

## BOOK REVIEWS

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *The View from Afar*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1985. [1983]. Translated from the French (*Le Regard éloigné*) by Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss. xvi, 288pp., Bibliography, Index. £19.50.

If it were not for the fact that the author in his Preface describes this collection of articles as an introduction to anthropology, one might wonder whether the publisher might not be guilty under the Trades Description Act. The blurb assures the unsuspecting reader that the author 'has...been careful to assume little previous knowledge of structuralism or ethnology so that he has provided what is, to a large extent, an introduction to these subjects'. It is anyhow difficult enough to explain what anthropology is about, but it would be intriguing to know just what impression of the subject an unprepared reader of this potpourri might end up with. He might well react with some perplexity to an argument over whether certain Northwest Coast Indian myths refer to horse clams or some other sort of clam.

The book could, as the author recognises, have been entitled *Structural Anthropology III*, since it bears much in common with the earlier volumes. It is composed of 23 chapters, most of which belong to the past ten years, and with two exceptions they have all appeared in print before, although some are modified or amended versions. The oldest piece, that on 'The Family', is taken from a 1956 textbook and is sadly dated, its presence barely excused by the claim that its inclusion results from the 'desire for thoroughness' and popular request. Of the other pieces, the standard rationale for collections - the advantage of gathering together scattered and hard-to-find writings - has justification, since included are pieces that first appeared in the programme of the 1975 Bayreuth Festival and in the catalogue to an exhibition of Anita Albus's paintings held in Frankfurt in 1980. Whether this is justification enough for the appearance of this collection is another matter, and there is certainly nothing in it of the calibre to be found in the two earlier volumes.

On the other hand, the range of subjects covered is considerable and will certainly give the newcomer the impression that everything is grist to the structural anthropologist's mill. Some chapters are concerned with grand themes, such as the innate and acquired characteristics of human nature; other with topics closer to the usual nitty-gritty of anthropological dispute, such as the Wikmunkan atom of kinship; others, such as that taken from the Frankfurt catalogue mentioned above, could have been written by someone without any knowledge of either anthropology or structuralism; and in yet others, such as 'Reflections on Liberty' (shades

of Durkheim's division of labour linger here), anthropology makes a rather forced appearance.

Some papers may be difficult for readers to follow because they consist of responses to the criticisms of other writers. For example, 'Structuralism and Ecology' (Chapter 7) is a talk given at Barnard College to which Marvin Harris responded, 'Structuralism and Empiricism' (Chapter 8) being Lévi-Strauss's reply. Despite what the latter may claim, I doubt whether anyone will be able to follow the argument without being familiar with Harris's paper. Lévi-Strauss welcomes Harris's criticisms because they 'place the problem on its real terrain - that of facts and our ability to deal with them', unlike most critics, who 'resort to often abstract prejudicial objections as a basis for the *a priori* rejection of structuralism'. This is rather surprising, for whereas such criticisms exist, Lévi-Strauss has just as frequently been accused of rather cavalier treatment of the ethnography and has rarely found it necessary to reply. Perhaps Harris's tone, of which Lévi-Strauss complains, touched a raw spot.

The translators have mainly done a competent job, but there is one place at which things go wrong. This is on the essay on twinship, much of which involves a discussion of hares and harelips. The relevant ethnography is mainly from North America, where the local species of hare is popularly referred to as a rabbit (Jack rabbit and Snowshoe Rabbit). In the French version, both the terms hare and rabbit occur, but the translators have failed to follow the French exactly, so that a rabbit turns into a hare in the middle of a single story. This confusion is further compounded by the fact that the footnote in the original that explains the use of the word 'rabbit' in North America has inexplicably been left out of the English text.

This, however, may not be the translators' fault, because lurking in the pages of the book is an unidentified character, an editor. True, he mainly reveals himself by the insertion of banal footnotes (rather than the excision of useful ones), but he has also avoided undertaking more serious editorial tasks. For example, the Preface was quite clearly prepared for the French edition and needs some modification for the English version. The discussion of Chapter 7 on p. xi leaves us uncertain about whether what is included is a reprint of the original text or a translation of the French version. This point is not cleared up in the Acknowledgements, where further, similar uncertainties occur.

Certainly, many of the pieces included in this volume are hard to find, yet unless one is a committed collector of Lévi-Straussiana it is difficult to see how it could be placed high on the shopping list.

P.G. RIVIERE

RENÉE HIRSCHON (ed.), *Women and Property: Women as Property*, London and Canberra: Croom Helm/New York: St Martin's Press 1984. 192pp., Bibliography, Indexes. £7.95.

