

## BOOK REVIEWS

JAMES L. WATSON (ed.), *Asian and African Systems of Slavery*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1980. 348 pp. £9.95.

Slavery is not an easy category to dissolve. Whatever the admittedly striking variations in the institution in time, place and language, and however scientifically suspect the moral or emotional load that the word may carry, it will not go away. There is a gritty residue which survives the widest cross-cultural application, as it defies the most acid of scholarly attempts to define it away. Some writers are nervous of using the word slave, fearing charges of ethnocentrism or of too firm a political or moral judgment upon the myriad forms of subordinate status offered by the ethnography of the world. The editors of a recent American collection of papers on slavery were so anxious to avoid commitment of this kind that they decided to use the word always in inverted commas - thus having to refer, absurdly, to the Atlantic, trans-Saharan, and eastern African 'slave' trades (S. Miers & I. Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1977; p. 69). If ever a slave were unambiguously a slave, and not to be called by some such name as 'acquired stranger of marginal status', it was surely so in these contexts. Academic over-scrupulousness of this kind, supposedly in the interest of value-free comparison, neutralizes the language to a point where there is nothing to compare. Among many non-senses in Miers & Kopytoff's 'Introduction', we might mention the analogy drawn between the separation of a person from his original society, and his transportation and incorporation into another as a 'slave', with the *rites de passage* accompanying normal changes of status (p. 15); or the assertion that to see institutions of 'slavery' in Africa only in response to outside stimuli is 'to deprive the African past of internal economic dynamism, inventiveness, entrepreneurship, and, above all, of its fundamental cultural concepts of rights-in-persons' (p. 67).

The present collection, the first of its kind to stem from the British anthropological tradition, does not suffer from academic artificialities of this kind. The fact that the various authors, in treating of slavery and related institutions in a variety of local contexts in Africa and Asia, do not shy away from using the term does not mean that they are insensitive to the problems of definition. James Watson's own paper offers a most careful analysis of the difference between various categories of bought children in south China, restricting the use of the term slave to the hereditary status of the *sai man*, who are attached to important families. In his 'Introduction' Watson takes his bearings from the

pioneering work of Nieboer (*Slavery as an Industrial System*, The Hague 1900) and Professor Moses Finley (see especially his article on the subject in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* and his *T.L.S.* article 'A Peculiar Institution?' of 2 July 1976). Watson develops a definition, or rather a 'set of guidelines for a definition' of slavery, emphasising that slaves are acquired by purchase or capture, their labour extracted by coercion, and as long as they remain slaves are not accepted into the master's kinship group. This is a great improvement upon Miers & Kopytoff, who pay little attention to the origin of slaves, focusing only upon their host society, and seeing little 'coercion' in the African variety of the institution but rather a benign continuum from the status of 'slave' to that of 'kinsman' as the stranger is gradually incorporated (after all, kinsmen, in their analysis, are bought too - through bridewealth etc.). In spirit, Watson's approach is much closer to that of Claude Meillassoux and his collaborators in the other recent collection on African slavery (*L'Esclavage en Afrique Précoloniale*, Paris 1977). It is true that Meillassoux emphasises much more strongly the original uprooting, separation from his own society and depersonalisation which the slave or his ancestors have necessarily suffered - and also the consequent close links between the internal relationships of a slave-holding society firmly to its external relationships with other societies. An appreciation of the external structural relationships of a slave-holding society is implicit in the analysis of several contributors to the present volume (for example Bloch on Madagascar, Gill Shepherd on the Comoros, Burnham on the Fulbe states of what is now Cameroon). Another aspect of Meillassoux's treatment of African slavery is his insistence that the physical reproduction of the slave is everywhere controlled, whether the labour of slaves is used productively or not. He is not free to marry and found a family as he chooses, in other words; and this point again appears in many of the individual papers in the present volume but is not developed by Watson to the extent that it might have been. Goody for example gives striking evidence that in Africa the price structure always favoured eunuchs and women above men - the opposite of the price structures of the New World, where able-bodied men were the most valuable. Whether an indigenous African or Asian system of slavery allowed marriage or concubinage with the slave population or not, the element of control and exploitation in this matter does seem to be of major importance, and even to outweigh the coercive use of slave labour as a general feature.

