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AESTHETICS IN A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: SOME REFLECTIONS ON NATIVE AMERICAN BASKETRY

HOWARD MORPHY

Introduction

WRITING in 1904, Otis T. Mason begins his compendious work on American Indian basketry with a reflection (or perhaps more truly a lack of reflection!) on the newly awakened interest of that ubiquitous follower of ethnographic fashion, the private collector:

In the past few years a sympathetic spirit has been awakened in the United States to keep alive this charming aboriginal art and to preserve its precious relics. In every State in the Union will be found rich collections, both in public and private museums. People of wealth vie with one another in owning them. It almost amounts to a disease, which might be called 'canastromania'. They resemble the 'merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.' The genuine enthusiasm kindled in the search, the pride of success in the acquisition, the care bestowed upon them,

This is an expanded version of a chapter (Morphy 1992a) written originally for a catalogue of an exhibition to be held at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, from 16 June 1992 to May 1993, entitled *Basketmakers: Meaning and Form in Native American Baskets*. I am grateful to the editors of JASO for encouraging me to produce this fuller version of the text and to Jeremy Coote, Frances Morphy, Linda Mowat and Penny Dransart for forcing me, by their critical comments, to clarify the arguments of earlier versions.

witness that the basket is a worthy object of study. The story is told of a distinguished collector who walked many weary miles to the shelter of a celebrated old weaver. He spent the day admiring her work, but still asking for something better. He knew that she had made finer pieces. At last flattery and gold won. She tore out the back of her hut, and there, hid from mortal eyes, was the basket that was to be burned at her death. Nothing could be more beautiful, and it will be her monument. (Mason 1988: vii-ix)

The paragraph would provide an excellent text for a critical sermon on ethnographic museums, the presuppositions of early twentieth-century collectors of ethnography and primitive art, the post-colonial context of production, the inequalities in the relationship between Native Americans and the colonial admirers of their artefacts, and any number of other themes. The text is so redolent with the assumptions of the time that it is hard to resist littering the quotation with parenthetical 'sic's and exclamation marks. One cannot help hoping that as soon as the collector left, the basketmaker replaced the missing basket with the next one in line for burning. However, as with any text that presents so clearly the presuppositions of its times, it is too easy to treat it unfairly and ahistorically, as if it were written today.

The themes that I want to take up here are as controversial today as they were at the time Mason was writing. They concern whether objects of other cultures should be presented as aesthetic forms or as art, and the extent to which presentation as art involves a distortion or appropriation of value. Underlying these themes is the question of the relationship between the aesthetic qualities of an object as viewed by its Western public and its aesthetic qualities as viewed by its producer, which question in turn has embedded within it the general issue of the usefulness, and even the validity, of the notion of aesthetics for cross-cultural analysis.¹

James Clifford (1991: 241) has written that 'one of the most effective current ways to give cross-cultural value (moral and commercial) to a cultural production is to treat it as art'. Mason's writing is clearly part of this process and illustrates particularly well the linkage between what Clifford refers to as the moral and commercial dimensions of value. The value (as 'a worthy object of study') is proved by the interest of the collector, who is prepared to invest large sums in acquiring an object of beauty or aesthetic value. The basket on the pedestal in the museum becomes the ultimate monument to its creator. On the other hand, in his radically sub-titled essay, 'Toward an Anti-Catalogue of Woodsplint Basketry', Russell Handsman (1987: 147) notes: 'when seen as art, artifacts [are] separated

1. A relevant debate took place in 1986 over *Art and Land*, an exhibition at the South Australian Museum, Adelaide, in which a set of Aboriginal direction signs from central Australia were exhibited deliberately as 'art' (see Jones and Sutton 1986, Brook 1986, and Sutton 1987; the debate is summarized in Taylor 1988). Susan Vogel's (1991) account of multi-perspective exhibitions of ethnographic objects considers similar issues in the case of African 'art'.

from their human, historical, and political relations'. As they stand, the two perspectives are not necessarily incompatible but, rather, depend on the particular concept of art applied. Certainly, it could be argued, as Handsman does, that the exhibition of ethnographic objects as 'art' often involves the imposition of a nineteenth-century Western European concept, whose application incorporates the objects of other cultures within the framework of Western European values and blocks understanding of their indigenous meaning and cultural context. Moreover, the concept of 'art' can mask the process by which the object was acquired: 'basket diverted by flattery and gold from funeral pyre' is unlikely to be part of the label. These dangers are certainly there in the aestheticization of the works of other cultures. However, I would argue that the fault lies not just in the overall context of exhibitions, but also in the particular concept of aesthetics employed. An exhibition may use the concept of art as a means of focusing attention on a set of objects in a way that asserts the value of the products of another culture, and yet simultaneously draw attention to the wider context of the objects in their indigenous frame. Used reflexively, the exhibition of ethnography as 'art' may involve a repositioning of the concept of art itself, moving it away from its nineteenth-century meanings towards one that is more relevant to the particular cross-cultural discourse concerned.

The incorporation of things within a unitary category of objects that are defined as 'art', and which are to be viewed together as an exclusive set specifically for their aesthetic effect, is what appropriates their cultural value and history and subordinates them to Western values. If, rather than seeing aesthetics as referring to this unitary category of objects, we see it as a dimension that any object can potentially possess, then the danger of imposing one set of values over others can be avoided. Instead, we may be able to enter into a cross-cultural discourse about the aesthetic potential of objects. Handsman is certainly right to say that such a discourse requires more than the display of objects on a pedestal in a particular light, and, indeed, more than the simple presentation of the objects. Such an impoverished and narrow conception of the way in which the aesthetic dimension of an object can be appreciated is an imposition of taste that narrows, rather than opens up, the possibilities of cross-cultural appreciation. Handsman and McMullen (1987: 34) go so far as to suggest that 'when presented and interpreted as art, splint baskets were not, and cannot be, "read" as artifacts of specific societies'. However, by identifying aesthetics and art with nineteenth-century values they may be falling into a trap: by defining art and aesthetics ethnocentrically they deny the possibility of their existence in other cultures. By creating the category 'art' in relation to a particular kind of non-functional aesthetic display valuable, associated with what Brook (1986) refers to as the 'gemstone' model of art, our predecessors appropriated not simply the objects that were put into that category but also the concept of art itself. For a while, 'art' became limited to a certain category of objects. This definition is not only subject to an anthropological critique, but was also subject to criticism from Western 'art' producers.

Art across Cultures

The word ‘art’ defies simple definition. Historically, ‘art’ can best be treated as a number of different words whose meaning varies depending on who is using the term and when. But it is possible to suggest some core components that seem to be common to most of its usages. The defining characteristics of art objects, or of the artistic dimension of objects, tend to include references to their aesthetic properties, to their effect on the senses, and to their expression of meaning and value. While not all objects labelled as art share every one of these characteristics, they tend to form part of a polythetic set with overlapping attributes. The narrow Western definition of art, with its category of ‘set-aside’ objects, is misleading because it has appropriated many of the more general ideas that lie behind the concept, and because it has added so many irrelevant exclusion clauses. Art objects become objects that have no other function, or are the product of individual creativity, or are defined according to innumerable other criteria that were signs of the myths of a particular period of history and a particular ideology, whether free-enterprise capitalism or socialist realism.

Guss (1989) addresses this issue in a rich analysis of the basketry of the Yekuana, a people of the Upper Orinoco River in Venezuela. He argues that while the Yekuana do not have a word for art, they do distinguish between works that are manufactured within the guidelines of traditional design, *tidi'uma*, and the mass of goods that they acquire through trade, *mesoma*, the latter word remaining ‘a synonym for any insipid or alien object’ (*ibid.*: 69). *Tidi'uma*, on the other hand, combine, in their manufacture, raw materials and use, a fusion of symbolic elements and functional values. In making and using them, individuals continually recreate the cultural values and physical and metaphysical processes of which they are a part:

to become a mature Yekuana is not only to develop the physical skills demanded of one’s gender, but also the spiritual awareness that the preparation of these goods imparts. In a society that has no special category for a work of ‘art’, there can be no object that is not one. Or put another way, to become a true Yekuana is to become an artist. (*ibid.*: 70)

At first sight, Guss’s analysis seems to contain a paradox: he begins by stating that the Yekuana have no word for art and yet ends up by stating that to become a true Yekuana is to become an artist. Is there simply a lexical gap in Yekuana that is filled by the English term? Is Guss writing rhetorically? Or is this simply a case of muddled thinking? The answer is, most likely, none of these, but lies in the problem of cultural relativism and the limitations of ordinary language, though rhetoric too may play a part. From a cultural-relativist perspective, concepts are defined according to the particular context in which they occur: it is not anticipated that the concept of ‘art’ will be any different from such concepts as ‘marriage’, or a ‘relative’, or ‘conception’, in that they all vary cross-culturally. Yet the very fact that we are applying the terms and seeking the equivalent concepts across cultures

implies that we have a more general concept that transcends the particular case and is part of the anthropologist's metalanguage. What Guss is saying, then, is that what he understands by, or defines as, the concept of art is found in something of the activities of every Yekuana. By definition, that concept could not be, or should not be, identical to the Western European concept of art, since that concept in turn will be relative to its cultural context and hence be culture-bound.² The metaconcept is related to the Western concept because anthropologists begin their comparative enterprise from their own culture, and in its recent origins, at least, anthropology is a Western science. The concept should be defined independently of, but necessarily with reference to, the ordinary-language usage of the word 'art'.

The situation is, though, even more complex than this. The Western concept of art is itself a many-headed monster, the definition of which analysts and theoreticians struggle continually to change. Indeed, the 'arts' of non-Western peoples, folk art and Oriental art have all been used by artists as part of their intra-cultural dialogue attempting to inspire Western practice and change Western concepts. Thus the analyses that anthropologists or art historians make of the arts of other cultures can, in turn, have consequences for Western art: *unlike the Yekuana, Western artists are attuned to seeing aesthetic value in other peoples' cultural products*. The presentation of Yekuana basketry as 'art', the assertion that it has an aesthetic dimension, that it is a sculptural form, is both a challenge to the Western category of art and, at the same time, if it is successful, something that results in a broadening of the category.³ The Western category of art, responds to criticism anaconda-like, by swallowing it whole. It is broad in ways that the Yekuana category is narrow. The Yekuana do not recognize any cultural value in objects introduced from outside for functional purposes. Western cultures, on the other hand, consume through aesthetics the objects of other cultures and discard their functions. The basket becomes a 'sculptural form', no longer a container for grain or a plate for cassava. This paradox has something to do with economic processes and the articulation of modes of production, but also has much to do with cultural differences. Whatever the cause, one of the consequences has been that while people of the Fourth World (see Graburn 1976) stop producing baskets

2. The perspective on the comparative method developed by Marilyn Strathern (1988: 8) is very relevant to the cross-cultural study of art: 'Comparative procedure, investigating variables across societies, normally decontextualizes local constructs in order to work with context-bound analytic ones. The study of symbolic systems presents a different problematic.... The task is not to imagine one can replace exogenous concepts by indigenous counterparts; rather the task is to convey the complexity of the indigenous concepts in reference to the particular context in which they are produced. Hence I choose to show the contextualized nature of indigenous constructs by exposing the contextualized nature of analytical ones.' Indeed, I would argue that one of the main achievements of the anthropology of art has been to pose questions about the Western category and concept of art and to expose its contextualized nature.

3. The corollary of this is that Western art history must also be, in Sutton's (1987) term, 'additive'.

and replace them with plastic containers and recycled products from the industrialized world (which they may or may not value aesthetically), the institutions of the industrialized world exhibit Fourth World products as works of art and increase their ‘value’.

Exhibiting Art

When trying to persuade a Western public of the aesthetic dimension of other peoples’ material culture, anthropologists present their arguments not only through their writings, but also by organizing exhibitions of other peoples’ work as art. And as we have seen, it is in the context of the art gallery that the Western definition of art and the anthropological metaconcept of art have the opportunity to get almost inextricably muddled. As Luke Taylor (1988: 93) has written:

why is it that we find objects from other cultures so beautiful, even though we know that at some level, the aesthetic values objectified in the work must be culturally specific? Clearly, an emphasis on the culture-specific quality of aesthetic values is not sufficient to describe the complexity of the situation.

There are two reasons why exhibition as art became an almost inevitable part of anthropologists’ presentation of their case. First, part of the metadefinition of art involves aesthetics, and one of the Western ways of communicating the aesthetic properties of an object is through exhibition. Secondly, part of the cultural-relativist agenda is to signify the essential equivalence of world cultures by a metaphysical criterion of equal cultural value. Value in this context is intra-cultural: it is created in each case in terms of the cultural system of which it is a part. The cultural relativist demonstrates the equivalence of this difference by explicating the values of the particular culture in terms of its own processes of reproduction, by drawing attention to analogous processes operating in other cultural contexts, by using rhetorical devices that assert that objects or processes of similar value exist in different cultures, and by showing that it is possible for a member of one culture to appreciate value as it exists for a member of another through a process of cultural translation. In this context, ‘art’ is used as a rhetorical device to carry over to the objects and ultimately to the agents of ‘other’ cultures the connotations of art as high cultural value. They produce objects of ‘art’, therefore they are of equal value to us, even though the ‘art’ they produce is different. In the former case, rather than asserting the equivalence of value, the anthropologist is arguing that, from a cross-cultural perspective, value is value-neutral. In the second case, the more positive assertion, that all cultures are of equal value, is being made.

The cultural-relativist agenda grew out of opposition to nineteenth-century evolutionary schema, which created out of the world’s cultures a graded series, in

which those at the top had art, science and civilization and those at the bottom did not. This imposition of a particularly culture-bound definition of art, in association with a colonialist ideology, denied art to many cultures and, since art was one of the signs of civilization, devalued the things they produced. George Kubler (1991: 85) has written about the distaste for America in European thought and literature:

The distaste was and remains a negative esthetic expression about America and Americans during the Enlightenment, and it survives in Europe and elsewhere today.... [There was] a dominant belief in enlightened Europe, from 1750 to 1900, that America was inferior as to its natural and racial endowment. Buffon as a naturalist in 1750 deprecated the animal species as inferior and the humans in ancient America as 'impotent and savage'. Kant's verdict as philosopher in 1778—that Amerindians 'were incapable of any culture, still far behind the Negroes'—was followed by Hegel's 'immature and impotent continent'.

It is against this background that we should see the work of such early museum ethnographers as Mason and W. H. Holmes, and the even more fundamental contribution of Franz Boas. They were concerned to communicate the aesthetic features of Native American material culture through the development of collections and the organization of exhibitions, as well as through their writings. In doing so, they were involved in a process of asserting the value of Native American culture and way of life, making Native Americans visible again as people and showing them in a positive light.

The initial division between ethnographic museums, where Native American arts were shown, and art galleries, where art in the European tradition was exhibited, was in itself a continuing imposition of the Western concept of art. In one sense, the failure to divide the products of Native American cultures into art and non-art would have accorded with Yekuana classifications, but in another sense it represented the continued subordination of Native American artefacts to the evolutionary schema. This contradiction cannot easily be resolved. If only certain works are selected for inclusion within the art gallery, being chosen either on arbitrary aesthetic grounds or by analogy with Western categories of art objects—for example, objects with painted designs, then that continues the process of appropriation: the objects are reclassified without reference to indigenous values. It is here that exhibiting ethnographic objects as art becomes part of a radical critique of art galleries: it provides a challenge to narrowly constructed definitions of art and to the separation of art from artefact that was the product of a particular period of European history. And though it can be argued that this strategy also incorporates artefacts within global processes that are essentially part of a Western agenda, it has the advantage of doing so by making people reflect on other peoples' categories and other constructions of the world.