This book, edited by Renée Hirschon, who has also written a lucid introduction, consists of nine papers which deal with contemporary social situations in East Africa (Patricia Caplan), China (Elizabeth Croll), North India (Ursula Sharma), Portugal (João de Pina-Cabral), Turkey (June Starr), South Africa (Sandra Burman), southern Ghana (Sallie Westwood), New Guinea (Marilyn Strathern) and northern Ghana (Ann Whitehead). The papers were originally a series of lectures organised for the Oxford Women's Studies Committee.

The extent to which any collection of papers based on different ethnographic situations can represent a theoretical step forward depends not so much on whether these situations are strictly comparable as on careful editing, such as ensuring a complementarity of subject matters. In this sense, the implications of these papers are cumulative, and the volume as a whole represents a theoretical challenge to certain common-sense assumptions which have been employed by anthropologists in dealing with the notions of property, women, and the relationship between them.

Lévi-Strauss's theory of marriage, taken to mean that passive female 'objects' are transacted between active male 'subjects', has been hotly contested by feminist scholarship. In a partial rehabilitation-cum-subversion of his idea, Ann Whitehead and Marilyn Strathern take British anthropologists to task for their ethnocentric use of concepts derived from Western jurisprudence and capitalist economy. For Ann Whitehead, the notion of an 'individual subject' is anomalous in 'pre-state, non-class' societies, where action is always 'embedded' in a collective context, and gender is given by the availability to certain people of certain spheres of action within a kinship hierarchy. Rather than talk in terms of 'subjects' and 'objects' or a relationship between 'persons' and 'things', she suggests analysis in terms of 'relative capacity to act', which, she concludes, is always more circumscribed for women than for men. Women's subordinate kinship status inhibits their capacity to recruit labour and therefore to activate resources, for example.

Marilyn Strathern doubts whether the Cartesian subject-object contrast has any validity in many societies. Like Whitehead, she points out that in the West Highlands of New Guinea, women and men form part of kinship units which transact women and wealth, both considered to be 'on the skin' and therefore detachable aspects of the giver.

Nevertheless, Strathern insists that gifts transferred in this way from one group to another create relationship only in so far as they continue to form part of the identity of the givers. Indeed, in the Southern Highlands they are considered to be 'of the skin' itself. Thus there can be no Cartesian separation of the functions of giver and gifts, no subject-object relationship between men and women or indeed men and valuables. Strathern compares

the Western and Eastern Highlands with respect to the variable capacity of women to transact on their own account, concluding that their status as subjects in this sphere is part of the way gender relationships are variously constituted.

Although we might accept that a 'subject-object' form of analysis is perilous, when what is required is an understanding of the symbolic relationship between the genders, there is no escaping the fact that the transacting entity is thought of as male. Yet even in situations where gender relationships are such as to define unmediated action as male, real women do act. (See my discussion of the role of women in arranging marriages in *Women and Property in Morocco*, Cambridge 1974). In some situations, such as those Mediterranean societies where women are bearers of group honour, unmediated initiatives may incur punishment by male kin. Even their murderers may act with impunity, since they have merely eliminated 'their own' (women), who are non-subjects in juridical terms. This is an extreme case, but if the book has a defect, it is that it gives pre-eminence to normative (gender) relationships and little space to the tensions which may arise because of the discrepancy between gender definitions and social action at different stages in the life cycle, and the changes which these discrepancies may produce in the long term.

On the other hand, several of the writers (Burman, Starr, Whitehead) emphasise the role of jurisprudence in creating new 'actors'. Particularly interesting is the account by Starr of the way in which Muslim women in the Bodrum region of Turkey have successfully used the modern law courts to defend their rights to land and honour, as accruing directly to women, and not only to their male guardians. It is unlikely that we can attribute this success to personal tenacity and do away with the concept of 'embedded' action. Starr mentions the emphasis Bodrum women give to warm and collaborative relationships among themselves, and there is other evidence in the volume that women's action is positively defined in symbolic terms, where there is a recognised mutuality of interest among them. One instance are the *Gâ*, described by Westwood, where women associate for trade and invest in houses, or again, the *wok meri* business associations described by Lorraine Sexton and cited by Marilyn Strathern. However, those societies characterised by hostile relationships between women of different kin groups and generations (e.g. the alienation of a bride's dowry in favour of her husband's mother in north India [Sharma]; or the tendency in Cape Town for a woman's female peers and seniors to accept her forcible abduction [Burman]) appear to be those in which women's capacity to act is most restricted, and the symbolic attributes of femaleness most negative.

