

SPECIAL SECTION ON SECOND FIELDWORK

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork as a topic is receiving more attention today than at any time in the history of anthropology. As Baumann comments below, a surprising amount of the writing on this subject is by authors who have no first-hand experience of participant observation research. However, many anthropologists undertake fieldwork on several occasions, and one would think that it is these that make the most reliable and interesting commentators on its qualities, problems and procedures. Doing fieldwork for a second time (or, as Banks points out, a 3rd, 4th, 5th or nth time) helps the researcher recognise which aspects of fieldwork 'experience' are essential to fieldwork itself, which are due to the circumstances of any particular piece of research (including the nature of the society or people studied), and which may be due to the personality and peculiar characteristics of the researcher himself or herself.

It is clear from MacClancy's account that today's researchers find very similar problems in trying to conduct fieldwork in what are apparently very different parts of the world. They may also, like Barnes, find that second fieldwork can only be conducted piecemeal, in short bursts on a variety of trips and projects. Such themes are discussed in the articles that follow, as are, amongst many others, film as ethnography (Banks), the constraints of academic life and bureaucratic difficulties (Barnes), the problems of local politics (MacClancy), and the simultaneities that affect urban research 'at home' (Baumann). In discussing such areas of concern in relation to more than one fieldwork experience, the authors are able to be more reflective, perhaps more objective, than is often the case.

'Second fieldwork' (or 'comparative fieldwork' as it might be called) is, like many concerns of anthropology, not as new a topic as it might seem. For example, Evans-Pritchard briefly compared

his Nuer and Azande field research in the pages of this Journal several years ago (see 'Reminiscences and Reflections on Fieldwork', *JASO*, Vol. IV, no. 1, Hilary 1973, pp. 1-12), voicing the widely held view 'that it is desirable that a student should make a study of more than one society' (p. 2). Of course he did not mean that making second studies would lead to better reflections on fieldwork, but that second fieldwork would make students better anthropologists. While not every student can have the opportunity to do field research twice (or even once), it must surely remain a desired aim. We hope that the articles that follow will reinforce the recognition of its value to the individual anthropologist and the discipline as a whole.

We should welcome further contributions and correspondence on the theme of second fieldwork, and related topics, for publication in future issues.