The present volume brings together a number of papers originally presented at a University of London seminar, and by covering cases from both Asia and Africa most usefully extends our geographical base of comparative thinking. The individual studies, moreover, are not presented as isolated instances but are often set in their own regional context. Perhaps one of the reasons for the relative neglect by anthropologists of the topic of slavery has been, in addition to the obvious lack of a historical dimension in much of their work, a tendency to focus too closely on one community at a time rather than to take a broader regional view of

a series of inter-connected communities. The clearest example in this collection of a regional treatment is Burnham's analysis of the nineteenth-century expanding circle of raiding, enslavement and political domination by the southern Fulbe kingdom of Ngaoundere upon the surrounding peoples. Upon assimilation into the expanding circle, the peripheral communities themselves began to raid and enslave neighbours even farther out, and internal structures of kinship, slavery etc. within any particular community were directly related to their position within the regional system. This case is a clear example of the 'open' mode of slavery put forward in Watson's 'Introduction' as a type distinct from the 'closed' mode.

The open mode is a system in which there are many routes to emancipation, either through manumission or through various mechanisms for freeing children of the next generation - for example those of slave concubines and free fathers; there is therefore a need to recruit more people from outside to maintain the slave population, and so this kind of society may often raid into neighbouring peoples. The closed mode, by contrast, is a system in which the recruitment of the slave population is largely internal - for example from those who commit serious offences, fall into debt or sell their children out of desperate need. The status of slave is passed on from one generation to the next and there is little or no hope of manumission. In this case, furthermore, there are likely to be permanent barriers against any unions between the free and slave population, and so no question of a rising generation with some claim to freedom. The clearest cases presented here of this closed mode of slavery are perhaps those of Nepal and Hindu India ('Power and Status in South Asian Slavery', by L. Caplan) and of south China (Watson's own paper on 'The Chinese Market in Slaves, Servants and Heirs'). In these cases there was no road to becoming a freedman, with all the opportunities that that might imply in the more fluid political societies of the Islamic frontier in Saharan Africa, for example, or even in the ancient world.

Watson is properly cautious about terming these two modes the African and Asian modes respectively, partly because it is clear that the systems of Madagascar described by Maurice Bloch resemble the 'closed' model, and those of Thailand described by Andrew Turton resemble the 'open' model, with the slave population of the Thai states being drawn partly from a predatory relationship with the surrounding stateless societies. But Watson does nevertheless put forward the idea of a general contrast between Asian and African systems. He defends this to some extent on the grounds that the differences correspond to different concepts of property in the two continents. Land was at a premium in Asia; whereas (following Goody) in Africa, control of land was less important than control of people and their absorption into local communities. Watson here accepts the Miers and Kopytoff view of the African lineage as having rights, corporately, over its own members, and being able to negotiate these rights, as in bride-wealth or by extension in the buying of outsiders who will eventually become kin. Generalisations of this kind, however, not

only underplay the reality (and often quasi-permanence) of slave-status in Africa but also the crucial distinction made very widely by African peoples between bridewealth and market transactions in which slave-dealing is included. Moreover, the 'assimilative' approach neglects the important historical fact that the African continent, for as long as we have records and beyond, has been a source region, a reservoir of people, drawn inescapably into the world's long-distance slave systems. The Nile Basin for example has been drained of its population by the slave trade for some three millennia. The Saharan trade has drained the African interior for many centuries, and the ravages of the Atlantic and east African trades are too well known to need elaboration. There are few parts of Asia in which patterns of 'indigenous' slavery have to be set against this sort of background. In most of the African cases in the present book (as well as those in the other two collections referred to) it is quite clear by direct statement or by implication that any one local system of 'slavery' is part of a bigger jigsaw, and that at least one factor in the local development of slavery has been the presence of long-distance trade. The African systems have often appeared as long parasitical chains; and to no small degree the 'open-ended' systems of Africa must be seen, especially on the Islamic frontier, as a response to long-distance exploitation.

It is helpful, I consider, not only to see Africa on a continental scale as having been a source region in patterns of slave-trading, but also to look more closely at particular societies or smaller regions which have had to live through extended periods at the wrong end of the slave-trade within Africa - as net contributors, rather than gainers, of slave population. This perspective would make possible a much more subtle comparative analysis; for comparisons to date have been of societies as holders of slaves, as 'host' societies, or centres of spreading domination. But to focus on the source of slaves, those societies from which they are uprooted and to which they occasionally even return, would give a more balanced picture. Sociologically, as Lévy-Bruhl observed in a perceptive essay which is seldom referred to ('Esquisse d'une Théorie Sociologique de l'Esclavage à Rome' [1931], in Moses I. Finley (ed.), *Slavery in Classical Antiquity: Views and Controversies*, Cambridge 1960), slavery is an *international* phenomenon. Slaves always come from somewhere else - if their origin is traced back far enough. Although, as the present volume illustrates, in Asia, slaves were frequently drawn from close to home, it is significant that an element of detachment is still present: for example in the south China case, the buyer and seller of an infant remain ignorant of one another, and the sale is conducted by an intermediary. The communities from which the slaves are drawn, even when close to the 'host' family, are surely stamped by this fact; Watson even writes of weeping women who had lost children in the Chinese trade. In regions where the worst forms of long-distance slave raiding and trading have depopulated whole zones (as in the Middle Belt of West Africa) it is inconceivable that the forms of culture and society found today do not bear the imprint, and have not been significantly transformed by this history. This is cer-