Other Peoples' Aesthetics

In discussing the exhibition of products of the Fourth World, of 'other cultures', as aesthetic objects, it is helpful to make an initial distinction between the aesthetics of the producing culture and the aesthetics of the exhibiting culture (though we shall see that the distinction is not an easy one to maintain). To begin with, I shall assume that the distinction is a strong one and accept the cultural-relativist position that different cultures have different and relatively autonomous aesthetic traditions. What is beautiful to members of one culture may not be to members of another, or, to phrase it more generally, the aesthetic sensibilities of one culture may differ radically from those of another. The same object may be seen, felt, or appreciated in different ways and on the basis of different attributes, to the extent that it may, arguably, become a different object. To take an apparently extreme and hypothetical example, in one case aesthetics might include how the object smelt and in the other focus on attributes of shape. If an object from the former culture were exhibited on the basis of its shape and surface form, then it would be treated in terms of the aesthetics of the exhibitor rather than of the producer. In the case of basketry, it is quite conceivable that matters such as the smell or the feel of the basket, as well as its appearance, should be part of its aesthetics for the producer. It is worth quoting at length Trudie Lamb Richmond (1989: 127-9), herself a Native American, writing about Schaghticoke basketry:

To understand and appreciate Native American basket-making fully, one must make the transition in thinking from materialism to spiritualism.... I spoke to a Mohawk basket-maker not long ago and asked her how she felt about weaving sweet grass into her baskets. Sweet grass is used by her people in their ceremonies and like tobacco is believed to have great power.... She told me she had thought about this meaning and that was why she always talked to the sweet grass and to her baskets as she made them. She said that she asked forgiveness for having to sell the baskets, but that she needed the money to survive. Using the sweet grass would keep the baskets strong and alive, and she hoped that the people who bought them would appreciate their significance. The basket weaver explained that she never picked the grass without making a tobacco offering.

The particular raw material used will usually have an impact on the visible form of the object, but this is not always going to be the case. Moreover, the aesthetic appreciation of that visible form may be enhanced by knowledge of the properties of the raw materials used and their cultural significance. It is sometimes difficult, even impossible, for museums to allow their public access to the full aesthetic potential of an object, since touching the object may transgress the requirements of conservation, and smell, like colour, fades with time. However, it should always be possible to draw the public's attention to the existence of such properties.

Aesthetic relativism thus applies to the non-visible properties of objects and to the intersection of form and cultural meaning. But it also applies to observable

form. When considering shape alone, there is no reason to suppose that the attributes of observable form that were appreciated by the maker, and are part of the object's intended form, are going necessarily to be the ones seized on by the consuming or exhibiting culture. Mason sets out what he considers to be the basis of the aesthetics of Native American basketry:

Unity in variety, the underlying principle in all esthetic composition, finds its first step illustrated in the making up of a basket.... This unity is of a very high order; for in many examples, coupled with a monotony of elements absolutely under control of the artist, there is at the same time a charming variation in width and length of parts in harmony with, and made necessary by, the widening and narrowing of the basket.... Usually the perfection of stitch is the aim of the worker. (1988: 142)

In the following paragraphs he provides a catalogue-type entry and a lyrical description of a Washoe basket that efficiently summarizes a whole range of attributes that go into the Western appreciation of a basketry form:

A rare coiled basket made by a Washoe woman named Datsolalee. It is in the collection of A. Cohn, Carson City, Nevada. The piece measures 8½ inches high, is 12 inches wide, and 6 inches wide at the opening. The stitches number more than fifty thousand, being thirty to the inch. The body colour is a rich light gold, and the figures are in red and black. It weighs 16 ounces, and is valued at many hundreds of dollars. The figures on the basket represent birds migrating or flying away, the motto being, 'When the birds leave their nests and fly away, we shall move.' The shape of this piece and the quality of the sentiment in the markings are excelled only by the inimitable quality of the work on the surface. It is difficult to conceive of a more perfectly uniform piece of handiwork than this. (ibid.: 142-3)

It is easy to see how this description comes out of his theoretical framework, related as it is to the technique-and-form school of Gottfried Semper. The weights and measures, the meticulous counting of stitches and the stress on uniformity, gain meaning through the idea that perfection arises out of the application of technique to functional form. There is nothing wrong with such a perspective, and it is one that has, in Mason's case, resulted in a magnificent examination of the relationship between technique and form that can provide the basis for much further research. However, the description tells us little about the aesthetics of Washoe baskets from the perspective of the Washoe producer. For example, although it hints that there may be a dimension of content that articulates with technique and form, it leaves that unexplored. While Washoe aesthetic processes and concepts may have much in common with Mason's interpretations of the

aesthetics of their baskets, we are not presented with any evidence that this is the case.⁴

A Cross-Cultural Definition of Aesthetics

As Coote (1989: 237) has argued, 'the explication of the differences between different cultures' ways of seeing should...be the primary task of the anthropology of aesthetics'. Although it may be perfectly legitimate to see other peoples' works through the eyes of one's own culture, the anthropologist's job is to reconnect aesthetics with the culture that produced the object. However, before going on to consider how such a reconnection can be achieved, and how it might be reflected in exhibiting the works of 'other cultures', I can no longer postpone the task of defining a little more precisely what I include under the rubric of aesthetics. I have discussed the issue of cross-cultural aesthetics in detail elsewhere (Morphy 1989, 1992b) and will only summarize the arguments here.

In the case of material culture, 'aesthetics' refers to the effects of properties of objects on the senses, to the qualitative dimension of the perception of objects. Such properties include physical ones, such as an object's form, surface qualities, feel and smell. They may also include non-material attributes of the object that are signified by it or associated with it, such as the attributes of age or distant place or magical substance. In relation to physical properties, these stand as connotation to denotation. Many of the physical properties are apprehended cross-culturally. Such attributes as weight, shininess, softness, perhaps even symmetry and balance, are analogous to electricity in that they can have an impact on the nervous system irrespective of the cultural background of the person experiencing them. The non-material attributes presuppose cultural knowledge.

The properties of the object are not in themselves aesthetic properties, any more than an electric shock is. They become aesthetic properties through their incorporation within systems of value and meaning that integrate them within cultural processes. Shininess and symmetry, as aesthetic properties, are interpreted or appreciated on the basis of certain evaluative criteria that, in simple terms, cause them to be viewed positively or negatively, either in themselves or in relation to other properties or combinations of properties. This value converts an abstract, or

4. There have been a few studies that have attempted to elicit the aesthetic criteria employed by Native American basketmakers, one of the most substantial being the comparatively early study by O'Neale (1932) of the Yurok-Karok of North California. Her study, however, was based on short-term fieldwork and fails to explore the indigenous categories or to consider the connotations of particular forms. Moreover, the questions of emotional effect and the language of aesthetic appreciation from an emic viewpoint are hardly considered. I am grateful to Ed Carter for drawing my attention to O'Neale's work.

almost physical, property into an aesthetic quality, and this quality cannot be assumed to be invariant across cultural boundaries. The aesthetic quality may in turn be linked to particular cultural meanings, and these too can vary cross-culturally. One of the classic examples of the incorporation of aesthetic properties of objects within an overall system of value is that of the Massim region of Papua New Guinea, where the property of heaviness is associated with land, agricultural production and femaleness, and lightness is associated with voyaging, exchange of goods and male careers (see Munn 1986: 80 ff.). Thus, aesthetics involves not simply how something looks and is appreciated, but also how it is felt and understood. This insight illustrates both the difficulties and the potentialities of communicating aesthetic values cross-culturally. Understanding the aesthetic response of a member of another culture to an object requires suspending one's own response to it, and learning how that object and its attributes are incorporated into systems of value and meaning. If one can teach people to interpret and value the properties of the objects of another culture according to the aesthetics of that culture, then one may provide a powerful insight into that world, and into what it feels like to be a member of it.

Guss's analysis of the cultural context of Yekuana basketry provides an excellent basis for the understanding of Yekuana aesthetics. The Yekuana employ a technique that is widespread throughout much of the Amazonian region, and many of the designs that are found on their basketry also occur throughout the region. Employing a perspective from Western aesthetics (that used by Mason, for example) would make it difficult to differentiate between the particular cases. Yet, despite the existence of common cultural themes that cross-cut the region, we know that the meaning of the particular elements, and the context of their occurrence and use, varies from place to place. Guss's particular focus is on the Yekuana *waja*, the circular serving-trays that are used for their staple food, cassava. It is impossible to summarize the full complexity of his analysis, so I will concentrate on only a few aspects of it.

In a revealing section (Guss 1989: 79-85), he shows how baskets mark stages in the first year of a marriage. A man is expected to make nearly the full complement of baskets that his household requires. The first basket that he weaves for his wife is a version of a plain basket called a *waja tingkuihato*. It is a finely woven basket made from cane. Although woven in a single colour, the mosaic of the weave produces a pattern of radiating lines referred to as *kutto shidiyu* (or 'frog's bottom'). It is from this basket that the couple eat during the first year of their marriage. At the end of the year, the husband weaves a *waja tometo* ('painted' basket), whose pattern is marked out by the use of alternating black and white plaits. By changing the sequences of plaiting, the technique can be used to produce an almost infinite variety of different designs. The particular design selected is chosen after consultation between the man and his father, and may well be one that was used by his father or grandfather for one of their wives. The use of the painted *waja* is a sign that the marriage is established: 'the special images

woven into this ‘painted’ *waja* will be a clear statement of the strength and uniqueness of their bond’ (*ibid.*: 82).

In order to explain the opposition between the frog’s bottom baskets and the painted baskets, and the different contexts of their use, we must consider both the significance of the materials of which they are made and also the significance of the designs themselves. The plain basket is made from *ka’na*, a sacred cane that had its origins in ‘heaven’ and was one of the original materials brought down to earth (*ibid.*: 141). It is considered both a pure and a safe substance; it is also in some sense considered to be pre-cultural. Plain baskets, similar to the ‘frog’s bottom’, but less finely made, are used in the context of fasts and in other situations where people are particularly concerned with purity. The painted *waja* are made from two varieties of cane that are associated with powerful and dangerous spirit familiars that can be life-threatening, unless treated with care (*ibid.*: 127). People who are in a weak or spiritually dangerous condition, or who are responsible for someone in such a condition (for example, the father of a new baby), must avoid contact with the cane and eat from a plain basket. The designs themselves reflect this ambivalent status, since they represent subjects that are both potentially dangerous and of cultural value, sources of poisons for example, and such animals as the jaguar. For people who are in a spiritually strong condition, the painted baskets can be a positive force, purifying food by symbolically removing poisonous substances, marking the identity of the person and enabling the maker to reflect on myths and cultural processes. The use of the plain basket during the early part of a marriage can thus be seen both as precautionary, while a potentially dangerous relationship, in which childbirth and anger are never far away, is being established, and as a sign of the newness of the relationship and its potential (*ibid.*: 81). The painted basket, on the other hand, is a sign of the strength of a relationship that is well established and marks it with a particular identity. It links the marriage with the history of a family and of a culture.

Thus, for the Yekuana, the aesthetics of their basketry involves its integration within a cultural context in which the form of a basket and the contexts of its use together provide part of the framework of the Yekuana world. The value of the plain basket exists in relation to the value of the painted basket, and a Yekuana appreciation of its form will involve the understanding of its significance as an object of purity, a connotation that can be conveyed by its ‘material, technique, design, and function...coordinated to communicate the same message’ (*ibid.*: 146).

It might be argued that Guss’s fine analysis has produced the elucidation of the cultural value of Yekuana baskets, rather than an exposition of their aesthetics: the aesthetics, if anything, is the anthropologist’s aesthetics, as he or she delights at the way in which cultural meanings can be read into everyday material objects. My response to such an argument would be to both reject it and accept it. It may be rejected, in the sense that the cultural meanings are going to affect the way in which objects are perceived, and are going to be integral to the ways in which the forms of the objects have an impact on the senses. Aesthetic perceptions and conceptions are part of a cultural system. The aesthetic effects of objects are not

only part of value-creating processes, but are also affected in turn by the values given to them and the meanings of objects into which people are socialized. While the meanings of plain as opposed to painted *waja* are not in themselves aesthetic values, they are likely to influence the aesthetic perception of baskets of the respective types, and may be part of the way in which an aesthetic system is culturally structured through the consistent association of perceived form with emotional content. On a priori grounds, the aesthetics of a painted *waja* is going to be different for someone who associates it with potentially dangerous forces and substances, from what it is for someone who sees it only as a design form. The emphasis on cultural knowledge, on the cultural semiotics and connotations of the objects, is a necessary counter to those who see knowledge of meaning and context as almost an impediment to aesthetic appreciation.

However, although analysis of cultural meanings is a necessary component of an anthropological study of aesthetics, I should make clear that I do not intend to reduce aesthetics to cultural meaning or context. In order to analyse the aesthetic dimension of a particular object, it is necessary to go beyond sketching in the cultural background to an examination of the particular way in which the object is appreciated, perceived and evaluated by members of that culture, and to show how the creation of an aesthetic effect is explicitly or implicitly part of the intentional production of perceivable form. The task of the anthropologist is to elicit interpretations, take note of the data and observe the structurings of effects across media, thereby filling in the gap between cultural analysis and the objects as experienced by members of the culture.

Conclusion: Basketry, Aesthetics and Colonialism

Even with the information we now have, we do not know how the Yekuana 'see' their basketry, how they divide it up into components, how baskets fit into their perceptual world. As Forge (1970: 286) wrote, 'it is impossible literally to see through the eyes of another man, let alone perceive with his brain. Yet if we are to consider the place of art in any society...we must beware of assuming that they see what we see and vice versa.' An anthropology of perception, if such existed, might enable us to get closer, but to see as the Yekuana do would require that we were socialized into their world, and that we were used to the light and shade and the sounds and smells of the rain forest. The ethnography does, however, give us a greater understanding of what and how the baskets mean to the Yekuana, and provides a perspective on how to view them and how to value them. With this information we certainly do not see the baskets as we saw them before, and we may have shifted a little closer to the Yekuana view. We appreciate the baskets, as the Yekuana do, in terms of their form, texture, colour, and even smell; and knowledge of the way these aspects are culturally valued brings us closer to the

Yekuana aesthetic system and enables us to reflect on whether the form, texture, colour and smell are the same for them as they are for us.

In most cases, we do not have this quality of information concerning the cultural significance of objects. Moreover, exhibitions usually consist of objects from many different cultures, with only one or two examples from each place. This is partly because of the nature of the collections, partly because of strict criteria of aesthetic selection (the 'only the best examples will do' syndrome) and partly because there are many reasons, other than the aesthetics of a particular cultural tradition, that motivate the exhibitor. The exhibition may be designed to display regional variation, or the effect of different techniques on form, or the impact of European 'contact' on design. But rather than seeing such exhibitions as fundamentally wrong and misguided, we can draw more positive lessons from our discussion of Yekuana aesthetics.

We have learned that it is possible to gain insights into other peoples' aesthetic traditions. Using a variety of different sources of information—the objects themselves, written texts and labels, film, photography, dioramas—it would be possible to create a museum exhibition that was designed specifically to evoke and inform about the aesthetics of another culture. Indeed, it might be argued that in designing ethnographic exhibitions anthropologists should be able to help people see the objects in that light, and should always be aware of the dangers inherent in subordination to an alien aesthetic tradition. Once people are attuned to the idea that other aesthetics exist—that there are ways of understanding a set of objects that are separate from the canons of our own taste and outside the historical tradition of our own art—then a lesson has been learned that can be applied even in cases where the viewer is ignorant or where information is lacking. The aesthetic contemplation of the objects of other cultures in the light of knowledge of cultural difference encourages people to reflect on the meanings that may be there, and on their cultural value, and encourages them to look beyond surface form. Focus on the aesthetic dimension could provide a source of information about other cultures, just as much as any so-called objective abstraction from the object, such as its function, can.

