whole question on a new footing. Some of this evidence is recent and of much better quality than we had before. Much of it is difficult to get access to outside of Canada, and some of it is unpublished. However, Ives also presents a theory, and the theory is at least potentially testable. If eventually the theory and the hypothesis of a Dravidian pattern in proto-Athapaskan social organization is in large measure substantiated, they will have implications for trying to account for other, non-Dravidian, societies in North America. Ives gives a good deal of attention to non-Dravidian arrangements among some Athapaskan groups, and some of these ideas too might be extended.

Another important aspect of the book is its attempt to make a methodological and theoretical contribution to anthropological archaeology. Here Ives’s allegiances are to Lewis Binford, whose ‘positivism’ has in recent years been the object of attack from Marxist archaeologists. I am not able to assess the archaeological claims of *A Theory of Northern Athapaskan Prehistory*, but I can say that if archaeologists wishing to use ethnology for their purposes were to match the standard achieved by Ives, they would be most welcome.

R. H. BARNES


This is a collection of essays focusing on the Yangis ritual of the Yafar people (West Sepik, Papua New Guinea), an imported version of the Umeda Ida ritual analyzed by Alfred Gell nearly twenty years ago in his classic monograph *Metamorphosis of the Cassowaries* (London, 1975). Yafar ethnographer, Bernard Juillerat, provides a detailed description and interpretation of Yangis in the first chapter (pp. 20–124), which is then subjected to extensive reinterpretation and criticism by a range of distinguished anthropologists, including Alfred Gell, and two leading psychoanalysts (André Green and François Manenti).
The volume’s title recalls a lively debate in the correspondence pages of *Man* back in 1980 (Vol. XV, no. 4, pp. 732–7) between Juillerat and Gell, concerning the role of indigenous exegesis in the interpretation of Ida and Yangis. Both rituals conclude with the shooting of arrows into the sky. Gell originally interpreted this act without reference to exegetical commentaries, by focusing on the destination of the arrows (the forest); however, Juillerat argued that the significant feature of the rite was that the arrows were aimed at a heavenly target (the sun), a discovery apparently facilitated by local exegesis. The article that initially stimulated this debate, Ron Brunton’s ‘Misconstrued Order in Melanesian Religion’ (*Man*, n.s., Vol. XV, no. 1, (1980), pp. 112–28), haunts the pages of *Shooting the Sun*. However, the implications of Brunton’s other main example, Fredrik Barth’s analysis of Baktaman initiation, are not adequately explored. Herein lies my principal criticism of the present volume, to which I will return at the end of this review.

The central problem for most contributors is how best to delineate the nature and limits of anthropological interpretations of Ida and Yangis. Juillerat contends that Yangis may be analysed at three levels (p. 95). At a ‘public level’, it is primarily a non-verbal performance that, following structuralist analysis, can be shown to focus symbolically on the promotion of natural growth. There is, secondly, an ‘exegetical level’, wherein symbolic meanings are codified with greater specificity in language. Finally, there is the level of ‘anthropological or psychoanalytic interpretation’, which can only proceed correctly with reference to the second level. For example, exegesis reveals that, in the ritual finale, the ‘bowmen’ are directed symbolically by their ‘maternal uncles’ to shoot not at the earth (linked with the mother’s womb—the piercing of which implies incest), but at the sun, which explicitly represents the mother’s breast. Only then, according to Juillerat, is it possible to interpret the ritual symbolism correctly in terms of such themes as the Oedipus complex and the appropriation of the mother’s feeding function.

One of Gell’s main criticisms seems as valid today as when he first expressed it in the correspondence following Brunton’s article, namely that the ‘public level’ of the ritual, which everybody encounters, should be amenable to interpretation without (as well as with) extensive knowledge of the secret exegeses known only to a few senior men (a point reiterated here by Donald Tuzin (p. 254)). Tuzin also observes that if Juillerat’s approach were applied to rituals for which there is no local exegesis then anthropological interpretation would be impossible (p. 253). Gell, however, shows (p. 130) that, in the absence of exegesis, an identification between the sun and the primordial mother’s breast could be made by the techniques developed in *Metamorphosis of the Cassowaries*.

Following the trajectory of the correspondence in *Man*, the debate shifts to encompass the tensions (more apparent than real) between intellectualist and sociological perspectives. Juillerat maintains that ‘the most striking fact about Yangis...is its very low level in practical sociological implications’ (p. 93) and that ‘when ritual has no direct sociological result, it must be endowed with more
meaning to be perpetuated' (p. 97). The first assertion is contested by Gell on the grounds that ritual owes its existence to a dialectical relationship with nonritual activity (p. 137), and is therefore bound to engender sociological import. However, Gell dilutes this thesis insofar as he concedes that Yangis (but not Ida) is so rarely enacted that its sociological implications might not endure during the long gaps between performances. Regarding Juillerat's second assertion, Andrew Strathern points out that it is internally contradictory (p. 266), insofar as the existence of esoteric knowledge (exegesis guarded by senior men) is a political matter and, by definition, of sociological importance. Other questions are raised. Why should rituals that serve political ends have less need of meaning (p. 97)? Social theorists have long demonstrated the ideological value of rituals, even of ritual in general (a most compelling recent example being Maurice Bloch's *Prey into Hunter* (Cambridge, 1992)). Why should 'more meaning' imply elaborate exegetical commentaries (ibid.)? Barth has shown that Baktaman initiation, which fits Juillerat's hypothesis insofar as the rites are both politically central and lack exegesis, none the less sustains a rich and complex cosmology.

Juillerat's commitment to a specifically psychoanalytic line of interpretation raises many issues. Gell (pp. 141–2) and Tuzin (pp. 257–8), both reproach Juillerat for failing to demonstrate the ways in which Yafar, or at least more generally Melanesian, family life (which is a far cry from anything envisaged by Freud) might engender Oedipal episodes, or other classic complexes. Gell, for example, observes that 'the representation of the mother throughout Melanesia is monotonously geared to the provision of food, not so much milk as vegetable staples' (p. 141), rather than being an object of incestuous desire.

The risks of ethnocentrism are explored further by Marilyn Strathern, who objects to Juillerat's Freudian (and more generally Western) assumptions about Yafar conceptions of 'nature' and 'culture' (pp. 191–2). Perhaps an even more worrying form of ethnocentrism ensuing from the Freudian perspective is its assumption that Yafar society is authentically 'primitive' in the sense that 'its system of collective psychical representations puts us in closer contact with...the primordial' (Green, p. 146). This is more than a pedantic observation about the meaning of the word 'primitive', for it belies the commitment of psychoanalysis to a belief that representations are rooted in human sexuality. Thus, the imagery engendered in shooting the sun at the finale of Yangis, seems more basic or 'in closer contact with the primordial' than 'the vegetal and animal symbolizations that came before' (Green, p. 165). Thus, for the psychoanalyst, the culturally celebrated role of Yangis as a way of understanding and promoting natural growth, especially of sago palms, is assumed to be less primary than its sexual meanings.

Juillerat's analysis of Yangis focuses most substantially around the finale, a bias Gell attributes to our (Western) 'prejudice that makes us think that the end of a ritual (for example communion) is the most significant part' (p. 140), and which several of the contributors attribute to ethnographic variation between Yangis and Ida. However, an obvious reason for Juillerat's special interest in the last phase of the ritual is that it entails a 'frankly human characterization' (Green, p. 165),
which seems to denude human sexuality of its obfuscating ‘projections’ in the surrounding flora and fauna, most apparent in the preceding symbolism. None the less, there is no compelling reason to privilege the sexual themes of Yangis over those of, for example, sago growth. The cosmological ideas codified in Yangis concern the mysterious processes whereby things sprout from the earth, and gestation in humans and animals is brought into the service of this theorizing. To assume that the process of understanding ends with the discovery of sexual content is to miss the point. As Barth puts it in his *Cosmologies in the Making* (Cambridge, 1987, p. 44), ‘when any particular cosmologist works to reproduce and clarify the metaphors of his rituals...particular features of gender and gender roles may be seized upon as apposite, pregnant metaphors for aspects of various other relations, qualities or processes in the world’.

As I mentioned at the outset, the volume does not draw on Barth’s insights, in spite of the fact that his work is at the roots of the history that gave rise to it (Brunton’s paper on ‘Misconstrued Order...’ concerned itself as much with Baktaman initiation as with the Umeda Ida). However, Barth’s reactions were noticeably absent from the ensuing correspondence, and interested parties were obliged to await the publication of his *Cosmologies...* for a formal critique of Juillerat’s, Gell’s, and Brunton’s positions. Passing (but not very illuminating) reference is made in *Shooting the Sun* to Barth’s puritanical line on exegesis, but the most directly relevant aspects of his work are not taken up.

Juillerat collected exegetical commentaries on Yangis primarily from two men. However, as Andrew Strathern points out (p. 262), he does not explain ‘what overall systematic differences, if any, emerged in their viewpoints on the system’. Juillerat makes plain that substantial inconsistencies arose, but it is not clear how wide the range of variation might have been among all participants’ understandings (nor could it be, given Juillerat’s methodology). This leads Green to temper Juillerat’s claims about ‘the meaning’ of Yangis with the dictum: ‘meaning is never univocal’ (p. 147). Green regards multivocality as evidence of the governance of primary process in Yangis (ibid.), and he subsequently couches this observation in language that strongly recalls (but does not acknowledge) Barth’s perspective: ‘what will be said by the collective psychical representations [of deflowering, conception, pregnancy, and birth]...will tend to refer these various figures back to one another perpetually, stressing their analogical resonances in the imaginary’ (p. 149). If the multivocality of ritual symbolism is accepted then, as Wagner observes, this presents a potential problem: ‘the range of potential analogies or glosses...evoked by a verbal image or trope, or by a tactile, kinetic, or visual one is indefinite, possibly infinite’ (p. 207). Wagner proposes ways in which the field of potential interpretations is constrained, disallowing the extravagances of structuralist analysis. Barth’s persuasive solution to this problem, overlooked in the volume, is that the images cultivated in ritual may be cast in ‘analogic codes’, that is to say in the form of clusters of concrete metaphors for such focal mysteries as natural growth, the semantic properties of which are in a state of flux, though broadly patterned across time and space. This certainly seems
to be true of the way performances of Yangis cultivate images of reproductive energy that builds up beneath earth, bark, skin, etc., to burst forth explosively as vegetation, sago, newborn infant, and so on. This does not imply such a schematization as ground:bark:skin::underworld:sago:foetus/womb. As argued above, still less does it imply the priority of human gestation in these symbolic processes. It is mainly in the context of exegesis that such digital codes are likely to be formulated. For the general ruck of participants, who do not verbalize their experience of Yangis, each concrete metaphor for natural growth may be cognitively generated independently, creating a ‘harmony of connotations’ (as Barth puts it) rather than a table of polarities.

*Shooting the Sun* opens up for debate so many important areas that the omission of any sustained discussion of Barth’s ideas cannot be regarded as a crippling defect. What distinguishes the volume is the sophistication with which the various contributors seek to criticize, modify, or supplant Juillarat’s interpretations. From the shining eloquence of Alfred Gell, to the sober scepticism of Andrew Strathern, this has to be one of the most thought-provoking studies of a single ritual that there is.

**HARVEY WHITEHOUSE**


Thomas H. Lewis is a retired psychiatrist and medical anthropologist who was in touch with the Oglala Sioux at the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota at various times between 1965 and 1988. From 1969 to 1972 he worked with Oglala practitioners and patients and completed the manuscript of this book. After 1972, when violent confrontations occurred at Wounded Knee, relations between Oglala and Whites worsened, and further fieldwork had to be forgone. Lewis presents an explicitly personal view of his experiences, disclaiming any intention to make recommendations for change and offering no systematic psychological interpretations.

His highly anecdotal account is very readable and informative, though often grim. On the whole Walker takes an equally discouraged view of both Oglala and White behaviour, and he expresses similar doubts concerning the claims to practical effectiveness of both Oglala and Western medicine. Many of the patients’ personal histories are extremely distressing, and in Lewis’s account their hopelessness is intricately linked with the historical circumstances in which the Sioux find themselves, where they are neither masters of their own destinies, nor
able or willing to adjust to the expectations and opportunities of the surrounding White society. Such statements are so often made about North American Indians as to be clichéd, but Walker amply substantiates them with graphic summaries and depictions of meetings, conversations, clinical records and so on.

Such darker matter is accompanied by ethnographic information on concepts of power, the sun dance, night sings, herbalism and the multifaceted medical system at Pine Ridge. His chapter on Heyok'a dreamers and the Sioux 'contrary cult' gives an excellent brief synopsis of this topic and an adequate practical demonstration of why the symbolic reversals in their elaborate, backward, disruptive, objectionable, contrary and antinatural behaviours should never be expected to conform to a single logical type. Walker details a number of practices and cults that have been lost. Nevertheless, a century after the end of military conflict with the United States Army, Oglala life is characterized by the retention and renewal of much of the traditional worldview, healing practices, ceremonial structures and social organization. Medicine men continue a system parallel to Western medicine, interacting with the latter, according to Thomas, 'minimally or not at all, and preserving in the process many of the cultural antiquities of the Sioux'.

Walker offers no romantic view of co-operation between medicine men and Western doctors. Sioux, whether medicine men or not, often resist the disciplines and practices of Western medicine, to which they resort erratically, sometimes with dire consequences for their own health. Well-meaning attempts to bring the alternative forms of medicine together in one service collapse under the weight of bureaucratic obstacles, as well as cultural misunderstandings and disagreements. Walker's concluding view is that Oglala practices are not 'the art of keeping a patient quiet with frivolous explanations' until nature kills him or cures him. Healing takes place in the context of a structure of mutual belief, but the 'results' are nearly meaningless in any but subjective terms. By his interpretation the main achievement is the neutralization of the anxieties of the individual and the community.

R. H. BARNES


Before this book, Parkin tells us, no ethnographic synthesis existed for the Munda-speaking peoples. As a non-Indianist, I cannot assess this remark but only report it. But even if Parkin accomplishes such a synthesis he does little else.
Witness his treatment of Mundan patriliny. Thanks largely to the inspiration of David Schneider and his students, sophisticated analysis of descent groupings nowadays begins with ethno-embryologies, with local notions of how human beings are generated. Whether the published data on which Parkin relies are adequate on this topic I am in no position to say, but it is clear that the gap (if there be one) is of no concern to him. Parkin shows, and this is one of the book’s few good analytic points, that descent is logically prior to residence in Mundan thought. But having achieved this, he goes no further than Fortes in 1953, or indeed than Radcliffe-Brown in 1935: corporate agnation is by fiat taken to be fundamental to Mundan sociality.

Similarly, ‘the structure of society’ is assumed to be realized by a consideration of connubial relations among patrilineal groups: the most obvious debt is to Lévi-Strauss, vintage 1949. To be sure, there is also a kinship network that transcends agnation, but its behavioural entailments are analysed by appealing not to Mundan notions but to Radcliffe-Brown’s joking/avoidance dichotomy, in place by 1940 and questioned by Ward E. Goodenough, Roger Keesing and others since the early 1950s. Kin-terminological structure is (mis)handled through ideas pushed by Louis Dumont and Rodney Needham, and challenged by Floyd Lounsbury, Harold Scheffler and myself since the mid-1960s. Needham quaintly dismissed us all as ‘American formalists’ in 1971, which for Parkin apparently is all that need be said: neither Goodenough nor Keesing nor Lounsbury nor Scheffler nor Shapiro appears in his bibliography—and, for that matter, and despite Parkin’s assertion that ‘the Munda show exceptionally clearly the inappropriateness of genealogical thinking in recovering indigenous conceptions of kinship’ (p. 186), neither does Schneider. And as if all this were not enough, Parkin uses ‘symmetric prescription’ synonymously with ‘bifurcate merging’, whereas many of the terminologies isolated as ‘bifurcate merging’ by Lowie in 1929 and Murdock in the late 1940s have specialized affinal terms and are thus quite different from the systems adduced by Dumont and other Anglo-French structuralists.

Indeed, Parkin’s appreciation of the notion of ‘structure’ is firmly wedded to the limited perspectives of Lévi-Strauss and his admirers across the Channel. Thus ‘positive marriage rules’ are contrasted with ‘considerations of wealth and status’ (p. 102), as if structure pertains only to an ethereal world of ‘social classification’ and is not a property of grosser human behaviour. ‘American formalism’ has repeatedly endeavoured to unite these spheres since Goodenough’s seminal 1956 article on ‘Residence Rules’, but this is of course terra incognita for Parkin. The results are sloppy scholarship and a caricature of the structuralist programme.

The book’s concluding, and it might be supposed theoretically most important, chapter ‘Munda Kinship in Context’, shows much the same scholastic snobbery. The assertion that the pervasive equivalence of alternate generations in Mundan thought ‘should be seen not as a series of traits linked by a common theme, but as a single idea with a number of possible expressions’ (p. 216) is a pledge of allegiance to Lévi-Strauss but not even a semblance of an empirical proposition. Parkin’s reliance on Mauss’s 1938 essay on personhood ignores the last ten years
of fecund (and mostly American) literature on the subject. The notion that some of the logic of so-called ‘two-section systems’ of kin classification is ‘due to fundamental properties of the human mind’ (p. 222) is traceable to Needham circa 1960 but is utterly non-sequitorial. This may be as it should be, for it is presented in the context of a yet more enduring tribute to circular reasoning, namely that view of ‘evolution’ wherein contemporaneous forms are arranged in a (pseudo-)historical sequence whose earliest ‘stage’ is held to contain its ‘essence’. Much of contemporary social thought is concerned with the demolition of this edifice. That Lévi-Strauss, Needham and others are at home in it is interesting intellectual history (what Robert Nisbet, in his underappreciated contribution to this demolition, has called ‘the persistence of metaphor’), but this is no reason to delay the job.

In 1965, perhaps, this book might have been taken seriously as an analysis of ‘social organization’. But now that ‘American formalists’ have come closer than ever to achieving Lévi-Strauss’s stated (but never seriously attempted) goal of a structural perspective on human behaviour, aided by ethologists and by what Dell Hymes calls ‘ethnographies of communication’, it is outstanding only as antediluvian and parochial.

WARREN SHAPIRO


One of the unexpected things about the increasing rapprochement between anthropology and history is that it has been an additional factor in the movement of material culture from the periphery to the centre of the discipline. Objects provide a source of information about historical processes that complements the often woefully inadequate written record of societies during the process of European colonization and the era that followed. They also provide information about the dynamics of the relationships between indigenous peoples and colonists and the way they conceived of each other and their products. The rejection of material culture as a source of evidence has previously been a serious handicap to the development of an anthropology informed by history. In this elegantly written and well-constructed essay Nicholas Thomas does much to establish the ground for future research in the historical anthropology of the Pacific.

This is very much a book written from the middle ground—a book that has the modest aim of developing an intermediate level of theory, but nevertheless makes a number of points that will have to be taken into account in future research on Pacific exchange systems. Indeed, in some respects the book pushes a pragmatic
and, what some may interpret as, an empiricist view of the relationship between theory and research: ‘analysis can be seen as a procedure of engagement, a practice that cannot be differentiated into distinct levels of theory and description’ (p. 33). Although he engages with the theoretical discourse over exchange, in particular in relation to recent contributions by Chris Gregory and Marilyn Strathern on the relationship between gift and commodity, Thomas does so largely to argue for a middle position in which context and perspective influence the way in which an event is interpreted. I have much sympathy for a perspective that sees elements of commodity and gift in many transactions in most societies, and with his conclusion as to ‘the impossibility of speaking generally of gift or commodity societies’ (p. 9; emphasis added). While it could be argued that at times Thomas dissolves rather than resolves the problems being addressed in the debates over exchange, his analysis of solevu, large-scale ‘exchange’ ceremonies in contemporary Fiji, shows the productivity of his approach. In solevu the assertion by the participants of the monetary value of things that are not sold shows the relationship between different dimensions of the value of objects. Thomas concludes that ‘people who are entangled at once in a kinship economy and in petty commodity production draw a market metaphor, the notion of price, into the context of the life cycle ceremonies’ (p. 200).

Thomas argues that the exchange systems we have data on ethnographically are themselves in part the result of interactions with Europeans during the colonization of the Pacific. And quite reasonably he sees the analysis of such exchange systems as requiring longitudinal research into the processes of their transformation through their articulation with outside systems. He argues that trade was always a two-way process and asserts the equality of opportunity in early exchanges. He argues for trade and exchange as being value-creation processes in which value is the product of the way in which the object is used and conceptualized in its new context. He shows how for both the Pacific Islander and the European consumer the meaning and value of each others’ products changes as the objects move from one context to another. The point is a valid one but, as with many arguments in the book, in need of some qualification. It oversimplifies the historical processes by overcorrecting the simplifications of the past. Objects are not quite as malleable and as open to redefinition as Thomas implies. Often they arrived in the Pacific with, in effect, sets of instructions and instructors, in the persons of missionaries and government officials who created contexts for the use and exchange of introduced objects that affected their meaning and value. However, none of this diminishes the significance of the points Thomas makes, in particular as they apply to early stages of the colonial encounter.

Thomas is quite aware that the exchange relationship has ultimately proved an unequal one and that, in the end, the freedom of Pacific Islanders to choose has been constrained by their incorporation into colonial power structures that were orientated towards particular economic and political goals. He documents a move away from curiosity about the products of ‘others’ to disinterest (in the case of the planters), as European motivations shifted from ‘voyages of discovery’ to colonial
occupation and appropriation. However, the rhetorical point he is making, by emphasizing the active agency of the colonized in the process of exchange and the apparent equality of early exchanges, is not a trivial one, since it is directed against the view of Pacific peoples as passive victims of colonial processes the outcome of which was predetermined, and perhaps envisioned, from the arrival of the first European ship. As Thomas writes 'any theory which recapitulates the pioneers’ ideology of vacant and passive spaces for European conquest and achievement must falsely diminish the prior dynamics of local systems, their relative autonomy, and their capacity for resistance’ (p. 205).

Entangled Objects is well written, and many of the central issues of contemporary anthropology are entangled within the skein of its overall argument. Most of the separate arguments have been made before and in some respects the book is an appetizer. Inevitably in a book of this length nothing is pursued to the depth that one would like it to be: the Governor’s dining room in Levuka, Fiji, is glimpsed in a photograph; Reinhold Forster’s response to Pacific artefacts is quickly noted; and the ethnography of contemporary Fijian marriages is lightly drawn. But Thomas does present a coherent and well-articulated perspective. The main virtues of the book are that it provides, in a very compact form, a general framework for approaching Pacific cultures that shows the relationship between apparently disparate things and that it illustrates how the study of one aspect of social and historical processes provides insight into others.

HOWARD MORPHY
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OBITUARY

LYNN TESKEY

7 January 1949 – 1 March 1995

After a BA and MA in anthropology at McMaster University, Ontario, Lynn Teskey came to study social anthropology at Somerville College, Oxford, in October 1973. Already interested in India and Indian religion, she quickly completed the Diploma (the present M.St.) and a library B.Litt. on the Hindu concept of Renunciation. She then settled in Benares and concentrated on female ascetics—a pioneering topic at a time when Gender Studies were in their infancy. A letter from May 1976 well conveys the excitement of early fieldwork, and a later one (October 1977) shows how, with growing proficiency in Hindi, she begins to empathize with her sannyasins as individuals, as women pursuing a vocation, sometimes in loneliness and squalor, and appreciating the interest even of an outsider. Although the fieldwork was interrupted for a time for medical reasons, she continued doggedly and amassed excellent ethnography from the sacred city, meanwhile enjoying regular conversations with Jonny Parry from LSE, who was working nearby.

Problems increased during the writing up. She was one of the students caught in mid course by the abrupt rise in British university fees during the 1970s, and it was an exhausting struggle for her to assemble the funds, leisure and peace of mind needed for sustained writing. Though suffering from illnesses of many sorts—hepatitis, a car accident that led to expensive surgery, arthritis, a severe migraine condition, and in the end leukaemia—she persisted bravely. Her thesis drafts were scrupulous and polished, and reached the stage at which the appointment of an external examiner could be discussed. Meanwhile she was working at a variety of jobs, most durably in the Department of Religion at Concordia University in Montreal. Her publications represent only a tiny fraction of what she had learned, and she often expressed her sense of frustration at the obstacles preventing completion.

When well, Lynn was a tremendously vigorous and warm personality who made many friends in Oxford, both inside and outside ISCA, during the 1970s and '80s. She was my first Oxford supervisee, but I shall remember her more as a colleague—full of ideas and of enthusiasm for her subject, eager for the latest literature—as she was when our paths crossed in Harvard in 1988. She was by then happily married (as Lynn Teskey Denton), and an exciting academic future seemed to beckon. That was not to be, but the unexpected birth of a daughter brought great joy and fulfilment to her later years.