tainly the case among the peoples of the Sudan-Ethiopian borderlands, for example. It may be that on a continental scale, the main lines of difference between Asia and Africa in their indigenous modes of slavery could be profitably explored in this way.

A further topic on which there could be more analysis of slave-based or slave-holding societies is that of the position of 'freedmen', as distinct from the ordinary free population. The distinction was of extreme importance in the ancient world, and I believe still is so in many parts of the African Islamic frontier. Finley has pointed to the interesting paradox that it is from those societies which practised forms of the most severe exploitation of slaves that have sprung some of the noblest conceptions of freedom - such as those of Greece and modern America. When laws are drawn up for the emancipation of slaves, freedoms are actually defined for the first time - freedoms which probably are not possessed by the ordinary citizenry who are still burdened by obligations of family, lineage, property and so forth; the *libertas* of the noble Roman citizen was a different matter from the *personal*, individual freedom of the emancipated slave. In these terms we might approach the extraordinary phenomenon of political power, even the foundation of new dynasties, associated with slaves or recently freed slaves in the Saharan kingdoms. This paradox appears clearly in the slave associations of the royal Funj of old Sennar, and their Hamaj successors. In old Sennar, slavery was 'the greatest nobility' according to James Bruce. The present volume does not offer much on paradoxes of this kind, but it is an important and timely publication which brings us closer to a properly historical perspective on the peoples we study.

WENDY JAMES

DAVID J. PARKIN, *The Cultural Definition of Political Responses: Lineal Destiny among the Luo*, London: Academic Press, 1978

There is an important and provocative book behind this bewildering title. Based on field work conducted mainly in a Nairobi housing estate in 1968-9, the study shows how Luo migrants from western Kenya maintained a distinctive cultural identity in an environment of diminishing political and economic opportunities.

The introduction and conclusion address an ambitious variety of theoretical questions. Arguing that the 'superstructure' of culture can retain its autonomy and its character in the face of such changing conditions as urbanization and increasing wage dependency, Parkin weaves together his thoughts on *ethos* and *eidos*, illocution and proposition, structure and *communitas*, etic logical necessity and emic logical consistency, and levels of homology or opposition in semiology, to pick only a few of the issues. Inevitably, some teasing threads are left untied, but the final product

is one of commendable scope, and no one will call it pedestrian.

Although Parkin believes that culture is more a matter of continuity and order than one of flux and disorder, he suggests with his ethnography that urban Luo culture is now a mixture of two opposing sets of ideals and expectations. One favours the small monogamous family unit, high levels of education, and individual achievement for men and women; the other favours the polygynous family (traditionally the conceptual model for segmentary patri-lineages of all sizes), solidarity with wider circles of kin, and the authority of elder men. Findings of such value conflicts are now common enough in the literature of urbanization and social change. But Parkin's study is particularly notable in showing how the same individuals switch from one ideology to the other, using emotionally charged 'key terms' to set the tone of their relations one way or the other, according to the intimacy or formality of the social encounters in which they are engaged.

The schism between old and new values pervades urban Luo life: Luo-speaking youth gangs are contrasted with English-speaking students' associations; a Luo bar with minstrel singing is contrasted with a polyethnic bar with a juke-box; hospitality for kin is contrasted with hospitality for unrelated friends; and the history-conscious, country-based leadership of Oginga Odinga is contrasted with the westernized, city-based leadership of Tom Mboya. The ethnographic body of the study is rich and broadly cohesive, and yet it does not appear to be unduly schematized.

In its main theoretical underpinnings, Parkin's book represents a significant swing of the pendulum back towards a certain functionalist mode of interpretation that has been unfashionable for some years. Luo culture, he argues, has 'a relatively high degree of autonomy as a self-regulating system of key terms, ideological assumptions, and practices' (p. 288). He singles out high rates of polygyny, high bridewealth payments, and the hierarchical, 'poly-segmentary' lineage structure - this form of classification being emulated, as he shows, in the structure of urban ethnic associations - as crucial elements of the old order, all closely integrated. I suspect that some readers, even if agreeing with his use of the term 'self-perpetuating' in connection with these institutions, will nevertheless balk at his use of the term 'self-regulating' with its added suggestions of organic integrity and balance. Parkin is careful, however, not to project his conclusions onto other societies in Kenya or elsewhere. 'Cultures may differ', he writes, 'in the extent to which their constituent institutions are related in a logically consistent way' (p. 20). How much fruitless controversy might anthropologists avoid among themselves if more of them thought this way?