Such is the complex nature of human cultures that any way of exhibiting objects involves selection and simplification. Seeing objects as functional types, or regional types, or frozen in some pastiche of their cultural context in the form of a diorama, can be as misleading as displaying them on pedestals as 'art', and is just as likely to confirm cultural stereotypes. Exhibiting as 'art' does have benefits. If the historical context is right, then the assertion of the value of the objects as art can play a part in the process that results in the acknowledgement of the equal humanity and cultural achievement of the producers, which can have consequences for the recognition of their rights. It can even have economic consequences: products that are no longer used to store grain can be produced for sale in the market, resulting in a form of economic integration that, paradoxically, can help to maintain and perpetuate cultural differences through a process of cultural transformation.

The manufacture of objects for sale inevitably results in an interchange of value and in the migration of aesthetic concepts. However, this neither lessens the authenticity of the objects nor makes them into alien products, but merely adds another screen through which to view the complex, emergent image of cross-cultural aesthetics. Aesthetic systems have never really been neatly packaged into discrete boxes labelled with the names of individual cultures. Although, as a symbolic system, Yekuana baskets seem to fit together in a neat package, they have always been traded with neighbouring groups, who shared many of the same designs and symbolic themes and defined themselves in relation to those themes. Coherence is created through flux.

Native American basketry exists as part of a regional network of trade and exchange in which styles change over time and in which aesthetic appreciation of neighbouring styles must always have been a factor. Trade with Europeans added another dimension to basketmaking, albeit one that for most of its duration has been linked indissolubly with the colonial process and has had the strands of domination, expropriation and exploitation woven into its being. But together with these are other strands of more positive origin, consisting of the aspiration of the weaver, the struggle to survive, to engage the other and to define the self. The overall mosaic, as Handsman (1987) suggests, was a fusion of colonial process and indigenous struggle. The woven and traded baskets became instruments of survival, which in more positive times could become objects of reflection and a basis for the continued assertion of cultural identity. Reflecting on the aesthetics of Native American basketry means reflecting on the aesthetics of particular cultures, and on the interchange of aesthetics and values between Native Americans and Europeans. But it also means reflecting on the fear, hostility, appropriation, dispossession and alienation that lies in between.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

**ETHNOGRAPHY AND GENERAL THEORY
OR PEOPLE VERSUS HUMANKIND**

PAUL DRESCH

RICHARD FARDON (ed.), *Localizing Strategies: Regional Traditions of Ethnographic Writing*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press / Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press 1990. x, 357 pp., Index. £17.50.

At the 1986 American Anthropological Association meetings in Philadelphia, Arjun Appadurai convened a panel called 'Place and Voice'. The aim was to discuss relations between regional ethnography and 'metropolitan' theory.¹ Two months or so later, having planned the event two years before, Richard Fardon convened a conference at St. Andrews 'to examine the dialectic between regional and theoretical factors in the development of monograph writing' (p. ix). The tendencies in anthropology that gave both conveners pause for thought still flourish like the green bay tree, and the Fardon volume provokes reflection.²

1. For the resulting papers, see *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. III, no. 1, 1988. Unfortunately, Friedrich chose not to include his admirable piece to which I refer below. The use of 'metropolitan' to describe sociological theory in such contexts as the present one is Appadurai's.

2. The contributors to the volume and their subjects are: McKnight on Australia, Riches on Eskimology, James on Sudan and Ethiopia, Tonkin on West Africa, Werbner on South-Central Africa (a very welcome reprint), Parkin on East Africa, Strathern on Melanesia, Gilsenan on the (western) Middle East, Street on the (eastern) Middle East, Burghart on India, Kapferer on Sri Lanka, Hobart on Bali, and Moeran on Japan.

Reading Skills

The shadow of the ‘writing culture’ movement hangs over most of the papers here. Fardon’s introduction provides a good critical summary of the issues, and he rightly distinguishes James Clifford from the epigones. Still, a mention of Hayden White would help: Clifford, after all, tries to do for anthropology what White did for history some years ago—and one of the attractive things about White’s work (see White 1978, 1987) was the way ‘the burden of history’ never quite disappeared into textuality. Clifford, for his part, despite his skill, ends up with a gap between humanism and determinism, which ‘textuality’ covers unconvincingly: ‘It is as if Clifford covertly recognizes two historical periods: a period of Anglo-French imperialism marked by political inequalities, and another of American ascendancy during which politics have become textually internalized’ (Fardon, p. 12). We are now in the latter. The supposed links, or lack of them, between texts and politics dominate the literature, while style establishes authors’ claims to be thought politically correct. But as Rabinow notes (cited by Fardon, p. 16), no one’s credentials are stamped by denouncing a dead colonialism. We are constantly faced with inauthenticities that have long been a joke in literary criticism—the ‘dangers of the text’, for instance, which really amount to the risk of paper-cuts.

How much this has to do with the practice of anthropology is doubtful. This is not (*pace* Fardon) because style and content are separable, but because few issues are entirely new. Moeran’s discussion of his own work, for instance, explains how dropping the dates from his material freed him to write more tellingly: ‘I found I was able to collapse time, to take totally separate entries from my written journals and place them together thematically’ (p. 349). Those snared in current muddles over fact and fiction might think this either ‘literary’ or dishonest. But all ethnographers do something like this. The last explicit go around the subject simply happened to run the other way: the Manchester school’s ‘extended case method’ was aimed precisely at the practice of ‘apt illustration’ (see e.g. Gluckman 1967: xiii-xiv), and the failure of their attempts to analyse ‘total process’ was exemplary. Descriptions are always partial. Many problems have occurred before in less exotic language than that of modern textualism, and one fears anthropologists less well read than Moeran have discovered they were speaking prose all these years. Indeed, the wide acceptance of ‘ethnographies as texts’ as, in effect, a new paradigm tends to rob one of means to read anthropology.³

3. ‘The essays [in *Writing Culture*] do not claim ethnography is only “literature”’ (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 26). One of the unintended consequences of the movement, however, was that many students concluded that all ethnographies were ‘fictions’ and thus much of a muchness, which was not the point. To recover the value of the movement one almost has to go back to where it started (e.g. Marcus and Cushman 1982). But it seems fair to say that the ‘writings on writing’ with the greatest audience have been precisely those that show little sense of context.

A properly reflexive anthropology would be one aware of its own history, and thus alert to where its concepts come from—able, among other things, to think what in fact has changed when problems seem to reappear. But much recent ‘theory’ (I shall justify those quotation marks as I go along) seems directed at an audience that reads very little and for whom anthropology’s past disappears into mist ten years ago. Nothing could be more at odds with the subject’s practice. Where psychology and sociology do indeed work mainly with new publications, anthropologists use even old journals, let alone old books, almost as much as recent ones (MacLeod 1985; see also Beattie 1971). An illusion of unilinear progress requires sorting grain from chaff: ‘theories may be discarded as erroneous but ethnography always has some redeemable value and may be subjected endlessly to reanalysis’ (Fardon, p. 4), for instance; so Malinowski the field-worker seems contemporary and Malinowski the theoretician an exotic fossil. It depends how one sets about this, and of course what one means by ‘theory’. Models? Methods? The kind of claims Malinowski made about a ‘school’ of anthropology? Whichever of these, theory is as open as ethnography to reanalysis, and ethnography as much engrossed as theory with practicalities of time and place.⁴ But genealogies that mark only anthropologists no longer seem satisfactory.

Herzfeld’s *Anthropology Through the Looking Glass* (1987; thus after the Fardon conference) does an excellent job of locating such issues in Mediterranean anthropology. Not only is ‘theory’, in the sense here of a set of interests (an agenda for research, perhaps), linked persuasively to what was written at different times, but academic and local interests are shown to be entangled also, encompassed by claims that centre upon ‘Europe’. To show this requires reference to the myths of classical Greece and to constant reworkings of that imagery since the early nineteenth century. Again, the changing agenda of research in India makes sense within a larger history (see particularly Cohn 1968), which in this case can be traced back at least to Hegel (Appadurai 1988b).

Several papers in the Fardon volume remind one how far back current interests reach, though the spread of such interests has itself been recent. Kapferer, for instance, starts convincingly with Robert Knox on Ceylon, in the seventeenth century, to show the effects of emphasis on one region within Sri Lanka (pp. 280 ff.)—not an obvious move to make twenty years ago. One is also reminded that the subject lacks natural boundaries. Anything may be pressed to use in making sense of what we read and find. The breadth of possible references, as well as the subject’s indeterminate depth historically, requires that anthropology, more than most things, be always read symptomatically: this establishes, on the one hand, the

4. It should also be said that time and place determine ‘theory’s’ value. Leach’s ‘Rethinking Anthropology’ (1961), for instance, takes its value from the assumptions against which he wrote and which until then seemed natural to many. Malinowski’s ‘The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis’ (1939) by contrast, was not so much simply bad as surplus: it answered no ethnographic need.

significance of the pieces read and, on the other, the reader's own position. The products are highly various, and ways of reading define one's colleagues more clearly than do ways of writing.

Anthropology exists less in paradigms, or even departments now, than in what people read and how. But as the breadth of possible reference widens (more journals, more books, more conferences), so disagreements on how one selects from this become more pressing. The problems are all too obvious (common sense looks to others like coded language), but no obvious remedy is in sight, for if one passively accepts the current 'theory' (language coded elsewhere) then ethnography itself becomes clumsy if not redundant. *Localizing Strategies* and its kin suggest at least a shift of interest. Let us argue over what in fact we do instead of over what we claim. Fardon's volume offers the superficial paradox of a book on separate area-traditions addressing a fairly general audience without a discrete topic (no 'kinship' here, nor 'politics'; sub-title aside, it is not about 'writing'), in which perspective the unity of anthropology looks rather different and slightly odd. Though the mechanism receives no close attention, a good many people turn out to know butter from margarine. Not paradigms, but skills and problems are what we share—and an interest, of course, in how problems differ from place to place.

Language still nags, for instance. Gilsenan (p. 228) is politely diffident about the diffidence shown ethnographers of the Arab world who had studied Arabic. But societies with apparently quite different concepts of causality and the like ('classic' societies, one could have said some years ago) were too often those for whose languages we lacked a dictionary. Ignorance was bliss indeed:

The result has been that the anthropology of complex non-Western societies has, till recently, been a second class citizen in anthropological discourse. This...involves a kind of reverse Orientalism, whereby complexity, literacy, historical depth and structural messiness operate as disqualifications in the struggle of places for a voice in metropolitan theory. (Appadurai 1986: 357)

It is questionable whether that struggle matters much, and Indian ethnography was in any case (so the rest of us thought) what broke the jinx. Still, the primitive world, whether fact or fiction, is nowadays hard to come by: 'as the societies under consideration become more complex, literate and historical, the kind of decontextualization that facilitates generalization becomes harder to accomplish' (*ibid.*: 359). Our 'localizing strategies' seem not to keep up with this, and language remains the index: 'it is impossible, given the usual period of fieldwork of 12-18 months, for a fieldworker to learn them all [i.e. all the different tongues used in an Aborigine settlement]. Hence fieldworkers normally concentrate on one language' (McKnight, p. 57). Even that should give pause for thought. Admittedly language-learning in outback Australia or highland New Guinea must be intensive. But Arabic in a year? Mandarin Chinese? Tamil? What is the difference? This

particular nettle no one grasps, though it flowers where Appadurai points to problems.⁵

Assuming that ethnographers of different regions are roughly comparable, those studying the Arab world (or China or India) have to wonder of New Guinea (or Australia or the Amazon Basin) how much ethnographic error is lost in regional and dialect difference—we certainly misprise things easily in fieldwork, so do our colleagues in the bush somehow not? Those studying New Guinea have to wonder for their part (and so they should) what ethnographers of the Arab world (or China, or India) lose by consulting dictionaries when in doubt, which in practice happens often and notoriously flattens regional differences. In both cases, presumably, the anthropologist's practice aligns with local assumptions about hierarchy and comparability—in short, with local definitions that largely construct for us our objects of analysis. One can imagine a Fardonesque volume on the subject.

Such problems, however, and our awareness of them, are exactly what characterize anthropology. Lexical concerns are one space of several (the most obvious, perhaps; certainly the most discussed) that open towards over-interpretation or, more barbarously, 'over-troping'. Part of anthropology is spotting how one slips into this. When we do slip, we collapse the ethnographic process and present ourselves with an aspect of what we started with. Regardless of whether one knows a region in detail, one can often enough spot the chance of such slippage; and concern for this turns out to be common to people who work in areas that are otherwise very different. Anthropology, like history, consists of disparate practices tied together, when at all, by what Friedrich (see note 1 above) calls 'craftsmanship'. This remains so within a changing world that makes studying the erstwhile 'primitives' more like studying the erstwhile 'orient', or indeed more like studying Europe.

One of the nice things about the Fardon volume is that several contributors have the honesty to invoke their crafty standards, 'standards...by which [for instance] we should judge at least parts of this text [on the 'Nipnip' Nuer] as rubbish' (James, p. 125). We work by such standards constantly. It is foolish to pretend, when 'theory' gets loose (here with the sense of an unsecured claim to precedence), that we have none, for this only mislocates our problems. 'Writing', for one, was no panacea. Many of those writing about writing on culture write not very cultured prose: indeed, some seem incapable of a lucid sentence. Geertz, to take the opposite case, is scarcely lost for a crafted phrase or two (he is sometimes in the Ronald Firbank class), but too often he dazzles where a steady light is needed. Impatience with his work stems from other causes, which Hobart touches on here and has touched on elsewhere (1986: 146) in terms that, were ethnography

5. McKnight himself is very clear that language-learning is an index of the problem, not the problem itself. Rather, it falls within a general pattern of Australian studies where everything seems to happen 'just too late' (p. 51).

the only issue, would be simply damning.⁶ The terms are much like those suggested earlier, of collapsing the ethnographic process, presenting oneself with a mirrored image. Yet here is another sense of ‘theory’—not a set of interests, but a summary example that claims a wider than usual audience and inserts anthropology’s terms in common discourse (cf. Fardon, p. 24; Marcus and Cushman 1982: 51-3).

‘Theory’, then, has several senses. As a humble referent the term is useless, though its persuasive power can be quite strong. Recent interest in politics (at least, political language) and historicity (thus far, primarily, that of our own subject) seems in fact to turn around a more careful, less dramatic, practice of producing sense without over-interpretation, and language is the obvious case. As the subject becomes more popular we also have a problem of audience. On the one hand, those we rely on to get the point start to seem like cliques. On the other, an enormous readership is willing to consume if not ethnography, then certainly anthropology. We should not be surprised if generalities become the currency of rank and precedence, and ‘theory’ as it were the colour of the money.

Theory as Something New

Geertz’s role as the Margaret Mead of his generation was an extreme case of a common phenomenon, one that requires we remember anthropology’s place in the larger world of such things as literary weeklies. Certain modes of writing, it seems, key into our readers’ wishes (the image of individual actors elaborating meaning has been with us for years now), and they provide, to put the matter bluntly, means to fame and to self-advancement. The point has been made repeatedly, but more of the literature should have been cited in Fardon’s volume. As it is, disagreement with ‘star figures’ comes off too smugly as wicked America versus righteous Britain (or righteous Europe, to make the numbers up), whereas, in fact, the bulk of criticism has been from American-based or American-trained authors:⁷ it is there more than here that one has to deal with ‘a climate of competition which favours overbidding’ (Dumont’s diplomatic phrase). Yet the

6. The defensive phrase ‘Geertz envy’ has come into use on certain American circuits as if criticism were in bad taste. This will not do. If the emperor’s clothes are threadbare, he should simply not strut about like this.