N. J. ALLEN
The defence and illustration of hierarchical reversal, undertaken in the first part of this article (JASO, Vol. XXV, no. 2, pp. 133–167), have led us to an orientated structure composed of two relations, the second being a ‘descending’ (top–down) transformation of the first. This definition is situated at the interface between two questions. (1) Is holistic hierarchy a ‘culture’, i.e. a gradation of two or more references forming so many elements of a conception of the world proper to a given society; or is it a ‘structure’, a relation of relations? (2) Is reversal in this hierarchy a symmetric reversal of the same relation between two contexts functioning each for itself, which leads us back to a culture, or is it one of the variants of the relation of relations invoked?

The discussion must be continued while at the same time pursuing ever more ethnographies that present, as far as possible, a global society. But it has come under attack recently from the arguments that Needham has directed against the holistic idea of hierarchy, in which he sees only a theoristic imposture masking the realities that his binary analyses had already accounted for long ago. I have suggested that Needham (1987)—and also Beidelman (1989), whose comments all

1. The other change of level, in the ascending (bottom-up) sense, accounts for ritual; it is not symmetric with the descending change of level, since it includes temporality (see Tcherkézoff 1989, 1993a).
refer back to Needham, without adding anything to the discussion—confuse everything and reduce the discussion to a matter of contexts, because they have made no effort to enter even a little into the presuppositions of the holistic approach, in which the object ‘society’ is a hierarchy of relations, ordered with reference to a more or less complete idea of attachment to the same whole. By adding to Part One of this article an examination of other scholarly critiques formulated by Needham, I hope to be able to bring this absence of understanding to a close.

Three other ‘counterpoints’ are posed by Needham in his work of that name (1987). The first is addressed to Dumont, through a refusal to understand the notion of a ‘whole’, and, above all, to myself; and Beidelman (1989) also refers to this critique of Needham’s in his review of my book. How can it be said, exclaim these authors, that analyses like those in *Right and Left* neglect asymmetry when they speak only of pairs in which a positive term and a negative term are contrasted (in the ethnological translation of local cultural valuations) (Needham 1987: 120ff., 149-56)? Here again is proof that my reading of serious authors (in contrast to myself) remains on the level of mere ‘reportage’ (Beidelman 1989: 174). The second reproach is addressed to Dumont. In his propositions concerning reversal, Dumont talks of an ‘articulate’ hierarchy but does not explain it. Here again is proof that the obscurity of Dumont’s ideas means that there are no ideas to be sought in the holistic vocabulary (Needham 1987: 140-45). The third is addressed to myself, with Beidelman again referring to it. What monologue am I presenting when I oppose the hierarchical method to the binary method? For, I am told, there has never been a ‘binary method’, and no one has ever claimed that the two-column tables have any lessons to teach concerning the ideology of the society under examination. There is considerable bad faith here, and I shall end by examining this evasion.

1. *Symmetry/Asymmetry*

To say that analyses aligning pairs as ‘+’/‘−’ ignore the presence of asymmetry in the data is no doubt provocative, but the remark I had made is salutary. It emphasizes the fact that, numerous though asymmetric examples might be, the binary view is still based on symmetry, since it regards matters as if value were merely an ideological presence added to the fact of the existence of the terms in nature. Right and left, then, are no more than the two sides of a sheet of paper divided by a vertical line that one has drawn. It is enough for this line to be centred in order that the boundary be an axis of symmetry. Indeed, not even its position is relevant in this logic: there is only right and left. One proceeds as if the social actor who classes certain things or individuals to the ‘right’ and to the ‘left’ was, as the source of meanings, as much outside the society as the person
who had traced the line on that sheet of paper exists outside that sheet and automatically defines left and right on the surface. In order to summarize this epistemological position, so heavy with consequences, I said that binary asymmetry is observed by starting from symmetry. Moreover, Needham chooses as an epigraph to one of the chapters in his *Reconnaissances* (1980), which includes another of his works on analogical classification, a quotation from Hermann Weyl, that says nothing less: 'Seldom is asymmetry merely the absence of symmetry. Even in asymmetric designs one feels symmetry as the norm from which one deviates under the influence of forces of non-formal character.' And when the asymmetry encountered in the ethnography is related back to a normative symmetry (in universal transcultural thought), as supporters of the binary mode do, all the relations at issue are analysed either as added measurements, whose explanation will necessarily be contextual, or as the forms of an eternal ‘complementarity’. The symmetry ‘felt’ beneath the difference inclines one to the judgement that there is, at root, a universal complementarity. The problem is that this inclination is quickly extended to such social facts as ‘power’, ‘politics’ or ‘the mystical’, and that, in neglecting ‘non-formal’ forces and in supposing that symmetry is always primary, all content to social relations is withdrawn in advance, in order to leave in place simply a supposedly universal structure of the mind, which I said was just a receptacle for our spontaneous Western representations of the social.

Still with Needham, let us take the example of India. He has long considered India to be a case of complementary dualism. It is, he said, in a lecture of 1978 published in *Reconnaissances* (1980: ch. 3), a good example of the ‘bipartition’ of powers (ibid.: 75). India thus enters a long list in which Needham piles up examples of the ‘binary structure of dual sovereignty’ (ibid.: 105), i.e. the ‘dyarchy defined as jural + mystical’ (ibid.: 71), which is also the addition, according to Needham, of the ‘temporal’ and ‘mystical’, ‘political’ and ‘spiritual’, ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’, ‘power’ and ‘authority’, ‘control’ and ‘influence’ (ibid.: 93).2 The Meru example was summoned anew into this list, and, in generalizing to all sorts of societies, the author again links it to his hypothesis, that of the complementarity of political and religious powers. This hypothesis had accompanied the analysis of the Meru case in 1960, which I had criticized in taking up the Meru ethnography again (Needham 1960, 1973, 1980; Tcherkezoff 1987: 15-26).

In those years, Needham none the less found some interest in the possibility that the Indian example, as reported by Dumont, represented a rather ‘subtle’ dualism:

> Here in particular we see the operation of the principle of bipartition, with the special interest that the two powerful statuses exercise a joint sovereignty: the king, who is *kshatriya*, wields temporal power but is immediately dependent on the ritual...

2. Needham presents all these pairs with the sign ‘+’ in between the terms. For him, it is a logic of addition.
ministrations of the priest. The connection between the two, between power and priesthood, is a matter of great subtlety and has been excellently treated by Dumont, especially in his summation of the conception of royalty in ancient India. It would be presumptuous of me to express any judgement in this field, and I shall leave it with the observation that here we have a classic instance of dual sovereignty. (1980: 75; emphases added)

The last two phrases are particularly to be savoured when we compare them with remarks made in 1987, where Dumont is said to have presented 'a haphazard and inconsistent exposition of his own case. In effect, what was taken for a challenging theory turned out to be rather specious and incoherent rhetoric' (1987: 143).

In between, it is true, certain writings of the French holistic school have cast doubt on the interest of the analyses contained in Right and Left. Dumont asked that hierarchical opposition be added, and he cited, without polemical intent, Needham's collection as an example of works that reveal its interest by default (Dumont 1978). I took up the Meru case again, the origin of Needham's binary course and the example he used in subsequent works, in order to indicate that Needham's analysis had not answered the question it had posed, namely, 'Why is the left hand of the Mugwe sacred?' (Tcherkézoff 1987). Moreover, a year before Dumont's critical citation of Needham's collection, Augé (1977: 84) had criticized it by noting that it belonged to a type of anthropology in which 'more attention is paid to the symbol than to the symbolization', the latter being neglected in favour of analyses 'concerning fixed configurations' and reduced to being observed only 'at the end of the [ritual] process of creating them' and 'under the form of direct “symbolic” connections [...]': white = purification, black = danger or mourning [and of] the juxtaposition of several pairs [of this sort]'. The category criticized by Augé also includes the symbolic structure of royal incest according to de Heusch (1958), Nuer symbolism as reviewed by Beidelman, and the structure that, according to Leach (1966 [1959]), accounts for variations in local theories of heredity.¹

On the question of symmetry and what results from it, the propositions of Counterpoints are very revealing of the substantialist approach. They boil down to a general critique aimed explicitly at a quite large group of models since, along with holistic models, Needham also rejects those of Bateson's concerning 'direct' and 'diagonal', 'complementary' and 'symmetric' dualism (Needham 1987: 189–95).⁴ All these approaches are said to have been at fault in adopting a 'spatial' view and therefore a 'geometric' form of modelling, producing the false

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³ Augé gives no reference for Beidelman, but it is presumably Beidelman 1966 he is discussing here.

⁴ If one draws a parallelogram, the adjacent angles, linked 'directly', are 'complementary', the opposite ones, linked 'diagonally', are 'symmetric' (cf. distinctions between relations of the type brother–brother, elder–younger, as opposed to relations of the type sister–brother, at least where age is simply a secondary difference between social positions that, on the principal plane, are considered to be identical; see Tcherkézoff forthcoming).
idea of a ‘monothetic’ class. In fact, dualism in general is ‘polythetic’: no single model can take account of its variety. The sole invariant is that ‘there are dyads’.

This withdrawal into the unmentionable obscures the fact that every time Needham speaks of dualism, or examines a pair of terms, he thinks of the relation as starting from the ‘addition’ of the terms. Symmetry thus being saved, and the added value being able to roam at will, Needham can say that the only certain thing is that there is a human propensity to think in binary fashion and that, for the rest, everything is polythetic (I would translate this as ‘value is contextual’). It is the holistic analysis that would become somewhat restricted. But, as we know, the problem resides elsewhere. Holism preoccupies itself with thinking of the terms starting from their relations (and thus thinking of the distinction between the terms starting from their attachment to the same whole). The only discussion that matters is this one. When a functional-structuralist analysis examines the coherence of a given society (and not only the coherence of the human mind), should we not systematically replace analyses in which one goes from the elements to their ‘additions’ with ‘top-down’ analyses that seek to deduce the elements from their attachment to a whole?

I thus think it justified to reserve the term ‘asymmetry’ for hierarchical oppositions, at least when one is discussing a configuration of levels, and especially reversal. In this sense, Needham’s reversal in fact expresses symmetry. This is present in the relation of the first level, since one can no longer say that one element proceeds from the other and that the reverse is false. It is present in the connection between the two relations, for the second proceeds from the first as much as the first proceeds from the second; there is therefore no orientation. It is thus strange to see Beidelman and Needham, when explicitly criticizing my remarks, finding it incomprehensible that I should have addressed to them a reproach concerning symmetry. It is true that they state that all their examples are ‘asymmetries’ (right/left etc.); but the asymmetry invoked at first glance, where one limits oneself in brief to saying that ‘right/left’ is not the same thing as ‘right/right’, says nothing. Asymmetry only becomes sociologically relevant if it is referred to a whole. Until then, it remains the simple observation of a distinction, as with any symmetric opposition.

2. The Place of Ideology in Reversal

In Dumont’s remarks concerning reversal and levels, mention is made of an ‘articulate’ hierarchy. Needham says that the term does not strike him as clear: Dumont’s model ‘adds nothing’ apart from this strange mention of an ‘articulate hierarchy’, which is ‘either obscure or disputable’; but he does not discuss it

5. Cf. Needham 1987: ch. 9, especially p. 236, on ‘the indeterminacy of individual dyads’!
further. Needham actually puts his finger on an important point here, one that is linked directly to the question of knowing where the global ideology ends. Indeed, we also meet in Dumont mention of a ‘strict’ sense of hierarchy, one tied to the alternation, in his words, between the notion of a ‘set’ and that of a ‘whole’, like this other alternative between a second level that remains in ‘the ideological’ or emerges only in the ‘empirical’.

2.1 One or two hierarchies?

Before we go further, the reader must be given a warning. Dumont’s remark concerning ‘articulate’ hierarchy certainly touches something that is at once a difficulty of a general kind and a particularity of the Dumontian sociology of India. But this does not in the least affect the fundamental logic of the hierarchical structure, which remains one of two levels, with a reversal between encompassment and distinction, and which accounts for the articulation between the social fact (encompassment) and the presence of the observer (the recognition of something familiar in the encompassed). As regards Dumont’s remark, it is here that the distinction between the ideological and the empirical is mainly situated (1966: 58-9, 89, 106, 294ff.; 1978). Each society presents to view a particular way of attaching the element to the whole. Caste is one example (in which one defines oneself by protecting oneself from below, from an impurity emanating from others), the titles of Polynesia (in which one defines oneself by presenting oneself genealogically as more or less near to the original divinity) are another example, but we meet also with other classifications, even ones that are very familiar to us (to be ‘of the right’ or ‘of the left’) — and we should not think that these classifications are merely distinctive. On this plane, we progress towards the universal in generalizing, a little more each time, the structural modalities of social ‘attachment’. But in other respects too there arises a comparison with our own situation: we necessarily give a name to the various ‘elements’ that manifest their attachment when we observe what they ‘are’ outside their sole attachment. This ‘empirical’ intrusion must be bound up with the ideology we meet with, while also being distinguished from it. In this general view of the comparative method, there is only one sort of hierarchy, and reversal always makes us leave the ideology, since reversal is only present, in the model, in order to put ‘them’ and ‘us’ on the anthropological stage or, to use different language, to bring out the gap between ideology and practice.

I have already indicated that, for Dumont, ideology presents something very general on the plane of ‘ideas’ (the set of ideas and values) that, left as such,

6. The passage in full is as follows: ‘First, Dumont adds nothing to our general comprehension of this form of reversal; actually he says nothing at all about it, except (what is either obscure or disputable) that it is characteristic of hierarchy of the articulate type—a type, moreover, that has not been defined’ (Needham 1987: 141–2).
would serve only to encourage all culturalisms, and something very particular on
the formal plane: the first level, locatable because it is an encompassment. In
*Homo Hierarchicus*, Dumont proceeds rather from the first notion towards the
second, which leads one to think that encompassment is a peculiarity of Indian
ideology, whereas it is really the sign that the analyst is considering a global plane
(the whole, or partial wholes, of a society). Nowadays, it is useful to generalize
in another sense: it is the global ideology, in the sense of an organizational matrix
of representations, the retrospective truth (syntactical reading) of the collection of
practices, and not the reflection of some ‘practical’ level that is visible wherever
we see encompassments. The primary level (of the hierarchy, in the holistic sense)
is therefore always ideological.

We must examine the formal variation in this remark. For my part, I had
distinguished unity and conjunction because the taxonomic tables of the Nyamwezi
suggested it. But hierarchical logic (of which reversal is a part) is all one. Dumont
spoke, in 1978, of ‘encompassing the contrary, hierarchy in the strict
sense’ (Dumont 1986 [1978]: 230), making this remark after saying, ‘we are
dealing with a whole and not just with a set’ (ibid.). A little earlier, he indicated
that, to begin with, he had called ‘hierarchical opposition’ the ‘simple type in
which one term encompasses another’ (ibid.: 228). Thus the relation set/element
presents only two terms. It is a matter of ‘a proper whole’. There is a double
relation that the hierarchical model breaks down, namely identity and contrariety,
for the nature of the set determines the nature of the element—-they are ‘consub­
stantial’ — but the second is not simply identical to the first, since it is an ‘element
of’ a part. This double relation, Dumont tells us, is ‘stricter when a proper whole
is concerned than when a more or less arbitrary set is involved’ (ibid.: 227).

In order to explain these last words, Dumont refers to what follows, where he
invokes oppositions of the type ‘right/left’ in dualist taxonomies. This type of
opposition, in giving a society classificatory capacity, ‘refers to a whole’ (the
human body and, by analogy, other ‘bodies’), which immediately raises the point
that the two terms are not in the same relation to the whole. At first sight, says
Dumont, we do not fall into the ‘simple type’. But in reality the logic is the same.
One of the terms prevails on one level, for its function is ‘more representative’,
meaning that it represents the whole more than the other term does. Thus, in the
relation between the two terms, we find one level on which one term stands for the
whole and the other does not. Following the logic I have already indicated here,
this relation can be reversed. We have encountered Dumont’s remark indicating,
in this text, the possibility of reversal for oppositions of this type (reversal between
‘asymmetric relations’, in contrast to the immutable character of the symmetric
opposition). The ambiguity left by Dumont has been noted. Reversal clearly does
not give the other term the function of representing the whole (i.e. the same
function), as if it could replace the role of the first term on the first level in
identical fashion (there would then be a symmetrical reversal). The second term
cannot become the encompassing one in its turn (though it can play a role within
the first level; see sec. 2.4 below). But it can become dominant (inequality) on the
plane on which it is not defined uniquely as a consubstantial part but appears to be defined through its intrinsic nature, becoming then something differentiated from the whole.

In short, the opposition between a ‘strict’ hierarchy and a ‘broad’ hierarchy, between a proper ‘whole’ and a ‘set’, parallels the one I had already examined in my book (1987 [1983]), which distinguishes systems with two terms and systems with three (unity/conjunction). It does not appear to pose particular problems on the formal plane. On the other hand it does pose some problems when Dumont invokes the limits of ideology.

2.2 Articulate hierarchy

At this point, we return to Needham’s query. He wonders if there is any connection between the absolute character of the superiority defining the first level and the fact that Dumont then talks of an ‘articulate’ hierarchy concerning the example ‘priest/king’. This time, let us cite at length the passage in which Dumont makes this remark (previously, we limited ourselves to the formulation of the connection between priest and king). Dumont adds that the hierarchy constituted by this example is ‘articulate’, whereas the case in which the encompassing pole is directly the whole places us where things are less clear—one leaves the ideology:

In matters of religion, and hence absolutely, the priest is superior to the king or emperor to whom public order is entrusted. But ipso facto the priest will obey the king in matters of public order, that is, in subordinate matters. This chiasmus is characteristic of hierarchy of the articulate type. It is obscured only when the superior pole of the hierarchical opposition is coterminal with the whole and the inferior pole is determined solely in relation to the former, as in the instance of Adam and Eve, Eve being created from a part of Adam’s body. What happens here is that it is only on the empirical level—and thus not within the ideology proper—that a reversal can be detected, as when the mother comes to dominate in fact the [Indian] family in which she is in principle subordinate to her husband. (1986 [1978]: 252–3)

The remark is, to say the least, rapidly made, especially since Dumont does not return to the subject in what follows. Clearly, the ‘obscured’ chiasmus concerns the case of ‘strict’ hierarchy: the superior pole is the whole \( A = A + B \). The reversal is therefore not anticipated by the ideology, since the ideology is, as I have already suggested, a designation for level one, the level that describes the existence of an element to the extent that it belongs to a set–whole. In this formal definition of ideology—which corresponds, I believe, to what Dumont’s remark implies but which does not appear as such in his writings—it becomes perfectly logical to adopt a different designation for the practice defined by the second level.
Dumont's selection of the term 'empirical' is not innocent, but an ironic glance at the reflective, long-standing Anglo-Saxon construction, in which the fundamental plane is that of the practical or pragmatic, explaining the superior plane of 'ideology' (in the sense of 'reflection', not of 'value'); or else, it was the plane of the profane, understood as complementary to the 'sacred' (also called the 'religious' or mystical). This choice is also a reminder of the 'comparative' method that is dear to Dumont. The socio-cultural particularity of a society is obtained through the relation between what observation presents as ideology (in formal terms, encompassments) and what it presents as supplementary, i.e. what the observer 'sees' but what the ideology does not account for directly (Dumont 1966: 58 and other references cited above), something empirical for the observer, a 'residue' (but one which can be very important quantitatively) with regard to ideology and, in formal language, as I try to stress here, an 'encompassed' level.7

The whole force of this method comes from the equivalence that strikes the observer concerning these three notions. If the empirical alone were to the fore, one could not control interpretative abuses: the observer would believe himself to be recognizing things that can have no sense in the whole of that society (economist or 'politician' abuse, political or state bias, etc.). It would be enough to say that observation concerns a residual domain, an elegant way of saying that the society does not 'see' it, and one could then rig out the unconscious or the alienation of the people concerned in all sorts of clothes. Comparison only begins when what one thinks one has ‘recognized’ can be formally deduced from the ideology, i.e. encompassed, whence the crucial importance of hierarchical reversal in this method, which is, I would say, when all is said and done, a formal means of tying the observer intimately to the society under consideration.8

7. We have seen in Part One how reversal necessitates the building of a non-ambiguous formal model of two levels. As a result, we must build a non-ambiguous formal model of 'ideology', whence my stress on 'encompassed' for what Dumont calls the 'empirical'. The term 'residue' that Dumont uses is also intended to evoke the process of observation. The main ideology tells the anthropologist nothing of the why and wherefores of the practice he is currently observing. But this term does not in any way mention the extension that these facts might occupy in the whole society. As Dumont says in brief, the term contains no 'ontological prejudice' concerning observed fact (1972: 75). The residue is simply what remains once our observation, in its entirety, has been referred to the ideology we encounter, not everything being directly explicable by the ideological 'system'.

8. One will therefore distinguish concepts that are properly anthropological, such as encompassment (where one might place the Maussian 'sacred'), which belong to a structure obtained through a generalization of the relation between an 'observer' and a 'whole' (the 'society'), from culture-centric notions, such as inequality and power, for example. Clearly, this does not mean that these notions must be rejected by the anthropological endeavour. On the contrary, it would be naïve and dangerous to want to go beyond cultural a priori at the outset and to forget that anthropology is a science that has been elaborated within a particular (Western) culture, not within any sort of ether of objective knowledge. But these notions will only be recognized in the ethnography when a relation of subordination to the whole of that
All this would no doubt require a profound examination. Yet, within the grand lines that I have sketched out in broadly emphasizing the formal constraint, in order to rein in the culturalist type of interpretation, the hierarchical structure and the vocabulary that designates its elements are defined on a one-to-one and operative basis. How, then, should we regard this supplementary remark of Dumont’s, made in passing, asserting that reversal in the Indian example is of the ‘articulate’ type? Let us admit our confusion, which on this point matches Needham’s.

If we make the hypothesis that Dumont considers the second example, that of the ‘obscured’ chiasmus (man/woman), in distinctive opposition to the first (priest/king in India), this means that the Indian example is equally opposed to the fact—characteristic of the second example—that the reversal takes place outside the ideology. We would then have to conclude that the level of power in India, on which the king dominates the priest ‘in matters of public order’, is situated, from his point of view, within the ideology. Now this would contradict the many remarks in Homo Hierarchicus in which Dumont places the fact of power well and truly in the ‘non-ideological’ (1966: 59, 100–108, ch. 7, 354 etc.).

If we maintain the formal definition of the level of the ideology (the encompassments), the priest’s obedience to power is, in the Indian case, placed irremediably outside the ideology. This clearly does not mean that it is a matter of unconscious practice. And, of course, if we were to modify the definition of ideology to include all the ‘conscious’ practices within it, everything would be situated within the ideology. But this ideology is not in question. Already, in his 1962 text on kingship, Dumont had noted the ‘ideological’ aspect of the relation priest/king, the spiritual superiority, and the aspect he called ‘practical’, material dependence (cited above). At the same time, he indicated that the Brahmans, since the far-off time of the Brahmans, ‘if they more often proclaimed their spiritual preeminence, were also at the same time conscious of being temporally dependent’ (1970 [1962]: 66). Yet indications concerning the unconscious or less conscious character of the second level abound with Dumont (see Part One, page 144, note 7).

Here we reach the very heart of the whole discussion. By not stressing the formal definition, or rather because this is only recognized later and is thus absent from the 1962 text and from part of Homo Hierarchicus, Dumont remains within the language of the interpretation of values.9 At the same time, he discovers from

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9. One can see how the ‘consciousness’ of the ideology is constructed in part through the observer’s decision: ‘Yet on certain points we shall take the liberty of completing and systematizing the indigenous or orthogenic theory of caste...by postulating that men in a society behave in a coherent...manner’; this comes just after the author has observed that the tradition explicitly distinguishes between caste status and power; 1972 [1966]: 74. Moreover, decision intervenes in declaring as ‘systematic’ that which includes the practice of the extremes (see Part One, page 158, note 16).
the outset that the fundamental relation, that between the two principles of brahman and ksatra (priesthood and purity / kingship and domination), is not distinctive but hierarchical (subordination but inclusion, inclusion but contrariety). It is always ‘within the religious universe’ and ‘in a society that continues to be under the rule of dharma’ (which the brahman principle can represent on its own) that artha acts (‘interest’, ‘directed’ by politico-economic action—politics and economics are not distinguished in the treatises on artha). And yet, says Dumont, artha is the ‘negation’ of dharma: ‘The political sphere is separated from the domain of values [dharma]... artha is recognized only in the second place, we may say in matters indifferent to dharma [but] artha finally remains contained within the all-embracing dharma’ (Dumont 1970 [1962]: 78).