Residential arrangements are crucial in determining women's relation to resources. Two excellent papers, by Croll and Sharma, describe the constraints which co-residence with in-laws or parents imposes on women's activities. In another paper, Pina-Cabral points out a contrast in social power in northern Portugal between those women who inherit house and land and are able to marry and bear legitimate children, enjoying the support of the community of *vezinhos*, and those women who do not and whose houselessness lays

them open to material and sexual exploitation.

Finally, Pat Caplan describes for Mafia Island how both women and men are able to set up house near the kinsman or kinswoman of their choice within the framework of a cognatic kinship system. The ease with which a divorced or widowed woman can build a new house and change her residential alignment is not unrelated to the autonomy with which she manages her resources (admittedly more limited than a man's). The Tanzanian government's campaign to encourage people to build permanent housing has the effect, paradoxically, of creating male-headed households in which a woman's capacity to act is considerably reduced.

The volume reminds us that resources are inert unless they can be deployed in social relationships, and that those qualities which define a transactor - honour, employment, jural capacity, residential choice - may themselves be a form of property. Previous discussions of the relation between women and property have focused on different forms of marriage payments and inheritance. Yet as Ursula Sharma points out in her fine paper on dowry in north India, the direction of marriage payments does not necessarily indicate women's greater or lesser control over resources. On the contrary, several papers (Burman, Croll) note changes from bridewealth to dowry and vice versa without concomitant changes in gender relationships. Sharma concludes:

The coexistence of two quite different forms of marriage payment in the same society, not accompanied by radical differences in kinship structure, cultural evaluation of women, etc., presents a nice challenge to the possibility of sociological generalisation. (p. 67)

This, perhaps, in a nutshell, is the contribution of this volume to anthropological theory - a proposal to view women's relation to property not merely as an 'economic dimension of kinship', but rather as part of the social organisation of relations between people, such that some have more power to act than others.

VANESSA MAHER

MICHAEL HITCHCOCK, *Indonesian Textile Techniques*, Princes Risborough: Shire Publications 1985. 56pp., Plates, Figures, Map, Bibliography, Index. £2.50.

*Indonesian Textile Techniques* is a slim volume, intended to be sold as an information booklet in museums and to be read by people of all ages and from widely different backgrounds. Designed to be an introduction, a first glimpse of the variety of textiles found in Indonesia, it is very readable and, on the whole, informative.

It makes the point rather well that though steeped in local customs and closely linked to ceremonies and rituals which probably have an ancient history, Indonesian textile traditions have never been a static artform and have continuously changed and adapted to particular needs.

Some criticism must be raised, though. The book contains several avoidable errors. For example, Kalimantan is said to differ 'greatly from the other major islands because of its lack of substantial mountains'. Any map contradicts this claim. Speaking of materials, Hitchcock says that cotton 'has always been the predominant textile material'. Linguistic evidence separates the use of the loom and the use of cotton, the latter coming from India at some time between the second and eighth centuries A.D. On the other hand, the word 'weaving' associated with the 'loom' is Proto-Austronesian. The time depth generally accepted is 5000 years, leaving many centuries for weaving with other materials. An alternative fibre might have been *Musa textilis*. Speaking of the trade in *patola* cloths from Gujurat, Hitchcock says that this type of textile 'was traded throughout the archipelago in the nineteenth century'. In fact, the trade is considerably older: the first Portuguese travellers in Southeast Asia noted the demand for *patola* in the sixteenth century, in particular in the Moluccas. The Dutch established a monopoly on the *patola* trade in the seventeenth century.

General publications on Indonesian textiles usually dwell on the symbolic significance that cloths have in the archipelago. They typically talk about this significance in such a generalized and unspecific manner that the results are mystic to the point of banality. This approach is blissfully absent here. At times, though, I think Hitchcock could *suggest* another, less concrete, interpretation. The association of weaving with noise-making which he reports from Bima deserves at least a footnote about the consistent and widespread use of clappers or bells (idiophones) at times of transition. Similarly, the text opts for a superficial interpretation when it says that cloths which show rows of people holding hands illustrate the fact that 'family relationships and friends...are important to many islanders'. The standard interpretation is that they represent 'linked ancestor figures'.

Nevertheless, the book serves its purpose well. It is especially to be welcomed that the techniques of textile decoration found in the islands are discussed extensively, and the description of looms is easy to follow - a difficult task for anyone to achieve.

RUTH BARNES

S.A. NIESSEN, *Motifs of Life in Toba Batak Texts and Textiles* (Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 110), Dordrecht and Cinnaminson: Foris Publications 1985. viii, 235pp., Glossary, Bibliography, Illustrations, Plates, Maps, Figures, Index. Dfl. 35.00.