7. Which having been said, the distinction between American and non-American authors is better dropped in a list of things to read on these subjects: e.g. Rabinow 1985, 1986; Keesing 1987; Sangren 1988; Spencer 1989. Sangren is particularly interesting and, to judge from several angry responses, struck a nerve. In their reply to him, ‘Michael M. J. Fischer and George E. Marcus, with Stephen A. Tyler’ (1988) (why are they listed like a TV production team?) go so far as to muddle together ethnography, post-modernism and the first atom bomb.

structure of publishing, if nothing else, ties us all to the same problems. The general and the new become elided as part of marketing, again with slightly odd results.⁸

Fardon contends that the appearance of ‘paradigm shifts’ and ‘crises’ is often contrived (p. 4), and he says of Marcus and Fischer (p. 16)—to take only one example—that ‘by chapters 5 and 6 of their book, the new in “new writing” has become synonymous with little more than recent’. Even this is not quite the point. Agreed that in academia (‘small world’, indeed) we are all meant to know what’s now and wow,⁹ yet arriving in 1984 in an American department where ‘the cutting edge’ was sought for self-advancement, and up-to-dateness therefore highly prized, one found that the now and the wow at issue were the same now and wow of ten years earlier: Foucault, Derrida and the usual gang, with the solitary addition of Mikhail Bakhtin.¹⁰ The rediscovered ethnographers of Marcus and Clifford’s world have an odd familiarity also: Bateson and Leenhardt, for instance, were long ago features of Rodney Needham’s reading lists, which one presumes was a matter not of trendiness but again of telling butter from margarine. There comes a point where you cannot tell if reading Bateson, say, was terribly advanced or backward.

The notion of discrete ‘theoretical time’ is *prima facie* implausible (note how strong a move in the theory wars it remains to exhume dead ancestors, never mind the odd fixity of those now and wow reading lists) and it scarcely reflects how the subject works. Area ethnographies are, at least, out of phase. If Gilsenan (p. 231) can bemoan the long dominance of ‘village studies’ in the Middle East, and Parkin can seek an escape from similar problems through de Heusch’s claim to something like a ‘great tradition’ in Africa (p. 185), then McKnight can still regret, at the same conference, the Aboriginalists’ taste for books that consider more than one group at once—‘a convention [sadly, it seems]...at variance with the norm of the intensive monograph elsewhere’ (p. 53). Quarrels over who is the more advanced can be left to the less well read and the more ambitious. Different regions have their own problems. The terms mean different things in each. But an interesting by-product of *Localizing Strategies* and its kin is that linear histories of ‘metropolitan theory’ itself lose their attraction as all but a source of rough labels. If the mid-1950s were ‘the high point of structural-functional accounts’, and thus an apt

8. Inflation of this kind is nothing new with novels. Memoirs of forty years ago, perhaps even ninety years ago, complain of every third work being hailed as a work of genius. Nor is playing for a general audience new to anthropology (Malinowski’s *Sex and Repression* is a famous case). But the elision of the general with the new is striking. See the publishers’ advertisements and (sadly) the reviews in most current journals of anthropology.

9. This valuable phrase I owe to Michael Fahy, who in turn attributes it to the noted Bronx nationalist Rick Bucci.

10. One suspects that not even a list of approved authors is quite the crux of the matter. There are those who came to Bakhtin through ‘theory’, those who heard of him through Dostoevsky (more often, to be exact, through V. S. Pritchett), and those innocents who have still not heard of him. For people in the first category, the other two categories could as well be one.

time for Laura Bohannan to publish reminiscence in novel form (p. 7), they were also the high point of many anti-structural-functional efforts whose kinship to their opponent was less apparent then than now. In short, we no longer use existing literature to keep time (to decide who is nearest the ‘cutting edge’, for instance) but to establish who and where we are in a world rather larger than anthropology.

We should not pretend as part of this that new ideas are all old ones (nor is nostalgia an honest option). Current interests in textual metaphors, in poetics, in literary criticism are all genuine additions to anthropology, just as has been people’s reading Foucault (rather less so Derrida) and taking note of political economy. Interests in different historicities and in forms of action are new. The major objection to the interests Clifford promotes could only be that the readings are still not ‘close’ enough. The problem arises when such interests serve as claims to authority, for anthropology, whatever else it is, is not a positive science.

The sciences themselves no longer look as they did. That too is part of what has changed—or should have done. Foucault and Derrida remain intensely fashionable (intensely misread also), but the same milieu that produced them produced also the rediscovery of Gaston Bachelard, whose writing on the history of science approved an ‘anabaptist’ philosophy: science in practice produced its own concepts, regardless of how philosophers said the world worked, and philosophy could not do more than aid their emergence and tidy up the world of ideas afterwards. The theme was taken up in Marxism, where the moral was drawn that theory’s claims to govern practice were extremely suspect.¹¹ To understand the world required, however, theoretical effort (the sense here was of not leaving analytical terms ‘unthought’) —a Feyerbandian free-for-all left ideology intact. Nor did it locate the author in a world where subjects of their nature are decentred—which was surely the single point to grasp if post-structuralism (much talked of in the years since then) is not to be pre-structuralism simply new and improved with added Frenchmen. The author’s position *vis-à-vis* readers and those written about is at issue, not a choice between tropology and objectivity. The joke has been that general ‘theory’ acquired such prominence in a world that (for ‘theoretical’ reasons, if you like) no longer has a legitimate place for it—and has not had for some time.

Whatever the sources, anthropology has internalized much that once looked like separable theory (here with the ‘meta-narrative’ sense; the commentary that legitimates what one does next). Works carry with them, in a way they did less before, a care for intellectual context. The range of reference, not least historical, that now routinely colours books and papers is an index of what has happened. Paradigms have given way to what looks like a ‘sense of the past’:

11. See Jenkins 1974, 1975. For a map of the French academic field at the time, see Lemert 1981. For an excellent introduction to what the issues were (and perhaps still are), see Soper 1986.

Without the sense of the past we might be more certain, less weighted down and apprehensive. We might also be less generous, and certainly we would be less aware. In any case, we have the sense of the past and we must live with it, and by it.

And we must read our literature by it... (Trilling 1951: 185)

By comparison, talk of general theory and of breaks with what came before has often come to look trivial. Marcus and Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (widely read and cited if any book has been in the last five years) was full of this: 'The essential tension fueling this kind of experimentation resides in the fact that experience has always been more complex than the representation of it that is permitted by traditional techniques of description and analysis in social-scientific writing' (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 43). The implication that 'non-traditional' techniques might not be less complex than experience betrays either dull experience or a strange conceit about one's place in a story as yet unwritten. The claim to be new has itself come to look old-fashioned.

In practice, the last several years have seen a 'growing tendency to produce careful, ethnographically based regional collections' (Appadurai 1986: 361), and the interest seems again to lie more with monographs than with pithy articles. This will not last for ever. Obstructions will build up more or less unnoticed, and we can all be surprised when shown what in fact they were; there lies another sense of 'theory', that of Wittgenstein's letting the fly from the bottle,¹² a sense compatible with 'anabaptist' interests. For the moment, however, the texture of ethnography seems in general rich. Major works routinely concentrate on unpacking the representations of at least local 'great traditions' (e.g. Fuller 1984), very often of missionary work (e.g. Fernandez 1982, James 1988), of colonial powers (e.g. Dirks 1987) and of nation-states (e.g. Davis 1987); even studies in particular villages show a keen appreciation of time and place (e.g. Boddy 1989; a particularly distinguished case). In what passed for 'theory' at the same period, all this was lost in an encounter between us (whoever 'we' might be) and the Other.¹³ The more conspicuous works of recent years thus already seem thin and to have formed a too-coherent knot.

The effect of claims to theoretical authority was to generalize anthropology's object, which ceased to be people and became instead 'humankind'. (Inclusive language made that much difference; it used to be called 'man'.) This bland confection, much the same in its essentials anywhere, could be analysed or interpreted, without reference to the past, by an equally unlocatable anthropologist.

12. Will that seem an in-group reference? Not so long ago it was common currency. The idea is simply that 'philosophical problems' arise from faulty questions—which may not be true of much philosophy but is certainly true of most ethnography.

13. Only recently did one realize who the Other is, that vast featureless being, well-intentioned and yet threatening, who haunts much current theory-writing: it is Mr Stay-Puft, the marshmallow man, in *Ghostbusters*.

The fantasy took many forms: not only ‘the interpretive turn’ itself, but ethnography as personal experience (e.g. Briggs 1970); the quest for ‘woman’ (e.g. Shostak 1981); the habit of taking ‘texts’ as the form of life; and, not least of course, the original ‘reflexivity’ (e.g. Dwyer 1982), which portrayed ethnography as two people in the void with a tape-recorder. All of this, as Hobart says (p. 311), presumed ‘an antic theory of individual and society’.¹⁴ But it also invites, as if all proper selves were similar, a warm glow of fellow-feeling in readers’ participation, and one rather thought someone (Hobart perhaps?) might quote, from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera on kitsch: ‘Kitsch causes two tears to fall in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass!’ It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.

Anthropology’s Position

The point of anthropology is judicious assessment of the sense people’s worlds and actions make, and to make them the same so thoughtlessly is to deprive each one of us of moral autonomy. Space must be left for the people studied. This is not a matter of ‘polyphony’ (let us use what tricks we may, by all means) but of keeping clear that accounts are partial and that the author’s position is not that of the people written about—which is surely where Bakhtin might have been of use. Unfortunately, the principle by which groups of ‘humankind’ were separated out (at least in some traditions) underwent a surreptitious change that confused things further, and further collapsed the relation between readers, writers and people written about. ‘Culture’ had been a handy, undefined term with vague associations of the ‘superorganic’: an attribute of groups, perhaps, and harmless enough when these groups were all neatly separate. Now they were not, it became the stuff that binds groups together and increasingly an attribute of individuals. The wider world took over anthropology’s term of too casual art. Certain parts of the subject (the process, one fears, has hardly started) became managers of this mystic substance, transmitting it back and forth in terms not mediated by history, class or structure of any kind.¹⁵ One can only be thankful that ethnography kept dropping

14. Hobart has a sharp nose for cant. But, particularly having quoted Butler ('For learned nonsense has a deeper sound...'), he should know to avoid words like 'amaurotic' (p. 312), 'allelomorphic' (*ibid.*) and 'autolatrous' (p. 330). Cynics will turn to his next paper expecting lots of difficult words that begin with B.

15. One hesitates to cite cases for fear of the point seeming just *ad hominem*. Yet the literature has been littered recently with ethnographers writing primarily of themselves as a ‘type’ of person.

what terms were not of use to it and left space for the people studied in the gaps of its reworking. The dispersal of ethnographic practice proved valuable. If anthropology now seems ‘all margins anyhow’ (Gilsenan, p. 238), well, most of it usually has been. Yet our own autonomy, with the resulting lack of certainty that we are ever right, seems always to worry people.

One of the odder features of the Fardon volume, and of others like it, is, therefore, that everyone feels left out, or nearly everyone. Eskimology has ‘a lowly place in the anthropological collective conscious’ (p. 71); ‘Africanists...at the conference owned to a common sense of marginality’ (p. 94); bookshops used to file Middle East ethnography under area, not under anthropology (p. 228; they still do, of course); ‘the reputation of South Asianists in Social Anthropology is not a very good one’ (p. 260). Admittedly, the first essay starts on a more confident note—‘It is hard to imagine anthropology without Australian Aborigines...’; but even Aboriginalists, it turns out, suffered ‘isolation, and the concomitant feeling of being out of the main academic stream...’ (p. 62). So much so that many went to work elsewhere, presumably in search of real anthropology. Everything turns on an absent centre. So, is there a ghost haunting anthropology, or is this a case of mild hysteria? We should know, having read our Todorov, not to ask.

The important thing is how the illusion works. Ethnographic fields are ‘pre-constituted’ by regionally specific histories—colonialism, trade, missionaries, whatever it may be (Fardon, p. 24). Other subjects form part of the field—so sometimes historians get there first and anthropologists try to carve a niche for themselves (Europe would be the extreme case), sometime historians arrive later and anthropologists are on the defensive (West Africa; Tonkin, p. 144); sometimes imaginative literature pre-defines an area, sometimes only ethnography allows such literature to flourish (Ethiopia and Sudan; James, p. 96). But there are privileged spots where anthropologists talk to hardly anyone. If the *anthropology* of the Middle East loses its stress in an endeavour shared with historians and economists (Gilsenan, p. 238), and the anthropologists of India are engaged with textualists (Burghart, p. 270), then those studying New Guinea, say, talk to no one but other anthropologists—‘real’ anthropology seems defined by the lack of anyone else’s interest. The absent centre lies inland of Port Moresby. Add to this that other subjects, once away from area-specific detail, then come to us in search of ‘theory’ (the legacy of Lévi-Strauss’s fame?) and one has the recipe for endless self-doubt, not to mention *nostalgie de brousse*. If ethnography is indeed the ‘anabaptist’ part of things, however, then the doubts of those who feel peripheral are misplaced. Anthropology as such is not worth the worry (again, see Beattie 1971), though as a space in which to work and a source of ideas it deserves protecting.

Fittingly, one of the more confident pieces in *Localizing Strategies* is Marilyn Strathern’s on Melanesia. Much anthropology, she argues, has worked by inversion. But one has to expose the inversion’s base, as with contrasting gift economies and commodity systems where ‘what has to be cancelled is the apparent basis of comparison, which here would be the idea of “economy”’ (p. 211)—which

in turn, one has to say, is what we did in our student essays and what students generally still do. Agreed that single contrasts are inadequate,

Perhaps a staged encounter could be set up between alien conversers—Trobriand and Maori, for example. For the anthropologist, unable to represent the one completely in terms of the other, would use his or her Western concepts to mediate between the two in such a way as to give the analytical language the status of a visible third voice. (Strathern, p. 212)

‘Audible’ would be more to the point with voices, third or otherwise, but the general idea is excellent—and, one has to say, well within that set of ideas made common by structuralism decades back. One moment of anthropologists’ thought does seem like a kaleidoscope, where the distance is the same from all patterns to the watcher’s eye (Dresch 1988). Probably this is indispensable.

Yet presenting anthropology to the wider world (keep an eye on that changing audience) reveals a structure of conceptual distance much like that Edmund Leach concocted for animals, sex and naughty words. Ethnographies as wholes are not equivalent. Amazonian Indians or New Guinea Highlanders, and even the Nuer if one leaves out their recent history, all seem ‘other’ enough to be unworrying: if they do strange things, it is part of their ‘culture’; or as ‘people without history’ they form part of our own great tale, subjects (or objects) of colonial wickedness. The Indian caste system, by contrast, is an outrage to the liberal mind (Dumont was right enough there) and altogether too close to home, if only through its sheer longevity. The Islamic world is worse still, falling right on the boundary between home and the wild: the literate public find it hard to see the Middle East as people doing something other than we do; they see it all too easily as people doing what we do but apparently with perverse incompetence—hence some real taboos on the area’s study and a popular sense of something akin to panic. Europe is, in some respects, more difficult still. Japan presents problems. ‘Within particular nations,’ says Rosaldo (1988: 79), ‘those who most nearly resemble “ourselves” appear to be “people without culture”....’ This illusion in fact is widespread and distributed untidily over national boundaries. False resemblance is as much a problem as exoticism ever was. If one subscribes to the idea of ‘culture’ in this sense (not everyone does, of course), then Rosaldo is right that some places have far too much of it and others have far too little. The degree to which, for political and intellectual reasons, an area needs constructing (or for that matter, deconstructing) varies hugely from case to case: only then does the kaleidoscope process work.