We know from elsewhere that the ksatra principle is, from the earliest period, associated with brahman in defining the two pillars, the two ‘forces’ of the system in India, at least in learned discourse (1966: 93ff., 352). Finally, it is clearly difficult to make the whole Indian institution of royal power and rights over the soil pass into the non-ideological (in the usual sense); artha is an ‘end’ that is recognized in the texts, but for Dumont it is ‘hierarchically’ inferior. The king also ‘knows’ that the priest, especially his chaplain, is ‘in front of’ him, for he himself cannot carry out the sacrifice, and he knows that he ‘keeps power only for himself’ (ibid.: 356). Dumont sometimes admits the difficulty. Having presented the principle that distinguishes ideology from the encompassed residue, he says that what thus appears to be an extreme simplification of an ethnographic situation, which every time and on every occasion is in reality complex, means that ‘[in short], the distinction is between the conscious and the unconscious aspects’ (Dumont 1972: 321, n. 22c), adding straightaway:

and this is a relative and not an absolute distinction. This is true; for example, the politico-economic aspects are indeed not wholly absent from the consciousness of the people concerned. They are even written about.... But just as in the literature taken overall these aspects are subordinated to the religious ones, so they are practically excluded from that constellation of strongly marked and interconnected ideas and values which form the ideology (or perhaps the main or predominant ideology) of the social system. There is certainly room for inaccuracies and inadequacies in such a definition of the conscious nucleus of the system. (ibid.)

But, continues the author, the advantages to be drawn from this distinction are greater than the drawbacks associated with the definition—in effect, without this

10. In this text as in others, one can see that Dumont uses ‘values’ in the plural while designating on the first level, the domain of values, that of ultimate values; and politics, the second level, is separate ‘from the domain of values’ (1970 [1962]: 86). In similar language, one can say that the first level is that of ‘the’ value (Dumont 1982).

11. The two words given in square brackets here, significant in this context, were omitted from the English translation.
distinction, comparison in the sense Dumont intends is no longer possible. Elsewhere and on other topics, Dumont considers that a distinction of levels can be present entirely in the conscious (1982: 218 n. 4).

2.3 Comparison

I will make the following hypothesis. Dumont’s whole view here depends greatly on his perception of history, in India and in general. The differentiation between power and religion is a ‘secularization’ (the quotation marks are Dumont’s) that is produced ‘within’ religion (ibid.). In the hypothetical history of India and, even more, in the universal course of evolution suggested by Dumont, a secular power is always a secularized power, issuing from a prior form of ‘magico-religious’ kingship (1970 [1962]: 68; cf. 1966: 71, 100 n., 269; more recently, 1986: 47–8).

The difficulties in characterizing the second level as contrary but included when it concerns a central institution and a principle widely recognized in the learned literature are encountered fully when the author brings together the ‘ideological’ and the ‘conscious’. It is impossible to say that the Brahmans are not conscious of their ‘empirical’ dependence (cf. quote above). At the same time, the second level is outside value ‘in matters indifferent to value’, being in a different state of relation to the whole: whence a hesitation, and variable formulations concerning the ‘least conscious’.

I believe these ambiguities stem from the fact that Dumont, in the early 1960s, retained something of an evolutionist conception (the magico-religious origin) and a relatively Hocartian view of values (though presented without its indispensable Hocartian complement, a theory of ritual action); a priori, religion is chosen as the domain of integration:

As we live in an egalitarian society, we tend to conceive of hierarchy as a scale of commanding powers—as in an army—rather than as a gradation of [ranks and] statuses.... Further, the very word hierarchy, and its history, should recall that the gradation of status is rooted in religion: the first rank normally goes, not to power, but to religion, simply because for those societies religion represents what Hegel has called the Universal, i.e. absolute truth, in other words because hierarchy integrates the society in relation to its ultimate values. (1970 [1962]: 67; emphasis added)

The differentiation of functions is produced within religion (a universal fact, in the sense of Hocart 1978). On the other hand, and in an insight that entered later into Dumont’s work (i.e. after 1962), the Indian hierarchy of ‘human ends’ (dharma/artha) becomes a specific formal model, ‘the encompassment of the contrary’ (Dumont 1966: 9). Any domain of (ultimate) values is then both an auto-reference and thus locally ‘universal’, and an inclusion of the contrary. The researcher then becomes aware too that this duality is itself tied to the epistemological connection between the society and the observer (the latter is culturally present through his recognition of the encompassed).
Ultimately, ideology is not defined clearly. Is it religion, or religion ‘for these societies’? How should we then characterize the situation of representations and practices that are outside this religion? As secondary values less constraining for consciousness? As a universal-historical development, which only becomes fully conscious if it becomes autonomous, escaping encompassment, as when it ‘leaves the world’ (Indian renouncer, early Christians), or when, as in the case of Christianity, it becomes, in the next stage, the encompasser of a new world (Dumont 1983)? But does Indian hierarchy then represent a moment of evolution, and is encompassment of the contrary a model accounting only for some societies, those ‘traditional’ ones that represent a particular evolutionary stage or, at least, a type within a typology of cultures–societies? We will say rather that ideology is the primary level of any hierarchy, in which case the second level is at once non-ideological and fully ‘conscious’.

‘Religion’ is, for Dumont, this local universal which, under a good many different forms, presents the formula for integration. But we then require the most formal definition possible, in order that the ‘contrary’ of integration, this ‘empirical’ element, be only the encompassed part of the integration. This generalization is possible, but it requires us in turn to call into question the evolutionist and culturalist typology of societies. We would then leave the particularist consideration of ‘these societies’, which Dumont calls ‘traditional’ when differentiating them both from the ‘modern’ case and from those of ‘tribal’ or ‘simple’ societies in which value is perhaps not a sort of Hegelian universal or ‘religion’ (1966: 71, 100 n.; 1986 [1978]: 215). And we would envisage hierarchy as a structure capable of accounting for any concrete totality for a universalist anthropological view, whether it is a matter of a ‘traditional’, ‘modern’ or ‘tribal’ totality.

I cannot pursue this discussion here, which would open up the whole debate about the comparative method in anthropology. But the matter had to be raised in order to conclude the discussion on the distinction between an ‘articulate’ (and less strict) hierarchy, a ‘set’, and another, ‘obscured’ hierarchy (hierarchy ‘in the strict sense’), a ‘proper whole’. The formal difference does not seem profitable. On the contrary, as soon as one invokes it on the plane of reversal, it leads to a single model, the bidimensional model, as Dumont calls it (1982: 225). In short, the presence of two levels accompanies the configurations of unity as well as those of conjunction (in my vocabulary of 1983). And if we were to give a meaning other than the formal one to opposition, we would have to move towards a typology of societies. We would have to admit that, for ‘certain’ societies (‘traditional’ holism), the anthropological concepts of ‘value’, status ‘hierarchy’ and ‘global’ attachment designate the same reality as ‘religion’ does with us. In this case, reversal would then be partly or completely ideological, for, as is well known, one never leaves the Hegelian universal even when contradicting it.12

12. One can even try to specify in this way, or in a fashion inspired by it, ‘cosmomorphic’ or ‘socio-cosmic’ societies. For those who use this vocabulary, the levels observable in the society can consist of different types of ceremonial exchange, and one does not then see how only
However, one cannot then very easily see how one might escape culturalism in order to delimit this type of society. As I have suggested, the notion of 'levels' is very quickly lost in returning to a view of contexts, which is incapable of expressing anthropologically the idea of 'totality'.

In conclusion, I will follow the path of not retaining on the formal plane the distinction proposed in such an allusive fashion by Dumont, and which so intrigued Needham. On this point, Needham's query was useful. Yet he should have examined this distinction, instead of rejecting it a priori, for, in suggesting that reversal can occur 'outside the ideology', it has the merit of posing the problem of the ideology.

2.4 The breadth of the first level

This said—and it is quite a different problem—the distinction Dumont proposes can also evoke the fact that, in India, the connection between 'dominant' power and the priest is double: one part comes under the religious relation, the other is situated within that of domination. When the sacrificiant–householder, dominant in village or kingdom, employs a sacrificer–purificator, he makes him a sacred gift, which is the counterpart of the ritual service. This action is situated in the relation in which the priest is superior (encompassing). At the same time, these gifts form a part of every relation in which the ritual specialist depends materially on the employer. In this sense, the action of power here takes on a double aspect (but the term 'power' is only valid for the second aspect), a consequence of this particularity of the system in which the relation to the whole passes through the sacrificer and not through the sacrificiant. Part of what the priest receives from the king (or from his equivalents) is situated 'ideologically' on the first level; but this part, in which royal action (and its equivalents) is sacred, is clearly not yet a manifestation of 'domination', even though access to resources (the source of domination) is logically prior to the fact that the king can make gifts.

The 'articulate' hierarchy can serve to designate this order of facts: one part of royal activity is clearly 'religious', on the level in which the determinant of the relation is not the king but the priest. One might enlarge on this comparison and say that, within the encompassing level (and, therefore, before crossing the barrier of reversal) the relation can present a double aspect. Thus in certain cases (in Oceania), it can be accompanied by a double circulation of ceremonial goods, in certain of them would be in the ideology (Barraud et al. 1984, Barraud 1990, de Coppet 1990). As a result, the Dumontian distinction 'ideological/empirical'—which is, however, the key to the comparison—becomes blurred. Then, 'reversal' (which can be reduced to symmetric reversal) is only one of a number of possibilities of perceiving gradations of level (Barraud et al. 1984).}

These divergencies concerning the holistic method indicate sufficiently that reflection on the epistemology of reversal is useful; see Tcherkezoff 1994.
which goods coming from the pole that stands for the whole are superior to those that come in the reverse direction, just as the householder's payment compensates in India for a ritual service that is superior in value. On the other level, the relation is modified, with another circulation of goods or with another aspect taken by the second circulation of the first level, and the one who gave (on the first level) from an inferior position (or what he gave) can become superior within this second level (but this time the superiority is in terms of 'domination'). But the breadth that the first level can acquire does no damage to the unity of the three 'hierarchical' formulas I have emphasized, and which Homo Hierarchicus and other texts of Dumont's suggest while leaving the door open for other, more culturalist constructions.

In Samoa—to remain in the partial configuration that constitutes relations between the sexes (see section one of Part One)—a double arrow can be used to mark the brother-sister relationship that occupies the first level. The fine mats, symbolically encompassing, circulate in one direction and constitute only a part of the sister-brother relationship (but the part constituting the symbolization, calling for a symbolic association). In return, the brother gives the pigs. This return completes the cycle but—considered in itself, opposed to the gift of mats—it is an inferior gift. The brother is 'masculine' and 'strong' in order that he can 'do the work' required to search for food. But on this level, this 'force' is said to be 'at the service of the village', which itself is a circle of titles (each of which is perpetuated by the sister-brother relation). Only when one crosses the barrier of hierarchical reversal can the masculine 'force' become 'dominant' and thus no longer orientated to value. Similarly, in the ritual relationship between the brahman and the king in India, the ritual gift of life (purification) and the sacred return gift remain on the first level, while the aspect of domination of 'the employer' opens up the second level.

Ritual in general and ceremonial circulation in particular have much to teach us concerning the breadth of the first level of the hierarchy. But it is better to enter into this research without allocating different types of hierarchy (articulate/implicit, or others) in advance. Thereafter, we can turn our attention to the facts that have been collected and reopen the question.

13. The term 'symbolic' is used here in the sense of a dynamic view of ritual—not an object 'representing' something, but the partial term of a syntactic chain that only has meaning retrospectively (Tcherkézoff 1989). In this case, completeness comes from the association between 'mats' and 'pigs'. The ritual works a symbolization, which is something other than analogical 'symbolic' relations (see above, sec. 1; see also Augé 1977).

14. It is inferior in the sense of being a less complete representation of value. The mat belongs to the side of 'heaven', which itself encompasses the side of 'earth' (and 'night') from which the pigs come.
3. The Binary Method

Having made clear the relevance of hierarchical reversal, I have now traced the limits of a connected question, that of the relation to ideology. In these two stages, I have considered what is essential in the criticisms that Needham has addressed to the holistic idea of hierarchy. I will complete this traverse by briefly mentioning a supplementary argument that Needham has directed towards myself.

The same blindness that has me reproaching the binary mode with maintaining symmetry (see sec. 1 above) also has me seeing a 'method' in this binary mode, so as to be better able to oppose it to the supposedly hierarchical method, whereas, Needham asserts, analyses of the type found in *Right and Left* have never pretended to define a method. On the contrary, they clearly state that it is solely a matter of a mode of exposition, a simple 'mnemonic device' (see below).

3.1 To aid the memory...

The discussion deserves presentation and will respond, in anticipation, to a query that the reader will not fail to raise. At root, he will ask, why this polemic? If it is obvious that the analyses in binary mode of the classifications encountered do something else entirely (or the reverse), since they compare analytically the 'additions' of terms (see sec. 1 above) instead of deducing the terms from the hierarchy of relations, why discuss them together? There would indeed be no need to waste time in this way if, as well as using a different method, the binary mode were aimed at a totally different object than the holistic one. In fact, Needham never stops repeating that, behind 'collective representations', the object he is seeking to isolate is types of 'cerebral' movement, the 'innate' form 'of vectors of individual cerebral activity' (Needham 1981: 4 and *passim*; also 1980: 3–15, 99–105; 1983; 1987; cf. Khare 1983; Karp 1985). Let us note in passing that this slender result (the omnipresence of the 'complementarity' between two terms) is somewhat disproportionate in light of the efforts made.

But—and here is the entire problem—the analysis is not content with noting the conceptual existence of pairs of all sorts, in the course of an enquiry into a mixture of ethnographies. Halfway through the traverse appear binary tables that characterize one given society (Needham 1960, on the Meru; 1967, on the Nyoro) or one given institution (1980: ch. 3, on dual sovereignty), even when the author continues to speak of cerebral dualism. The lesson delivered, even implicitly, is more precise, such as a functionalist theory of *power* (see sec. 1 above, and below; Tcherkézoff 1987: secs. 1.3, 4.2). It will be remembered, for example, that the

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15. Let us add that the polemic is the only thing of Needham's taken up by Beidelman 1989. We have seen (above, sec. 1) that, in 1978, Needham was not sparing in his praise of Dumont's Indian analysis. Now, the 'critiques' by Dumont (1978) and Tcherkézoff (1983) with regard to binary tables were not intended to open a polemic. Dumont contented himself with noting the
analysis of the Meru case begins with Needham trying to understand the status of the left hand of the Mugwe sacred chief, which is always hidden but has magic powers. It is thus a question of value, the answer to which is provided in the society’s own terms, and not a question of the Meru’s capacity to distinguish left and right in general.

Needham’s discourse consists of two versions that appear to me to be incompatible. We are told that the binary tables teach us only universal mental forms. But, in reality, they speak to us also of particular social wholes. We are also told that the tables mean nothing: they are only a ‘device’. But we are also told that they teach us something concerning the recurrence of certain relations between certain specific categories (see below).

The tables are of no use; thus there is no reason to see in them a method, says Beidelman (1989) referring explicitly to Needham, who makes the same reproach against myself and Dumont (1987: 115, 151–2). And, in Counterpoints, Needham himself refers me to assertions of his published previously (1973: xxiv; 1980: ch. 2). The representation in two columns, he says, is content with assembling data under a form making it easy to recall the binary recurrence; the columns are only ‘mnemonic devices’. However, the author adds that this device is useful because it is ‘a conventional figure that helps one to recall the cumulative effect of the argument’ (1973: xxv; cited 1987: 115).

What, then, is this cumulative effect? In common logic, it cannot be simply a matter of the dualistic form (‘there are dyads’): on this plane, the examples do no more than unravel a prior generalization. I had stressed this, namely that it is...
necessary to postulate the dualistic mental universe in order to be able to identify the pairs (which is how all these pairs are grasped in substantialist fashion) (Tcherkezoff 1987). The cumulation is rather that which indeed has its ‘effect’ while each column is being extended through the observer garnering his distinctive oppositions. The author can go on repeating that a single column constitutes no unitary meaning as much as he likes—this will not prevent the reader from finding significance in the fact that the cumulation of examples reinforces, at each step, a common relation between a ‘+’ term and a ‘-’ term.

3.2 ...in noting the mystification of the feminine

The matter becomes very clear—and the anthropological lesson very close to error—when Needham, if only in passing, takes up the symbolism of the sexes (gender qualities). At the end of his article on ‘Analogical Classification’ (1980: ch. 2), he emphasized the integrating capacity of analogy with respect to what he calls ‘hierarchy’ (classification through branching: genus/species/sub-species; ‘logical division’). Anything can enter into analogy, ‘anything can be assimilated, in some respect or another, to anything else, so that a classification could be extended practically without limit’ (ibid.: 59). However, marvels the author, a small number of categories prevail statistically. He continues: ‘One especially impressive example is the symbolic complex right : left :: masculine : feminine :: jural power : mystical authority’ (ibid.: 60).

We have already, it seems to me, left the simple universal dualism and find ourselves again in functionalist terrain (the equilibrium of powers, the complementarity of the ‘real’ or ‘pragmatic’ and the ‘symbolic’ or ‘mystical’; ibid.: ch. 3). The article following that on analogy, which concerns ‘Dual Sovereignty’ (ibid.), already mentioned, confirms this impression. Here, among other examples, Needham returns to the symbolic complex of gender and power concerning the brother-sister relationship in the Ryukyu Islands, following Mabuchi’s celebrated text (1964; Needham ibid.: 86–8). We thus come back to the cultural (or at least thematic) area of this relationship that led me, while observing it in Polynesia several years ago (i.e. since 1984, and more especially since 1987), to consider that it was necessary to start reflecting again on hierarchical opposition.

Mabuchi, of course, formulated things in the language of his time, that is, in functionalist terms, which removes nothing from the perspicacity he showed at a period in which one hardly imagined that the brother-sister relationship could be the centre of a social organization. Thus he generalizes his data through expressions such as ‘the sister takes the lead in ritual life and her brother in secular life’ (cited in Needham 1980: 87). Needham, twenty years later, builds on this formulation: ‘generally speaking, sisters assume the role of spiritual patroness to their brothers, while the brothers are expected to protect their sisters in secular life’ (ibid.: 86). Immediately afterwards, the author speaks of ‘the mystical function’, which manifests itself above all when the brother is in danger. Thus one of the
two columns of the table is already achieving autonomy for itself. Moreover, of the brother he says, ‘his distinctly secular role is clearly stated, and it appears that he has some jural control over his sister’ (ibid.: 87–8). Can one still maintain that the lesson here is confined strictly to ‘cerebral dualism’? On the contrary, the ‘cumulative effect’ of the different pairs certainly achieves its effect. Besides, since the Ryukyu data are very similar to those from western Polynesia, I can confirm with some certainty that this way of characterizing the relationship is as inadequate as its equivalents proposed recently for Samoa. Better still, we see Needham, later in this article, finally becoming more interested in the content of each column than in the relation that unites them. Having come to a conclusion once more concerning ‘complementarity’, he adds: ‘Rather more striking are those features which have to do with the imagery of the mystical, for they are logically independent yet they have a remarkable recurrence.... The most prominent images of the mystical...are darkness, femininity, passivity, and the left’ (ibid.: 89; emphases added). The association of the mystical and therefore ‘of things unseen’ with darkness is a commonplace, continues Needham (ibid.: 89). Following the argument, he recalls that the colour ‘proper’ to the Mugwe of the Meru, as well as that of his ritual objects, is black. In Dual Classification Reconsidered (1987), I noted the possibility that this might be a considerable error. In the entire region, according to the statements of those concerned, black can characterize the sacred through a valued connotation acting as intermediary, evoking the rain (low, heavy clouds) that fertilizes the earth. This is precisely the hierarchical reversal of white as a sign of the burning sun, the sign of drought and death, and this reversal is clearly given in the ritual (ibid.). It is therefore far from obvious that our Western commonplace (belief = things hidden) has anything to do with matters here. And if it were necessary to choose between the poles ‘+’ and ‘−’, I would lay a bet that the black of the Mugwe is a positive sign (a power of life) and certainly not a negative sign of a supposed feminine passivity (in the sense of something contrary to the production of life).

The association between the mystical and the feminine has long been noted, says Needham again (1980: 90). And ‘the Mugwe appears to be associated analogically with the feminine’. ‘Passivity’ is also contained in the basket: it ‘may or may not be thought to be connected with femininity’. And he recalls that the Mugwe does not try to seduce young girls when he is a young man; when married, he remains abstinent for long periods, and it is his wife who must take the initiative in the sexual act, this rule being part of the instruction he receives from the elders before his marriage. Needham does not pursue the matter, except quickly to cite the fact that Lugbara diviners were equally known, when young, to

16. The ritually efficacious sororal object is a piece of cloth, the efficacious gesture is the wrapping up. The sister’s spirit can be transferred to the brother’s person. She can also inflict misfortune through a curse and, as on Samoa, when that is said of sisters, it is also said that they do not do it intentionally, but that misfortune will strike the brother if he does something seriously displeasing to his sister (for Samoa, cf. Schöeffel 1979).
be ‘either impotent or uninterested in women’ (Middleton, cited by Needham ibid.: 91). The reader is thus led to retain by default an association between the category of the mystical, that of the feminine, and a sort of absence of sexual virility. The substantialist complex feminine-mystical-hidden-passive is reinforced by this enormous error, supposing that the absence of any heterosexual or simply sexual orientation on the part of a man of sacredness allows him to be placed or retained in the feminine column. The degree of error to which the constraints of the binary method lead in demanding a logic of ‘either/or’ (here, feminine–passive or masculine–active in a heterosexual way) can readily be seen. The sociological phenomenon of the third sex is thrown out in advance. The sexual prohibitions that sacred persons must bear are well known (African sacred kings, women as ‘sisters’ in western Polynesia, etc.). But it is also known that the position occupied by these persons is defined precisely as one that transcends distinctions (Adler 1978, 1979, 1982; Tcherkezoff 1987: 50–51, 69ff., 114–15; Yamaguchi 1974). The supposed ‘feminine passivity’ (of the man or woman in charge of the sacred) can at the same time be the sign of a prohibition, which is itself a sign of the elevation of status and a means of ritual efficacy (Tcherkezoff 1989). In the Samoan case, the sacred woman (the ‘sister’) belongs to a specific level that encompasses as its contrary the opposition of the sexes (in the sense of sexuality). Also, the ‘beyond’ of the distinctions can itself reproduce the primordial stage, before any distinction, the archetypal singular and uniform “whole” of the cosmogonies, in which, at a given moment, some distinction is introduced, some asymmetry appears, thus designating the place of humanity or of the society to come (Tcherkezoff 1987: 63–4, 90, 96–7, 114–15, 127ff.; cf. Part One, on unity). The consequence introduced by the binary method is one of no longer allowing the apperception of these various hierarchical configurations to take place. In order to evoke the collection of impasses that analyses of the Right and Left type erect, even though involuntarily, I have spoken, and will continue to speak, of the ‘binary method’.

17. Phenomena called ‘the third sex’ group together very different cases of ambivalence (the androgynous, in myth or ritual), of the encompassment of one sexual category by another (the empirically observable gender of an Inuit child can be overridden by that of the ancestor who ‘lives again’ in it), and of one beyond the distinctive opposition of the sexes (those with sacred authority). Saladin d’Anglure (1985, 1986, 1988, 1989), who has studied the phenomenon particularly and introduced the well-known Inuit example, noted at the outset, entirely sapphemically, that the binary method was inadequate here—and he referred his readers to my critique of it. For my part, I would speak of a totalizing logic concerning sexual dualism. This third gender goes beyond the usual distinctions, whether of the form A → B (among the Inuit, the gender of the reincarnated ancestor overrides that of the child in possible conflicts between these two references), or of the form (A + B) (androgynous sacred kings, etc.). On the other hand, an example like the Samoan one lays claim to the title of ‘third sex’: the teine (virgin) is neither fafine (woman) nor tamaloa (man) (on Samoa, see Tcherkezoff 1992, 1993b).
4. Conclusion

The example of the two classifications that are referred to the two hands, right and left, has been the main thread and heading of a discussion that has aimed at bringing in hierarchical opposition too as a possibility, so as to make understood specific social logics in which the representation is elaborated top-down, from the set to the element. In this view, right and left refer to a ‘whole’ and not to the universal of substantialist positions. Needham has quite uselessly added polemics to the discussion. It sufficed him to say that, in effect, in the type of analysis he pursues, right and left are not referred to a whole. He says it now; the whole of *Counterpoints* could be limited to this paragraph:

What others have missed, Dumont thinks, is the recognition that the right/left pair cannot be defined in itself, but only in relation to a whole.... To begin with, then, it is a truism that the opposition right/left cannot be defined in itself: the terms can be defined only in relation to something else. But it is not true that they can be defined only in relation to something that constitutes a whole. The arbitrary stipulation of a point of reference, combined with a given point of observation, is perfectly sufficient. The point of reference could be a map reference in a featureless desert, or the beam of a flashlight in a dark enclosure, or coordinates in space. In each instance, once the point of reference was established, the observer, at the given point of observation, could determine right and left, and without reliance on anything that could be called a whole. (Needham 1987: 25)

We are therefore certainly in agreement. Such is the process of the binary method, which considers a priori that each culture uses it in its representational space just as a modern Western traveller uses a map: the absence of transcendence (the reference is always ego-centred) and of the initial taking account of an orientation of value (left and right are only geometric sides). I maintain that it is wrong to think that this mode of representation is at work when Meru society assigns a ‘left’ magic to the Mugwe (or, what comes to the same thing, when it prohibits him from being, like others, more skilled with the right); when Nyamwezi society (a collection of kingdoms, placing ‘society’ on the plane of each kingdom) makes the king a bivalent being (on the plane of gender, numbers, colours etc.); when Samoan society separates and hierarchizes the ‘sister–brother’ difference and the ‘man–woman’ difference; in brief, every time that the anthropological gaze, falling on a global society, is confronted with relations and not with terms, and with hierarchies of relations, all this being a far cry from any idea of analogy between relations.