Parkin successfully demonstrates that the features he selects as the critical elements of traditional Luo culture are all inter-related, but his implications about the causal arrows in the system are perhaps more open to question. The persistence of polygyny, he argues, presupposes the segmentary lineage structure, which in turn depends on a conceptual distinction between men's and women's roles (see pp. 8-9). (One may note here that there is a multitude

of East African societies that have polygynous marriage but do not have segmentary lineages. In some cases polygyny has persisted while segmentary lineages have disappeared.) I, for one, am left with the feeling that Parkin is sometimes treating ideology and attitudes as foundations for behaviour and conventions, when the case might be better stated the other way round, or as a varyingly circular chain of cause and effect. The use of 'key terms' is treated more as an action of social control than as a reflection or expression of conflicts that are occurring at a more basic level. Parkin writes,

At present men successfully contain this ambivalence within the status of women [as mere producers of men's offspring, or as urban wage-workers in their own right] through controls which draw much of their efficacy from the use of customary verbal concepts in domestic and political speeches (p. 30).

Surely these terms and concepts will have some bearing on how men and women continue to behave toward each other, but one cannot help wondering whether, in some of these propositions, Parkin may have the tail wagging the dog.

The study treats cultural self-perpetuation as being, for the Luo, a desirable end in itself. Parkin suggests that among the migrant population, this continuity, as seen in distinctive patterns of marriage, filiation rights, and lineage structure, may serve to conceal the disjunction between the agricultural and the industrial modes of livelihood. More importantly, he suggests that this continuity may shape the migrants' reactions to the political problems they face in a city where they are not the dominant group. Parkin finds that the Luo see cultural survival in terms of increasing numbers, something they can best achieve through the old polygynous and strongly unilineal family pattern. This, as I understand it, is what the title means.

Since the book was published, the administration of Kenya's President Moi has made great strides toward reconciling the large Luo minority with the Kikuyu and other powerful groups, restoring several Luo leaders into top-level government positions and seeking to bring about an atmosphere of fairness and cooperation. It will be interesting now to see whether the trend of decreasing opportunities that Parkin describes for the Luo will be reversed, and whether some of the distinctively ethnic customs and institutions by which Luo urban migrants have maintained their solidarity and their integrity will begin to seem less necessary to them as a result.

Unfortunately the book lacks the sparkling clarity of exposition that characterizes much of Parkin's other work, notably *Palms, Wine and Witnesses* (London: Chandler, 1972). True, the theory of *The Cultural Definition* is more complex - arguably more sophisticated - and so may require more words and more repetition. But there are many instances, particularly in the introduction and conclusion, where strings of lengthy sentences with abstract terms tend to obscure the points. This is only a minor criticism; however, and the reader who perseveres will get more than his money's

worth. As this book is expensive (£14.80), this says a good deal.

PARKER SHIPTON

JACQUES MAQUET, *Introduction to Aesthetic Anthropology*, Malibu: Undena Publications 1979. 108 pp.

*Introduction to Aesthetic Anthropology* is an attempt to extend the idea of the aesthetic to the world outside the boundaries of the western art discourse. The book is divided into two segments: 'The Aesthetic Phenomena' (chapters 1-11) and 'The Anthropological Approach' (chapters 12-20). The first delimits the western idea of art as referring to a set of objects (sculpture, painting and drawing) which is produced to be 'used in one way only, to be looked at' (p. 10). These objects, in western societies, tend to be isolated in the context of the artistic establishment; a domain made up of art markets, art collections and art museums. Maquet's intention is to return aesthetics to the wider world in the dual sense of affirming its existence in the quotidian realms of life and establishing its presence in non-Western societies. The aesthetic is shown to exist outside of the artistic establishment; although the book is weak on particular illustrations, Maquet does mention the formal grace of the Japanese tea ceremony, the elaborate knot-work of Bororo-Fulani saddle straps, and the intricately carved masks and figurines of African ancestral cults as examples of aesthetic activity outside the western context.