There are vast imbalances of power at issue also, but power’s convolutions are less simple than some would have them. The image of an ‘ethnographic gaze’ dominating ‘the Other’ in a vast panopticon obscures the way that, for instance, Ethiopia’s own ‘imperial gaze’ presents an unwary world with ‘simple beings of nature who populate the fringes of empire’ (James, p. 99). A certain edge is given to James’s essay by the fact these are ‘her’ people being fantasized over—and, as it happens, displaced or murdered. Not everywhere is so grim. Yet the real position of those we study is often lost to the view of what passes as the academic

centre: flattening people into ‘otherness’ is indeed ‘empowering them only to exist in terms of their author’s sense of self’ (Hobart, p. 311). Anthropologists are not so powerful as to make that interesting. Yet precisely at the time when the complexity of our position has been made obvious and the question of distance made problematic, anthropology has seen a move to replace the analysis of power with what can only be called mock-politics.

Access to a system still dominated by America and by spoken English offers vast rewards. We control rather little of this, though we operate with reference to quite a lot of it, and we should thus be careful in what way we generalize or elect not to. The mere fact of fieldwork is educational: ‘In an absolute monarchy, or in a modern totalitarian state, investigative methods are rarely open to the...ethnographer who is not actually working for the state’ (James, p. 131). But all states have acquired what were once totalitarian features (nowhere can one travel without a passport). We are all bound up in collusions that centre on the bombast of nation-states and on the flow of money. If there is one conspicuous case of ‘localization’ (Fardon) or ‘the problem of place’ (Appadurai), it must surely be that of states in a world economy, which, oddly, is little discussed here.

The space of the world filled up alarmingly as evolutionism and diffusionism tried to make of that world a coherent story; and, as Lenin argued memorably enough, the space was divided by colonial powers before ever they found for it local uses. Many of anthropology’s ‘areas’ date from then. The affinity of functionalism with the later colonial setting, or of culture-history with America of the period, needs no rehearsing; nor yet does the invention of local units such as African ‘tribes’. The transformation of imperial districts into nations that had seemingly always been there has been well analysed (e.g. Anderson 1983), as too might be the dispersal of such identities, each comparable to the others, in what became after the Second World War a world economy: not structuralism itself, but its nostalgia for ‘the primitive’ found a place in this, at the end of a process that had started with the primitives being found. (Lévi-Strauss’s fascination with Rousseau was hardly whimsical.) But control of space locates labour in particular places (Harvey 1989). The homogeneity some predicted has not occurred, at least not in the form expected. The latest episode of time-space compression (Harvey’s phrase) has been spectacular, and several markets approximate the instantaneous pan-global money market; but the crisis of representation provoked has been accompanied also by the prominence of identities less attached to place, or attached less obviously; those separate ‘cultures’ have in some cases now collapsed inward to the point where, in popular usage, not a state but an individual can claim to be ‘multi-cultural’. No wonder, perhaps, that writing, for a while, seemed easier to deal with than culture, and that ‘writing culture’ re-established a feeling of control and distance.

Parts, though only parts, of the social field now approximate to homogeneous space of the kind in which geographers’ models work. Difference is then produced, not found, in a manner reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss’s world, where elements are recombined ‘not so much...in a spirit of imitation but rather to allow

small but numerous communities to express their different originalities...' (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 8). Across much of the world the same mythic representations are common property, and *bricolage* seems a matter less of creative tinkering than of differences in something like audience response. At that point, and only then, does it seem to us odd that 'culture' is conceived as something local and that 'at least since the latter part of the nineteenth century, anthropological theory has always been based on going *somewhere*, preferably somewhere geographically, morally and socially distant from the theoretical and cultural metropolis of the anthropologist' (Appadurai 1986: 356-7; original emphasis). Appadurai's own response has been a journal called *Public Culture*,¹⁶ concentrating on precisely those 'trans-national' facts and images that are hard to locate spatially, though 'decontextualization' (Appadurai, 1986: 359) remains a problem few contributors have faced satisfactorily.

These are subjects on which Appadurai is suggestive but where *Localizing Strategies* rather fails to fulfil its title's promise. What are these localizing strategies (if 'strategy' is the right word)? How are 'areas' established, and why have they appeared so real? Why, also, most importantly, has the question only surfaced now? The brute facticity of ethnographic regions has in some respects (though only some) been eroded since the Second World War by mass migration and by changes, again, in who reads what.

The 'ownership' of ideas has become (always was, perhaps) problematic, and the status of pan-national intellectual interests deserves careful study—so too does the status of pan-national intellectuals, which in some degree is what we are, engrossed with a world whose centres deny their presence.¹⁷ Instead, there is usually the kind of muddle one sees on such course-flyers as one for 'Comparative Literature 790: Third World Literature and Literary Theory', at the University of Michigan in 1988:

literary theory has been challenged in the last ten years by scholars coming from 'Third World' countries (Fernandez Retamar, Said, Spivak, Christian)...; what kinds of research programs and teaching goals [should we] envision.... If the essence of literature is called into question, what is left to compare?

And so on in familiar style. But Said, for one, is about as much a 'Third-World author' as Isaiah Berlin (rather less so, if anything). The rhetoric makes sense in a setting of pluralist politics where there is mileage to be had from 'ethnic' claims, but that sense is scarcely analytical. One may sympathize with Said's politics

16. Published since 1988 by the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

17. Recent 'critical' language has been oddly weak for discussing this. If, for example, Tambiah and Obeyesekere happen both to be Singhalese by birth and both are noted anthropologists, one cannot then say of Sri Lanka that 'the Other perhaps more than the foreign anthropologist has had a voice in the orientation of research' (Kapferer, p. 281)—if one knows who these people are, they cannot be faceless.

(heaven knows, what upset him is real enough) and admire his literary criticism, but not, I think, elide them in this latter-day Negritude. More to the point than ethnic claims would be where we all work and in what connections, which is something anthropologists might place on their new agendas.

Though imitated by the *Guardian* newspaper, the language of pluralism will lack the same power in this country until Europe becomes more federal. In the wider world, however, something like it has been prominent for many years (see Fardon 1987) and does much to constitute our unthought objects of interest. Like nations, we see it discussed too little here. Instead, the hegemonic discourses dealt with in the Fardon volume are mainly the older ones, which seem more obviously Eurocentric: under British rule, caste in India came in fact to be something like Westerners thought it was (Burghart, p. 263); in Indonesia *adatrecht* meant that custom of the sort abstracted from life by anthropologists became law (Hobart, p. 316); 'liberal' models, more recently, were made dubious reality in Aboriginal 'home-land centres' (McKnight, p. 59). But the locals were by no means passive: Hocart's Singhalese assistant, Senerat Paranavitana, for instance, became an epigraphist and an important figure in Singhalese nationalism (Kapferer, p. 288)—shades of folklorists and lexicographers in Europe—a figure in a history where Hocart and caste might look to have different values.

The complicity of anthropology in these old concerns would seem less distant were they placed in their current setting, where the past has always been remodelled and a pristine 'other culture' is plainly beyond reach. McKnight comes closest, perhaps, discussing Aborigines. But papers on the Americas (particularly contemporary North America) and on work in Europe (see now, McDonald 1989) would make clearer the entanglements from which the end of colonialism does nothing at all to free us. Nothing could, of course; nothing should. But the context of anthropology needs more obvious comment than it seemed to previously.

Us and Them and the Dreaded Other

Schwab's *Oriental Renaissance* (1984) remains, so far as I know, the only work to explore at all fully a mutation that set 'the East' (primarily India) at the centre of Western thought and set everyone from Goethe onward learning 'Eastern' languages for a meaning thought missing from Europe's history. By now it is a commonplace what role timefulness played in this process—and in modernist literature also: it is in *The Magic Mountain*, after all, not a linguist's tome, that one finds the timeless sanatorium, removed from the world, described as having 'too much of Asia' in it. More generally, the great works of modernist writing can all be seen as responding to a sense that time in the West was somehow filling up and lives were becoming disciplined by a common time in which we lived willy-nilly:

hence a search for sense outside time—in the east, among the primitives, in myth, the unconscious, and, perhaps not least, the ethnographic present.¹⁸ But the subjects of these dreams were busy dreaming also, often in the terms despaired of: ‘European Australians...are trying to replace history with myth, while the Aborigines...have taken up history to replace their lost mythology. But then, who taught them history?’ (McKnight, p. 44). The brutality of the Australian case is not in doubt—its sheer contemporaneity is unsettling also, but the product is of a kind that recurs very widely and has done so for at least two centuries. By comparison, anthropologists are late-comers, not autonomous. Our indecision over how to get on with academic historians denotes the larger context within which, historicize as we may, we are always slightly out of place.

History as an ideology has spread, with sometimes unsettling results. Despite some feebleness in the West itself (whereby, for instance, would-be radical ‘post-modernists’ and Francis Fukuyama woke up in the same bed), the world at large has rather taken to history. No nation lacks one of its own, no matter how contrived, and nations conceive their relations with each other in historical terms: the very language of ‘development’, for instance, presumes a unitary chronology. This too is unevenly distributed. If the cry in studies of the erstwhile orient has been to historicize everything ('timeless' is a fierce term of disapproval), then where history is the dominant means of self-definition, as usually it is with nation-states, it throws up its complement.¹⁹ Anthropologists may fear they have treated ‘Eskimo culture’, for instance, as too timeless, but ‘the notion of a shared contemporary culture that derives directly from tradition is also the image of themselves that the Eskimos prefer to project to national government to support their claims for particular rights’ (Riches, p. 73). Woe betide the non-Eskimo (non-Inuit?) who dares historicize the claim. Ethnography cannot please everyone, but what it can do, at the risk of losing ‘market share’, is demystify what is said by whom. It no longer has much option. The metropolis and the periphery, if they were ever separate, are now practical parts of each other’s fantasy,²⁰ and historicity is increasingly played off not against the orient but against the motif of ‘indigenous peoples’ and of course ethnicity: merely to explain the details is to

18. For a useful overview of the famous novels, see Quinones 1985. Ardener’s suggestion (1989: 202) that Malinowski’s ethnography be viewed in the same light seems not to have won wide support; but there is indeed a sense in which Trobriand ethnography is comparable with Dublin on Bloomday.

19. Certain older oppositions are reworked in curious terms. Note how many anthropologists (periphery) are rushing to write linear, narrative histories, as if all the world should sound like Victorian England; while historians of Europe (centre) now write in the ethnographic present as if France, let us say, were colonial Africa.

20. Centre and periphery are now spatial versions of something more general—marginality, which may be more or less imposed or contrived. For a darkly amusing picture of the culture game played for cash prizes by ‘Native Americans’ and their neighbours, see Clifton 1990.

undermine someone's claims, if only those of the weekend supplements, and we are forced to 'strategize' with care.

Mere physical distance no longer counts for much. The Penan, once known, if at all, for their system of naming, have this year been on a world tour, the subject of congressional hearings, and are all but protégés of The Grateful Dead. To separate their claims from those of the *soi-disant* 'Celts' of Brittany (McDonald 1989)—polytechnic lecturers almost to the last man and woman—requires appeal to more than 'other cultures'. The complexities are real, the need to deal with them pressing. The current fashion for speaking of 'the Other' and homogenizing politics could not, on grounds of either timing or substance, be much worse judged—and the bland appeal to 'culture' more so. Essentialism is the last thing we need at present.

Few contributors to Fardon's volume miss the point that our terms of art are political capital, and that what were once local rhetorics are convoluted throughout much of what we read. The potential ironies (symptomatically, an overworked word) are endless. The convolution itself is evident from the fact that one can now, without care for time or space, quote Street quoting Akbar Ahmed quoting Malinowski: 'When I started fieldwork...the stage was set and waiting. I could therefore "put aside the camera, note-book and pencil" and "plunge into the imponderabilia of actual life...to grasp the native's point of view"' (p. 235). What did the natives call him, one wonders? 'Sir'? For Ahmed is a man of more weight in the world than most of us, district officer of North-West Frontier Province, scion of an important family, a dominant figure in Pakistani ethnology and, one gathers from those who work in those parts, a gatekeeping figure of some importance. He comes to dominate, quite oddly, Brian Street's own ponderously written piece on 'Orientalist discourses' (does the phrase look a little frowsty?) in the Persianate half of the Middle East. Street's essay turns out back to front. In heavily didactic tones, Street chastises Richard Tapper for chastising Akbar Ahmed, and himself ends up, quite unwittingly, casting Ahmed as an old-style 'native'—the kind of person whose utterances are data, not conversation. A lot of this has been going on.

The problem is compounded, if not produced, by 'metropolitan' self-delusion. Ahmed has his view of Pakhtun or Pathan ethnography, and Tapper has his reservations:

But this is an unequal contest in which to engage. Whatever power Ahmed may have or assert in his own contact with the western academic world, he cannot reverse the power structure and undermine the academic culture on the basis of the indigenous one.... Ahmed simply runs the risk of alienating his erstwhile tutors. (Street, p. 253)

Scary stuff on the Northwest Frontier that, upsetting one's old tutor. To delude ourselves that SOAS is a power at all comparable to the Pakistani government is scarcely helpful: if Tapper 'denigrates' Ahmed 'with all the authority of the metropolitan culture' (p. 254), we have to be realistic about what

that authority now amounts to, how this culture works and where SOAS fits into it. The appeal of 'Islamic anthropology' to British publishers would be worth analysis, as too would the relation between access to the British press and one's standing as an intellectual elsewhere, a relation that presumably works both ways and does much to define anthropology's value for all concerned. Ahmed's own vast list of newspaper pieces would make a fascinating study. We might even, unexciting though it is, decide on the merits of Tapper's and Ahmed's arguments. Academics, however, still restlessly dream of power: 'The academic...makes a different but no less telling contribution than the politician to the construction of Middle Eastern society as alien' (p. 240). And the opposite sex find us irresistible.²¹

To deal with complexities honestly (to 'speak from one's position', as the Marxists used once to say) requires a sense of proportion. When the author to whom James responds 'rubbish' comes floating across one's sights—'in order to turn myself into one of the Nuer people I took off all my clothes' (quoted, p. 124)—one has to be allowed a laugh. The Nuer too must be given space for their response, be it outrage, bafflement or a laugh of their own. Area ethnography leaves that space to a surprising degree, if only because it is open to detailed reworking. The idea of 'humankind' leaves less space. Culture, in the sense of something shared in their bones by those we write about, leaves less again.

21. This hubris seemed laughable to start with. The experience of the Gulf war since then should have rubbed academics' noses in how marginal they are to collective fantasy as well as (which they knew already) to the forms of power. A colleague who wrote an excellent book on pre-invasion Kuwaiti politics was typical: one phone call from the media to know how many wives Shaykh Jabir had, and an invitation to appear on 'Geraldo'—which, wisely, she declined.