Therefore, even in the ‘featureless desert’, even in the narrow ‘beam of a flashlight’, the anthropological observer encounters facts like these: among the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea, the left hand (our term) is ‘X’ (specific term), but the right hand (our term) is ‘the true hand’. This is no simple metaphor replacing the more everyday word for ‘right’; it is the only, entirely everyday way of saying ‘right hand’. And, of the left-hander, one says that ‘his left hand is his true
hand'.18 No ‘map references’ can help us, then. We must follow the way of ‘truth’, until we perceive that, in this society, among everything that exists, only certain things are ‘true’ (for example, the ceremonial object at the conclusion of an exchange), whereas other things are only what they are. The analysis then proceeds in terms of levels (value/empirical); it becomes holistic, and must leave the binary method. Let us note the fact without polemical intent.

18. I thank André Iteanu for having provided me with this example. To designate the other hand, the left of the right-hander or the right of a left-hander—if the case presents itself, which is rare—one returns to the general system of reference for all direction-finding, whose axes relate to the environment (towards the mountain, sea, etc.). For the ‘truth’ of Orokaiva exchanges, see under he in the glossary in Iteanu 1983.

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In writing about Amazonian feather art, Luiz Boglár (1984–85) made a distinction between a system of signs referring to social positions and a system of ideological signs. His words, however, are even more widely applicable as the peoples of lowland South America wear not just feathers but a wide range of decorations and adornments to make statements about both social statuses and social values. Two examples from the Ñe peoples illustrate this. With reference to the Kayapó, Terence S. Turner (1969) has shown how different types of decoration and body paint denote social status (see also Vidal (ed.) 1992), while Anthony Seeger (1981) has demonstrated how the importance that the Suya place on speaking and hearing is emphasized by their practice of placing wooden disks in lips and ears. I want here to look at something rather more nebulous, in so far as it is not always visible: that is, how people may be transformed or transform themselves by changing their skin or clothes, and, as an aspect of this, consider the relationship between inside and outside the body as reflections of changing human nature.

This article is a modified version of a paper given at a colloquium of Amazonianists and Melanesianists held at the Satterthwaite Conference Centre of the University of Manchester in 1994. It has since been published in Portuguese in Revista de Antropologia (Vol. XXXVIII, no. 1 (1995), pp. 193-205). I am grateful to the editors of Revista for permission to publish this version here. The aim of the colloquium was to explore the common ground between the two regions, and, like the colloquium itself, this paper is exploratory and reaches no conclusions. I am grateful to my fellow participants for their invaluable comments, especially to Michael O’Hanlon whose companion paper drawing on Melanesian examples is to appear in a future issue of JASO.
The native peoples of Amazonia live in a highly transformational world where what you see is not necessarily what you get; thus the title of this essay. Appearances are deceptive, in the sense that they may be put on and taken off like clothes that hide the underlying reality. What I intend to do is to look at a few examples concerning the relation between external appearance and inner reality, each of which illustrates different aspects of the matter.

Let me start with two examples drawn from opposite ends of the Amazon. First, that provided by the Carib-speaking Kaxuyana of Pará, of whom Protasie Frikel (1971: 139, n. 16) writes:

The 'soul', in the thought of the Indian, is the immortal part of the man, but not just the spiritual or immaterial part. The immortal part is...the person or the man himself and which, given the right circumstances, can be seen. The human body is simply a means of manifestation, a type of 'clothing' which he receives at birth and loses at death.

Far to the west, the Matsigenka of Peru state that 'the body serves only as a cover or “dress” for the free soul' (Baer 1992: 81). Numerous other examples of similar ideas could be quoted, but I want to look in rather more depth at a single case. The Trio (Tiriyo) seem to provide a particularly good case of WYSIWYG, and after considering them I will pursue in different contexts some of the themes raised by their case.

Some years ago I commented that for the Piaroa the problem of the Trinity is less of how three can be one than why it might not be (Rivière 1989). The same is true for the Trio. They live in a transformational world of which the Trio regard the caterpillar, which they treat with awe, to be the archetypal symbol. One of the lessons I learnt when trying to obtain exegesis on myths was the futility of trying to find out whether a particular character was a human, animal or spirit. The response to the question, 'Is he a jaguar or a man?', was invariably a degree of perplexity followed by a comment such as, 'It was a man, but he was wearing jaguar's clothes.'

I will turn to some myths in a moment, but it should be stressed here that transformation is not simply something that occurs in mythic space–time. It is part of the everyday world, of which, to some extent, myths are also part. Take, for example, the following incident. An Indian told me that he once went out hunting with a famous and powerful shaman. They shot a spider monkey, which then became jammed in a branch well above the ground. The shaman told the man to go some paces away, face away from the tree and not to look round. The man obeyed, but suddenly he heard the noise of a jaguar behind him. He looked over his shoulder and saw a jaguar descending the tree with the monkey in its jaws.
fled frightened, but had not gone far when he heard the shaman calling for him. He returned and found the shaman at the foot of the tree holding the monkey. For most Trio such a story simply confirms their assumptions about the power of shamans to transform themselves. Equally, whether or not a particular creature is the actual creature they see or a spirit wearing that creature’s clothes will depend on the outcome of the encounter, unless one is a shaman and thus able to see through the disguise to the internal reality. The power to see into the invisible world is the Trio shaman’s essential qualification: ‘seeing is believing’, on condition that your sight is good enough.

I now want to look at two Trio myths that contain rather similar incidents (see Koelewijn 1987: 65–70, 114–17). In both of them a young Trio man becomes the son-in-law of a creature, in one case a jaguar, in the other an eagle. In both myths the wife’s parents provide the young man with the skills to hunt. In the case of the jaguar the relevant part of the myth goes thus:

After the young man had been with his jaguar wife for a while, he received his jaguar clothes from his father-in-law. Jaguar had different sizes of clothes. Clothes to catch tapir, clothes to catch peccary, clothes to catch deer, clothes to get agouti. All these clothes were more or less different and they all had claws. The young man put on these clothes and went hunting. (ibid.: 67)

The Jaguar, although the import of this will have to wait, was unusual in so far as he ate his meat cooked and cultivated fields. After a while the young man misses his kin and wants to return home, but his father-in-law wants him to stay and perform brideservice. However, the young man, killing his wife and leaving behind him his jaguar clothes, escapes and reverts to being human.

In the other myth a young man is marooned up a tree while trying to capture an eagle chick. When the chick’s mother returns she offers her daughter to the Trio man as his wife, and she also gives him the means by which to hunt. Once again this comes in the form of clothing, in this case eagle clothes. First, he is given clothes with which he is able to catch birds, and later he is given better clothes with which to hunt monkeys. After a time the young man gets fed up with the demands of his parents-in-law, and with the diet—he has to eat ‘almost raw meat’. However, despite soliciting the help of various birds, he has some difficulty in getting away. He finally persuades a parakeet to rescue him, and he returns home fully human.

In both these myths the word po, the standard Trio term for clothes, is used for the skill that the wife’s parents provide in order that their son-in-law may hunt for them. In both cases it is also quite clear that the young men are able to put their clothes on and off. In other words they can shed their respective jaguarness and eagleness and revert to their human nature at will.

I now want to look at another myth (Koelewijn 1987: 118–20) in which the transformation goes far deeper. This concerns two brothers who are expert weavers. These two men wove baskets with jaguar designs that were so realistic
that the baskets became, in a sense, jaguars.1 The brothers were then able to skin these jaguars, whereupon the baskets became baskets again and the brothers had sets of jaguar clothes. When they put these on they liked to go hunting and were good at it, whereas previously they had not been. In fact, the elder had to warn his younger brother about taking too much game. The younger brother ignored this caution and one day he not only killed an excessive number of peccary, but also licked their raw blood. As a result he could no longer take off his clothes. They stuck to him and he turned into a jaguar, not only in appearance but also in reality. He tried to sei ze his elder brother, who shot him. Then, in remorse, the latter put on his jaguar clothes, drank blood and became a jaguar in turn.

In this case the transformation from the human to the animal world becomes irreversible. The reason for this is given explicitly in the myth: ‘He had completely changed into a jaguar, he was not a Trio any more, because he had licked blood’ (ibid.: 120). This contrasts with the first two myths discussed above. In the first, the jaguar and, presumably, the hero ate their food cooked, and the latter had relatively little difficulty in returning home safely. In the second, where the hero complains about the eagles eating their meat ‘almost raw’, he has much greater difficulty in escaping. These three myths indicate that care should be taken not to practise animal dietary behaviour in case, as in the last myth, there is a permanent transformation and one can no longer take off one’s animal clothes. In other words, it is safe to put on animal clothes so long as one does not behave too much like that animal. This, in turn, suggests that there is in humans an essential animality that must be guarded against. Although it is not my intention to discuss human clothes and adornments in this essay, I should propose that these are the visible signs of humanity that hide an unseen animality. This essential aspect of each person may literally surface unless guarded against. I shall, however, return to the notion of a basic animality that is often conceived as lurking in human nature.

I am now going to turn to another myth (Koelewijn 1987: 37–44), a rather complicated one of which many features remain obscure to me. Here there is an old Trio man who had no children. His wife had adopted the young of all sorts of birds and animals, but this had not proved successful. So the old man set a trap with the carcass of a tapir he had shot. It attracted a flock of king vultures and while they were feeding on it the Trio seized one of their chicks and ran home. It then appears that the vulture parents are spirits (presumably wearing king vulture clothes), as the Trio meets them in a shaman’s hide. It is agreed that the Trio should keep the child, and the vulture father gives the Trio two items to give to the child. One is his king vulture clothes and the other is a mysterious object variously described as being like a watch and a bit like a man, or perhaps a stone.

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1. I should note here that weaving in north-east lowland South America is not simply a practical task or skill. Among the Warao of the Orinoco Delta the master weaver is regarded as having powers similar to that of the shaman (Wilbert 1975), and among the Ye’cuana the art of weaving is part of cosmic ordering (Guss 1989).
with a small container in it. It is, the vulture father says, ‘the power of my son, his heart’. In some way, possession of this object will help him to be a Trio, and it is clearly contrasted with the clothes, which are connected with his forest nature. It is not at all clear what it is that is being referred to here. Obviously, it is not the physical heart as such, although it is seen as analogous to it. It is hard (metal or stone) and its being like a watch may well refer to the ticking, which presumably is seen as being similar to a heartbeat. At the same time, it has some human features. Although I can only guess, my view is that it is an attempt on the part of the story-teller to represent ‘eternal life’. In other words, it is a heart made out of a hard material, stone or metal, the Trio symbols of eternity and immortality. This interpretation is reinforced by a second myth (ibid: 45–6), or perhaps an episode from the same myth since it involves the same characters. This is the Trio version of the widely distributed myth of how people became mortal because they answered when the tree called, rather than when the rock called.

To return to the main myth. To begin with the vulture child retains its bird-like habits and sleeps sitting on a perch. Slowly, however, he takes to sleeping in a hammock and wearing a loincloth, though from a young age he insists on eating his meat rotten. When he is nearly full grown he decides to go and visit his vulture father and puts on his vulture clothes to do so. While he is away his Trio father dies and on his return he remains only briefly before leaving for good. During this time he tries to teach his Trio mother a spirit song that will allow her to retain her soul and thus have immortality. In this myth it is the king vulture spirit, as I think he should be called, possessor of the secret of eternal life, who transforms himself into both bird and man. The point here is that, except for shamans, spirits can only reveal themselves to people by donning human or animal appearance, that is, clothing in Trio terms. This clothing gives the spirit an outward appearance but continues to hide the true nature, which is invisible, hard and eternal. This idea seems quite widespread. For example, in the mythology of the Matsigenka also ‘vulture-people’ take off their wings and appear as humans or people, and later put on their wings like garments to fly off like birds’ (Baer 1992: 92).

I now want to pick up on this theme of hardness. Often symbolized by rock and hard woods, it is widely associated in lowland South America with notions of permanence, eternity and immortality. It is also associated with the spirit world and, by an interesting paradox, with those features of personhood that we would probably regard as the most intangible and ethereal—souls, names etc. Further, in the myth just summarized the ‘heart’ of the vulture child is described as being of either metal or stone, what might be considered the hard core or vital force of the person, and in this case ‘immortal’.

This contrast between hard, endurable, internal and invisible essence and a soft, ephemeral and external appearance is certainly widespread in Amazonia. For example, the Yanomamo version of the myth of the loss of eternal life has just this theme (see Wilbert and Simoneau 1990: 375–6). This particular version was collected among the Sanema subgroup and tells of its origin. The original culture
hero intended to create the Sanema out of poli trees. These trees are rare and widely dispersed, have very hard wood and a fine peeling bark. The culture hero told his younger brother to collect this wood but the latter was lazy and brought in kodalinase trees, which are common and have very soft wood. It is from the latter that the Sanema were carved, whereas the culture hero had intended anacondas to be made out of this wood so that they would have short lives. He had intended the Sanema to be like the poli tree, to live a long time and rejuvenate themselves by shedding their skin as anacondas do. Once again we have the idea of a hard, enduring core with an external covering, which in this case is renewable.

The idea of renewal or rejuvenation associated with skin shedding is also a common theme throughout Amazonia, and not surprisingly it is often associated with snakes, particularly anacondas. The Tukanoans provide a prime example of this imagery, highly elaborated in myth but also enacted through ritual. Menstruation, understood as skin-shedding, is seen as a form of renewal because the menstrual cycle is regarded as the source of women’s life-force, which in turn accounts for the fact that they live longer than men and recover from illness more readily. For women, this cycle of menstruation and renewal is natural and involuntary and is matched in the male world by the cultural and voluntary means of a ritual cycle. In these rites various actions can be seen as metaphorical menstruation or skin changing (Christine Hugh-Jones 1979: ch. 5). The He House ritual of the Barasana not only results in a change of skin but also gradually transforms the animality of the newborn child into the spirituality of adult men. A Barasana baby is on the side of animals and nature whereas adult men are on the side of spirits and the He world. In the He ritual there is a return to the non-differentiation of nature and culture that was a characteristic of the ancestral past. This is done partly by introducing nature into the house and partly by re-enacting the basic animality of man through the donning of ritual clothing made from parts of animals and birds (Stephen Hugh-Jones 1979: 141–2).

For a final example one might look at the Piaroa, who distinguish a ‘life of thought’ from a ‘life of the senses’. Whereas humans possess both these, gods have only the former and animals only the latter. Young children, however, like animals, have only a life of senses, and formal education consists of the mastery of the senses by the knowledge that comes with the life of thought. The life of thought is understood to be contained within the body as ‘beads of life’ and is represented externally by face paintings and strings of beads, of which the mythical prototypes were made of granite. Joanna Overing (1988) has described these beads as ‘the individual’s inner clothes’. The beads of life are filled by powers from the gods and, in so far as they are kept in crystal boxes, these powers appear equally to be associated with hardness. In this case we seem to have a much closer relationship between the inside and outside. Overing makes the point that there is a correlation between the number of beads one wears and the amount of knowledge to which claim is laid or granted. One might note in addition that the Piaroa also use the notion of clothing to describe sickness; thus paralysis is seen to result from a loincloth of wild peccary being wrapped round the victim (Overing 1990).
Although it is not my intention here to draw any conclusions from this rather disparate set of randomly chosen cases, of which many more examples might be adduced, there are some general points that are worth making. First, there is the simple point that in Amazonia, much as elsewhere, clothes and coverings provide a means for expressing the varieties and intricacies of human nature, although the way in which this is done is somewhat different. There does seem to be here the belief that human nature has an 'animal' aspect, and that this needs to be socialized, domesticated or civilized either ritually or educationally. If, as in the Trio case, there is a failure to follow the precepts for being human, there is the danger of reverting to animality.

Second, and the point has been made often enough before, the outer covering of the individual mediates between the inner self and society. Terence S. Turner (1969) has claimed that among the Kayapó the skin is the boundary between two aspects of the human personality, one being the presocial drives emanating from the individual's biological constitution and the other the moral conscience and intellectual consciousness based on cultural principles. There is here, I think, a parallel with what I have just said, but there is a complicating factor within the Amazonian context, that is, the highly transformational world in which its native people live. It is never entirely safe to believe the evidence of your own eyes. It is better to wait and see what transpires. Behaviour is a better guide than appearances.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

THE POLITICS OF SELFHOOD AND GENDER IN NEW GUINEA

JAMES F. WEINER


In their introduction to a Special Issue of the journal *Social Analysis*, devoted to 'Sexual Antagonism, Gender, and Social Change in Papua New Guinea', Gilbert H. Herdt and Fitz John P. Poole (1982: 4) wrote that throughout the history of anthropology in New Guinea 'the idea of “sexual antagonism”...has remained largely a vessel of unexamined assumptions that has often obscured as much as it has revealed'. Moreover, they continued, 'logical distinctions among such notions as “segregation”, “separation”, “contrast”, “opposition”...“envy”...and “hierarchy” (e.g. domination–subordination) are rarely drawn or, where drawn, are not systematically analyzed' (ibid.). One could not disagree with this assessment, and in fact it is still germane to raise it after more than a decade of continuing research in Melanesia. But although we can conclude that this was an important first step, other steps remain to be taken in order for New Guinea ethnography to continue to exert its transformative effect on anthropological theorizing about gender and sociality. For we now have to add the very notions of 'sexuality', 'male', 'female', 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' to Herdt and Poole's list. In other
words, it is of limited utility to question the validity of sexual antagonism only to retain an essentialist and Western view of what constitutes the male and female sexes and acts of sexuality.  

If the two books under review here accomplish anything—and they both accomplish much—it is just this critique of essentialist notions of sexual identity and sexual relationship in Papua New Guinea. For each author challenges us to isolate exclusively male or female identities, attributes, acts or capabilities, or their specifically sexual or erotic nature. Of the Gimi of the Eastern Highlands described by Gillison and the Etoro of the South Highlands portrayed by Kelly, we can say two things. First, sexual identities, like all social identities, are relationally constituted; that is, the difference between male and female in New Guinea is, as Gregory Bateson (1958) first observed, largely a product of the elicitory strategies of social interaction. And second, because the perception of these differences thus emerges within a social value space, it is contiguous with other reference points within that space. Thus, what we identify as sexual attributes and capacities are subsumed within more encompassing cosmological processes that include growth, consumption and life energy. The differential vectors, directions and polarities of such processes are given moral as well as cosmological assessment, and it is upon these differential assessments that we attach the labels that signal sexual identity and contrast.

In fact, Kelly wants to argue that gender is a non-subject for the Etoro, since he locates the difference between male and female within a broader system of social inequality. His book is an effort to provide, first, a comprehensive analysis of the sources of social inequality in the Etoro sociocultural system, and secondly, a critical evaluation of the most prominent works on social inequality in recent times (specifically, the theory of Collier and Rosaldo (1981) concerning inequality in simple societies). Kelly begins by defining social inequality as ‘social differentiation accompanied by differential moral evaluation’ (p. 4). For the Etoro, this differential moral evaluation is made by assessing the contribution people make to the perpetuation of life, chiefly through the transmission, accumulation or appropriation of semen, which is the ‘animating principle of an individual’s spiritual constitution’ (p. 13). Men, who are of course the source of semen, promote life by acts that lead to the transmission of semen to others: either by inseminating their wives and subsequently ‘feeding’ the foetus in utero, or by stimulating the growth and physical maturity of boys by inseminating them orally. Semen contributes to the strength of a person’s hame, which ‘embodies the animating principle and vital energy of human existence’ (p. 147–8). Senior men who have spent a lifetime engaged in donating semen to others thus occupy the highest position in the hierarchy of virtue. At the other end of the scale are witches, who suffer from a ‘mutation of the soul (tohorora)’ (p. 143), which predisposes them to consume the life force of others for their own selfish aggrandizement.

Each Etoro person is thought to possess a spirit double (ausulubo) that ‘replicates the possessor’s physical body in form but lacks corporeal substance’ (p. 146). A witch harms his/her victim by attacking the ausulubo and consuming the spirit organs that are the doubles of the physical organs. A woman exerts a
weakening effect on a man because the latter expends semen in the act of sexual intercourse. As long as this depletion of semen serves to ensure conception and the subsequent in utero nourishment of the foetus, it is morally valued, though still a sacrifice on the part of men. A woman who, on the other hand, entices her husband into intercourse to no reproductive purpose is acting in a morally negative manner, and is like a witch; she is abetting the expenditure of life force to no purpose other than her self-gratification.

For the Etoro, the contrast is not strictly speaking between hetero- and homosexual acts of intercourse, but between those acts that allow the proper flow of life substance and those that do not. The insemination of an older man by a younger man is by the same token repugnant to the Etoro because it releases a flow of life in a direction opposite to that which is conventional and morally approved. Furthermore, Kelly establishes that unlike many other New Guinea peoples, including the Kamula who are culturally and geographically very close, Etoro men and women are not seen to possess distinct and complementary productive capacities. Indeed, an Etoro husband and wife share virtually all productive tasks in their subsistence regimen (though if men's and women's procreative contributions to reproduction are not set apart from their 'economic' capacities, then there is a complementarity of male and female attributes among the Etoro that has focal social implications). Etoro women are not disadvantaged with respect to men in the distribution of food or wealth; in fact, quite the opposite.

In sum, Kelly says that the relation between male and female cannot be defined except as it takes its place within a more global system of prestige and stigma that includes, among other things, witchcraft capacity, spirit mediumship, men of status, and differentiation in life-cycle position. *The Construction of inequality* expands upon the analysis Kelly first made in his important article ‘Witchcraft and Sexual Relations’ (1976), but goes significantly beyond that in its situating of this nexus within a wider system of status hierarchy.

For the Gimi, the issue of sexual difference revolves around the sacred flute (the focus of the male cult) and its ownership, that is, who originally possessed it, who stole it, and to whom it must be returned. Gimi men and women tell their own myths, each of which gives a different account of original possession and original loss, and of the consequences of that loss for sexual dimorphism.

In the many descriptions of the cult from the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the flute is reported to be the embodiment of male power: men ‘believed that the ability to wage war and dominate women, and thus to uphold the social order, rested with those who possessed [the flutes]’ (p. 4). But we are unable to identify the Gimi flute—or any other Gimi ‘phallic’ symbol—as the embodiment of exclusive male qualities. The evidence for its androgynous, relational composition is found in Gimi mythology. According to Gimi women’s myth, the First Man had a very long penis, which he carried coiled within a string bag. The string bag hung from his neck so that it ‘protruded in a lump over his belly’ (p. 7). Such a man might very well be said to be pregnant with his own penis, or to be carrying it around with him like an infant in a string bag or like a foetus—or both.
The myth told about this man is as follows. While the man lay fast asleep inside his house, his penis awoke 'out of hunger' and went out alone to search for the vagina. The penis was blind but followed his nose into the woman's house, where she was fast asleep and her vagina closed. The penis searched in vain for the opening and finally 'ate a part of the hole to open it...entered and ejaculated'. The woman awoke with a start and took the penis in her hand. She walked to the man's house and, while he still lay sleeping, cut his penis to the length of a section and a half of sugar-cane, throwing the huge severed portion into a river. The blood of the maimed giant was the blood of the first menses (pp. 10-11). Gillison pairs this myth with the male myth of the origin of the flute, in which the first couple was composed of a woman and a boy who were sister and brother. One night, the cries of the woman's flute awoke the 'small boy' asleep in the men's house and he crawled to her house, hiding himself in the tall grass outside her door. In the morning, after his sister had gone to her garden, the boy crept into her house and stole her flute from the head of her bed or, as told in other versions, he took it from the grass where she had left it. When he put the instrument to his mouth to play, he found that she had closed the blowing hole with a plug of her pubic hair. The boy's lips touched the plug and his sister's hair began to grow around his mouth, which is why men nowadays have beards. By stealing the flute, the boy not only acquired a beard; he also caused his sister to menstruate for the first time. But when she saw that her flute was gone and heard it 'crying' inside the men's house, she was not angry and did not try to take it back: 'she forgot everything that happened and died' (ibid.: 10). Gillison concludes: 'analyzed together, men's and women's myths reciprocally imply that, in the very first instance, before time began...only the other sex "had the penis," only the other was grown-up and possessed sexual appetite' (p. 12). In these myths and in all of Gimi social imagery, we are unable to attribute specific organs, or their functions, or specific consumptive or sexual acts to one sex or the other. Both men and women have penes and vaginas, both men and women emit sound and substance and receive or consume such emissions, both men and women are consumers as well as consumed. There is no sexual difference in any form familiar to us. In fact, in Marilyn Strathern's words (1988: 107), for the Gimi 'maleness and femaleness seem defined to the extent in which persons appear as detachable parts of others or as encompassing them'.