Maquet does not, however, transcend the western idea of the art work as an object isolated from the mainstream of life so that it can be contemplated as a thing in itself. The second section, which is devoted to proposing a method for the study of aesthetic phenomena in culture, fails to pull its subject loose from its western frame. Most of the chapter enunciates the cultural materialist approach to cultural phenomena. This approach, which is criticized below, serves in the context of an 'aesthetic anthropology' to justify treating an aesthetic artifact as an object which is produced to fulfil man's universal need for contemplation. The section advocates the delineation of an 'aesthetic segment' of culture and attempts to prove that objects within this segment exist solely to satisfy that need. The 'framing' of the western art work is thus extended to the aesthetic domain in large. The fact that Maquet's two extended applications of his approach deal with western phenomena, socialist realism and protest art, seems to affirm the ethno-particularity of his concept.

The rest of this review is a criticism in particular of Maquet's idea of the aesthetic segment and in general of the concept of art as an autonomous domain. It will contend that the term 'aesthetic' is particular to our own culture and cannot, therefore, be used as a means of delimiting a particular aspect of another culture's



production. To open a study with the question, 'what in a culture is aesthetic and how does it relate to other aspects of the culture?' is to presuppose that the aesthetic refers to a universal domain of valued experience. Such a start assumes that the aesthetic relates to other realms of experience in some sort of pluralist manner; it either reflects life, presents an alternate vision, or rejects the secular in its striving towards universal form. The possibility, which Arnold Hauser in *The Social History of Art* comes nearest to asserting, that the realm we would term the aesthetic is continuous with and indivisible from the 'discourse' of a society is hidden by the initial definition. An anthropologist cannot carry his own culture's conceptual baggage with him if his visit to another culture is not simply to prove that everywhere we find the same in different guise.

Maquet's opening gesture, performed in the interests of the 'empirical' discipline of anthropology, is to sever aesthetic artifacts from the belief systems which motivate their production and ground their affective power: 'the mental state of aesthetic awareness, inaccessible to anthropological observation, is translated into an objective quality - the aesthetic quality - which is located, as it were, in the visual form of the object' (p. 19). What is significant to the anthropologist, Maquet contends, is the 'non-instrumental features' of the aesthetic object. These are aspects of an artifact such as ornamentation or precision of form which do not pertain to its practical or symbolic functions. Such palpable evidence of aesthetic impulses frees the anthropologist from the necessity of studying their significance to the producers or possessors:

Defining an aesthetic quality of an object by its non-instrumental form aims at converting a subject-object relationship (the subject's contemplative awareness stimulated by the object's form) into a quality of the object itself (its non-instrumental form) .... The observer need not refer to the subject's state of mind; he may reach his conclusion *exclusively* [my emphasis] by examining the artifact (pp. 29 and 21).

Maquet posits the existence within culture of an 'aesthetic locus'. A reader hoping here to find an association of production and belief will be disappointed to discover no more than a tautologous definition which not only fails to attend to cultural reasons for 'marking' certain domains more distinctively than others, but which provides no resistance to the outsider's temptation to impose his own categories on the elements of a people's material culture. Maquet's aesthetic locus is 'the class or classes of objects that are localized in areas of heightened aesthetic consciousness' (p. 30). He is not concerned with why such areas exist; the empiricist anthropologist's only interest is in the objects themselves.

An object cannot, however, be studied 'in its own right'. When it is sundered from one context it must, to be discussable, be placed in another:

An aesthetic locus is the area in which aesthetic sensibility and concern are intensified and where, consequently, the aesthetic form of the object is granted priority even if its instrumental functions have to suffer .... Thus locus objects tend to be of less utility than others, or of no utility; they are superfluous (p. 73).

Maquet is not asserting that there are cultural areas which are organized around a concept of 'art for art's sake,' but instead that the criterion of non-instrumental features reveals that the aesthetic value of certain objects is far more important than their roles in ceremonials, religious rituals, ancestral rites, and the like. This idea of a radical incompatibility between the meaning a people ascribes to its productions and the actual significance of those objects has a lone and tenacious heritage which passes in manifold forms from the armchair anthropologists of the nineteenth century through Malinowski and Durkheim to certain anthropological schools of the present day. Maquet sounds rather like Malinowski when he claims

Aesthetic locus is an analytical category .... It is not necessarily a category recognized by the participants in the culture studied. Such is the case with most anthropological analytic concepts; our distinctions between magic and religion, between judiciary and legislative function, etc., make sense in the study of most cultures, regardless of whether or not the culture bearers possess equivalent distinctions in their conceptual systems (p. 32).