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THE DECLINE OF THE ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTHOOD AND ITS EFFECT ON THE IRANIAN ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

SHAHIN BEKHRADNIA

Introduction

It might reasonably be assumed that clergy play an important role in maintaining the traditions of a religion and, therefore, that a decline in their numbers would be accompanied by a corresponding decline in the strength of the religion. The case of the Iranian Zoroastrians,¹ however, seemingly refutes such an assumption. In the early years of this century, a sharp decline in the number of the clergy was accompanied by the opening of Zoroastrian schools, migration to the capital, Tehran, and an increase in the number of well-educated Iranian Zoroastrians. A period of relative security and prosperity between the 1950s and 1970s lulled the community into believing that religious toleration in Iran was irreversible. Responsibility for the transmission of community history and religious knowledge was then relegated to teachers, whereas in the recent past this teaching had been

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1. For a brief introduction to the history and geography of Iranian Zoroastrianism, see Bekhradnia 1991.

the responsibility of parents. Between 1956 and 1966 the balance between rural and urban populations was reversed. Schools became increasingly secularized and fewer children knew about their traditions. Then, in 1979, the Islamic Revolution dramatically changed the situation. Religion became a compulsory subject at school, while distinct social and economic pressures forced an awareness upon all Zoroastrians that they were different; yet expressions of respect from Muslim Iranians both inside and outside the country made Zoroastrians particularly proud of their principles and history. Simultaneously, there were more participants at Zoroastrian religious and social occasions, indicating a rekindled sense of community and identity. More recently, with indications of large numbers of Iranian Muslims seeking a self-asserted Zoroastrian identity, together with the expression of Zoroastrian identity by some Yazidi Kurds,² some Tajiks and some Azerbaijanis, the Iranian Zoroastrian identity has also acquired a political and quasi-nationalist dimension. Some rituals and traditions survive, although they are observed in the main by elderly rural people.

The decline of the priest's caste among Iranian Zoroastrians is not a new phenomenon. The text *Dadestan i Denig* reveals that even as far back as the ninth century, Manuchehr, the Zoroastrian high priest of Fars and Kerman, was lamenting the difficult conditions that the Zoroastrians were obliged to endure as a result of the Arab invasion two centuries earlier. He was quite clear about the consequences for the clergy and did not castigate those priests whose sons did not follow in their footsteps, understanding that the economic rewards for priestly activities were simply not adequate for some people (Kreyenbroek 1987: 188). It was thus envisaged eleven centuries ago that many of the sons of priests might no longer follow in the footsteps of their fathers as the tradition had required (and has continued to require). But in the event, there seem to have been enough people able to retain and transmit traditions pertaining to their religion right through to the nineteenth century, despite many periods when Zoroastrians in Iran suffered evidently heavy declines in their population.

The nature of the knowledge handed down is interesting; much of it might be characterized as traditional, yet it is still difficult to conjecture how much was innovation, reflecting facets of society at particular periods. Furthermore, many of the clearly religious observances did not require the participation of a priest, but were domestic or neighbourhood occasions that the laity themselves organized.³

2. One member of this community has written a tract claiming Zoroastrian identity for the Yazidi Kurds, whose population stands at between two and three million; see Yazidi 1983. However, his claim to leadership and the veracity of his statements is disputed by a Yazidi Kurdish informant in London.

3. The importance of domestic organization of religious life corresponds to women maintaining the Little as opposed to the Great Tradition. The prominence of the rituals of Yazdi village women devoted to various *kheirat* as well as Bibi Sehshanbeh and Moshegelgosha exemplify this. See Sered 1986 for the Jewish case, and see Atkin 1989 for the survival of Islam through folk or village practice in Soviet Tajikistan.

The Decline of the Priesthood

The decline in the number of priests (inherited through the male line within priestly families) is evident in a detailed headcount of 1891 (Azargoshasb 1973: 110-11). By that time, the main body of Zoroastrians in Iran lived in or around the towns of Yazd and Kerman, on the edge of deserts in the central south-east of the country where both the terrain and climate are harsh. There were 63 priestly families in Yazd,⁴ but with only 35 individuals serving as officiants for a total Zoroastrian population of 6908 in Yazd and its 23 outlying villages. The shortage of male adults within the priestly families (one out of six of the priestly caste compared to one out of four or five in the non-priestly population) can be explained by migration. At the time they were in Bombay and other parts of India, earning money with which to support their families (since in both Iran and India they were paid only for each officiation). As, with their increasing poverty, the number of Iranian Zoroastrians dwindled in the nineteenth century, there were fewer people in Iran who either needed or could afford the priests' services. From the middle of the nineteenth century, when Parsee philanthropists decided to rescue Iranian Zoroastrians from their destitution, and because sea and rail links developed quickly at that time, it became commonplace to find Iranian Zoroastrians setting off for Bombay, as if to a promised land. Priests were able to ply their trade much more successfully in India than in Yazd, since there was a larger and wealthier Parsee population there (c.90,000 people).⁵ Furthermore, Yazdi priests were especially popular amongst both the Parsees (because they were considered authentic) and the migrant Iranian Zoroastrian community. Their absence from Iran thus explains the anomaly of a low adult male priestly population.

However, there are further problems associated with this headcount. The size and reproduction of priestly households was significantly curtailed: 62 boys and 36 girls within 63 households gives an average of just 1.5 children per household; while amongst the lay Zoroastrian urban population of Yazd, households averaged 5 children (202 girls and 202 boys). These contrasts may perhaps indicate a relative inadequacy of the material means to maintain a family among the impoverished priests, in contrast to the relatively prosperous Zoroastrian townsfolk.

Levels of literacy are also indicative of the wretched plight of the priests. Although it might be expected that priests would have a higher level of literacy than the lay population, the headcount reveals that in 1891 only 65% of adult priests in Yazd were literate, compared to some 68% of lay urban male adults. Yet amongst the priests, 58% of their sons were literate compared to only 23%

4. It might be assumed that since no breakdown for priestly and non-priestly families was given for Kerman, the size of the priesthood there was already insignificant by 1891.

5. The Parsees are descendants of Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated to India in the tenth century.

among the sons of laymen. From this one deduces that there was a greater number of literate adult lay males than there were priests, possibly reflecting new needs for literacy in the practice of trading enterprises. On the other hand, the higher percentage of literate sons of priests suggests that a considerable value was being placed by priests on the ability of their sons to read and write. These skills were in fact the first step to an escape route from the priesthood, the profession of priest being understood by practising priests to be an effective guarantee of low income and status. Indeed, most of the first generation of Iranian Zoroastrian professionals (doctors and engineers) came from priests' families, while the lay public excelled in trade, property speculation, and farming, the latter occupation holding limited prospects for the future, given the increasing desertification of Yazd.

Just as in the ninth century, when Manuchehr the high priest recognized a problem for the future of the priesthood, so too did Dastur Namdar e Dastur Shahriar, the high priest in the early years of the twentieth century. Like so many other priests from Yazd, he was often away on trips to India, and so he vested his general authority in a council of priests (*kankosh e mobedan*) which he set up in 1916. His cousin, Dastur Mehraban e Tirandaz, presided over the council during his absences, and the council of priests made decisions as a body. Subsequently, Dastur Mehraban's nephew and son-in-law Rostam took over the presidency of the council. Between the 1920s and 1930s there were about 85 priestly households in the priests' quarter in Yazd, but the number quickly dwindled since most priests began to move their families to Tehran, where better educational opportunities and careers were available for their children. By 1944, most priests had moved to Tehran and the council was dissolved. In 1952, the council of priests was reconvened in Tehran under the presidency of Mobed Ardeshir e Azargoshasb, who is regarded by most Yazdi families as the high priest, by virtue of his genealogy and knowledge, since he is the son of Dastur Namdar e Dastur Shahriar, the founder of the priests' council. He actually supplied me with this information and claimed that the title of high priest (*dastir e mas*, more formally *dastur e dasturan*) was bestowed by popular assent. He acknowledges, however, that any decision relating to religion is made by the council, which nevertheless shows great respect for his opinions.⁶

From the mid-1950s onwards, there were few practising priests left among Iranian Zoroastrians, and the council was opened to all *dasturzadeh*, i.e. men or women who could claim paternal or even maternal descent from the families of priests. By 1978, when I was last in Iran, there were only five practising priests in Yazd and eight in Tehran, all aged over 55, being paid by the *anjoman* or Zoroastrian council. One Parsee priest had been brought over from India, but he was not able to communicate with his congregation, i.e. those within his *husht* or parish, nor was he familiar with the Iranian Zoroastrian way of celebrating

6. In the summer of 1991, an official publication of the Priests' Council of North America referred to Mobed Ardeshir's brother, Firooz, as the high priest, possibly because of Mobed Ardeshir's ailing health and old age.

religious occasions, though he obviously picked up some ideas of how things were done while in Iran. In 1991, an informant surveyed the situation there and reported three priests in Yazd, one in Isfahan and five salaried priests in the Tehran area.

Religious Education

According to older informants, children used to learn about their religion and how to say the Avesta or holy texts, simply by spending time in the company of adults.⁷ They would listen with great attention when their elders sat around a brazier on winter evenings telling stories from the *Shahnameh* (the tenth-century Persian epic ‘Book of Kings’) and lamenting the onslaught of the Arabs. It was not the priests who passed on knowledge to the children of a community but the parents, the mother usually being more available and also usually the more pious and regular in the observance and performance of rituals, as well as more inclined to story-telling. Communal religious occasions, which almost always involved communal eating (for example, *osh e kheirat* or charity stews, the cooking of *sirog* or sweet spiced fried bread and Gahambar commemorations six times a year), were an integral part of community life in which the children participated with all the members of their families. The annual spring visits to the shrines and the major festivals of Nowruz, Tirgon and Mehrized were part of the regular annual calendar that everyone in Yazd observed. Children would be expected to undergo their Sedreh Pushi (initiation ceremony) before puberty, but not all children experienced the official ceremony, usually because it involved the laying-on of hospitality for a number of guests.

By the 1920s, each of the 26 villages around Yazd containing Zoroastrians had a school for Zoroastrian girls and boys, run by a Zoroastrian headteacher, and often paid for by Parsees. Zoroastrian schools for girls and boys had also been

7. The word *avesta* is used by Iranian Zoroastrians to mean the whole body of holy texts, from which a number are regularly recited as prayers. The language of these texts varies, reflecting the time of their composition. Thus the most ancient are totally unintelligible to Iranian Zoroastrians, while others of much more recent origin are in part fairly easy to understand. The texts were written down as well as orally transmitted, but it is said that Alexander the Great’s invasion in the fourth century BC and the Arab invasion in the seventh century AD destroyed the bulk of the recorded material. Even when new records were compiled from orally transmitted texts after the Arab conquest, these were regularly destroyed by hostile rulers. Thus oral transmission assumed particular importance. When Anquetil du Perron went to India in 1758, specifically to investigate the Zoroastrians there, he was the first European to find them in possession of texts, which he studied for two and a half years with the assistance of one of their priests (see Firby 1988: 155). He cross-checked them for accuracy and consistency, and was persuaded that they were authentic, being composed in an ancient Indo-European language.

founded in Tehran. Religious education, including the teaching of the Avesta, was integrated into the school curriculum. Thus the responsibility for teaching the children Zoroastrian history and traditions passed from the parents to the teachers. Of course, some parents did continue to teach their children what they knew, but with the opening of the schools, and the drift to Tehran, the number of parents who did this gradually declined. Since Zoroastrian schools were never exclusively for Zoroastrian children, they began to attract a large number of Muslim children as well, many parents (including Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925, and many of his ministers) believing that the standard of education and upbringing was better than the available alternatives. This sharing of Zoroastrian schools with non-Zoroastrians resulted in less emphasis being placed on Zoroastrian religious education during school time. Meanwhile, a youth wing of the *anjoman* council, the *sozemon e fravahar* or youth association, was created to make up for the lack of education in schools.

The Islamic Revolution

Although the 1979 revolution has had all sorts of effects on the Zoroastrian community in Iran (including the prohibition against Zoroastrians running Zoroastrian-founded schools), one of the results has been a reinvigorated sense of difference between Zoroastrians and Muslims. This in turn has manifested itself in an increase in the number of people coming forward to take the priesthood examination (although they do not necessarily practise as priests afterwards). It is also reported that more children are having their Sedreh Pushi or initiation ceremony performed. The demand of the present regime that all children must be examined in religion means that the youth association plays a very important role in providing religious education within the community. Interestingly, this revived interest appears to have resulted in more people wearing the traditional symbol of Zoroastrianism, the *koshti* cord worn around the waist, something that very few Iranian Zoroastrians were doing even in the villages of Yazd in 1976.⁸ At the same time, because the revolution created a large diaspora, consisting of approximately one-third of the Iranian Zoroastrian population (up to 10,000 Zoroastrians are said to have left Iran), the need was felt for the establishment of a priests'

8. Most Zoroastrians seem to have given up wearing their *koshti* upon moving to Tehran. Certainly, many informants from Yazd associated the end of their *koshti*-wearing with their entering a much larger community of non-Zoroastrians, such as at school or training college. The Parsees, in contrast, lay great store on the wearing of a *koshti* and insist that a person not wearing a *koshti* cannot possibly be a bona fide Zoroastrian. This was graphically illustrated to me in 1978, when two well-known Iranian Zoroastrians and myself (all of us attending the Third World Zoroastrian Congress) were denied entry to a fire-temple in Bombay on the grounds that none of us was wearing a *koshti*.

council of Iranian Zoroastrians in North America where the majority had settled (the council's composition consisting again almost exclusively of *dasturzadeh* rather than practising priests). Furthermore, as communities of Iranian Zoroastrians formed in the United States, Canada and Britain, with few practising priests amongst them, *dasturzadeh*, or sons of priests (few of whom had passed the examination granting them official entry into the priesthood) began to officiate when required for particular occasions. Young members of the community, who had not shown the remotest interest in their cultural heritage before their migration from Iran, began to attend and help organize such community events as the festivals of Jashn e Sadeh, Jashn e Tirgon and Nowruz. They also began organizing such social events as discos, excursions and sporting fixtures for members of the Iranian Zoroastrian community in their vicinity.

These activities suggest an increasing awareness of religious cohesion and a community united by a common cultural heritage, rather than apathy and a lack of interest. Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to assess the longer-term significance of this increase in religious awareness for the cultural attributes that will be associated with post-revolution Iranian Zoroastrianism. However, it cannot be disputed that during the years before the revolution, the number of priests and initiations, the attendance at fire-temples, and general interest in the religion was declining. In general, the move from the rural to the urban context that occurred mainly between 1956 and 1966 dramatically affected the frequency and the nature of religious observances.

The Significance of the Rural Context

It should be remembered that for centuries Zoroastrianism was practised and understood within a framework bounded by an agricultural way of life. Prior to the 1950s and 1960s, when an urban experience became common for the majority of Iranian Zoroastrians, almost all religious observances were expressed in idioms or symbols embedded within a rural culture. For example, the significance of eating meat on an important festival day (such as the coincidence of the day of Mehr and the month of Mehr, i.e. the 16th day of the 7th month) needs to be appreciated as a practice of subsistence farmers who could not afford to deplete frequently their modest stock of animals. The rare treat of eating roast lamb on an important holy day was thus much looked forward to and regarded as a reward for hard work. The foods distributed at the Gahambar memorial celebrations (occurring six times a year, each over a five-day period) and during weddings were merely the foods that were available locally: that is, nuts and various dried fruits together with sugar-coated nuts and other white sweetmeats, known collectively as *lork*. Similarly pragmatic explanations could be given for the frequency of distributing *sirog* (fried bread) and *osh* (pulse and vegetable stew). The reverence

for fire could also be explained by the practical experience of daily life where fire was essential for warmth, cooking and light, all of which are necessary for a reasonably comfortable though simple life-style. At the same time, fire was seen as symbolizing the life energy and as a symbol of eternal truth. The respected status of water was similarly reinforced by an absolute dependence on irrigation to cultivate crops in particularly hot and arid conditions: it is understandable how water might assume sacred associations in drought conditions.