*Motifs of Life* claims to be the first attempt to interpret the textiles produced by Toba Batak women in a 'complete' sense, i.e. in their social meaning. It does, in that respect, present an example of a most welcome development in Indonesian studies. During the last decade, a growing number of scholars working in the Indonesian field have turned their attention to the investigation of textiles in their cultural setting, a trend which has gone hand in hand with an increasing appreciation among the general public of the cloths of maritime Southeast Asia.

Niessen, however, tries to bring an altogether different focus to textiles. She starts from the premises of the Dutch Field of Anthropological Study (FAS), which for Indonesia claims a 'Unity in Diversity' (both the Indonesian official motto and the title of a book recently discussed in *JASO* [Vol. XVI, no. 2, pp. 87-110] by R.H. Barnes). She intends her work to be an 'experiment constructed around the hypothesis that a comparative textile program could profit from the application of the FAS'. Yet the book is not a comparative study.

Instead, she discusses fundamental themes of society in the Toba Batak context: kinship, fertility, time, and space. These notions are approached from two perspectives. First, there is a verbal approach, in which two myths, 'The Origin of Humans' and 'The Origin of the Earth', are presented. Both are given in the original Batak and in translation. Secondly, there are the textiles, in particular traditional types which are significant as gifts at certain times of transition in the lives of all Toba Batak.

Niessen has used the myths as an introduction for her analysis. I assume this is done because they develop two particular themes. In the first myth, 'The Origin of Humans', social order is expressed by the males in society. The second myth, 'The Origin of the Earth', gives the female a dominant role: the earth is created by a woman. The link between both myths is the disobedience of two sisters, who do not wish marry the husband chosen for them. One kills herself, the other moves to another world, the future earthly realm. Both, in effect, create by removing themselves from their original state. The older sister, after her death, turns into the sugar palm, the younger sister manages to harness chaos and bring order into the world of humans.

The mythical role of creator, given to a female, is then continuously referred to throughout the book and compared to the weaving done exclusively by women. As two points of reference in interpreting Toba society, these are successful images. Unfortunately, the interpretation which follows is not always so convincing. The chapter called 'Kinship Motif' attempts a discussion of descent, exchange, and alliance: should it not then include the

analysis of a comprehensive kinship terminology? The terminology given can barely be called a beginning. A major aspect of Niessen's argument in this section is the question of matrilineal descent, but the evidence given for the 'surviving matrilineal traces' seems extremely flimsy. Inheritance of textiles and looms from mother to daughter are the 'proof' offered. Textiles are passed from mother to daughter in many parts of the world; in Indonesia I can report it from several, though not all, parts of the Lamaholot region to the east of Flores. But these practices are doubtful evidence of matrilineal descent. As concerns the inheritance of the loom: what would a son do with these tools, which he has never learned and never will learn to use, because they are for women's work? And finally on this point, Niessen does not at all mention the inheritance of knowledge, which is at least as important as that of material goods. Most commonly in Indonesia (reported from all societies, as far as I know), a girl learns *how* to weave and *what* to weave from her mother. It is in these cases, where potentially certain patterns or textile types are passed on from one generation to the next, that one could conceivably find a specific 'female' knowledge which is independent of the patrilineal aspects of a society. R. Maxwell has posed this question for the textiles of East Flores, and J.J. Fox has found elaborate evidence for it on Savu. Yet Niessen does not refer to the issue at all.

A very important aspect of Toba Batak weaving is discussed in terms of fertility and concepts of time, that is, the linking of the continuous, circular warp thread of the cloth to the passing of time. Niessen should have directed the reader to similar examinations of time concepts in other Indonesian ethnographies. The magically most important cloths in Toba Batak society frequently have an uncut warp, and again the author does not give enough indication that the cutting of cloth or the retaining of the circular shape may be critical issues in other Indonesian societies, issues that have been discussed elsewhere.

Finally, certain of the cloths are considered in terms of spatial orientation. The description closes with a most interesting definition of the *ragidup*, given to the author by a Toba Batak. This should have introduced the entire discussion and been used as a guide throughout. Instead, it stands rather separate from Niessen's own interpretation. Should the statements and categories given by the people we write about not be in the forefront? Here they have become obscured by the ethnographer.

Sadly lacking is information on Toba categories of cloth, a gap which is difficult to comprehend. I also think that the gift of cloth, which is so important, must be seen in conjunction with the *piso* gift, the offering which is considered male. The two must complement each other and should be discussed together. The question of cloth and 'femaleness' could furthermore be discussed in terms of a change in condition, of which textile production is obvious evidence. It changes from raw cotton to thread, from white thread to the coloured fabric. Characteristically, it is women only who can manipulate the transformation.