There is some validity to such a statement; anthropology needs, at one level of analysis, to deal with the conceptual translatability of cultures. Failure to take native classification into account leads either to the use of categories which are so general as to prove worthless in any specific application, or to the blatant substitution of categories derived from the observer's own culture for indigenous ones. Maquet's approach to the aesthetic artifacts of other cultures makes use of both of these forms of anthropological malapropism.

Malinowski, in 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages', (in Supplement I to C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, London 1923) wrote 'in its primitive uses language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behaviour. It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection' (p. 312).

His idea of the 'context of situation' alleged that social behaviour and institutions (including linguistic and ritual codes) could only be understood as practical means of satisfying the biological needs of a community of individuals. Cultures were expressions of the different ways the human animal pursued food, warmth and procreation in different environments. Maquet, Marvin Harris, Leslie White, and other proponents of 'cultural materialism' accept this perspective as their own. Maquet speaks of 'the fundamental

psychic unity of mankind' (p. 47) and declares 'the human component is logically prior to the cultural and idiosyncratic; it is possible to imagine an 'abstract man' endowed only with human nature and stripped of any cultural and individual determinations' (p. 51). Cultural forms are, then, simply the means of expressing and fulfilling certain innate and universal needs of this 'abstract man'. If one can discover the character of these needs and trace their manifestations in a culture, one has performed an act of anthropology.

Maquet's *Introduction to Aesthetic Anthropology* is the result of his discovery of 'contemplation, one of the few existential relations between man and the world' (p. 45):

Contemplation is not a reflective attitude of the subject thinking of himself, turning his thoughts inward; on the contrary, the subject is oriented toward the object, fully alive to it. Contemplation is not cognition, the discursive process through which the intellect actively and critically builds a mental image of the object; on the contrary, the contemplative subject does not analyze and reconstruct, he simply attends to the object (p. 14).

In support of his definition, Maquet refers to Charles LeCoeur's work among the Saharan Tubu which revealed that 'the idea of repose is at the center of their aesthetics' (p. 26). 'Repose' as a philosophical term is rather nebulous. Martin Heidegger has directed the greater part of his philosophical speculation to the idea of being 'at home' in the world. His 'at-home-ness', in its sense of being at one with one's surroundings, is analogous to Maquet's concept of 'repose'. Being 'at home' for Heidegger involves an endless series of self-positings and choice-makings in pursuit of an existential 'fit'. If Maquet's contemplated object can provide such a *rapprochement* of observer and form, that object is of great anthropological interest. Yet it remains anthropologically insignificant until the anthropologist has uncovered and understood the interplay of self-conception, form, and environment which results in such an engrossment. Maquet, however, avoids the whole question of the link of culture and the forms capable of 'orienting' the attention of its bearers. He places the grounds of an aesthetic article's appeal outside of history - far beyond the realms of willing and doing. His proclamation of 'the irreducible character of the contemplative relationship to reality and the rooting of the aesthetic experience in contemplation' (p. 95) protects it from analysis by placing it, by definition, prior to anything we could use to question it. If the contemplative relationship is truly universal and *a priori*, it is of little use to a discipline interested in comprehending the significance of the varied ways persons relate to their environments and their social systems; it can tell us no more about cultural variability than can the statement 'all societies are made up of one-headed persons'.

Maquet's categories do not, however, stand outside of history in a realm of universals. Let us look, for example, at his

explanation of behaviour within an aesthetic locus. Maquet claims artisans are drawn to the locus by the simple desire to produce aesthetic objects: 'Those who, in any society, have a keen appreciation of aesthetic forms, and those who are eager to create them, meet here' (p. 31). The empiricist observer, by disencumbering cultural relationships of the ephemera of religious beliefs and hereditary role relegations, has managed to elevate the form of the market relations of Western art production and dissemination to the status of a universal category. In Maquet's formulation, the aesthetic domain is simply a meeting point for individuals with a natural talent for creativity and those whose appreciation of aesthetic quality is backed by sufficient wealth or power to allow them to 'purchase' the created artifacts. There is no significance to their association outside of the symbiotic affiliation of supply and demand.