The attitude towards these elements helps to explain the unique Zoroastrian way of disposing of the dead. Using the *dakhmeh* or tower of silence obviated the need to use the good earth for the disposal of corpses: soft earth that could be dug was used for cultivation, not for the proliferation of putridity. The towers were located at some distance from human settlements, on mountain tops inaccessible to all but the corpse-bearers, so that communities should not be affected by disease-ridden corpses. (It has also been suggested that the towers developed from the need to find effective ways of speedily disposing of large numbers of dead after a battle or a massacre.)

The distinction between pollution and non-pollution extended to the human being. Contact with corpses, blood, saliva, nails and hair was avoided or at least minimized.⁹ These attitudes were translated into ritual practice during menstruation and death, thus giving rise to the observation of purity laws or *pak o pacholi*. From discussions with older informants, during whose lives these purity laws were observed, it would certainly seem that ordinary rural people understood these ancient ritual practices through their own practical 'common sense' interpretations. Is it too fanciful to suggest, like them, that the concepts of purity and pollution were merely a schema into which elementary hygiene laws were encoded?¹⁰

Most of these practices are regarded by non-Iranian Zoroastrians as features that, individually or together, set apart Zoroastrians from other religious groups. Indeed, in discussions with some Western scholars it has been suggested to me that the purity laws were dreamt up primarily to distinguish very clearly those people who did observe them from those who did not, thus serving to demarcate real Zoroastrians from the rest. Scholars, Parsees and some urbanized Iranian Zoroastrians have an image of authentic Zoroastrianism as a religion that must be expressed through such traditional rural observances, the absence of which they lament as indicative of the passing of the true religion. While it may be true that such practices are to be found uniquely amongst Zoroastrians, it is not necessarily true that they constitute the essential principles of being Zoroastrian. This view is endorsed unconsciously by Iranian Zoroastrians who have continued to practise many of the so-called traditional rituals, but who have also adopted modifications

9. The procedures pertaining to purity and pollution are derived from the Zoroastrian texts known as the *Videvdat*, an Avestan-language text, and also from the Pahlavi *Vendidad*. For further discussion, see Choksy 1989.

10. See Douglas 1968: 45, and Irani 1990.

to traditional practices. For example, nowadays the majority of Iranian Zoroastrians do not live in close-knit neighbourhoods. Thus in Tehran or Los Angeles, the charity stews are no longer held within a local neighbourhood, nor are the Gahambar periods kept six times a year, nor do they necessarily consist of a distribution of oven-baked bread and local fruits and nuts or pulse and vegetable stew. A Gahambar in an urban context is much rarer than it is in a rural setting, partly because it is dedicated to the house where the person bequeathing it used to live (which was until recently usually Yazd), and partly because neither Tehran nor London (nor for that matter any other urban situation) is an appropriate setting as there are no specifically Zoroastrian neighbourhoods. And when they do take place outside a rural context, being rarer and people having to travel from much farther afield to attend, it is more usual to serve a meal than merely to hand out bread, dried fruit and nuts.¹¹ Because urbanized Zoroastrians today eat food in greater quantities and of much wider variety, it is thought that their expectation of what is fitting to receive or serve at a Gahambar has risen. To provide more than the traditional bread and *lork* is too expensive, and perhaps for this reason too, Gahambars are declining.

Methods of disposing of corpses have also changed with the move to an urban context. Burial and cremation have become acceptable to almost all Iranian Zoroastrians, even to those brought up within traditional priestly homes, and during whose early years only the *dakhmeh* was known. Not one of my many informants could give even one example of a person undergoing today a Noshveh or purification rite, a common enough practice a few decades ago. Neither could any of my female informants think of anyone who still went into segregation at menstruation, even though such was the norm (expected to be strictly enforced within priestly families) just a few decades ago and within the first-hand experience of many of my informants. A vestigial trace of such observances is present in the fact that even today girls and women brought up in Tehran or the West, as well as Yazd, will not usually enter a fire-temple during menstruation. These people, however, are regarded by fellow Iranian Zoroastrians as the most traditional because of the very fact of their attendance at holy places and their daily prayer recitals, observance of the Zoroastrian calendar, regular attendance at fire-temples and observance of meat abstinence days. People considered most traditional may also continue to maintain observances for the souls of the departed, but very few people still maintain *all* the observances that would have been the norm in Yazd and Kerman 40 years ago.¹² The festivals of Tirgon and Mehrgon

11. Dried fruit and nuts are still handed out at weddings (including those taking place outside Iran), often a small symbolic amount being elaborately wrapped in decorative green or white net and handed to each guest and also sent to absent guests. *Lork* has thus acquired the function of representing an aspect of traditional Zoroastrianism.

12. I witnessed a rather poignant scene not long ago at the funeral of a family friend who provided me with her life story. Her daughters had been educated in the West, had married non-Zoroastrian husbands and thus had had little contact with the Zoroastrian community since their

are still celebrated by some communities, but the practices (and the names in some cases) associated with them are not necessarily the same as they once were. In the case of Tirgon, tying seven coloured ribbons to the wrist and pouring water over passers-by, followed by a kind of fortune-telling (*chakeh dolog*), is no longer feasible. In the case of Mehrgon, as eating meat is largely taken for granted nowadays, having a feast built around a roast lamb is not such a noteworthy occasion and the celebrations do not feature prominently. It is nowadays commonplace to find Iranian Zoroastrians, either as a community or as individuals, maintaining disparate aspects of what is termed traditional. They have no difficulty in recognizing themselves and others as genuine Zoroastrians, despite the non-observance of the many purity laws that even within their own lifetimes had once been strictly applied.

Conclusion

The Islamic revolution in Iran has brought back into sharp focus the moral values and principles for which the Zoroastrians have suffered such a long history of persecution. Among younger members of the community, these moral values of Zoroastrianism seem paramount, while the importance attached to specific ritual is minimal. It is not the outward form of religion but the inner content that interests them; many simply consult the oldest Avesta texts, the *Gathas*, for a real understanding of their religious principles. The most popular expression of Zoroastrian values by younger informants took into account the importance of truth and honesty, the importance of honest work, the importance of helping others and charity, and the importance of respecting nature by planting trees, not polluting the earth, the water and the air. In other words, the Zoroastrian adage passed on through the centuries, ‘good thoughts, good words and good deeds’ (*pendor e nik, goftor e nik, kerdor e nik*) has survived.

I would contend that, while the lifestyle of the Iranian Zoroastrian has changed, and while many of the rituals traditionally associated with the priesthood and religion have disappeared, the changes do not necessarily imply that the ethical sense of being an Iranian Zoroastrian has been weakened. On the contrary, I would suggest that precisely because of the present political circumstances, Iranian

youth. They clearly wanted to do the right thing at the funeral in order to show the respect and love they felt towards their mother, and in the knowledge that she would have liked and expected to have a Zoroastrian ceremony. However, they were completely at a loss to know what ritual was expected of them. They illustrated very well the gap between the generation that was born and raised in Yazd and Kerman and the generation born in an urban context.

Zoroastrians have a strongly developed sense of their history, their principles, and their identity.

Even though the number of practising clergy has declined since the 1930s, their numbers may be once again on an upward curve. Because of events in Iran, and their political implications for Iranian Zoroastrians living abroad, as well as political events in nearby lands such as Kurdestan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, a new dimension has been incorporated into the concept of the Iranian Zoroastrian identity, a component that carries strong resonances of reawakened nationalism. Consequently, it may be said that the identity of an Iranian Zoroastrian is undergoing change. It has undoubtedly assumed a more secularized form and content: the outward form of the religion that the priesthood has helped to maintain is no longer as important as it was. Instead, its ethical ideology has acquired greater prominence and interest, and has assumed a politicized dimension. At what point does a group that is both referred to by others and refers to itself by reference to a religious category lose its genuinely religious connotations?

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BASKETMAKERS **MEANING AND FORM IN NATIVE AMERICAN BASKETS**

edited by Linda Mowat, Howard Morphy and Penny Dransart

Basketry is one of the leading art forms of the Americas. From Tierra del Fuego in the south to Canada and Alaska in the north, baskets are integral to the daily life and culture of the peoples who produce them. Woven into people's lives, basketry has become a focus of cultural meanings and a source of reflection on the world. **BASKETMAKERS** is the first book in recent years to attempt to reflect the variety and breadth of basketmaking traditions across the continent. Leading experts in the field have contributed essays based both on first hand ethnographic research and on the study of museum collections and archives. The book's major theme is the way in which baskets are integrated as meaningful objects within the cultural and historical processes of different regions. It contains a wealth of information about basketmaking techniques, showing how technical, aesthetic and functional factors contribute to the final form. The book is also a celebration of Native American cultural achievement, emphasizing basketmaking as a continuing tradition that provides a means of asserting cultural identity. It will provide a major resource for the teaching of courses on American Indian culture, material culture and cultural anthropology, as well as for those interested in the study of museum collections and for craftspeople and textile enthusiasts.

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SOME BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON STRUCTURAL CONTINUITY IN CHINESE PEASANT SOCIETY

SELINA CHING CHAN

Introduction

A NEW book by Sulamith H. Potter and Jack M. Potter portrays the life of Chinese peasants in a district of Dongguan county, about half-way between Hong Kong and Guangzhou. *China's Peasants* compares the underlying structure of the society during three different periods: pre-revolutionary (before 1949), revolutionary and Maoist (1949-76), and post-Maoist (late 1970s to early 1980s). Using villagers' personal accounts, historical documents and information gathered in fieldwork, the Potters provide a comprehensive picture of the peasants' life. In addition to discussing the great tradition, formal party ideology and policies highlighted by the state and cadres, the Potters also concentrate especially on the 'little tradition', the actual daily activities of the peasants. Indeed, their book is one of the few published anthropological texts to draw on direct observation of, and participation in, life in mainland China since 1949.

At first sight, there seem to have been big changes in the 'traditional' pattern of peasant life after the revolution and throughout the Maoist regime. One only has to think of land reform (1949-51), collectivization, the Great Leap Forward (1958-62), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Nevertheless, as the Potters acutely observe, these rapid changes are in many ways superficial. In a closer

investigation, one notices that there is a marked degree of continuity in the deep structure of the culture. The new socialist, collective forms of Marxist communism were subtly remoulded by Chinese minds and were indeed saturated with old structural ideas. After providing a brief summary of the main theme of the Potters' book, I want to try to suggest how one might provide a deeper understanding of the persistence of these structural forces with special reference to the notion of the 'individual', drawing, in particular, on my experience as a Chinese native of Hong Kong, particularly concerned with the study of my own culture.

A Summary of China's Peasants

Before the revolution of 1949, the peasants of the three major villages in Zengbu were organized as a localized, corporate, single-surname patrilineage (p. 252). The patrilineage thus formed the dominant social unit in the local area: all patrilineal residents were closely attached and subordinated to it. The élite and the gentry who had retired from the bureaucracy were the basic representatives of the lineage and were responsible for the daily activities of its members. They controlled its economic, social and political aspects, maintained its internal law and order and defended its interests against hostile lineages. Thus the lineage was a multi-functional organization.

During the Maoist regime, the subordination of the peasants to the lineage was opposed, since lineage organization was discouraged by the Communist Party. Under the radical collectivization movement of the Great Leap Forward, the collective production team became the only significant social organization in Zengbu. The collective production team was consciously created by the Party in order to lead the way to a new culture based on the values and ethical system of communism. It was conceived as a means towards revolutionary change, i.e. towards destroying the ideological pillars of the old culture, as seen by the new: familism, sexism, nepotism, blind marriages, clannishness and superstition (p. 95). It was intended that loyalty to the collective would replace loyalty to kin and lineage (p. 255).

In reality, no matter what form the collective took—team, brigade, higher-level cooperative or commune—it had a group of property-owning and managing, patrilineally related men at its core (p. 262). In fact, social ties formerly based on membership in a collective never superseded ties of affinal and consanguineal kinship. The old rules of patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residence persisted unchallenged.

Potter and Potter note an even more striking connection between the content of the old lineage and the new collective (p. 263): that is, the relationship between the old lineage genealogies and the new household registers. The household

registers of brigades, like the old lineage genealogies, were documents that legitimized the membership and property rights of the men entered in them (*ibid.*).

Instead of the gentry and élite of the old days, today the Party controls local affairs through the cadres, who oversee such activities as the building of reservoirs, canals, embankments and pumping stations for drainage and irrigation. Indeed, the responsibilities formerly held within the lineage are now under the control of the collectives. Moreover, the cadres also act as intermediaries between the state and the public: they make persuasive visits to families reluctant about the implementation of collectivization (p. 65). This process of persuasion is actually a replication of the role the gentry and élite performed in the old days and is thus, again, not an innovation of the new order (*ibid.*). Through the cadres, individuals are under the total control of the production teams, brigades and communes. The individual as a team member is drawn into and subordinated to the group and is just as inseparable from family and lineage as in the days before liberation. As the Potters remark (p. 98), the new social form was inherently Chinese in enacting the same assumptions as the old.

It is possible, however, to take the argument further. The state, in fact, consciously encouraged individuals to challenge the dominant force of kinship structure. In the Cultural Revolution, children were taught to denounce their parents, the age-old institution of family and clan graveyards was discouraged and ancestral tombs were relocated (Hsü 1968: 603). In the Great Leap Forward, agricultural labour was relocated to produce iron and steel for the state. As Hsü (*ibid.*) remarks, it was the first time in Chinese history that people were encouraged to become aware of themselves as individuals in the direct service of the state rather than the family.

In the post-Mao era, the administrative reforms re-emphasized the importance of the single-lineage village, or a localized segment of a multi-village lineage, as a unit in China's rural administrative structure. The old village lineage community has been revived as an economic and administrative base (p. 257). Ancestral cults and dragon-boat races, both of which symbolize lineage identity, have also been revived. Overall, these revivals of the lineage village and its identity reveal the continuing dominance of the kinship ideology.

Although the ultimate ownership of land will remain collective under the de-collectivization movement, rights to the use of land are now being inherited by sons, following the old patrilineal inheritance rules (p. 266). The auction of rights to such collective property as land also follows the logic of the traditional relationship between the lineage and its ancestral estates and between the production team and its collective property (p. 173). The implementation of the production responsibility system in the post-Mao era, with its collective ownership and private management of the means of production, is a move towards an arrangement that resembles the handling of property and production under the pre-revolutionary lineage system. This production responsibility system is a mode of production in which households work on their own allotted share of land. The obligation to labour is derived from family membership rather than team

membership, and organizational decisions are made by the head of household rather than the team leader (p. 265).

To summarize: no matter whether before the revolution, under the Maoist regime, or after the Mao era, whether in the lineage or the collectives, the kinship system acts as a dominant multi-functional organization. Indeed, the collective team is structured and moulded on the implicit model of a traditional kinship group. As the Potters remark (p. 268), kinship structure is so dominant that it resists the sustained attacks of the revolution. To understand more deeply the persisting structural force of kinship, however, it is necessary to discuss, with some empirical examples, the notion of the individual in general. I am not going to give here an analysis of the relevant concepts like 'self', 'person' etc. I wish only to discuss the attributes and nature of this 'kinship ideology' with special reference to the individual.