RUTH BARNES



*Research in African Literatures*, Vol. XV, no. 2, Summer 1985 (Special Issue on African Oral Narrative, edited by Veronika Görög-Karady).

JEROME ROTHENBERG, *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1985. xxxiv, 636pp. £37.95/£14.25.

*Research in African Literatures* is a quarterly journal published by the University of Texas Press. It is an official journal of the African Literature Association and the African Literatures Division of the Modern Language Association. This special issue, under the guest editorship of Veronika Görög-Karady, features seven articles by six members and associated members of the research team known as 'Langage et Culture en Afrique de l'Ouest' and listed by CNRS as l'Equipe de Recherche Associée 246, 'Recherches Linguistiques et Littéraires au Soudan et au Sahel Occidentaux'. Görög-Karady, the head of the oral literature section of the équipe, provides an introduction to the **Special** Issue and a discussion of Genesis stories collected from a Vili (Congolese) student. Geneviève Calame-Griaule, Christiane Seydou and Dominique Casajus present translated and edited versions of articles which have previously appeared in French journals. Calame-Griaule discusses a Dogon tale, Seydou presents a comparative analysis of four versions of a Fulani tale, and Casajus analyses two Tuareg tales. There is also an analysis of three versions of a Vouté tale by Jean-Louis Siran. All these contributors make use of comparative materials as well as linguistic and socio-cultural information and are more or less inspired by structuralist and psycho-analytical approaches. That the articles is the product of a research team is clear.

To the uninitiated the analyses are sometimes esoteric and may seem far removed from the original texts (and *a fortiori* from the original performances); we are given accounts of the tales but almost no texts at all. The final article makes this more understandable, however, for this is an account, by Brunhilde Biebuyck, of 'The many faces of the French research team, Langage et Culture en Afrique de l'Ouest'. This article and its accompanying bibliography make it clear that the articles contained in this Special Issue are the theoretical and sometimes speculative end-products of time-consuming and conscientious research. As Biebuyck explains, the structural, psychoanalytical, ethnological and linguistic analyses are the fifth stage in a process which begins with the collection of texts in the original language, followed by situating the tales in their cultural context, comparing different versions and situating these in cross-cultural contexts. There has also been much work carried out in documentation and bibliography.

Though we may object to particular analyses in these essays, we can but admire the équipe's continuing interdisciplinary research and their success in making their work known outside France. This last point is brought home by the fact that among the reviews in this Special Issue is one of a previous product of the équipe's

work: Veronika Görög-Karady, ed., 1982, *Genres, Forms, Meanings: Essays in African Oral Literature* (JASO Occasional Papers no.1), which as readers of *JASO* will remember, contained papers originally published as a Special Issue of *JASO* (Vol. XIII, no.1).

Jerome Rothenberg's *Technicians of the Sacred* is altogether a different kettle of fish. The book under review is a revised and expanded edition of the original edition of 1968. Poems from oral traditions of all continents are presented in ten sections: Origins & Namings, Visions & Spels (*sic*), Death & Defeat, The Book of Events (I), The Book of Events (II), Africa, America, Asia, Europe & The Ancient Near East, and Oceania. These sections are more or less arbitrary and other classifications would, Rothenberg recognises, do just as well or better. Some poetry from written traditions slips in, for example, the 'Poor Tom' scene from *King Lear* (III, iv).

The poems, or extracts as some of them are, are first presented without comment and take up most of the book. At the back of the book are commentaries on each of the poems with information concerning source and context and comparative material from modern Western poetry - mostly French (Breton, Apollinaire) and American (mostly obscure to this reviewer). This comparative material is chosen, as it seems to echo the 'primitive-archaic' material.

Rothenberg himself is a poet and the book grew out of poetry readings given in New York cafes in the 1960s. Rothenberg saw similarities between 'primitive' rituals and the 'happenings' and 'events' which were then being presented. The key words in understanding Rothenberg's enterprise would seem to be such as *instinct*, *intuition* and *imagination*. There was then the idea, as Rothenberg puts it, that

what Blake called 'our antediluvian energies' would lead to a transformation of intelligence.... It was to this new imagination' that the work was dedicated - as a resource book of possibilities that were often new for us but that had already been realized somewhere in the world. (pp. xvii-xviii)

As an enterprise, *Technicians of the Sacred* tells us more about the poetry scene in America in the 1960s than it does about any of the other poetic traditions of which it makes use. For modern American poetry it was perhaps a time and place comparable to Paris in the early years of this century, when Picasso *et al.* 'discovered' African and Oceanic art. But one doubts it. Since 1968, the interest in and knowledge of oral poetries amongst academics and everyone else has grown enormously, and Rothenberg has added material to all his sections. His Pre-face reviews the developments that have occurred and includes a number of warnings to potential readers about their likely misconceptions: that simple cultures produce simple poetry, that oral poetry does not change, that the producers of these poetries are not reflexive about the poetic enterprise, and so on. It is, therefore, an informed book and Rothenberg's ideas are sound, though the presentation is sometimes rather pretentious, especially the irritating use of '&' rather

than 'and' throughout.