The strength of Gillison's analysis is the manner in which she identifies a core image of the Gimi life condition and shows how it expands through various social protocols into its mythopoeic, ritual and social processual forms. A bride carries with her in her net bag her father's sacred flute, which he has filled with cooked meat. She is unaware of what she carries and thinks only that it is a container of salt. The husband, however, knows what her bag holds. He removes the flute and extracting the meat, places it in his bride's mouth. In one of the many passages where Gillison deftly weaves together the many different forms of the primordial flute image, she writes (p. 16):
in enacting the unspoken content of their own myth, acknowledging that the flutes
the groom takes from the bride, and the things he removes from the mouths of the
flutes, are phallic or father-derived objects, men play out a fantasy that closely
resembles the explicit counterpremise of women’s myth, in which the heroine
removes the head of a giant penis. Through the transfer of flutes, men set up a
connection with women’s myth that they undo as soon as the exchange is made.

The recursiveness and ubiquity of this image, and its ability to retain its own scale
throughout these expansions, is evidence of a local strategy of meaning revelation
that cannot be captured by a structuralist account alone. Rather, it must be
characterized by a technique that does not separate perception from its bodily
constitution, that sees social relationship itself as a function of the body’s
superficies and conaesthetic faculty. Although the theoretical framework that
would account for this technique is not explicitly addressed in Gillison’s book, the
debt to Freud and Winnicott (e.g. 1964, 1971) is clear.

It is evident that in both the Gimi and Etoro cases—and, I think, throughout
Papua New Guinea and Melanesia—what we call gender difference emerges
around a perception of contrasting relationships to consumptive acts and protocols;
it is interesting to note that both the Gimi and the Etoro say that the father ‘feeds’
the foetus in his wife’s uterus by depositing semen inside her. These consumptive
acts are the productive system of these societies. If, as Gillison does, we intimate
that these acts are the forms that human desire and passion take in their social
manifestation, then it is appropriate for us to speak of the Gimi and Etoro
‘economic’ systems as constituted by what G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1986) call
‘desiring production’. To separate out the acts of distribution and control of
resources from this embodied production, as do Collier and Rosaldo, and as Kelly
must also do if only to be arguing on the same terms, is perhaps to do an analytic
injustice to the societies under consideration.

Gillison and Kelly speak directly to each other through these different
perspectives on interior New Guinea gender articulation. In speaking to each
other, they reveal the unmistakably bodily constitution of what we can call the
politics of selfhood and gender in Papua New Guinea.

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MUNDA KINSHIP AND TRANSATLANTIC ANTHROPOLOGY:
A RESPONSE TO SHAPIO

In his review of my book *The Munda of Central India* (Parkin 1992), Warren Shapiro adopts a wider agenda than is usually expected of a book reviewer (see *JASO*, Vol. XXIV, no. 2, pp. 218–20). He takes the opportunity to talk up everything American in anthropology and sneer at everything European, leading one to wonder whether the days of a recognizably common transatlantic discipline are finally over. This has lead me to break with normal practice and respond directly, as the author, to a book review.

Shapiro’s basic tactic is to use the depth of history as a means of expressing distance and disapproval, an interesting scholarly application of the deprecation of the ‘other’ with reference to time exposed by Johannes Fabian. However, this tactic is applied only to the Europeans, namely Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, Lévi-Strauss, Dumont and Needham. By contrast, Shapiro lionizes his American colleagues Lowie, Murdock, Goodenough, Lounsbury, Scheffler, Keesing and Schneider, even though those of them who are still alive are hardly much less long in the tooth. In reality, the intellectual histories of the two groups run largely in parallel. For example, with the publication of the original French edition of his *Elementary Structures* in 1949, Lévi-Strauss beat his contemporaries Lounsbury and Goodenough into print by only seven years (both the latter published key texts in 1956), while Dumont, with his influential article on Dravidian kinship terminology (1953), did so by a mere three. Also, given so much mutual influence, I find the impression Shapiro leaves, whether intended or otherwise, that there is a bloc of American theory consistently opposing a bloc of European theory very misleading. The fundamental question surely is not which continental traditions have contributed most to anthropology, but what constitutes progress in the subject and who has produced it. A short comment such as this cannot hope to give authoritative answers, but some remarks may help restore the balance.

As far as I am concerned, Needham’s remarks on formalism (1971: xxi–xxxiv) are just as cogent now as they were a quarter of a century ago. That formalists were and are mostly American is no more than a fact of history and does not mean that domestic critics have been lacking. Needham himself points to Coulé as ‘an exceedingly acute American critic’ of them (ibid.: xxx; emphasis added), and he was not alone (cf. Trautmann 1981: 59ff. on Scheffler). As ways of describing a classification, neither the componential analyses of Goodenough nor the formal semantic analyses of Scheffler and Lounsbury can be considered wrong, but they do not add anything that cannot be provided by a conventional analysis using genealogical denotation. Claims that such analyses enable behaviour to be
predicted are at best confused and at worst fatuous. While behavioural stereotypes may correspond in part to a classification, trying to read off actual behaviour from a terminology is futile. In short, those who have been trying to unite the spheres of 'structure' and 'grossehr human behaviour' (Shapiro, p. 219) have an awful lot more sweating to do.\footnote{Shapiro has misread my text at this point: 'positive marriage rules' are not contrasted with 'considerations of wealth and status', the two are listed together as factors that may restrict choice of marriage partner. They are not, of course, mutually exclusive.}

Given also Scheffler's blank refusal to consider the affinal terminology as anything more than an epiphenomenon of terms for consanguines, the limitations of the approach are clear.\footnote{I develop these points further in an as yet unpublished manuscript entitled 'Genealogy and Category: An Operational View'.} Really, it was such figures as Leach, Dumont and Needham who showed more clearly than Lévi-Strauss how certain terminologies express forms of affinal alliance, if not actually determine them. Yet they were all really working in the tradition of Morgan (to whom indeed Lévi-Strauss dedicated his \textit{magnum opus}), much modified it is true but still recognizably Morganist. Morgan's status as a pioneer helps excuse his mistakes, and he remains an inspiration for many, not only in Europe, as the work of Trautmann (1981) shows. I am happy to associate my modest efforts with this tradition, at least in part, though I did not feel it necessary to advertise the fact specifically in a book in which the urge to theorize was kept mostly within bounds.

Now Morgan and Trautmann are both Americans. I am thus far from being anti-American, as Shapiro evidently suspects. It is simply that I think my Americans are better than his. Nor does it matter a whit to me that Morgan belongs to what might be called the proto-history of the discipline. In itself, being younger than Morgan—or for that matter, younger than Lévi-Strauss \textit{et al.}—is no guarantee of academic excellence: what matters is whether the work is still of relevance. As it happens, Morgan's basic approach has become the mainstream form of analysis in kinship studies. This, it seems to me, is what is important, not when or where a person pursued his career. Similar remarks, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, apply to Mauss, who often seems to have thought of everything in his long and productive career. One of the virtues of his essay on the person is precisely its demonstration of 'the pervasive equivalence of alternate generations' in certain ideologies. Nothing I know of in subsequent disquisitions on the person—not even in America—has managed to undermine this demonstration. This is because, like 'two-section' systems,\footnote{This phrase must be Shapiro's. It is certainly not mine. This makes Shapiro's linking it with the phrase 'fundamental properties of the human mind', which actually comes in the middle of a lengthy discussion on reincarnation, doubly spurious.} such equivalences are not difficult to locate in contemporary ethnography. This in itself is an argument neither for nor against the
evolutionism Shapiro derides. History may or may not have more examples of these equivalences: it certainly does not monopolize them.

To return to kinship in a narrow sense, Schneider's position is somewhat different from that of the formalists. His approach can be related to the argument that anthropologists should concentrate on 'culture'—broadly speaking, symbolism—and leave social structure to sociologists. His stress on indigenous representations is certainly to be appreciated, though it is hardly remarkable in itself. More questionable is the attempt to ring-fence anthropology and thus limit its comparative scope. Anthropologists have always accepted the influence of other disciplines, including linguistics, philosophy, psychology, history and sociology, radically adapting the latter in particular. Since my own interest was largely social-structural, I did not feel Schneider provided any more of a model than the formalists had. Rather, the ethnography practically imposed the terms in which I wrote the book. This is where Shapiro's attempts to read between the lines frequently lead him astray. For example, of the three passages in which I cite Lévi-Strauss, two are critical (1992: 163, 184–6).

A key finding, ignored by Shapiro, is the fact that affinal alliance among the Munda characteristically does not fall exactly into any of the models identified by Lévi-Strauss. In its modest way, this represents a fresh development within the Morganist tradition.

Finally, a point about my association of 'bifurcate merging' with 'Dravidian' or 'symmetric prescriptive' terminologies (Shapiro, p. 219; Parkin 1992: 122). The first phrase was coined by Lowie to describe the sort of pattern that links parallel and lineal kin under the same term(s) but has a separate term for cross kin (e.g. $F = FB \neq MB$; Lowie 1928). As such, it is often encountered in symmetric prescriptive terminologies. Certainly, as Shapiro indicates, this does not exhaust its distribution: for instance, many so-called Crow–Omaha terminologies can be said to have this pattern, without this saying very much about them. This makes it unreliable for diagnostic purposes and is the reason I never use it, save to criticize or to attribute it to others (I will not labour the point that it is of American origin). Whether, as Shapiro further hints, the separation of affinal terms renders a terminology less 'symmetric prescriptive' is another matter. According to the orthodoxy of 'Anglo-French structuralists', it probably would. But what is truly surprising is that he has completely missed my discussion, in parts of chapters 7 and 8, of this separation and its significance in the Munda terminologies. In using arrogance to cover his inattention to what I wrote, Shapiro has succeeded only in producing an object lesson in how not to review a book.

ROBERT PARKIN

4. If Shapiro really wants to know how little I think of Lévi-Strauss's efforts to come to terms with the Munda ethnography, he should consult Parkin 1983.
NEW THOUGHTS ON THE PIG MEAT TABOO

As a biologist who has already trespassed into the field of anthropology in these pages (albeit in collaboration with the late Bryan Cranstone) with a discussion of the biological reasons why pigs have never been milked (Cranstone and Ryder 1987), I am pleased to be allowed to do so again. I wish now to draw the attention of anthropologists to a possible biological basis for the rejection of pig meat in the Middle East, having already put this forward in a biological context (Ryder 1993).

Although the earliest record of this prohibition is apparently that in the Old Testament, the rejection of pig meat is not restricted to Judaism. It is in fact part of a wider distaste for pork in the Middle East. According to Darlington (1969: 123), pork was forbidden to the aristocracy in the Egyptian New Kingdom, a fact he attributed to influence from the Hyksos, who invaded from the east in the eighteenth century BC. The pig is also regarded as ritually unclean in Islam, which began more recently. What is it about pigs in that area that makes whole groups of people consider them unclean on what is now regarded as religious grounds?

When I first became interested in this question thirty years ago and suggested to a veterinarian colleague that the reason for the prohibition might be the proneness of pigs to become infested with the roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*, he repeated the nineteenth-century view that "primitive" people are unlikely to have...
understood the link between human disease and the eating of infested pork. The parasitic nematode in question reproduces in the intestine of the pig and the larvae produced bore through its walls and enter the muscles. Here they create cysts in which they lie coiled and dormant, causing a condition known as trichinosis. People eating pork diseased in this way themselves become infested with the intestinal worms, which in turn invade the human muscles, often fatally. The connection between the porcine and human diseases was not thought to have been recognized (and then in Europe) until 1860 (Douglas 1966: 30). We now know that the larvae are killed by adequate cooking, that is sufficient time at 137 degrees Fahrenheit (58.3 degrees centigrade) to ensure that those in deeper parts of the meat are killed.

While writing my book *Sheep and Man* (Ryder 1983) during the 1970s I came across an explanation offered by the American geographer C. S. Coon that seemed very convincing at the time. He suggested that the religious prohibition of pork among Middle Eastern nomads is more likely to have had an ecological explanation (Coon 1952: 346). Pigs are unattractive to nomads because they are not easily driven and do not adapt well to the hot dry conditions of the Middle East. Unlike other livestock, pigs supply little more than meat and are difficult to skin. This explanation was accepted by Zeuner (1963: 261), who quoted Antonius as pointing out that the pig was valuable to the settled farmer only; nomads, who have always felt superior to farmers, came to despise the pig as well as the farmer who bred it. In due course the nomads developed religious prohibitions against the animal they could not keep. Marvin Harris (1986) considered that since pigs can compete with man for food, they may threaten the whole subsistence economy. Other domestic animals also provided milk, wool or transport, and sheep and goats could survive on the little food available in the austere environment of the area (Ryder 1983: 195).

During the writing of the paper on pig-milking, I became aware that anthropologists saw this religious prohibition of pig meat as a symbolic taboo. Indeed, I understand that for anthropologists a taboo is by definition symbolic. The basis for the taboo against pigs is thus thought to be not their over-rich fat, nor their habit of wallowing in mud to keep cool; neither is it their habit of scavenging for food. Mary Douglas (1978: 54–7) has pointed out that in Leviticus there is no reference to the scavenging habit of pigs. She sees the answer in ritualistic and symbolic terms, pointing out that the Israelites considered as ritually unclean animals that did not fall clearly within certain categories. In the first few verses of chapter 11 of Leviticus it is stated that only beasts which 'parteth the hoof and chew the cud may be eaten'. The pig is anomalous because, although cloven-hoofed, it is not a ruminant. Douglas (1972: 78–9) has further suggested that the pig symbolized prohibited exogamy, since it was eaten by neighbouring peoples with whom intermarriage was forbidden.

But did ‘primitive’ peoples really not recognize the link between diseased pork and human illness? They must for instance have learnt by trial and error
which plants are poisonous. More recently I have come across other evidence that suggests that a direct connection between diseased pork and human illness may well have been understood in prehistory. The *Trichinella* cysts are produced by the host animal as a reaction to the parasite and are coated with calcareous matter. I discovered that older livestock books describe how these grit-like bodies can be felt when a piece of affected meat is cut with a knife, and that the cysts are actually visible to the naked eye. Tacitus embraced this explanation when he wrote, c. AD 100, that the Israelites did not eat pork because it carried 'a kind of leprosy' (quoted in Zeuner 1963: 261). Zeuner dismissed this explanation in favour of the ecological explanation (as discussed above) because Tacitus had got the wrong disease, whereas it is not uncommon for a grain of truth to be hidden among the garbled writings of classical authors.

Finally, these 'pork worms' were in fact described by the scholar San Isidoro who lived in Seville c. AD 560 to 636. He called them *usia*, and stated that their danger to man was the reason why the Jews were forbidden this meat. The late George Ordish (1976: 41) thought that San Isidora's knowledge of the worms, plus his discussions with rabbis, might have led him to the conclusion that there was a practical foundation for the Mosaic prohibition on the consumption of pork.

How do anthropologists view this evidence for a completely different and more direct basis for the Middle Eastern prohibition of pig meat, with hints that this basis was known in antiquity?

M. L. RYDER

1. According to research reported recently in the *New Scientist* (Hutson 1994), sheep are able to learn which plants in a pasture are poisonous. The human ability to learn which foods are harmful may, therefore, have a longer evolutionary history than suggested here.

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CHICKEN GOLOK

On 7 September 1982 I attended the erection of a new clan temple for the clan Golok in the hamlet Lamanuk, just above Lameleria, Lembata, Indonesia. At an associated feast, two ata mola, or ceremonial specialists, Laga Doni Ten Or and Yosef Gogok, cooked a chicken according to the following recipe:

Throw the chicken into the fire, scorching off the feathers in places and melting the rest to the skin. Cut open the chicken along the back bone. Take out the intestines and then rub ajinomoto (monosodium glutamate) into the inside of the chicken. Next, take a stone and carefully pound the wings, legs and the rest of the carcass until all the bones are finely splintered. Throw the animal back into the fire and roast [until, as I recall, less than half cooked]. Cut into small pieces, leaving on the blackened skin, soot and feathers. Serve with salt and red peppers.

I wonder if JASO might be interested in publishing this recipe, perhaps as the first in a series called ‘Culinary Discoveries from the Field’ or some such.

R. H. BARNES
JASO
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Black youth is perhaps one of the most studied and controversial social categories of recent years. Earlier studies have, however, largely tended to adopt a 'problem oriented' approach to issues of black identity, in which black youth are seen as culturally confused, 'alienated' and outside the bounds of British society. Such works have portrayed black culture as fixed and static, passive in the face of external ascription and powerless to generate alternatives.

This study moves away from earlier, external definitions of black identity to consider how black youths define themselves. It contends that many black youths are involved in an ongoing and dynamic process of identity construction and negotiation, which assumes significance in interaction with others. At the level of lived experience, black identity is created and recreated from a range of sources and cultural options; it changes over time and according to individual choice.

The research is based upon the experiences and attitudes of a small number of black British youths in London. Using material gleaned from twelve months' fieldwork and interviews, the study seeks to place black youths as 'actors' at the
centre of any discussion of black British identity. This approach recognizes that, at 'street-level', black youth play an active and creative role in the construction of their image and expression. Black British culture thus becomes a primary site for contestation, which challenges the traditional certainties of 'race' and of an imagined national identity.


Perth, the capital of Western Australia, is home for about 4,000 to 7,000 migrants and their Australian-born descendants originating from Castellorizo, a Greek island between Rhodes and Cyprus, in the eastern Mediterranean. The Castellorizians, who migrated to Perth and other parts of Australia between 1900 and 1950 by chain migration, constitute a large and powerful segment of the Greek community of Perth.

The scope of this thesis, for which fieldwork was undertaken between 1984 and 1986, is to investigate the construction, maintenance and transmission of ethnic identity among community-affiliated Castellorizians, namely among those who chose to maintain their ethnic identity in the context of the Castellorizian and broader Greek community of Perth. Two fundamental aspects of their identity are examined in particular. First, how Castellorizians construct and maintain a sense of uniqueness and superiority vis-à-vis non-Castellorizians who constitute their milieu. Second, changes in Castellorizian identity over time and between generations. Since this is a study of people whose world has been restructured many times during a period extending to at least four generations, the perspective adopted is dynamic, and Castellorizian identity is presented as long-term, ever changing and open-ended.

A number of mechanisms of maintenance of identity have been identified in the areas of socio-economic adaptation, community and church politics and wedding rituals. Firstly, Castellorizian identity is structured and perpetuated in segmentary fashion: Castellorizians project their regional Greek, pan-hellenic or Australian belonging according to the social and ideological context of interaction. Secondly, they use their past creatively and selectively to justify and authenticate their needs at present. They believe that their success in business and their prominent position in the Greek and broader, Australian community, are proof of the continuity of a tradition established on Castellorizo. Thirdly, Castellorizians interpret their political and economic power as moral excellence, thus justifying their attempts to maintain prevalence in the Greek community on primordial grounds. Fourthly, there are systematic differences in the ways in which Castellorizians of different generation, age, gender and socio-economic status perceive and express their sense of belonging. Young Castellorizians negotiate values, practices and symbols transmitted to them by their parents and grandparents according to their own needs and ideas. Finally, the existence of an élite, the
members of which present themselves as exemplars of Castellorizian tradition, constitutes a powerful symbol of identification for Castellorizians and becomes a boundary of their identity.

**Evi Ioanni Constantinidou**, Local History and Identity in a Coastal Village in East Sutherland, Scotland: A Social Anthropological Study. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-8451)

This is a social anthropological study of Embo, a village in south-east Sutherland. The emphasis is on the relationship between competing historical discourses about a particular locality and the experiences of its residents. In Chapter 1 Highland history (especially the period of the Clearances) is examined in order to set a context for the ethnography of Embo. Embo’s regional landscape is described with special emphasis on its ‘lived features’.

Chapter 2 examines the local texts and processes through which local historiography generates the locality’s distinct historicism. Embo is shown to have a different historicism to Dornoch, the historical centre of the parish. In Chapter 3 the fishing past of Embo is shown to be enshrined in an ‘oral genre’—a ‘genre of life’. The history of the herring fishing and the stories of the fishergirls of Embo provide an ethnographic canvas for the discussion.

Chapter 4 explores the extent to which Embo’s traditions have been determined, respectively, by a local writer and by an outsider. The questions raised by the development of Grannie’s Heilan’ Hame—a tourist caravan park—are addressed. The discussion shows that the perception of veracity of the past and future of a particular group is important in understanding people’s experience of change.

Chapter 5 discusses the ‘local’ relevance of a language shift from Gaelic to English. Language death in Embo is shown to be the domain of competing and ambiguous definitions, imposed by the ‘public’ life of a language and the ‘private’ choice and experience behind it. It is argued that during the language death and its academic documentation there has been a parameter collapse which has important repercussions on the historical discourse of the Embos.

Chapter 6 is a detailed description of a series of fundraising events centred around an Independent State of Embo. The relationship between these events and local and extra-local interpretations is examined. The chapter illustrates the internal and external dimensions of the event, and shows that the two can be ethnographically described contemporaneously. It also includes a discussion of the problems of analysis of ‘events’ and ‘symbols’ in anthropological studies of Great Britain.
MARIE-BÉNÉDICTE DEMBOUR, The Memory of Colonialism: Meetings with Former Colonial Officers of the Belgian Congo. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-8452)

The thesis, based on in-depth interviews with former colonial officers, explores the way in which colonialism is talked about and remembered in present-day Belgium. It does not seek to reconstruct past colonial experiences as such. Rather it is concerned with present memories of colonialism. Two such memories are contrasted: on the one hand, that held by the interviewees, former *territoriaux* of the Belgian Congo, which stresses the dedication and effort of development at the heart of the colonial project; on the other, that of ‘leftist’ circles, to which the interviewer associated herself, which equate colonialism with oppression. These conflicting memories raise the question of the nature of the encounter of interviewees and interviewer. Were they able to ‘understand’ each other? The thesis probes the answer to this question.

The first two chapters examine the motivations, preconceptions, aims and expectations of both the interviewer and the interviewees regarding the research-project. The third chapter pays attention to complex processes which influenced what was actually said during the interviews. In particular, it stresses that memories are organized in function of present needs. The fourth chapter provides an analysis, by the anthropologist, of fundamental contradictions in the *territorial* discourse, which reveals the pervasiveness of domination within the relationships between the *territoriaux* and the Africans. The final chapter presents the criticisms which an informant addressed towards the work, exemplified by his comment that the thesis does not convey the ‘ordinary’ character of colonial practice.

The dialogical approach of the thesis highlights the way in which the anthropologist and her best informant hold irreconcilable viewpoints on colonialism and are engaged in an on-going debate. Its reflexive perspective invites the reader to follow the trajectory of the author, from near-certainties to dilemmas and doubts. Its overall aim is to illuminate the moral complexity of colonialism and to address the problematic issue of the establishment of knowledge in anthropology.


This thesis is an institutional ethnography of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in 1991. The museum, which is located in Honolulu, Hawaii, is the State Museum of Natural and Cultural History and holds major collections of the natural and cultural heritage of Hawaii and other Pacific islands. In 1991 it was an institution in transition, changing from an inwardly focused research centre to a more publicly oriented museum. The mechanics of this process of change constituted the focus of my study.
I found an intense conflict between two discourses in the museum. One I have called the traditionalist ethos and the other the new order paradigm. Adherents of the former wanted to build on the what the museum had always been, as they saw it: a Pacific research centre and an institution with strong links to Hawaii and the Pacific. The latter wanted to turn the museum into a ‘people’ place, bringing the world to Hawaii while at the same time operating in an entrepreneurial manner. The new order paradigm was introduced into the museum in 1984 when a new director was appointed to the museum. He came to the museum following a twenty-six year career at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. His ‘new’ ideas were symbolic of the multitude of outside influences that have challenged a distinctive island identity over the last two hundred years. Response to the outside world from those who call Hawaii home has always been characterized by a certain degree of ambivalence. They experienced a sense of diminishing control over what the destiny of the Hawaiian islands is to be. These attitudes were reflected among the traditionalists at the Bishop Museum, and they generated an intensely emotional response to the processes of change happening in 1991.

I developed a model of change which drew on the work, among others, of Sahlins and Thomas. The model incorporated Sahlins’s ideas of the past being part of the present through the reproduction and the transformation of structure, and Thomas’s recognition of the distinctiveness of the Pacific island experience, the indigenous processes of change, and the extended time frames that must be part of any model of change. Ideas of tradition and emotion further informed my study.

I concluded that in the implementation of change at the Bishop Museum only processes which allowed for the institution’s ‘Hawaiianess’ to be carried forward and which encouraged heterogeneity in its organizational discourses would be ultimately successful.


Abstract not available at time of going to press.