There is, however, quite a bit of pernicious meaning behind the naive ethnocentricity of Maquet's discourse. Maquet would set up aesthetic appreciation as an irreducible characteristic of human sensibility: 'just as it has been said that man is a thinking animal, it may be said also that man is an aesthetic animal' (p. 25). The innate capacity for contemplation is the ground for the creation of art objects, the articulation of aesthetic values, and the establishment of a network of supply and appropriation. Yet Maquet acknowledges that aesthetic objects don't just happen; they occur 'because craftsmen have an aesthetic concern, they do not content themselves with the forms required for the efficacious use of the implements they make' (p. 24). He does not mention that the labour involved in making something more aesthetic than necessary is labour diverted from other social ends. A thing of beauty is not just a joy forever; it is also a luxury item which announces to those who view it that the owner had either the excess time to produce it (and to train for that production), or the power to appropriate it from its creator. Although an aesthetic article within the culture matrix which produced it speaks of much more than the labour its production entailed, the fact that aesthetic loci coincide with centres of ideological, political or economic power reveals the control those institutions or individuals have over their society's distribution of wealth and labour. Medieval reliquaries were wondrously crafted containers made of precious metals and jewels by a group of craftsmen whose labour was controlled by the cathedrals. Their sumptuousness testified to the power and influence of the shrines which possessed them. Yet in times of need, these aesthetic objects served as handy sources of concentrated, easily liquified capital; they were melted down and sold when the churches needed cash. It would be reductionist to claim these articles were created solely for either their laudatory function, their aesthetic appeal, or their ready convertibility into money. Yet an anthropologist who programmatically advocates the purely aestheticist approach is serving, whether intentionally or not, groups which benefit from the masking of ideological manipulation or economic exploitation.

Western civilization has a two hundred year history of ignoring the beliefs and institutions of subjugated peoples in order

to wring whatever labour it can from them. Maquet's relating of the aesthetic locus to areas in which excess craft labour goes into artifact production suggests that, for him, aesthetic value and surplus labour value are coterminous. His detachment of aesthetic quality from the beliefs and feelings of the people who produce and venerate it bears a suspicious likeness to both the melting down of reliquaries for their cash value and the rendering of whole peoples for their labour value.

The western art community is an empowered institution, and its machinations are international big business. The covetousness of its collectors and the Janus-faced attitude of artists who produce statements of alienation which can be sold for 'big bucks' perpetuates the concept of the aesthetic artifact as an object of contemplation complete in itself. An anthropological study of that historically-determined concept would reveal that such autonomy is partially conditioned by the need for the aesthetic artifact to be simultaneously valuable and freely circulable. Art objects in the western world are luxury commodities, and 'primitive art' is now highly valued on the art market. One would expect a bit more critical insight from a man who writes

The first things to be metamorphosized into art objects are the artifacts of foreign societies that have lost their independence, and of the weak strata inside a society such as the peasants.

It may be that museums begin with looting (p. 38). Despite the fact that little in that characterization has changed other than the prices paid for the art objects, we receive from Maquet nothing but an academic justification for the systematic separation of third world peoples from their religious and ceremonial artifacts. Intellectual and economic colonialism go hand in hand.

Maquet concludes with the assertion that

If these demonstrations do not carry conviction, it matters very little. Aesthetic anthropology is an empirical discipline. Consequently the positions ... mentioned may be considered to be the basic assumptions of a 'contemplative theory of art'. Such a theory, like any other, may operate as a source of hypotheses and an explanatory synthesis (p. 95).

However, unlike the cultural materialists, we recognize that the definition of an object determines the uses to which it will be put. Any anthropology which accepts Maquet's idea of an aesthetic anthropology as a starting point for its labours will function both as a tool for exploiting the peoples it claims to study and as a means of destroying the integrity of anthropology as a disinterested academic discipline.

GLENN W. BOWMAN

## SHORTER NOTICES

COLIN RENFREW & KENNETH L. COOKE (eds.), *Transformations... Mathematical Approaches to Culture Change*, New York and London: Academic Press 1979. 515 pp., biblio, £22.00.

In this weighty (515 pp.) tome, jointly conceived by a mathematician (Cooke) and an archaeologist (Renfrew), 21 contributors have been brought together with the express purpose of bringing 'contemporary mathematical techniques to bear on the phenomena of culture change, and to formulate the problems of the archaeologist, the anthropologist, and the historian in such a way that they are indeed susceptible to treatment of a mathematical kind'. In this line an impressive array of mathematical models are trotted out (e.g., optimization models, dynamical systems, simulation, computer-aided transformations of symbols, cladistics, and catastrophe theory to name but a few). Obviously encouraged by the successful wedding of biology and mathematics, the editors here intend to generate a new subfield within our discipline - that of mathematical anthropology. One can only wonder however, whether this particular wedding will be equally fortuitous or whether it will ultimately prove to be of the shotgun variety. While not disputing the validity of the mathematical models produced in the text, one can only wonder at their utility and/or applicability for most social anthropologists. As the editors themselves make abundantly clear, this book is neither for the nonspecialist nor the uninitiated. Of the last 4 chapters, for example, we are told that 'the mathematics is effectively inaccessible to the nonspecialist' and that 'the chapters that follow can be fully understood only with some prior acquaintance with catastrophe theory' (p. 421). Thus, unlike the authors, I did not find my understanding of the operation of hunting-gathering bands (pp. 405-418) significantly increased by the application of their model. Indeed, I take issue with their contention that 'It is easy to see ... that pandemonium models can compute the maximization function with finite-order local functions' (p. 416). I can only ask: 'easy for whom?' Certainly not for the nonspecialist. For those with the necessary mathematic sophistication however this book will provide many interesting hours and will undoubtedly stimulate much debate.