Finally, the poetry is wonderful and, due to Rothenberg's own bias, 'strong' rather than 'pretty'. It is a beautifully produced book and the Commentaries are informative and thought-provoking. If the thoughts so provoked are not always scholarly, they are frequently more enjoyable.

JEREMY COOTE

CAROL RUBENSTEIN, *The Honey Tree Song: Poems and Chants of Sarawak Dayaks*, Athens, Ohio, and London: Ohio University Press 1985. xxiii, 380pp., Plates, Map. £36.95.

Carol Rubenstein, an American poet, spent the period from November 1971 to December 1974 in Sarawak collecting the material for this book from among no less than seven Dayak groups. She was assisted by staff of the Sarawak Museum and local interpreters and transcribers. The chosen task was formidable, involving archaic song language and colloquial versions of each of the Dayak languages as well as Malay and English. She acquired a small working vocabulary of each language for daily use, but hardly mastery. Translations began word-for-word and moved on to phrases, sentences and stanzas. The author was keen to be shown items of physical culture and landscape involved in the chants, songs, prayers and poems and to have allusions, double senses and verbal tricks explained to her. She describes the circumstances straightforwardly and acknowledges the difficulties and probable limitations. The book contains a great mass of such poetry divided into nine sections with names like 'Courtship, Marriage, and the Pangs of Love', 'Childbirth and Cradle Songs' and 'Headhunting'. Each section opens with a scene-setting vignette, followed by the English-language translations. These are designed for oral presentation and no doubt are best heard in readings by the author. The vernacular texts having been omitted, there is no direct way to judge the accuracy of the translations. Presumably the author has found or will find a means to make the originals available to scholars. What the reader takes from this book will depend on his purposes. Common humanity speaks from the texts, as does the sense of cultural distance and diversity. The reader who wishes to appreciate the richness of reference to local usages will have to work hard and go well beyond the book.

R.H. BARNES

ROGER TRIGG, *Understanding Social Science: A Philosophical Introduction to the Social Sciences*, Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell 1985. viii, 206pp., Glossary, Bibliography, Index. £18.50/£5.95.

Roger Trigg introduces the reader to the basic theoretical problems with which social sciences have to deal and does this, as the subtitle indicates, from a philosophical point of view. What is the nature of science? What is the nature of society? These and other questions are examined in an admirably clear and thorough manner. Trigg's fundamental contention is that social science 'must start from a properly articulated philosophical base if it is to be successful' (p. 205).

First, philosophical reflection about the nature of reality is of central importance for social science. In the empiricist view, reality has an objective nature: reality exists independently of what people think it to be. Therefore, it forms the empirical common ground on which theories can be tested as to their truth-value. Consequently, 'truth' is seen as '*adaequatio rei intellectus*': a proposition is true if and when it adequately reflects reality, if and when it perfectly corresponds with reality. These views are challenged by sociologists of knowledge such as David Bloor and philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn: they claim that there is no reality beyond concepts. What is real is merely what people think and believe to be real: it follows that there are as many 'realities' as there are different groups of people with different notions of reality. According to Trigg, if Bloor and Kuhn are right the intellectual endeavours of social - as well as all other - scientists become totally pointless: this is because he assumes that the empiricist views on reality and truth are the *conditio sine qua non* of all science. If different conceptual schemes produce fundamentally different worlds, reality stops being the common and independent point of reference and the correspondence theory of truth becomes nonsensical. Therefore, social scientists must oppose the radical demise of empiricism: ontologically speaking, social scientists cannot be but 'realists', since, for Trigg, it is the very condition of possibility of science in general, and social science in particular. Those who are convinced that science can function properly without the necessity of adopting the empiricist point of view will obviously disagree with Trigg, but then the problem is precisely what they mean when they claim that what they have to say is 'true'.