The Japanese musical instrument, the koto, is examined in order to illustrate the many ways that it signifies meaning as a traditional object of material culture. Through a study of the interrelationship between the object, its transmission, and its symbolism, the analysis discusses the signification of the koto’s form and function together with its general meaning in its broader socio-cultural context.
The objective of this thesis is to show that an examination of these very often neglected areas of ethnomusicology does help in the understanding of musical instruments, music, and culture. It is argued that the music sound itself should not always be seen as a unique entity that has no relationship with the human behaviour that produces it.

The discussion falls into three main parts (object, performance, and music) in order to emphasize that the study of the symbolism of a musical instrument should also consider the object (the form of the instrument) and its function (to play music in performance). Following an introductory chapter, Chapters 2–8 primarily examine the aesthetics of the koto as an object of material culture in order to establish the form, function, and meaning of its signifying features (its symbolisms). It is shown that a historical survey is essential to understanding the classification of the instrument in Japan. In Chapter 9, the koto is studied in its performance context. Here, the playing of music is seen as the primary function of the instrument and therefore one of the main ways by which meanings concerning the koto are transmitted. In Chapter 10, the last main part before the conclusion, an emphasis is placed on the interrelationship between the koto and the sound (the music) that it produces and the historical influences that music has on helping to establish a traditional form of instrument. The means of social production and the relationship between the performer, the instrument, and stereotypical patterns that are an inherent part of koto music, are examined in connection with cultural meaning that is embodied in the performance event.

D. V. L. MacLeod, Change in a Canary Island Fishing Settlement, with Reference to the Influence of Tourism. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5369)

This thesis examines a fishing settlement which has recently experienced a rapid growth in tourism. The main focus is upon change, and how the indigenous inhabitants have been influenced by the tourists that visit their island. I argue that a specific type of tourism, backpacking, has a broad and deep influence on the settlement, and show this through examining different aspects of people’s lives. Throughout the thesis I use the concept of the ‘role’ as one means of appreciating change occurring among the people in the context of social interaction, and I emphasize that they are themselves agents of change. A major problem relating to change is tackled when I examine the relationship between the agent and the system in terms of subjectivity and objectivity, which I argue are not oppositional qualities but different perspectives on the same continuum. I also take a historical look at the settlement, indicating that transformation has been happening throughout its existence, thereby placing current events into a temporal perspective.

There are three main parts to the thesis, which may be summarised as: (I) a general introduction to the region, examining the physical environment, history, economic change, livelihoods and political events; (II) a look at the domestic and social life of the indigenous population, focusing on the family, social activities,
and attitudes towards gender, marriage, identity and values; and (III) an examination of the influence of livelihoods, reviewing the history and characteristics of fishing in the settlement, showing the importance of kinship in the composition of the crew and their professional education; and focusing on tourism, enlarging upon points which have been made throughout the thesis and examining the types of tourist that visit the region.


This is an ethnographic study of Satnamis, a Scheduled or Harijan or Untouchable caste of India. The data come mainly from my fieldwork among the Satnamis of Amsena village in the Chhattisgarh region of Madhya Pradesh, Central India. As an ethnography, and set in a historical and structural framework, the thesis describes the social organization of the Satnamis. The central argument concerns the formation of the Satnami sect, the transformation of the sect into a caste, and the internal organization of the Satnamis caste and its relationships with other castes.

Chapter One reviews the different approaches to the study of the caste system and of the Untouchables. It also describes the regional features of Chhattisgarh, and presents my reasons for studying the Satnamis. Chapter Two focuses on the Satnami Movement in Chhattisgarh. The reform movement founded by Ghasi Das in the beginning of the nineteenth century forms the basis for the contemporary culture of the Satnamis. The historical background, the movement proper, the reformer and his ideology, the leaders and followers, comparison between the Satnami movement and other movements and the relationship between caste and sect are the subject-matter of this chapter.

Chapter Three deals with the internal caste organization of the Satnamis, and how they differ from other castes in the village. Its main concern is to describe and analyse the Satnami understanding of caste and units within caste, their pattern of marriage, kinship and sectarianism. The relationships of Satnamis with non-Satnamis are investigated in Chapter Four. Particular attention is given to the structural changes that have occurred in the caste system of Amsena and their impact on the Satnamis and non-Satnamis.

A summary of the findings is provided in Chapter Five. It also presents the main argument of the thesis, namely that the separateness of Satnamis and their distinct status have resulted in Satnami ‘substantialization’ from the caste structure. As a corollary, and in addition to conceptualizing the caste system as a structural whole (systems of relations), my arguments in this chapter call for the conceptualization of the caste system in contemporary India, as a substantial whole (system of elements).

This is a social anthropological study of a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, the Yakha, based in East Nepal. The field research involved was carried out from January 1989 until October 1990. To the best of my knowledge, the Yakha have never before been the subject of anthropological study, and hence this work aims at filling a void in the ethnographic and linguistic record of Nepal. A central question addressed in this regard is the extent to which the Yakha can be treated as a cultural whole. The twin problems of over-generality and over-specificity in anthropological accounts, highlighted respectively by the diversity encompassed by the term ‘Yakha’ and the many similarities between Yakha and neighbouring ethnic groups, are addressed.

At the same time this study is a contribution to ecological anthropology. Much anthropological work in this genre takes a materialistic, ethnocentric and overly empiricist approach to ‘environment’, regarding it as something with which people interact at a purely subsistence level. While not ignoring the importance of the ‘natural’ environment, this study argues that a wider definition should be used which allows for other analytic perspectives, and people’s own perceptions, to be taken into account. Expanding our conception of ‘environment’ thus allows the inclusion of elements such as the household environment, spirit pantheon and the outside world.

The fieldwork conducted took place during a tumultuous period in Nepal’s political history, and the ethnography records the outcome of the changes in a village community in the East. The effects of migration, education and development projects in the community observed are also discussed with a view to understanding both how the Yakha are influenced by and involved in the changing world around them.

DIMITRI TSINTJILONIS, Death and Personhood among the Sa’dan Toraja. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5497)

The recent past of the Sa’dan Toraja (Sulawesi, Indonesia) has been eventful. Waves of colonial incursion and missionary activity have brought fundamental social changes to the area, but a traditional ritual framework remains nevertheless. Indeed, the significant axes of this ritual framework continue to pervade Torajan society, particularly in areas such as Buntao’.

In certain respects, the proper explication of this pervasiveness connects very closely with the debate on the notion of ‘the person’ as well as the nature of ‘individuality’, and in many ways both crystallizes and inverts the terms on which this debate has been conducted. Torajan rituals are divided into those of the ‘east’ and ‘west’: while the former concentrate on life, the latter mainly deal with death.

In either case, however, they are tailored very closely not only to the treatment,
but also to the production and reproduction, of particular types of body—the
‘essence’ of a noble body, for instance, is said to be golden, whilst that of a slave
is wooden.

In this context, ritual constitutes a continuous process of embodiment and
disembodiment—a process bound up with the rate of particular lives (i.e. specific
bodies) and the replenishment of the cosmos as a whole. The overall efficacy of
this process depends on the successful replication of the organizational principles
which characterize disparate forms of corporeity and distinct types of essential
substance. A detailed account of the rituals of death makes manifest the
significance of this diversity and frames the subsequent discussion of personhood.

Indeed, the implications of this disparity are far-reaching. As the nature of the
body (noble, commoner, slave) dictates the patterns of appropriate behaviour and
circumscribes the major dimensions of social (inter)action, it is corporeity that
gives rise to what may be thought as person and/or self; furthermore, as corporeity
is constructed in the same fashion as numerous sacred or significant spaces in the
Torajan universe, it assimilates human existence to a spatial order in which it is
itself subsumed as a ‘place’.

The Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth

POSTGRADUATE NETWORK

During the ASA conference in Hull it was decided to set up a UK-wide network
for Ph.D. postgraduates in anthropology (and related topics), to enable contacts
to be made, information to change hands, and news to be disseminated. A
postgraduate directory is being compiled at the University of Edinburgh. If you
wish to be included in this directory please send your name, department/
university, e-mail address, qualifications, stage of study, and research interests
to Joan Stead or Martin Mills (tel. (0131) 650 6655, e-mail: asa.net@ed.ac.uk).

Or write to: ASA Postgraduate Network,
Department of Social Anthropology
The University of Edinburgh,
Adam Ferguson Building,
George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LL.
OXFORD UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES FOR 1993–1994

The Oxford University Anthropological Society is alive and kicking. Following a period of inactivity, the Society is once again providing a student-led forum for the discussion of issues and the propagation of the discipline throughout the University. The Society re-started officially in Hilary Term with the help of a grant from the University’s Clubs Committee. Dr Howard Morphy accepted the invitation to become President and two graduate students, Gwyn Isaacs and Robin Wells, shared the responsibility for organizing events.

From its tentative new beginnings the Society has grown to provide a wide variety of functions and events. For example, over successive weeks the Society showed First Contact, Joe Leahy’s Neighbours and Black Harvest, the trilogy of films about Papua New Guinea by Robin Anderson and Bob Connolly. The Society has also been addressed by three of Oxford’s own graduate students. Lennox Honychurch gave a talk entitled ‘Last of the Island Caribs’ about the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, and Jeremy Avis and Robin Wells combined to give a joint talk about the uses of video to record music in the field, drawing on their fieldwork experiences in Cameroon and Lesotho respectively. The Society has also organized guided tours of the conservation laboratories and the storage facilities at the University’s Pitt Rivers Museum.

GWYN ISSACS and ROBIN WELLS
Co-Secretaries, OUAS, 1993–94
BOOK REVIEWS


Yonne is a largely rural department in Burgundy with a population of over 300,000. Abélès carried out fieldwork there between 1982 and 1988 and this book (originally published in 1989 as Jours tranquille en 89: Ethnologie politique d’un département français) is the result. Among other things, the book may be seen as presenting a case-study of the local effects of the changes brought about by the decentralization reforms that the Mitterrand government enacted in 1982, changes that changed the nature of the French administrative department.

Abélès places his study of French local politics in the broader context of the question of the applicability of anthropological investigation to modern societies. Interestingly, the origins of the present study lie in the author’s fieldwork among the Ochollo people of southern Ethiopia in the 1970s. In discussing Ethiopian politics one day, he was asked by a local elder about French politics. The elder understood that France was Socialist, as Ethiopia now was. It was in the course of trying to give an answer to this inquiry, and to explain the meaning of the French republic, that Abélès became dissatisfied about his own understanding of French politics and decided to find out how it might look from an Ochollo point of view.

Despite the subtitle (that is, the subtitle of the English version), this book might be better described as a study of local politicians than as a study of ‘local politics’. The politicians within the department are approached as a ‘group that had its own customs and rituals and whose members... maintained strong social links’, and we learn a lot about the careers of a number of leading local politicians. Yet the book also claims to explain the dynamics of local politics more widely, including such matters as the ability of these politicians to attract electoral support from local constituents. The flavour of such explanation tends to the mythical: the successful politicians are apparently those best able to tap symbolic capital established—by their family lines or political parties—in an earlier era. The key to political success would thus seem to lie in the politician’s power of mythical evocation. This is not just a subjective capacity but also an objective resource that some have and others do not. It is here that the basis of political eligibility lies. Eligible politicians are those able to tap into historical networks, whether through family status, inter-family ties, or party affiliation. To the extent they achieve this, mythical evocation translates into electoral success.

There is a striking absence in all this of the voter or support-giver. Can one really explain the phenomenon of political support-giving solely from the politician’s side, without an ethnographic focus on those from whom support is obtained? It is assumed by Abélès—and not demonstrated—that local people simply do react in the prescribed way to mythical evocation. Arguably, one of the main challenges to the anthropologist who undertakes the study of politics
in such urban-industrial societies as France is to achieve a distance from the
discourse of the mass media and the politicians themselves. This may be what
Abéles thinks he has done by reaching back into history, but this is questionable
since many of the politicians he speaks to would seem to share this sense of the
importance of history. A much more obvious approach would be to focus on local
people themselves; not necessarily solely on their discourse (which may resemble
that of the politicians) but on how their periodic votes relate to local social
alliances and reciprocities, something that would demand a more firmly grounded,
socially centred ethnographic perspective than Abéles provides here.

JOHN KNIGHT

438 pp., Bibliography. No price given.

As the European Union becomes an ever more present and influential political
body, it is important for anthropologists to study its development and impact.
Marc Abéles is therefore to be commended for having followed Members of the
European Parliament (MEPs) between Brussels and Strasbourg, with the aim of
discovering the 'rituals of this nomadic tribe' (p. 13). Unfortunately, the repetitive
use of such words as 'ritual', 'tribe' and 'clan', presumably inserted to give an
anthropological flavour to the text, does not add up to in-depth anthropological
analysis. This is not to deny that the book is highly informative on the way the
European Parliament is organized. It gives a good sense of (among many other
things) the tight schedules under which the MEPs work and of their continual
travelling, as well as of their isolation from the local people, the highly technical
nature of their work, the way they fit (or don't) within the 'traditional' political
structure, the problems and ironies occasioned by the diversity of their national
cultural traditions, and their reliance on a multitude of persons including assistants,
truck drivers and translators. The analysis remains, however, at too general a
level. Each aspect mentioned above could and should have been developed. The
author had plenty of opportunities to problematize his material and to discuss the
implications of his findings. With the exception of an excellent chapter on
language use (and translation), he misses these opportunities and produces a
journalistic account.

Admittedly, his task was difficult. Not only is this the first book of its kind,
but also its author could not suppose more knowledge of the institution among his
readers than exists among the general public. The balance reached between
background information and ethnographic material is none the less poor. The book
begins with a lengthy chapter on institutional aspects, which the anthropologist
may find too difficult and largely irrelevant. It ends with a description of the
legislative procedure recently introduced by the Treaty on European Union. This takes up half the concluding chapter!

This being said, anyone with an interest in European institutions will benefit from reading this book, which is written in very clear and flowing prose. In fact, the present reviewer already longs for similar work on the Commission and the Council. But, as far as anthropological analysis of the European Union goes—a vast topic allowing for various perspectives, she would recommend the reader to turn to other recent studies, such as the volume *Cultural Change and the New Europe* (Boulder, 1993) edited by Thomas Wilson and Estellie Smith.

MARIE-BÉNÉDICTE DEMBOUR


This book has to do with the relationship between marriage alliance, social stratification, and ceremonial exchange in central Nias. The island of Nias, off the west coast of Sumatra, has long been famous for its magnificent architecture, megalithic culture and extraordinary gold jewellery. Historically, it was also known as a major source for the export of slaves. For the anthropologist, however, Nias is notable for its system of asymmetric affinal alliance without prescription. That is to say, marriages are contracted unilaterally according to a rigorous system of asymmetric prohibitions, but there is no corresponding marriage rule, either terminological or jural, that positively prescribes a category of potential marriage partners. In this last respect, Nias differs from other regional systems of asymmetric alliance as found among the Batak of northern Sumatra and others scattered throughout the islands of Eastern Indonesia.

Asymmetric alliance occupies a privileged position in the study of Indonesian societies. Josselin de Jong and his colleagues at Leiden saw cross-cousin marriage as a definitive characteristic of Indonesia as a 'cultural area'; for van Wouden, indeed, 'exclusive' cross-cousin marriage was the original form of Indonesian social organization. Affinal alliance has also been a major theoretical concern at Oxford, where Andrew Beatty is a postdoctoral fellow, and the present study may thus be seen as following in the latter tradition. Beatty himself, however, is less concerned with theoretical issues than with describing how the system works on the ground; this is first and foremost an ethnographic monograph.

Nias society is made up of patrilineal clans divided into lineages. It is the latter group of agnates that constitute the category of wife-givers. The asymmetry lies in the fact that once the relationship of wife-giver/ wife-taker has been established, it cannot be reversed, it is transitive. This sets up a linear structure:
wife-giver > wife-taker/wife-giver > wife-taker. The point to note here is that while wife-givers come in groups, wife-takers come as individuals. Thus brothers are united as wife-givers (they give their sisters and daughters to other men), but divided as wife-takers in that they may choose wives from different lineages. This prevents the formation of a structural imbalance in Nias society in that no descent group as a whole stands as wife-givers to another.

Women are exchanged for pigs and gold. Gold played an important role in traditional Nias society, acting as a medium of exchange, a standard of value, a store of wealth and a means of payment. It was also endowed with mystical qualities: only those who had commissioned new pieces of jewellery—who had 'beaten gold'—could gain entry to the golden paradise of the Nias afterlife. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that the items of bridewealth exchanges were ever conceived in the sacred manner of Toba Batak ulos cloth.

Bridewealth payments, however, are just one aspect of a more general system of exchange in Nias. Exchange is the mainspring of Nias social life: gold, pigs and rice make their appearance in Nias mythology, not as mere items of consumption, but as commodities to be exchanged. Fundamental to the mechanics of exchange is the idea of debt. Debt (ōmō) informs every aspect of Nias social relations, from commercial transactions to moral obligations and responsibilities. In the case of affinal alliances, women are said to be a 'gift of life'. Not only do they bear children, but they are also responsible for the major share of agricultural labour, domestic duties, rearing pigs and chickens and so forth. For all this, a man is forever indebted to his wife-givers, who are spoken of as 'those who own us'. He is also indebted to his mother's agnates, to whom he is beholden for his very life. Debt is more than simply a question of payment due in return for material gain or services rendered: the concept of ōmō also has a moral component. The Nias definition of sin is to get something for nothing. Ultimately, even man's relationship with the gods is conceived in contractual terms; men may not partake freely of the wealth of the island, which is in the keeping of the deities.

The focus of the book is the Ovasa ceremony or feast of merit. This is where affinal alliances, pigs, gold, power, wealth, debt and social status all come together. Rank in Nias, whether acquired through personal achievement, or inherited (by virtue of membership of a noble lineage), is publicly proclaimed by holding a great feast (typically accompanying some kind of rite of passage). The host is rewarded with a 'great name' extolling his virtues, which is ritually conferred by his wife-givers. In the past the event would also have been marked by the erection of a megalith.

This is where pigs come in: the Ovasa feast is an occasion for the massive consumption of pork (traditionally, before the advent of a market economy, pork was only eaten at Ovasa ceremonies). Huge numbers of pigs are consumed—there are reports of up to 1500 being eaten at a single event—all adding to the status and prestige of the host. The host only provides a certain proportion of the pigs required, the rest he gets from his lineage agnates, wife-takers and through donations from non-aligned parties. The latter are either loans or repayments for
pigs that the host himself has provided at other Ovasa ceremonies. To bring a pig to a festival is in itself a meritorious act. Beatty unravels the complex relations of reciprocity and obligation that are brought into play on such occasions.

The point to note is that to attend an Ovasa feast is to put oneself in debt to one's host. The invitation must be repaid; the book contains references to 'challenge feasts', contests of reciprocal feasting, which continued until one or other of the parties was ruined, or 'crushed' in Nias terms. Again the concepts of debt and sin are intermingled: to receive the meat of others without the intention of returning the honour is a cardinal sin with dire repercussions in the afterlife. Beatty describes the mortification of dying men whose debts remain unpaid.

If debt is sinful, so too are riches. Profit implies getting something for nothing. Yet power and status depend upon the acquisition of wealth. In this respect, the pursuit of political influence in Nias society entails something of a moral compromise, and there are special rites to 'cool' the 'heat' of accumulated gold. Traditionally, a rich man would roll a slave off the roof of his house and then decapitate him; this was described as 'letting out the smoke of gold'.

The obsession with debt and getting a fair deal are reflected in the Nias preoccupation with measurement. Gold provides the standard: everything—even pigs—have their gold equivalent. Indeed, life itself comes in measures. Nias mythology describes the creator deity rationing out longevity, in terms of life-breath, on a pair of scales. Interestingly, bridewealth is not measured, except by eye; after all, it is said, who can put a price on a bride?

It is in relating the concepts of alliance, status, obligation and debt to Nias cosmology, mythology and eschatology that Beatty is at his best. The ritual and symbolic aspects of pigs and gold are especially interesting, as is the mystical bond between wife-giver and wife-taker that allows the former to bestow blessings or curses upon the latter. Exchange is more than simply a manipulation of material interests, it is a 'total social phenomenon'.

Beatty is also interesting on the way pagan values are integrated into Christian beliefs. 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's', and 'As you sow, so shall you reap' are sayings that find a particular resonance in the native ethos. The concept of an all-merciful god, however, remains rather alien to Nias, where traditionally any infringement of the social code, particularly in sexual relations, was harshly punished. In the latter instance, sex between forbidden categories was considered the most heinous offence, punishable by death. There seems to have been little idea of an innocent party, rape victims, for example, being put to death along with their assailants.

In the end, the picture of Nias society, past and present, is a fascinating one, if rather grim. In Nias, Beatty observes, Jehovah is a more familiar figure than Jesus. There are no free lunches, everything is rigorously measured, transgressions of the social order are dealt with severely. Above all there is an obsession with gold. In the past, it seems, Niasans were not adverse to selling off their poorer relatives as slaves in exchange for the gold that would guarantee their eternal happiness. Today, modern Niasans make do with biscuit-tins and bacon-foil to
recreate the marvellous jewellery of their ancestors, their golden paradise exchanged for a Lutheran heaven.

JULIAN DAVISON


The fourteen articles in this book form the published outcome of the sixth EIDOS (European Inter-University Development Opportunities Study-Group) workshop ‘Cultural Understandings of the Environment’, held at SOAS in June 1989. The publishers see the book as ‘essential reading for students, teachers and policy makers in anthropology, development studies and environment studies’, and it is indeed a nexus for three fashionable subjects. However, ‘culture’, ‘environment’ and ‘development’ are three of the most nebulous and polysemic categories in the academic literature. Almost inevitably, despite (or because of) the contributors all being anthropologists, the book represents such a plethora of different approaches that one wonders what use most policy-makers (not to mention students and teachers) are likely to make of it. In its pages we are taken to Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Soviet North, India and nine different African countries, but not to the Americas, Oceania or Europe. A wide range of environmental features and ‘modes of livelihood’ are discussed: trees, floods, National Parks, holy mountains, wet-rice cultivation, shifting agriculture and the herding of cattle and reindeer, to name but a few. Subjects touched on by more than one paper include psychology, politics, gender and religion.

Those who have seen him perform at ASA conferences and elsewhere will know that David Parkin is expert at disentangling common threads from disparate papers. However, he and Elisabeth Croll have been severely challenged in attempting to do this in their two introductory chapters here. Their creation of ‘bush’ and ‘base’ as an ‘imaginative dichotomy’ (p. 17) that is culturally dissolved, maintained, celebrated or condemned, is a useful starting-point, as is their model of a threefold ‘development gaze’ in the history of negotiations between people and environment (and other human agents). However, such statements as ‘humans create and exercise understanding and agency on their world around them, yet operate within a web of perceptions, beliefs and myths which portray persons and their environments as constituted in each other, with neither permanently privileged over the other’ (p. 3) and ‘anthropologists question the conventional oppositions between human and non-human agency, or between person and environment’ (ibid.) lead one to ask, ‘Which humans?’ and ‘Which anthropologists?’.
Furthermore, if the anthropological approach to the environment is to be that bush is also base and forest is farm (or that, as the blurb on the back cover puts it, ‘human beings and their natural surroundings are inseparably fused’), we are immediately faced with the problem of why so many cultures (including some described in this volume) maintain a strong dichotomy between these components. While the editors emphasize the ambiguity and paradox contained in the relationship in many cases, it is surely over-simplistic to link such dichotomies to colonial intervention, an ‘implicite’ Golden Age tarnished by the Cartesianism of the wicked West. It is unfortunate that where ‘Western thought’ is invoked by the contributors, it is so often treated without the subtlety of approach accorded thought elsewhere.

The rest of the book is divided into two parts on ‘Ecocosmologies’ and ‘Change to Order’. Tim Ingold’s chapter in the ecocosmologies section is a theoretical linchpin for the volume as a whole. He bases his argument for the mutualism of person and environment (at a theoretical rather than a conceptual level) on the anti-cognitive theories of such psychologists as Gibson and von Uexküll. Positing perception and action as interlinked processes is certainly in line with much current thinking in anthropology, but many will feel uneasy at being asked to put all their anthropological eggs into one psychological basket. Ingold’s related propositions that we could quite easily leave culture (as he defines it) out of the ecological equation, and society out of the social equation, are provocative.