The illustrations by Escher and Osbert Lancaster are an unexpected bonus.

STEVEN SEIDENBERG

PATTY JO WATSON, *Archaeological Ethnography In Western Iran*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press (Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, No. 57, 1979, Arthur J. Jelinek (ed.), xv, 322 pp., biblio, \$9.95.

As stated in its title, this book represents an ambitious attempt to bridge the gap between archaeology and ethnography. From data gathered 1959-60 the author has produced a copiously illustrated (94 drawings, 47 plates, 25 tables) account of life in the West Iranian village of Hasanabad. As she is an archaeologist her account is heavily biased toward the material culture of the village. The student of social anthropology should not however, be daunted by this as the bulk of her text nevertheless maintains an amazingly close resemblance to standard ethnographic accounts (as her chapter headings readily attest ... Chap. 1: Hasanabad: The Land and the People; Chap. 2: The Village and Its Economic Organization; Chap. 3: Agricultural Methods; Chap. 5: Domestic Technology; Chap. 6: Kinship and Community; etc.).

Watson claims to have had two purposes in mind in producing this book: '1) to make available as much data as possible on details of technology and subsistence within the context of village life in the region studied ...; [and] 2) to make a contribution to our knowledge of behavioral correlates for material culture ....' While this reviewer cannot comment on Watson's success as an archaeologist, this book nevertheless represents an admirable introduction to the material culture of village Iran and would be quite useful to the anthropologist of the region.

STEVEN SEIDENBERG

C.C. LAMBERG-KARLOVSKY *et. al*, *Hunters, Farmers, and Civilizations: Old World Archaeology*, San Francisco: W.H. Freeman 1979. 306 pp. \$10.00 (cloth), £4.50 (paper)

This book is a collection of 30 separate articles which originally appeared in *Scientific American* between 1953 and 1978. They are arranged in four sections (1. Paleolithic Hunters and Gatherers; 2. Neolithic Villagers and Farmers; 3. Bronze Age Cities and Civilizations; 4. European Communities: Neolithic to Medieval), each prefaced with a short Introduction by C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Peabody Museum at Harvard.

The book is vast in scope with articles on such diverse topics as Stonehenge, obsidian trade, Harappan civilization and pharaonic tombs. Similarly, the articles represent a broad geographical sweep; included here are articles ranging from Winchester through Mycenaen Greece, Isimila and Jericho all the way to Sumer, Persia and,

finally, the Indus Valley. Each article in the collection is by a well-known specialist in the field, and they are all reproduced from the *Scientific American* with their texts and illustrations intact. As with all *Scientific American* publications the artwork, maps and photographs are excellent.

Although each article was written by a specialist this remains an eminently readable book. As each article was produced specifically for the *Scientific American* they tend to be geared to an informed, but nonspecialist, audience. Further adding to the *pot-pourri* nature of the collection is the short length of the articles. At an average of only 9 pages each they remain *hors d'oeuvres* that entice, successfully avoiding the too common tendency of bloated over-specialization.

While none of the articles are especially useful for the social anthropologist, I found some to be of more interest than others. John Chadwick's 'Life in Mycenaen Greece' (pp. 225-233) for example, while telling me rather more than I cared to know about the Linear B syllabary, was nevertheless anthropologically quite interesting, as was Martin Biddle's 'The Archaeology of Winchester' (pp. 281-292).

Minor criticisms relate to the selection of some of the items included in the collection. Walter B. Emery's 'The Tombs of the First Pharaohs' (pp. 218-224), for example, seemed rather *passé* to me ... more of a last gasp of Tutankhamenism than a valuable contribution to Old World archaeology. In contrast the omission of articles on more recent discoveries I found disconcerting. The inclusion of Norman Smith's, 'Roman Hydraulic Technology' (*Scientific American*, vol. 238 no. 5, pp. 154-161) for example, would have been a welcome addition to the volume. Nevertheless, this book remains highly readable and represents an interesting introduction to Old World archaeology.

STEVEN SEIDENBERG



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