What does all this mean for the social anthropologist? According to Trigg, it means that he has no other choice than to reject cultural relativism:

Without holding to a realist conception of the world, and without a substantive belief in human nature, it becomes miraculous that the members of one culture should understand those of another. Indeed, no possible basis for understanding has been left, and the only conclusion is that we must be doomed to mutual

incomprehension.... (p. 201)

If, ultimately, people belonging to different cultures do not speak about the same world, there is no room left for meaningful communication: they are, and cannot but remain, complete strangers to one another.

Secondly, philosophical arguments about the specific nature of society are also of prime importance for social science - indeed, social scientists investigate not only 'reality' but, more specifically, 'social' reality. Consequently, they must adopt those methods which are best suited for obtaining knowledge about the social world. Which methods those are should, according to Trigg, depend on the conception the social scientist has of the nature of society. For Trigg, this is not only a methodological imperative but also proof of a scientific - in the true sense of the word - approach. Thus whether a social scientist should copy the methods used in the natural sciences should be determined by whether he thinks people can be studied in the same way things are, or not. Trigg advocates that they cannot, since human society exists in the realm of consciousness, meaning and intention and, consequently, other methods than the ones used in the natural sciences are needed in the social sciences.

In sum, Trigg quite convincingly argues that the philosophy of the social sciences 'cannot be an optional activity for those reluctant to get on with the 'real' empirical work. It is the indispensable starting point for all social science.' Indeed, those who do not think much of the value of philosophical reflection for social scientists will find it hard to sustain their claim after reading this book.

ALDO MARTIN

HARALD O. SKAR, *The Warm Valley People: Duality and Land Reform among the Quechua Indians of Highland Peru* (Oslo Studies in Social Anthropology 2), Oslo etc.: Universitetsforlaget 1982. xii, 317 pp., Maps, Glossary, Appendices, Figures, Tables, Plates, Index, Bibliography. NKr. 190.

This is a study of the impact of the 1969 Peruvian Agrarian Reform on a Quechua-speaking Indian community (called Matapuquio) located in the Apurimao region of the Peruvian Highlands. Before the reform, Matapuquio provided labour for the nearby village *haciendas* that produced sugar-cane alcohol and various types of fruit and dairy produce for the regional market. Under the Agrarian Reform Legislation, the *haciendas* were appropriated and brought together to form a single-production co-operative whose membership included many households from Matapuquio as well as former *hacienda* workers.

Harald Skar's monograph combines analysis of the social consequences of this state-initiated and -planned change with a systematic treatment of cultural categories and oral patterns of social organisation, and demonstrates very skilfully the social and practical relevance of applying an anthropological perspective to problems of social change and development. His ethnographic data, which is primarily focused on the concept of *ayllu* and its ramifications for the social organisation of the Matapuquio, is presented in the context of a comprehensive historical, economic and ecological account of the area. He gives a frank description of the methodological problems encountered in a situation where identification with one of the two moieties in the community could have precluded access to the other.

His meticulous observation of the *ayllu* - a communal work group formerly described as either a corporate kin group or a group with defined territorial boundaries, neither of which seemed satisfactory in view of the ethnographic evidence - leads him to conclude that the *ayllu* is an extremely flexible grouping of individuals normally brought together for the purpose and for a limited period. Skar points out that although in Matapuquio such a group will frequently consist of a core of kinsmen, it does not exclude other sets of relationships, some *ayllus* being organised through a set of *compadrazgo*, affinal and/or friendship ties. The *ayllu* is also a relative notion, since its size and social composition will vary from situation to situation. It also has the idea of a structural opposition built into it, in the sense that the group is generally defined in relation to other similar or competing groups. Hence many *ayllus* function as factions and are constructed around 'big men' as leaders: according to Skar, their quintessence is the idea of 'those I can rely on'. In this part of his discussion he begins with an analysis of binary classification within the context of the ecology and economics of an Andean village, but he concludes by showing how this system is partially transformed under the impact of a particular process of agrarian reform. In short, he depicts the change from a segmented but relatively undifferentiated village social order (that formed by the two moieties) to one becoming differentiated economically and politically. Skar points out, however, that group structures in the Andes are inherently flexible and unstable, because of the nature of the bilateral kinship system.

In placing his ethnographic description and structural analysis of the *ayllu* within a historical as well as an economic and ecological framework, Skar provides a very graphic account of a process of adaptation and change and is able to point to the limitations of central government planning in the face of local, culturally specific modes of social organisation. He shows a deep understanding of the complex ways in which local and natural structures impinge on one another. Because this study is grounded on the systematic analysis of one strategically chosen case, documenting structural continuity and change at the local community level, Skar is able to expose many misconceptions about highland society and the nature of agrarian problems which underlie the Peruvian model of agrarian reform. He does not claim that the dynamics of change experienced

by the people of Matapuquio will necessarily be applicable to other communities in other regions, but he calls for studies of a similar nature to supplement and enhance his own.