For Jan van den Breemer, writing about the Aouan of Côte d’Ivoire, who combine conservationist beliefs about nature with environmental devastation, the relationship of culture to the use of nature is indeed ‘less direct than might at first be assumed’ (p. 106). One is reminded of similar situations in Japan, Europe and elsewhere. Melissa Leach, for example, argues that Mende use of the environment is ‘a context through which cultural constructions of both environment and gender are created and recreated’ (p. 76). These are the sort of relationships social anthropologists are adept at making, and for the development field Johan Pottier and Augustin Nkundabashaka present a fine analysis of the links between ‘official’ (that is, agricultural extension workers’) distrust of banana groves and the history of protest cults in Rwanda. The chapters by Walter van Beek and Piekebeke Banga (on the Dogon) and Günther Schlee (on the Gabbra), are also ethnographically fine, but one wonders how development practitioners would apply the knowledge contained in them in an operational sense. The editors clearly have problems with chapters such as those by Michael Drinkwater (who applies a critical-theory model to understanding conflicts over pastoral management practices in Zimbabwe) and Carol Drijver (who provides a comparative study of ‘dimensions of participation’ in four environmental projects in Africa and India), because they avoid ‘excursions into conceptual otherness’ (p. 26). One cannot, however, help thinking it is chapters like these (in which, as Ingold suggests, culture is largely left out of the people–environment equation) that development practitioners will find more congenial.
Culture wins the day in three other stimulating chapters, but not necessarily for the reasons Croll and Parkin consider 'crucial' (p. 26). Rosalind Shaw investigates the meaning of floods in Bangladesh for both men and women, rich and poor, and aid agencies and local people, while Gerard Persoon examines the symbolic associations of rice and sago cultivation amongst the Mentawai of Western Sumatra. Piers Vitebsky's study of the Siberian Eveny's perceptions of landscape, and their successful quest for political autonomy, concludes the book on a topical note, reminding us how both 'environment' and 'development', like culture, are polyvalent concepts. It is conflicting and changing constructions and imaginings of the environment, often within a single 'culture', rather than a straightforward identification or instantiation with an environment, which give these and other successful papers in the volume their vitality.

Overall, Bush Base, Forest Farm is germane to three fashionable topics in development anthropology, but it serves only to emphasize the uncertainties, paradoxes and complexities inherent in the concepts it seeks to integrate.

ANDREW RUSSELL

**Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Us and Them in Modern Societies: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Trinidad, Mauritius and Beyond** (Foreword by Bruce Kapferer), Oslo: Scandinavian University Press 1992 (distributed by Oxford University Press). xii, 208 pp., Bibliography, Author Index, Tables, Figures. £30.00.

Thomas Eriksen has impeccable intentions and reaches impeccable conclusions. He wishes to answer such questions as, 'under which circumstances are social identities, specifically ethnic identities, made relevant in conflicts in modern states, how do such conflicts arise and how can they be resolved' (p. 57). Unfortunately, the book under review is a disjointed compilation of his doctoral thesis with four previously published articles. Each of the articles has been copied directly to form a complete chapter with the addition of a new final paragraph to lead into the following chapter. As a result, the reader is presented with repeated outline histories of Trinidad and Tobago and Mauritius and a great variety of introductions and conclusions within and between chapters. There is also a general lack of theoretical consistency. Nevertheless, Eriksen's discursive approach to theoretical argument does mean that the book provides a useful and engaging critique of anthropological literature concerning nationalism and ethnicity.

Eriksen depicts a world of 'high modernity' (p. 190) characterized by globalization and localization, cultural homogenization and differentiation (p. 12, pp. 184-90). Unfortunately, this depiction is incongruously contradicted by Kapferer's foreword in which he criticizes the modernist perspectives of Gellner, Hobsbawm and Anderson as being Western and outdated in this post-modern
world, where ‘highly deterministic and closed systems of thought’ (p. ix) and ‘the universalist formalist lineairties of the modernists’ (ibid.) are no longer dominant.

Throughout the book, Eriksen compares and contrasts Trinidad and Tobago with Mauritius, supporting, changing, developing and finally abandoning his theories about ethnicity and nationalism. Early on he defines ethnicity as ‘the systematic and enduring social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people who perceive each other as being culturally discrete’ (p. 3). In subsequent chapters he treats ethnicity as a comparative concept ‘devoid of substantial content’ (p. 9) but with ‘semantic density’ (ibid.). By this Eriksen means that ethnicity depends upon context: it needs to be located in time and space. For example, ‘someone who is emphatically a Creole in an urban environment may be defined as a “near-white” in a village’ (p. 169).

Eriksen assesses the various situational, historical, and cultural contexts of ethnicity and ethnic differences. In chapter three, he employs the Wittgensteinian concept of language-games ‘to distinguish, in a formal way, between inter-ethnic contexts where the degree of shared meaning is variable’ (p. 33). The result is a stimulating discussion in which it is suggested that language defines the self and that ‘culture should be conceptualised as a language-game’ (p. 47).

Eriksen does not address the question of whether or not the concept of the state and the ideology of nationalism translate from their Western historical origins to the post-colonial islands of Trinidad and Tobago and Mauritius. Instead, he explicates the differences between the particularist ethics of ethnicity and the universalist ethics of nationalism (pp. 50–70) and describes the various forms of nationalist ideology that stress ‘the cultural differences between us and them’ (p. 13). There is no substantial contextualizing history or ethnography about the islands, bar the observation that Trinidadian Indians possess the characteristics of a minority group, similar to that of Afro-Mauritians. Furthermore, Eriksen insufficiently accounts for the intellectuals from Trinidad—S. Selvon, C. L. R. James and V. S. Naipaul, for example—who have been influential in the Caribbean and beyond. Instead, he explores the dual phenomenon of nationalism, which formally organizes the state (unattended, respectable Independence Day celebrations), and nationalism, which informally organizes the civil society (irrepressible, unpredictable Carnival celebrations).

Finally, Eriksen develops his polemical abandonment of the concept of the ‘plural society’ for being contradictory, semantically vacuous and empty of context. He concludes that cultural differences are context-dependent, that the reification of ethnic groups in conversation does not corroborate with reality, and that ‘ethnicity is like a linguistic idiom...through which agents negotiate who they are and define themselves through contrast’ (p. 179). This rightly entails and predicts a post-ethnic, post-nationalist condition whereby ‘identities are negotiable’ (p. 190) and ‘boundaries are not necessarily justified on the basis of ethnicity or nationality’ (ibid.).

JONATHAN SKINNER

As the title implies, Lee Haring’s new book is a treatment of various generic types of oral artistry in Madagascar combined with a preliminary discussion of the history of Malagasy folklore studies. The base material for this analysis is culled solely from written sources, that is, nineteenth- and twentieth-century manuscripts. This attempt at ‘folkloric restatement’ (the author’s words) is original and, as such, bears closer scrutiny, not only for tantalizingly seductive subject-matter viewed through time, but also for the methodological issues that it raises. From the outset, it must be stated that Haring is quite candid in isolating and admitting apparent problems, as well as in discussing their relevance for folkloric research.

The Malagasy language was rendered in Arabic script in the seventeenth century and by the Roman alphabet in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the book begins with a discussion of how this new literacy became the ready instrument for the imposition of state power by the dominant ethnic group of the island, the Imerina. Since the early missionaries and colonial masters aligned themselves with the Merina powerbrokers, the folklore itself reflects this bias. Indeed, most of the examples provided here were originally collected from that group, to the almost total exclusion of any examples from other local communities with cultural and linguistic identities independent from that of the island’s rulers. Thus only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ is represented in the written sources from which this book derives its ‘primary’ material.

The author isolates four generic types of verbal art: riddles (*ankamantatra, fampanononana*), proverbs (*ohabolana*), longer poems (*hainteny*), and formal oratory (*kabary*), all included under the broad classification *Jitemin-drazana*, ‘sayings of the ancestors’, for formal and performative analysis. All other forms of verbal artistry, such as song and narrative for instance, are excluded. In the case of songs, this surely reflects the collecting biases of those Europeans undertaking such work. Nor are we given a clear picture as to how these categories might fit in with those the author has excluded from his analysis. Haring seems to accept at face value the generic statuses of these artistic categories and delineates in them a binary substructure comprised of precedent and sequent, a two-sided format deriving from an inherently interactive situation, such as the riddling encounter. (Of course, as the texts were collected decades ago, any account of the indigenous conceptualization of their appropriate stylistic, performative, and contextual enactments is necessarily lacking.) Haring then combines this analysis with the Bakhtinian notion of alternating and overlapping dialogic and monologic rhetorical voices implicitly embedded in the folkloric text. Riddles, for example, provide a case for dialogic opposition, whereas proverbs impose their will in a monologic fashion sanctioned by the authoritative ancestral voice of ‘tradition’. The more elaborate and stylistically inclusive genres of
haïnteny and kabary incorporate these genres and structures in greater detail and intensity. I find this an illuminating argument in some cases, but when promoted as a unique phenomenon of Malagasy rhetorical style, I view the imposition of this 'structure' an instance of ethnocentric 'structuring' by the researcher. It also seems to me to be a rather blunt analytic instrument, as it is surely almost universal in its generality and possible application. In many instances, 'dialogic' is, in my opinion, applied rather freely whenever any kind or level of antithesis can be drawn from the data.

Finally, and the author creditably acknowledges this, the texts themselves are open to question. Most likely the greater proportion of them have been bowdlerized by their collectors (and subsequent editors) for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Malagasy and/or European consumption. In addition, many were collected in contexts not intended for or conducive to their 'proper' performance, and most were not collected with a view to an 'exact' (perforce written) accounting of their verbal and paralinguistic renderings. These questions might be thought to amount to an argument against the idea of ever undertaking such an 'archaeological' enterprise in the first place. In my view, however, it is a worthwhile project, provided such methodological reservations, which are considerable, are kept in mind. It remains now for some first-class fieldwork to be done to further develop and bring fresh light to these issues, with new and extensive evidence viewed from a contemporary perspective. None the less, Haring has given us an insight, oblique as it necessarily must be, into a subject until now dominated by Malagasy and French academic discourse.

GREGORY VAN ALSTYNE


The editors of this volume plainly see it as being in some ways complementary to the Leiden approach to Indonesian social organization, which focuses on marriage alliance and forms of unilineal descent and which was reviewed not so long ago in Unity in Diversity (1984), edited by P. E. de Josselin de Jong, an earlier volume in the same series. It is true, as the editors claim, that a good deal of work has been done on alliance and descent in Southeast Asia, while despite the attention drawn to cognatic kinship by George P. Murdock and J. Derek Freeman, cognition has been somewhat neglected. It has, however, been only somewhat neglected, and it is well to remember that Rodney Needham and Edmund Leach, both of whom have made many contributions to the study of descent and alliance in
Southeast Asia and elsewhere, have also contributed to the ethnography of cognatic societies in Borneo.

There has been a tendency to overdraw the contrast between the cognatic arrangements characteristic over a vast stretch of territory running down from the Philippines through Borneo to Malaysia, parts of Sumatra and Java on the one hand, and the alliance systems in highland Sumatra and eastern Indonesia on the other. There are in fact, non-unilineal, non-alliance societies in the east too, for example on Alor, and quite unusual approaches to alliance and descent, as shown, for example, for the east by Barraud and McKinnon (Tanimbar Archipelago) and by Lewis (Flores), and for the west by Andrew Beatty (Nias). Needham’s comparative work on relationship terminologies in eastern Indonesia demonstrated the considerable variety there is in prescriptive and non-prescriptive forms. Although there is no completely homogeneous outlook in this collection of essays, there is one strong strand that takes a similar attitude toward the variety of cognatic arrangements. Of the twelve studies in the book, five concern Malaysia and there is one each on the Philippines, Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Bali, and Thailand, while another touches on both Java and the Philippines. Thus the geographical spread sticks very close to the classic terrain of cognation, and to this extent the book presents few surprises.

In his general survey of the debate concerning cognatic social organization and stratification in Borneo, Victor T. King reviews a sufficient richness of anthropological contributions to further qualify the claim that this form has been neglected. He notes that some of the variation in Borneo may easily derive from differences in anthropological points of view. Much of the debate has centred around Freeman’s definition of the kindred, which other anthropologists have wanted to define differently, or in some cases to leave out of their descriptions. Accepting Maurice Godelier’s observation that ‘the appearance of real social classes implies precisely the disappearance not of kinship relations, but of their capacity to be the general form of social relations’, King argues that ‘there are significant differences in terms of kinship between the egalitarian and hierarchical societies of Borneo’ (p. 30). Agreeing with Needham, he argues against isolating cognation and the features usually associated with it to establish a positively defined type of society. In other words, cognatic kinship does not provide a basis for comparison.

Jeremy Kemp adopts an overtly anti-corporatist stance in his paper on the Thai farmers of Hua Kok: ‘the cognatic nature of the system with its primary emphasis on dyadic relations remained unsullied by the taint of corporatism’ (p. 107). If the absence of unilineal descent does not make cognatic societies a unified category, neither does the absence of corporations make for any distinctive set suitable for comparison. Several anthropologists have demonstrated that not all unilineal groups are corporations. Kemp in any case aims at the wrong target in attributing to Evans-Pritchard the view that ‘social structure is only about corporate groups’. He says nothing of the kind in the closing pages of The Nuer cited by Kemp. Instead, Evans-Pritchard says (p. 203) that ‘Nuer lineages are not corporate, localized, communities’. He makes the same point more forcefully in his
contribution to *African Political Systems* (London, 1940), where he writes (p. 287) that ‘clans and their lineages are not distinct corporate groups’.

Roseanne Rutten explores the instrumental importance of kinship among poor labourers of Hacienda Milagros, Negros Occidental, the Philippines, where workers maintain relations of mutual aid with a wide range of bilateral kin, affines and ritual kin. Comparing Central Luzon, in the Philippines, with Central Java, Willem Wolters demonstrates, among other things, that in Java there is not such a close relationship between kinship and political factionalism above the local level as there is in Filipino society. Frans Hüsken brings out the varying importance of wider kinship ties among different classes in north Javanese village society. While they are of little importance to the poor, the élites ‘attain a high degree of social closure by developing a conception of semi-corporateness among kinsmen and kinswomen’ (p. 167). For Bali, Mark Hobart turns in another tongue-in-cheek discourse in his accustomed manner, mixing spurious and fictitious scholarship with philosophical references and observations about native Balinese metaphysics. All is aimed at demonstrating that the Balinese have no ‘kinship’. He acknowledges that Balinese domestic and kin relations have already been pretty thoroughly set out by other authors, which relieves him of the need to produce much in the way of evidence and allows him to get on with slaying his straw men, most of whom, however, have been slain long ago by others.

C. W. Watson also makes heavy weather of the fact that Kerinci social organization has both cognatic and matrilineal features. He suggests that alternative views of Kerinci in these terms are similar to the trompes-l’œil in Escher’s etchings. Frankly, I think he makes too much of the difficulty. While it is true that there are examples of anthropologists with unilineal preconceptions misconstruing aspects of social organization, it is also true that there is a wide consensus, reflected in our teaching and writing, that cognatic relationships will be recognized and are likely to be important in all societies. This is not a new consensus either. Watson might, for example, benefit from looking again at Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer concepts of *buth* and *mar*. In his contribution to *Studies in Social Anthropology*, the Festschrift for Evans-Pritchard edited by John Beattie and Godfrey Lienhardt (Oxford, 1975), H. H. Meinhard (p. 12), called the view that all societies recognize cognatic kinship within certain limits a commonplace to social anthropologists, unrecognized by the older (nineteenth-century) generation of scholars.

Maila Stivens argues that on the other side of the Malacca Strait the matrilineal *adat perpatih* of Negeri Sembilan is not a unitary social phenomenon. Instead, the present kin relationships embrace contradictory elements, some matrilineal, others cognatic. She thinks the latter are becoming more important than they were in the past. It is interesting that whereas Stivens thinks cognatic ties have become more important through migration, Watson cites Diaha Kato in support of the view that migration does not undermine the Minangkabau matrilineal ethos. T. Wong presents an empirical, unspeculative account of domestic developmental cycles in a village in Kedah, Malaysia. Her conclusion is that ‘control over familial labour depends on actual control over land and other economic resources, thereby
generating progressive social differentiation within the village' (p. 201). Josiane Massard looks at exchange practices in a Malay village in Pahang; kinship ties can be subordinated to other factors, such as physical proximity or economic motives, while exchange practices illustrate, rather than obscure, economic disparities. Taking material from another Pahang village, Bill Wilder demonstrates that Malay kinship is many things at once, and is also fluid and highly malleable. Janet Carsten draws on field research on the island of Langkawi off the north-west Malaysian coast. She focuses in particular on the relationship between parents-in-law, which has a central importance on this island. Parents-in-law frequently call on each other for many kinds of mutual aid. Many exchanges focus on common grandchildren. She also discusses the commonplace theme of the co-occurrence of equality and hierarchy: ‘if the community is in one sense a collection of consanguinely related households and compounds within which relationships are based on hierarchy, in another it is also a collection of affinally connected households whose relationships with each other are founded on a notion of equality’ (p. 112). The relationship between parents-in-law represents affinity, community and an ideal of equality. However, this egalitarianism does not imply actual equality in the social system.

There are no startlingly new perspectives or discoveries in this book. Its utility lies in its central claim, namely that it addresses forms of social organization that are important in the lives of a great many Southeast Asian peoples, and which are not accounted for by ideas of unilineal descent and marriage alliance. Since the older Leiden approach apparently still has some life in it, but has little useful to say about cognatic kinship, it is right to have the balance corrected. However, the ghost of the maddened unilineal descent theorist that hovers about the pages of this book should not be allowed to cause the authors, paradoxically, to exaggerate the differences between those societies that do not resort to unilineal descent and those that do. There is just as much variety in the land of descent and alliance as there is here.

R. H. BARNES

CHARLES LESLIE and ALLAN YOUNG (eds.), Paths to Asian Medical Knowledge (Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care), Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1992. ix, 296 pp., Index, Figures. $40.00/$15.00.

Compared with the numerous monographs on South Asian notions of the self, emotion, morality and cosmology, ‘Asian medicine’ is a comparatively neglected area. This new volume, of a consistently high quality, derives from a 1988 American Anthropological Association symposium and follows Charles Leslie’s earlier Asian Medical Systems (1976), in which he first argued for a sympathetic consideration of Chinese therapeutics, Ayurveda and Unani as coherent systems of practice in their own right, rather than for judging them against biomedicine
Given Foucault's idea of contemporary medical epistemology as an objectifying 'gaze' that was developed by eighteenth-century European science, Shigeheisa Kuriyama provides an intriguing account of the impact in Japan of an illustrated Dutch anatomy text. This neatly fitted Japan's own eighteenth-century search for a 'modernizing' perspective, opposed to tradition and to subjectivity, that attempted to describe the physical world as an independent and objective reality. Not only 'modern', however, for this search fitted Daoist concerns to penetrate beyond illusion; illusion now standing for an outdated tradition. Paul Unschuld, the doyen of Chinese medical historians, charts the changing Chinese attitudes to European medicine—and the converse. While both cultures, he argues, have tended to a homogenizing perspective of the other, Chinese medical practice has been the more pragmatic, pluralistic and incremental, in contrast to biomedical's claim to represent accurately the natural world once and for all. Judith Farquhar argues similarly that the Chinese case histories used in medical education were not paradigmatic of fixed categories nor of anomalies (as they were typically in Western medical books), but were rather in a dynamic and empirical relation to the earlier collections of cases and medical theory. Gary Seaman provides a useful and detailed account of geomantic correspondences and causalities in Chinese medicine between the living and the dead, human and land, rice and the body. Margaret Lock continues her previous work on the 'diseases of modernization' in Japan, detailing the recognition and treatment of school-refusal syndrome, mother–son 'incest', apartment neurosis and the menopausal syndrome. Japanese physicians debate whether these are 'real sicknesses' or just the consequences of woman's idleness in a mechanized consumer household. Lock notes that the salient characteristic is that Japanese women now live in good health well beyond child-bearing age. The impetus behind the new pathologies is perhaps less idle housewives than idle (male) gynaecologists.

The second section contains papers on Indian medical systems. Margaret Trawick considers four apparently dissimilar therapeutic practices in Tamil Nadu (textual, charismatic, spirit mediumship, devotional), and argues that at a high level of generality they are linked by the need to privilege life over death and health over pain, when the shared cosmology argues for the mutual necessity of these complementarities. Gananath Obeyesekere, examining the translation of Ayurveda to a Buddhist context in Sri Lanka, suggests that on the way it has become more empirical and bereft of mythic resonances. In his fascinating paper, Leslie argues that medical anthropologists have generally assumed that ayurvedic patients themselves 'understand' the system (as opposed to Western patients who have been generally represented as dissatisfied with their treatment as it ignores their own understandings), yet at the same time medical anthropologists funded by international aid agencies have regarded local healers' appropriation of pharmaceuticals and stethoscopes as quackery. He argues that to 'understand' is not to
'agree' and that anyway ayurveda has always been syncretic; from the time the East India Company's orientalists argued that there was a linguistic and cultural continuity between classical Greece and ancient India (and, indeed, encouraged a local Indian 'renaissance' of Vedic medical texts), there has been a continuing debate within South Asian medicines as to the degree of Western influence and medical technique that may be incorporated, a debate closely tied to that on national identity and which led directly to the assassination of Bandaranaike in Colombo.

Following his arguments in The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats (Berkeley, 1987), Francis Zimmermann argues here for a common tripartite division in Indo-European medicine: cathartic (including surgery and purification), soothing, dietetic. The cathartic element of 'managed violence' is now lost in the competition with biomedicine, leaving the 'Indian medicine' marketed in the West as simplified and commodified, a 'gentler' version of tablets, aromatherapy and massage, holistic in name if hardly in practice. Mark Nichter's detailed account of local responses to Kyasanur forest disease (a tick-borne virus that has become more prevalent with afforestation and cattle-rearing) demonstrates the multiple levels of understanding. Local aristocrats encourage an idiom of troubled spirits (particularly those spirits that once articulated feudal relations) to delay (successfully) further land reform, whilst patients and their families look at individual vulnerabilities through astrology and an angry pox deity, and local modernizing activists in touch with public health officials favour the idiom of a 'disease of development'. Nichter argues that 'karmic explanations' do not make for fatalism as is so often argued, but rather back up the gaps in biomedical explanations.

The final section, devoted to Islamic medicine, is the shortest, reflecting the relative interests of medical anthropologists today. Byron and Mary Jo Good begin to address the question of how a discrete corpus of Graeco-Arabic medicine articulates a variety of social and political concerns from West Africa to the Pacific, and consider some of the local divergences from the founding texts. Thus Galen's theory that both sexes contribute to the foetus has been generally replaced in Arab societies by a monogenetic (male) origin. Carol Laderman takes the instance of how the introduction of the Graeco-Arabic hot/cold classification into peninsular Malaya in the fourteenth century appropriated and revised existing hot/cold systems; as with related debates on the introduction of medieval Hispanic medicine into the Caribbean and into Central and South America, the accounts of the 'prior' aboriginal practice (Senoi, negrito) are, of course, of twentieth-century provenance. If Leslie's earlier volume established Asian medical systems as reasonably coherent and historically grounded systems of knowledge and practice, this collection starts to tease out political issues of creolization, external influence, local contingency and historical divergence. Without exception, all the chapters here are informative and lively, uncontaminated by the hermeneutic and phenomenological jargon that has settled on to many medical anthropologists, not excluding some of the contributors to this volume.

ROLAND LITTLEWOOD

The subtitle suggests the argument pursued throughout this new collection of essays. The various authors show that although, as mammals, women are equipped physiologically to breast-feed their babies in the first few months of their lives, how it is done, how often, for how long, by whom, and even whether it is done at all, are everywhere matters of conscious decision based on social and economic factors. In some places it is the mother's decision, but in others it is the father's, or it may even be the 'decision' of the prevailing medical authorities. In her study of breast-feeding in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iceland Kirsten Hastrup writes that 'the basic assumption of the present paper is that we cannot study the practice or absence of breast-feeding in any particular society without considering the larger cultural context' (p. 96). This assumption runs through all the book and is supported by convincing ethnographic evidence.

Vanessa Maher, whose own area of study is Morocco, begins and ends the book with theoretical sections in which she points out, among other things, that the present attempt of the medical profession to persuade Third World women to breast-feed is yet another example of men trying to tell women what they should do (and, one might add, of rich women telling poor women what to do). She argues that the current insistence of international organizations on the promotion of lengthy breast-feeding as a way of ensuring healthy babies takes no account of the surrounding factors. The effects on the mother's health (or lack of it) are ignored, as are other equally important factors, both social (such as gender inequality) and economic (such as poverty).

The core of the book consists of ethnographic studies dealing with the issue of infant feeding in different cultures. Some of these are such 'traditional societies' as those of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iceland, a Tunisian mountain people, traditional Iranian society (and the institution of milk kinship) and two Nepalese groups. Only the paper by Balsamo, de Mari, Maher and Serini is concerned with breast-feeding in an urbanized setting, in this case Turin in Italy where both the hospital and its medical personnel intervene to a considerable extent.

The experience of the Turinese mothers, most of whom were breast-feeding with their own mothers' encouragement (but without that of the obstetricians, who believed that breast-feeding damaged the mother's eyesight!), provides an interesting contrast to the findings of my own studies of breast-feeding among the urban Hong Kong Chinese. In Hong Kong the rate of breast-feeding is currently extremely low, and it is almost universally discouraged. Grandmothers are at best neutral on the issue, but rather tend to discourage their daughters on the grounds that it is a nuisance and far too tiring. It is fairly routine in Hong Kong hospitals for the mother's breasts to be bound. Whereas the Turinese mothers say that they
breast-fed because they ‘didn’t think about it because it never occurred to me to do otherwise’ (quoted on p. 64), many Hong Kong mothers claim it never occurred to them to breast-feed.