Another important dimension of this work is that it aims to combine a structural with an actor-oriented approach, so as to isolate the incentives and constraints giving rise to particular social forms. This orientation is especially useful in the analysis of changing patterns of interpersonal relations at household and intra-moiety level, and it enables Skar to resolve the problem of the *ayllu* concept in Andean societies. However, the female reader is acutely aware that this is necessarily a male-actor orientation and is led to question how a female perspective would enhance this complex and otherwise comprehensive account. Skar's wife, herself a social anthropologist, accompanied him during his fieldwork, so perhaps in due course we can expect a companion volume of the way the structural dualism of Matapuquio society affects the organisational patterns of the lives of the women.\* This does not detract from Harald Skar's achievement, but it underlines the problems faced by all anthropologists working in any society who set themselves the goal of achieving a totally comprehensive view of it.

ANN E. FINK

\* Two articles by Sarah Skar on Matapuquio were published in *JASO*, Vol. IX, no.1, pp. 53-60 (1978) and *JASO*, Vol. X, no.1, pp. 21-30 (1979) (Editors' note).

## OTHER NOTES AND NOTICES

### JAWS

The Japan Anthropology Workshop (JAWS), which was founded in Oxford in 1984, held its second meeting at the Fourth International Studies Conference on Japan, which took place in Paris on 23-26 September, 1985. Members of JAWS were represented in most of the eight sections, but the majority of papers were presented in a section entitled 'Sociology, Education and Cultural Anthropology'. There was a special session devoted to the theme of 'Communication', chosen at our last meeting, but our members also contributed to sessions on 'Women in Japan', 'Children and Youth in Japanese Society', and 'Medicine and Society in Japan', as well as to the general sessions on a variety of subjects ranging from the problems of doing research, through the mythology of Nihonjinron (Japanese theories about what makes them unique), to the moulding of the past to justify the present social order in a relatively new Tokyo community. There were also JAWS contributions in the Linguistics Section on the Culture of Kanji and some comparisons between Sakhalin and Hokkaido Ainu, in the Economics and Economic History section on 'Pre-Modern Whaling in Northern Kyushu', and in the History, Politics and International Relations Section on 'The Debate over Japanese Capitalism'. We were also represented in the sections on literature, religion and philosophy, and the new section on theatre, music and the arts.

At a business meeting held in the Centre de Recherches sur le Japon Contemporain, we agreed to hold our next conference in Jerusalem in the spring of 1987. In view of the number of North American anthropologists who have joined JAWS, the possibility was also discussed of setting up a similar group, based in North America, which could meet at local gatherings of anthropologists.

The Paris papers will eventually be published, but there is no news as yet about format or publisher. Many of the papers from the initial conference, held in Oxford, have appeared in a book entitled *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches* (JASO Occasional Paper, no.5), edited by Joy Hendry and Jonathan Webber, available from JASO, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE, England, price £9.75, including postage.

Prospective members of JAWS may write to Dr R.J. Hendry, Department of Social Studies, Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP. Please mark the envelope 'JAWS'. The current membership



fee is £3.00 per 18-month inter-conference period. Scholars interested in forming a North American counterpart to JAWS or in contributing to a North American newsletter of research in Japanese anthropology should write to Dr Theodore C. Bestor, Department of Anthropology, 452 Schermerhorn Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

JOY HENDRY

PAUL E. MINNIS, *Social Adaptation to Food Stress: A Prehistoric Southwestern Example*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1985. x, 197pp., Figures, Appendix, References, Index. £18.50.

This work attempts an interpretation of archaeological data in order to link hypothetical 'food stress' to possible demographic changes in the Rio Mimbres region of southwestern New Mexico from ca. A.D. 600 to 1249. Minnis frames questions by reference to modern ethnographic studies of responses to hunger among the Fringa Enge of New Guinea, the Gwembe Tonga of South Africa, and the Tikopia. Puebloan ruins are found in areas lacking modern pueblos. Studies of tree-ring variations and alluvial deposits documented substantial prehistoric environmental variation. From these circumstances archaeologists have inferred a tie between environmental and population changes. The author attempts to push this assumption further by means of an elaborated model combining topography, climate, hydrology, soils, vegetation, and fauna with archaeological information on subsistence, residence and exchange. Minnis discusses the limitations on his information and model, but only an archaeologist could assess his methodology and his many, sometimes unevicenced assumptions. Ecologically minded anthropologists may find interest in his second chapter and conclusions.

R.H.B.