Among Hong Kong mothers breastmilk is regarded as something useless and superfluous. This is in contrast, for example, to the situation among the Khmir women of the north-west mountains of Tunisia as described by Marie-Louise Creighton. There milk is a sign of baraka, ‘a life sustaining force’ (p. 37) that causes not only the baby to thrive but also all who are connected to the household. It is also the milk that bonds baby and mother, even extending to the mother’s siblings; though, conversely, it can also cause the baby to fall ill. Apart from sustaining a baby and baraka, milk can create relationships beyond the immediate household. Jane Khatib-Chahidi shows how, in Iran, breast-feeding other people’s babies is used to create ‘milk kinship’, both to prevent the incidence of marriage and to create alliances or easy relationships between the sexes among those whom one is not allowed to marry. She also touches on the very interesting topic of wet-nursing and what it meant in traditional Iranian society.

Catherine Panter-Brick compares two groups in rural Nepal who live side-by-side but have different economies, one being based on agriculture the other on animal husbandry. She finds that among the group where women’s work is essential to the community, babies and nursing are easily integrated into the working day. Among the other group, where the women work at home and older women are also at home, both groups are more involved in child care.

A real puzzle is presented in Kirsten Hastrup’s paper. She discusses the reasons for the Icelandic avoidance of breast-feeding, an avoidance that lasted for two to three hundred years with disastrous demographic consequences. Why people continue with a practice that to others would appear to be in their own worst interests raises the whole tricky question of rationality in human behaviour. Hastrup provides a convincing analysis of a complex of reasons for the avoidance, an analysis she could not have advanced without a thorough understanding of the society’s history and culture.

It is for the lack of a thorough understanding of a people’s background that, in her editorial chapters, Maher condemns those who indiscriminately promote lengthy breast-feeding in the Third World. She argues that the reasons for a mother’s decision to give artificial milk are likely to be as rational as any other decision she makes. In Morocco, for instance, it is the husband’s money that pays for the milk for the baby rather than the mother’s malnourished, exhausted body.

This collection of well-researched articles demonstrates without doubt that breast-feeding an infant involves far more than ‘natural laws’, and far more than mother and baby in isolation. The book takes its place among recent anthropological literature that locates the occurrence of natural, universal phenomena squarely in a social context.

DIANA MARTIN
BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI, *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski* (eds. Robert J. Thornton and Peter Skalnik; transl. Ludwik Krzyzanowski), Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1993. xv, 234 pp., References, Index. £35.00/$59.95.

This book is long overdue. As works of the principal founder of modern social anthropology one would have thought that Malinowski’s early writings would have been the object of intense discussion, yet because most were written in Polish they have remained inaccessible to English speakers—until now that is. *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski* contains nine essays by Malinowski written between 1904 and 1914. Five are translations of articles originally published in Polish or German, including his Ph.D. dissertation originally handwritten on only seventy-five pages, two are translations of hitherto unknown essays discovered by one of the editors in the archives of Yale University’s Stirling Library, and two are republications of articles, written in English, but initially published in obscure places.

Readers will find his essay on Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) particularly interesting, not only because it is the earliest piece of scholarly writing we have from Malinowski’s hand (probably written for a philosophy course on Nietzsche in 1904/5, and published here for the first time), but because of its functional interpretation of myth. Myths, ‘in their basic social function’, he says, ‘are themselves the explanation, justification, or normalization of what is happening in the world’ (p. 86). Those familiar with Malinowski’s work will see in this the origins of his idea of ‘myth as charter’ that he later developed in ‘Myth in Primitive Psychology’ (1926).

Malinowski’s doctoral thesis ‘On the Principle of the Economy of Thought’ is a critical analysis of the positivist epistemology of Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach. In it he criticizes their conception of the ‘economy of thought’ (i.e. empiricism) as a psychological phenomenon of a normal human being since the criterion for normality is ‘determined by the conditions under which it takes place’ (p. 107). What concerns him ‘is science taken socially, as a phenomenon of social life, not as a facet of the development of an individual mind’ (p. 110). What he learned from Mach and Avenarius was that ‘scientific methods are economical’ and that ‘we must pare our facts and events down until they are simple and as few as possible and arrange them into a lucid form’ (p. 107), points Malinowski elaborated in his methodological disquisitions in ‘Baloma Spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands’ (1916) and in his introduction to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). Scientific thinking is equivalent to other modes of thought, and he argues that its value must be judged with respect to some socially determined purpose. He concludes that empiricism is a necessary but not a sufficient basis for a social science. Knowledge of purpose of such modes of thought and, in a broader sense, their function is also required. Malinowski concludes his dissertation by observing that ‘we do not yet have an empirical basis for a philosophical world view’ (p. 115). What was lacking was the empirical evidence to support and develop his ‘proto-functionalist’ ideas. He found it in the ethnographic material of Sir James Frazer.
In ‘Myth in Primitive Psychology’ Malinowski gives the impression that his conversion to anthropology was rather dramatic—the result of reading Frazer’s *Golden Bough* during one of the bouts of illness that plagued him throughout his life. But as these essays show, it was in trying to come to terms with Nietzsche and Mach that Malinowski turned to Frazer in the first place. Thornton and Skalnik suggest that Malinowski’s anthropology grew from a synthesis of Frazer’s ethnological projects and the philosophic thought of Nietzsche and Mach. In his later years Malinowski formed something of a mutual admiration society with Frazer: Frazer praising Malinowski’s work in his foreword to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), and Malinowski paying tribute to the ‘Master’ in his preface to ‘Myth in Primitive Psychology’. It is surprising to learn, then, that between 1911 and 1913 Malinowski published a scathing, three-part methodological critique of Frazer’s *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910) in the Polish journal *Lud*. Although praising it as ‘an invaluable treasury and mine of facts’ (ibid.) he finds Frazer’s theories ‘cannot stand up to serious criticism’ (p. 125), that his arrangement of facts lacks ‘a clearly formulated, purposeful method’ (p. 126) and that his concepts are ‘purely hypothetical and, as it were, purely personal assumptions and dogmas’ (p. 135)—in short, Frazer’s anthropology was entirely flawed. What Malinowski learned from Frazer, Thornton and Skalnik comment (p. 4), was ‘how not to do anthropology’ (original emphasis). Malinowski’s critique of Frazer is not simply a litany of what is wrong with evolutionary anthropology. He uses Frazer as a foil for his own functional interpretation of totemism and exogamy.

The remainder of the essays discuss such diverse topics as religion, kinship, economics, magic, the family, marriage, and men’s group’s in Australia. They expose the myth that Malinowski’s idea of ‘primitive’ societies as working and integrated systems grew from direct observation of them. Indeed, they reveal that he had already formulated the principles of his functionalism before he left for the Trobriands. It was because the ethnographic material available at the time was gathered and presented under an evolutionary framework, and was thus un conducive to a functional interpretation, that he was driven to fieldwork. These early texts give us the questions that Malinowski’s Trobriand Island ethnography was meant to answer.

Thornton and Skalnik have done us a great service by publishing these essays. Of Malinowski’s early writings only his book *Wierzenia pierwotne i formy ustroju społecznego* (Primitive Beliefs and Forms of Social Organization), which was completed before he went to the Trobriands but only published in 1915, is now left to be translated. *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski* provides insights into the philosophical and theoretical foundations of Malinowski’s later thought (and thus of social anthropology in general) and is indispensable for anyone interested in his work or the history of anthropology. The editors’ astute comments and summary of each essay add considerably to the value of the book. Like Malinowski’s *Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967), *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski* will continue to be a source of discussion for years to come.

CHRIS HOLDSWORTH

Although sometimes looked at rather askance by anthropologists in the other main anthropological nations and despite it being strongly influenced early on by the Année, there is no doubting the self-sufficiency of the Dutch anthropological tradition, something it really shares only with Britain, the USA and France. One of its major figures is honoured in this book and, unlike a lot of Festschriften, it is not just the honorand who provides the bulk of its coherence. A number of contributors (e.g. Junus, Platenkamp, the Benda-Beckmanns) try to develop Dutch traditions in the literary and anthropological analysis of Indonesian cultures, with plenty of reference to the famous FAS approach, especially in the transformational revision of de Josselin de Jong’s uncle’s original programme undertaken subsequently by Patrick Edward. Visser seeks to combine this approach with Dumont’s work on hierarchical opposition with reference to the elder brother/younger brother dichotomy among the Sahu of Halmahera, while Oosten applies it to the Indo-European world in a critique of Sahlins’s study of the myth of the stranger king and the outside origin of sovereignty generally, an idea also dealt with by Visser. More independent of the approach are Needham’s paper on changes in kinship terminology in eastern Indonesia (some of his earlier work here, of course, has been just as transformational in its way), Barnes’s paper on various Indonesian representations of space, and Postel-Coster’s attempt to revise the usual androcentric model of spouse exchange by showing female influence behind marriage choices as standard in many societies. A number of articles look at various aspects of history, Locher especially from a very personal point of view.

The book’s title, of course, refers to T. S. Eliot’s poem (Eliot being one of the honorand’s favourite poets) whose overall four-five structure suggested to the editors the Javanese *monca-pat* system, which in a sense initiated the Leiden tradition through van Ossenbruggen’s study of it in 1917. Perhaps they failed to notice that these very same lines also contain a possible epigraph (or epitaph?) for the more controversial aspects of that tradition—its treatment of double unilineal descent: ‘...an abstraction. / Remaining a perpetual possibility / Only in a world of speculation.’

ROBERT PARKIN

The present volume brings together four papers on the interpretation of mating and marriage and the relationship between them from as many different disciplines and perspectives, namely zoology (Paul Harvey and Janet Rees), biological anthropology (Vernon Reynolds), social anthropology (Sir Edmund Leach, probably his last paper) and sociology (Ronald Fletcher). On the whole it is the biologists who impress the most, and Reynolds in particular shows a real interest and awareness of what is happening in the social sciences, which is not often encountered, much less reciprocated by practitioners in the latter.

But I begin with the social scientists. Leach's arguments against the genetic determination of marriage systems are reasonable if unremarkable, stressing that while mating is a purely biological and private matter—though still subject to social regulation through incest rules where humans are concerned—marriage is 'a public matter' involving the legitimation of children and rights to property. It is also purely human, though the claim that not all societies have it depends on accepting Leach's over-narrow definition. Personally, I find it very odd to see 'mating' applied to any aspect of human life at all: certainly in ordinary language, while 'mate' may occasionally be used ironically of a sexual or marriage partner, 'mating' generally suggests what goes on in the baser world of animals alone.

Fletcher is more open to other disciplines but wants to bring into the picture something akin to the sort of social psychology one can end up with by reading Durkheim in a certain way. What he means is the acting out of instincts arising in response to physical stimuli (i.e. the urge to mate), the sentiment of attachment which is thereby created towards whoever satisfied these instincts (i.e. the mate) and the institutions that arise out of these attachments (i.e. marriage, as far as human society is concerned). The associated argument that marriage is based on the needs of the family reminds one rather of Malinowski, though Fletcher himself traces it back to Westermarck and Crawley, neither of whom saw any great distinction between animal mating and human marriage, in view of the biological imperative underlying both and the social nature of many non-human species, something which frequently extends to post-natal care of the young. For Fletcher, indeed, mating is more than copulation and also includes, for example, the courtship displays of certain animal species: he is the only author in the book who seeks to blur the dichotomy the others insist on maintaining between mating and marriage. When applied to human societies, such arguments tend to sacrifice proper consideration of the cultural variation of marriage to a general account of its evolutionary development, and they rely overmuch on the satisfaction of mating instincts to the neglect of the human ability to control and channel them, if not to suppress them entirely. Certainly, in his efforts to account for them psychologically Fletcher seems to think that all marriages are love marriages, though Leach shows how uncommon these are cross-culturally. These two authors are also at
odds over the relevance of common rearing as a basis for incest taboos. Fletcher again follows Westermarck in accepting it as the explanation, thus disregarding the fact that a rule of clan exogamy can quite easily ban relations between two people who have never even seen each other, if the clan is large and dispersed enough. Fletcher is more valuable on trends in marriage in modern Western society, which is presumably his forte. He will not get far with social anthropologists by seeking to build on the largely outmoded ideas even of the worthy Westermarck (would any anthropologist nowadays seriously cite fear as a general explanation for incest or indeed any other taboo?). Nor will he impress them much by pushing on them the historically not unreasonable but nowadays wholly nonsensical suggestion that their subject is just a branch of sociology. Fletcher comes across largely as yet another example of the exponent of one discipline building his view of another on work that is decades out of date.

The main burden of the two biological papers is to knock the idea of species-specific mating patterns firmly on the head. Rees and Harvey do this primarily for non-primates, suggesting also that the requirements of ensuring a beneficial gene balance may limit outbreeding as much as inbreeding. This reminds one of the many human societies in which there is an outer, endogamous boundary as well as an inner, exogamous one (the Indian sub-caste would be a prime example, though it is not the only one). Reynolds concentrates primarily on primates and on the transition to human society, arguing, on grounds of differences between the sexes in respect of size, body hair etc., that humans evolved as a polygynous species and only subsequently came to value monogamy to any extent. Both he and Fletcher seem to see polygyny as always and everywhere a matter of status, though in many societies it is no more than the regular solution for childlessness and has no status implications whatsoever (except, perhaps, in preventing one’s status from falling through a lack of children). According to Reynolds, humans also brought primate lineages with them in their evolution and possibly invented cousin marriage to ‘counteract strife’ between them. Well, affines regularly fight one another in many parts of the world, and N. J. Allen’s tetradic theory, which Reynolds also brings in as an anthropological model of the evolution of human kinship systems, actually implies the absence of lineages of any sort at such an early stage. Non-human species may often practise the avoidance of near kin as mating partners, though pace Reynolds, Lévi-Strauss’s theory of exogamy as something essentially human can still be saved by referring to the equally essentially human capacity to classify and regulate. This, of course, reflects ‘the extension of the cognitive control of behaviour already seen in non-human primates’, which ‘has enabled humans to intervene cognitively in their own social systems’, something which Reynolds freely recognizes. Indeed, one of the most congenial aspects of his paper is its situating of the social and biological aspects of the problem of what constitutes mating and marriage fairly in their relation to one another, and his frank assessment of just what sociobiology has to offer and what it has not.
Despite their differences, the message from all sides in this book is that not even non-primate mating systems are necessarily wholly genetically determined, let alone primate and human ones. This leads to some unexpected results. The biologists give equal weight to environmental and, where appropriate, cognitive factors, while the sociologist prefers psychology. Only the social anthropologist remains true to form in eschewing any real attempt at explanation at all: as so often, he knows what the explanation is not, but not what it is. One can divine the reasons behind the scepticism readily enough by perusing the papers by Reynolds and Fletcher, though they are attempting a more universal explanation of the evolution of human marriage rather than simply stressing variation, as Leach and also Rees and Harvey do in relation respectively to human societies and to animal ones in general. Yet all the papers have their points to make, and the book as a whole may help to dispel some of the social anthropological prejudice against approaches to kinship from other disciplines, approaches which are not infrequently stereotyped before they are fully understood.

ROBERT PARKIN

JENNIFER ROBERTSON, Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1991. xviii, 236 pp., Bibliography, Index, Figures, Maps, Tables. $29.95.

Jennifer Robertson carried out fieldwork in what is now largely a commuter ‘bed-town’ within the wider metropolitan area of Tokyo. This was also the district in which she spent much of her childhood, and though she says that this was not a direct influence in her choice of location, there is a richness and depth in her ethnography that is almost certainly due to her earlier experience. For Robertson, much of the time and energy an ethnographer new to an area spends in establishing fundamental detail about the location could be diverted into other activities, and the result is impressive. We do not learn a great deal about individuals living in Kodaira, not even about Robertson herself, but there is a wealth of collective representation unusual for an urban study.

The second characteristic feature of this book is that it is organized around a particular concept that the ethnographer found to be a ‘dominant representation’. Thus, she writes, ‘the ethnography is, to a large extent, a literary portrait of Kodaira condensed from the various repeatings of a particularly cogent word, or trope, in just as many contexts’ (p. 4). The first chapter is then devoted to a detailed analysis of the ‘resonances and ramifications on the national and local levels’ (ibid.) of this concept, which lays the groundwork for the ethnographic portrayal that follows. This buildup is reminiscent of the introduction of words like mangu and mana, which were to become part of the vocabulary shared by all
anthropologists. Robertson is operating in a large and complex society, along with many other ethnographers, so that her concept is by no means new to the outside observer, but her analysis of its use is certainly the most comprehensive in the English language to date.

The ‘trope’ in question is *furusato*, literally ‘old-village’, though more accurately translated into English as ‘home town’ or ‘native place’. It is a concept that has been used widely in the last two decades in Japan by politicians, city planners, journalists and advertisers alike, to evoke a sense of the usually nostalgic past related to some present or future purpose. In the case of Kodaira, as elsewhere, the notion of *furusato-tsukuri*, or *furusato*-making is brought into play in the social construction of the community—‘a process of reifying a Kodaira of yesterday to serve as a stable referent of and model for an “authentic” community today and tomorrow’ (p. 5).

Kodaira in fact comprises seven smaller communities that were reclaimed from barren land in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cultivated through the intervening years, and amalgamated in 1889. The *furusato-tsukuri* movement is a ‘second reclamation’, aimed at restoring to the suburb it has become ‘the harmony and camaraderie that allegedly characterized life and work in the seven original villages’ (p. 9). Efforts are made to encourage newcomers to settle themselves as locals by adopting the ‘pioneering spirit’ it is assumed motivated the earlier settlers. However, to a considerable degree the descendants of these same earlier settlers—‘the natives’—counter these efforts by continually claiming and indeed maintaining for themselves a special place distinct from that of the newcomers.

The title of the book reflects this antimony, and it is examined in various contexts in separate chapters on festivals, settlement patterns, religious consociations, ritual practices and neighbourhood associations. Participation at most levels is not only different for natives and newcomers, in many cases it is enforced as such by the exclusion from the long-standing associations and their activities of all but the families established for several generations. Thus, there is a third tier of relative natives, or relative newcomers, that establishes and runs a parallel but different set of organizations in the middle. A picture emerges of a deep and divisive rift, quite depressing in a world currently rather generally engaged in community building.

The overall thesis, of course, is one of historicity and the extent to which the past has been moulded and reinterpreted in the promotion of current interests. One of the most interesting chapters of the book is that which addresses, through historical documents, the original ‘making of Kodaira’. For anyone who has travelled through the apparently endless urban and suburban sprawl that makes up the metropolitan area now known as Tokyo, it is fascinating to discover the nature and degree of social engineering that went into its creation over three centuries ago, and to learn something as clear and precise as this account provides about the type of landscape it has been built upon.
To discover that today's most honoured civic ancestor was a cruel and despotic landlord is also interesting, though not particularly surprising to Europeans perhaps, and herein lies the weakness of the book. For this excellent ethnography is presented in, and only in, the terms of the trendiest general theory current in the United States today. Thus, it is postmodern, particularly in its initial inaccessibility, but what is worse it virtually ignores the abundant related work by anthropologists who have carried out fieldwork in Europe and other complex societies beyond America. It even ignores the rather substantial literature already published on the very subject of its focus, namely uses of notions of nostalgia in Japan.

This lack of scholarly context, however, does not in the end detract from the book's appeal, for the account stands as a splendid piece of ethnography in its own right. It has an extraordinary depth, notably in the author's use of Japanese historical materials, as well as in her evident ease with local institutions. The depth of knowledge presented here will surely provide an excellent base for future comparative endeavour, should the author choose that path. The book will also be of interest to the generalist as well as the Japanese specialist for, as intimated earlier, the subjects it addresses are today of interest way beyond the shores of Japan.

JOY HENDRY


Power and Religiosity presents a readily comprehensible sociological account of Sinhalese Catholicism. It is based on the author's field research from the 1970s onwards, as well as on historical materials that enable him to chart developments in Catholic policy and practice over the past century. It is a model of how the anthropology of literate, complex societies can be done. The author's long-term experience of Sri Lanka gives him a masterful control of the data that quickly wins the reader's confidence.

Stirrat begins (and ends) by denying that religion and politics can or should be separated in the Sri Lankan case. Power and dominance are central to both, and, if anything, religion appears to encompass politics, 'rather than existing as a separate domain which rarely interacts with the political' (p. 10). While we may applaud this principled position, writing an anthropology book in English that avoids the words 'politics' and 'religion' is well-nigh impossible precisely because these are such fundamental categories in Western understanding. This is Stirrat's contention as well, of course, but escaping this ethnocentric trap while writing in
a European language is about as easy as lifting oneself by one's bootstraps. What does clearly emerge is that religion is not an eternal thing 'out there', it is rather a zone that constantly gets redrawn according to historical shifts in dominance.

Under the British, from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s, the Sri Lankan Catholic Church was relatively protected and given considerable latitude in operating according to its own conventions and ambitions. This included the running of high-calibre sectarian schools that equipped Catholics linguistically and otherwise to assume prestigious civil service posts. The Catholics saw no obstacles to the expression of pride in their identity, which they could trace back to the sixteenth-century Portuguese colonization of Sri Lanka. As the country was still under European domination, connection to a colonialist regime carried little stigma, although there were occasional moments of friction with the Buddhist majority.

With the devolution of electoral power to the local population in the 1930s, the Catholics began to be seen as 'denationalized', as mongrels who had betrayed their true Sinhalese (Buddhist) identity. After Independence in 1948, but especially after the 1956 election of Bandaranaike's nationalist party, which declared Sinhala the official language and Buddhism the state religion, this situation was exacerbated. Catholic schools were nationalized, much to the distress of the Catholic community, and Catholic identity came under pressure from a number of angles.

In this nationalistic atmosphere, the Catholics in the region studied by Stirrat, most of whom are Sinhala speakers, felt it desirable and not radically contradictory, to cultivate a Sinhalese identity. This involved embracing as much of Buddhist national history as they could, while lowering some Catholic religious barriers. Official sanction was given to this course of action by the advocacy by Vatican II of the translation of liturgical texts into the vernacular, and by the promotion of the view that the Catholic faith could be maintained even when expressed in local cultural forms. Whereas the use of drums in ritual ceremonies and the wearing of white as a colour of mourning had hitherto been forbidden as heathen and contradictory to Catholicism, they were now embraced as elements of a traditional Sinhalese culture completely unrelated to religion. Here then, is a perfect example of how changing power relations contribute to the redrawing of the boundaries of religion.

The area to which Stirrat devotes most attention is the rising importance of pilgrimage centres, charismatic priests and holy men, and the incidence of demonic possession and exorcism within Sri Lankan Catholicism since the 1970s. Sorting out the various causes and meanings of these developments is a complicated matter, which can hardly be summarized here. Even Stirrat does not propose a single perspective or answer to the matter, but freely admits that these developments in Catholic practice are overdetermined. It is important to observe that these innovations parallel changes in Buddhist practice, such as the rise of the Kataragama cult described by Obeyesekere in his article 'Social Change and the Deities: Rise of the Kataragama Cult in Modern Sri Lanka' (Man, n.s., Vol. XII,
This parallel could be the result of the post-Vatican II indigenization of Catholicism, a form of cultural adaptation or syncretism. Another possibility is to read these convergences as the product of the fundamental similarity between the traditions of Catholicism and Buddhism, both of which allow for the ideas of possession and exorcism. A third possibility is to treat the rise of ecstatic religion as a standardized response to common psychological or sociological predicaments—forms of religious convergence caused by cultural-historical modelling.

In a particularly interesting section (pp. 160ff.), Stirrat argues for a sociological approach whereby gods or saints parallel worldly patrons in their possession of *varam* (delegated authority). In the modernizing towns of Sri Lanka, patrons are indispensable. The common understanding is that complete devotion, whether to human patron or saint, will bring protection and rewards. Likewise, the success of others is seen to be at one’s own expense and is envied, thus leading to increasing charges of sorcery and recourse to shrines for exorcism. Some reference to George Foster’s ‘Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good’ (*American Anthropologist*, Vol. LXVII, no. 3 (1965), pp. 293-314), as well as other works of his, would have been useful here.

*Power and Religiosity* is an excellent book, which may be read profitably by students and advanced scholars alike. Its calm clarity of exposition makes it extremely useful as a comparative case-study that may illuminate the historical and cross-cultural study of Catholicism, as well as the relations between power and religion generally. Sri Lanka is a small country, but one which has generated a disproportionate number of superb anthropological studies. Stirrat’s contribution extends this trend, and it sits nicely next to the works of Obeyesekere, Tambiah, Gombrich, Kapferer, Spencer and Scott.

CHARLES STEWART
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