The Individual in Chinese Philosophy and Society

Under the influence of Confucianism and Taoism, the Chinese have stressed equality among individuals at birth (Munro 1969: 179). Such an attitude implies that society is obliged to maintain the proper conditions for each individual to develop morally. But it does not follow that each individual should be treated equally as an adult (*ibid.*). This is a descriptive equality, different from the evaluative equality of the West, which implies the egalitarian treatment of all people. It is rooted in the Christian belief in the equal worth of men: God values all souls equally and does not recognize worldly hierarchical distinctions between men (*ibid.*: 2, 180).

The individual in Chinese society is bound by permanent ties that unite closely related members of family and clan into relationships of mutual dependence with hierarchical attributes (Hsü 1967: 291-2). This contrasts, for example, with the individual-centred American, characterized by a self-reliant personality and egalitarian attributes; his relationships with closely related human beings being only temporary. The Chinese mutual dependence relationship, with its hierarchical attributes, is rooted in the dominant dyad of father-son in the Chinese family (Hsü 1968: 583). It is also the basic content of *wu-lun*, the five main social relationships in Confucian thought: father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, king-minister, and friend-friend. *Wu-lun* is a theoretical construct, but it affects the way people behave. In highlighting the *wu-lun*, Confucius enjoined individuals to act from the very earliest stage in the process of familial socialization according to their status in the social structure.

In each pair of social relationships within the *wu-lun*, each individual is influenced greatly by the expectations of the opposite party regarding his or her specific role positions, his hierarchical relationship between these positions, and

a code of conduct governing the relationship in terms of social norms and virtues. Indeed, the individual is supposed to act according to the famous Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names of status, *cheng ming*, which is based on the belief that once names of status have firm meanings they will serve as effective standards of conduct, so that a man in his role as a son must practise filial piety toward his father. The role expectation of each individual is thus defined in terms of his or her particular relation with a particular person.

The relationships between individuals in different kinship statuses can be compared with the ripples formed by the dropping of a stone into a pool (Fei 1947: 22-30). The place in the centre where the stone sinks represents ego's position. The ripples represent degrees of patrilineal remoteness from ego. In the innermost ripple are ego's father, mother and siblings, while other more distant relatives remain in the outer ripples (*ibid.*). Fei calls this 'differential hierarchy'.

In the Chinese social structure, the behaviour of individuals seems to be much affected, or even dominated, by their status in the social circle. The individual exists meaningfully almost solely within the context of a pair relationship or within a collective kinship category. More precisely, the individual is important only when he or she is encountering others in his or her differential, hierarchical social circle in a cluster of pair relationships. Each individual hardly has his or her own autonomy and will. This is very different from the 'individual' in the West with its characteristics of autonomy and self-direction, according to which an individual's thoughts and actions are mainly his or her own. He or she has the privacy to pursue his or her own good in his or her own way. The difference can perhaps be better understood with reference to three of the main activities of life: marriage, the birth of a child, and work.

As the Potters remark (p. 203), marriage in China is significant in social rather than personal terms. In the old days, marriage was not the concern of the individuals involved. The young were married without their consent and often against their personal wishes. Marriage is considered a collective affair, a matter between two families rather than resulting from the choice of the individuals. Indeed, individuals do not have autonomy and privacy in marriage. Apart from domestic convenience, the institution of marriage is also for the solemn purpose of 'perpetuating the descent line' (Hui-chen 1959: 88). A wedding is not an occasion for congratulations, it is a matter of generations succeeding each other (Goody 1990: 39). Marriage is a means for acquiring a woman who can give birth and perpetuate the man's descent line.

In the marriage ritual of Fukien, as described by Lin (1947: 48), the bride holds 'a bag of five happinesses', *wu-fu-tai*, containing five kinds of food, representing various desirable attributes in the production of sons: peanuts, *sheng-tzu*, symbolizing giving birth to a son; red prunes, *tsau-tzu*, symbolizing giving birth to a son as early as possible; melon-seeds, *to-tzu*, symbolizing numerous sons; and longan,¹ *lung-tzu*, symbolizing the son of the dragon, that is, a diligent

1. The fruit of the longan tree (*Nephelium longana*), akin to the lychee.

son. The bearing of descendants, as one of the core meanings in marriage, is expressed in other ways too. When my parents got married, in Hangzhou, in the Lower Yangtze River area of China, in the 1960s under the Maoist regime, my grandfather sent them a gift of a patch-work quilt. This is known as a ‘quilt-cover of descendants’, *tze-sun-pei*, and symbolizes the hoped-for numerous descendants. The quilt is made from 99 small pieces of colourful cloth by a woman who is prosperous and happily married with a number of sons and grandsons. The number ‘99’ in Chinese is pronounced *chiu-chiu*, a term which also denotes ‘that which is longlasting’. Thus the quilt symbolizes the hoped-for duration of the marriage. The meaning of marriage, as expressed both in the ritual and in the gift, focuses on the family as an enduring collectivity and particularly on the perpetuation of the man’s lineage. The individual’s self-interest and privacy are relatively unimportant compared with the interest of the family.

In addition, since the beginning of the 1980s, under the ‘one child policy’, each couple may have only one child. Some peasants, however, still try to have more than one, especially when the first is not a son, for a son is important for the continuance of the man’s descent line. As one of the Potters’ peasant informants said, ‘You must have a son to carry on the family name. If you don’t have a son, you won’t have anyone to worship the dead parents’ souls’ (p. 249). Indeed, having children is not for the sake of the individual parents, but for that of the whole family, even the whole lineage. The interest of the family must come first, and this attitude is deeply internalized.

Moreover, if the cadres discovered that a pregnant woman had already had a child, they would try to mobilize her relatives to persuade her to have an abortion. The process of persuasion is directed not just towards the individual, but toward her relatives as well. This shows again that a birth is not an individual, private matter, rather it is a collective affair of the family and patrilineage. As the Potters say, the child-control policy is a system created under the pressure of population growth and does not respect the individual’s exclusive rights over his or her reproductive capacity (p. 250). The concept of the rights of the individual is in fact never fully developed in Chinese culture as compared with the West; Chinese individuals mostly work according to their role and status in the interests of their family and lineage.

Next, I turn to the meaning of work for the individual in the Chinese context. As the Potters remark, in speaking of work, the villagers are speaking about the symbolic affirmation of human relationships (p. 194). Work is a value for the collective rather than the individual. Even in modern China, the individual is not fully free to choose his own job, generally it is assigned to him by the Party. Work is the symbolic medium for the expression of social connection; it affirms relationships in the most fundamental terms the villagers know (p. 195). It is believed that if human relationships at work are correctly communicated and practised, the social order will be correctly understood and practised as well. Individual satisfaction with work lags far behind the importance of working for the

family. In other words, kinship ideology and familism are more important forces than individual satisfaction.

Conclusion

To conclude, I agree with the Potters that although various social movements have superficially changed the life of the peasants and challenged the kinship structure, kinship still persists as the dominant structural core of Chinese life. Changes since the revolution of 1949 have not really disrupted the enduring form of Chinese society. From some points of view the revolution was only a rebellion.

Going further, however, I believe that the 'individual' in the Chinese context is created by his or her status in mutually dependant relationships with others, especially those within the kinship category, in a 'differential hierarchical' schema. This is very different from the Western sense of 'individual'. Indeed, the Chinese individual is dominated by his or her kinship relationships: family interests are prior to self-interest. Attitudes towards such 'private affairs' as marriage, the birth of a child, and work are dictated by the ideology of kinship rather than by the individual's independent decision. I believe that if we are to understand the persistence of the deep structural forces in Chinese society, we might usefully pay more attention to Chinese attitudes to the individual, attitudes very different from those with which people in the West are familiar.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

UNPACKING ANTHROPOLOGY

DAVID PARKIN

EDWIN ARDENER, *The Voice of Prophecy and Other Essays* (ed. Malcolm Chapman), Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1989. xxviii, 256 pp., References, Index, Tables, Figures, Frontispiece. £35.00/£14.95.

I

THIS is the posthumous volume that Edwin Ardener had once said (to this reviewer) would be the only form in which his most seminal essays would be published collectively. In fact, it did seem at one stage that the volume, or something like it, might after all appear in Ardener's lifetime. But, as if returning to the original prophecy, Ardener died suddenly (in 1987) and the volume was indeed mainly prepared after his death. As is common with scholars who die in the prime of their intellectual life, there have been many obituary tributes. There has already been so much said, including, in this volume, Chapman's introduction and postscripts by two other students of Ardener's, Kirsten Hastrup and Maryon McDonald, that it is difficult to avoid repetition. Let us then re-cast the exercise of the review in different terms, a task Ardener might have appreciated, and 'unpack', as he used to say, this volume in an exploratory way, discovering things about it as we define it.

II

Starting near the end with Hastrup's postscript, we find an exposition of Ardener's approach that is as clearly expressed as Ardener's own appeared elusive. It focuses on three of Ardener's notions: semantic density, event richness and historical density, which are neatly glossed as to do respectively with language, space and time. It is subtly expressed but also the most polished summary statement I know of the trajectory in Ardener's thought, shorn of all the inevitable untidiness that went into it, and one of which Ardener himself would have been incapable, so reluctant was he to stay for more than a moment with anything that looked like a definitive statement. As McDonald says, Ardener avoided the -isms and, as Chapman notes, he saw himself as ghosting between the interstices, difficult to pin down if you wanted a precise formulation. He regarded characterizations that began to assume theoretical status as always provisional, and no sooner had we begun to understand what a p-structure was in relation to an s-structure and how they derived from the idea of template, than we were carried on into language shadows, simultaneities and world-structures and, most intriguingly of all, as in the final chapter here ("Remote Areas"—Some Theoretical Considerations'), into such expressions of everyday English language as 'remote areas', whose excavation tells us more than any analytical term, but which may itself, as Ardener sadly warned, eventually suffer the fate of taking on analytical status.

Chapman has done a remarkable editorial job and has also provided an introduction that retains the freshness of Ardener's creative provocations. The volume comes across as autobiographical in multiple and unintended ways. The book is of and about Ardener's work and achieves that task well, but Chapman also comes through as an intelligent and sensitive interpreter whom one would like to emerge from the shadows, just as Hastrup and McDonald establish their own legitimacy (the latter seeming to reflect in her comments on Ardener's empiricism something of her own remarkable experiences working in Brittany—a kind of many-mirrored imaging of Breton authenticity). This is not to say that there has been a merging of student and master, but that among the very few anthropologists who would let themselves be *visibly* captured by Ardener's prose and thence by his ideas, most were his students. Of course, a very much larger number have over the years moved in his direction, though rarely aware of the influence and even more rarely acknowledging the triggering insight.

All this relates directly to the book's title and, most importantly, to the heart of Ardener's mission. The title is bold and risky, as Chapman notes, but is probably right because it forces us to focus on prophecy as an epistemological problem rather than as to do with fortune-telling or the like. As Ardener says, prophets do not foretell: they tell us what is already there, but at the time we cannot understand them. They see before them what for others is neither visible nor communicable in existing language but which, through non-verbal means, eventually makes surface sense as the underlying logic of events and tendencies begins to be articulated in a style that informs common understanding. But it is

not that the language catches up with the underlying pattern. It is that the new language and the pattern are indissolubly formed through each other.

It has become commonplace nowadays to scoff at naïve ideas of language as referential, as principally a means by which objects are concretized and labelled. To use Ardener's early phrase, we now all accept that the linguistic and the social penetrate each other and even that the linguistic constantly 'contaminates' the social, a general view towards whose contribution Ardener acknowledges (p. 39) the work of Needham, whose *Belief, Language and Experience* (1972) also became an important landmark. But it is not always widely known how and why we arrived at this position. For this reason, it is good that Chapman included (a shortened version of) the introduction to the 1971 ASA volume, *Social Anthropology and Language*, for it has almost undergone the full cycle of datedness, and seems ripe for re-release at a time when much of a whole new generation knows only the panic of 'relevance' and seems to be rebuilding the wall that separates the practical from the conceptual.

We have to abstract what is valuable, and it is still useful to remind ourselves of the three levels at which Ardener saw language and anthropology as being related—the technical, pragmatic and explanatory—in order both to dispose of them, as he himself did, but also to pause over historical traces that may again become interesting. For instance, Ardener was at the time writing with great adulation of Saussure and against older, reconstructionist philological work. At that time, the 'master exemplar' was *langue* and *parole* and attendant oppositions, each having relational rather than intrinsic value. 'Living philology' of the Henry Sweet kind was regarded as the non-relational interest of a Malinowski who sought meanings only or mainly 'in context'. Yet, while Ardener continued to regard meaning as resting on relational notions of opposition, his last works seem also to point in the direction of a kind of philology, as the chapter on remote areas suggests: like the apparent inarticulateness of the prophet, the everyday term or phrase (odd-job word?) hovers over an assemblage of possible actions, thoughts and language, which may or may not be realized.

It would have been instructive to have Ardener address within his scheme Lienhardt's insight (1988: 107), with which I concur, that African (and, I would say, especially Bantu) languages have extraordinarily transparent etymologies. I find that it is sometimes possible to trace complex vocabulary back to an apparently original meaning. The transparency is sometimes evident to the speakers, who therefore have their own, non-Western epistemological framing that, through its visibility, invites referential thinking; not with regard to objects, however, but to conceptual-semantic archetypes. Many Africanist ethnographers must have witnessed and marvelled at how a diviner or other sage unravels a complex semantic domain and poignantly reveals an alleged root. In such situations, less is hidden from us and we are that much closer to the apparent origins of ideas, so that the 'word' can and does take on great intrinsic significance that does not have to be explained relationally, although relational significance can be found in it too. It is at once archetype, realization and expression.

III

Here we come to what I regard as an interesting tension in Ardener's work. A paper that is not in the volume, but which must stand as progenitor of the rest, is the celebrated one (1970) on zombies and witchcraft, and their co-variation with poverty and economic boom, which was first presented publicly in 1967 and published in the ASA volume on witchcraft, but which in part is found in even earlier work. Here was born the idea of the template, the underlying assemblage of ideas that can only be given partial realization at any one time, giving the impression of surface differences, which are, nevertheless, cut from the same template. It is an idea that, unlike Geertz's (1966: xx) neat but throwaway usage in his famous paper on religion as a cultural system, was nurtured over the years and took increasingly fruitful form during the rest of Ardener's career. The tension I see in Ardener's work is between the similarity that this notion shows to a standard structuralist account and the empirical flexibility that it implies and that threatens to break the constraints of any structure.

This tension entered Ardener's own conceptualizations and language. Apart from learning in the first chapter (the ASA volume introduction 'Social Anthropology and Language') that it is not the Prague School model of phonemic opposition and distinctiveness that anthropologists should be emulating, but rather that of relational opposition and distinctiveness in general, we are introduced in the second chapter ('The New Anthropology and its Critics', the 1970 Malinowski lecture) to the idea of underlying programme, qualitative generativeness as opposed to quantitative predictability, and then in later chapters (principally chapter 5, 'Some Outstanding Problems in the Analysis of Events', which was first presented and circulated widely in 1973) to the distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures. Ardener called the latter p- and s-structures, not just as an exercise in abbreviation, but because he wished to emphasize that they were not quite the same as the Saussurean and later Lévi-Straussian concepts, though very much related to them. But what was the difference and why the hesitancy?

The difference is three-fold: of scale, of his perception of otherness, and of his vision of loose as against tight boundedness. For Lévi-Strauss, it is the great mythological and marriage schemes of the world to which we address our analyses. For Ardener, it is the nooks and crannies of existence: alleged witches hiding under blankets in tin-roofed houses; differences between Ibo and English handshakes; women returning from the Bakweri forest to scream at their husbands under the general complaint of 'bush'; or the irony of retired Americans and other incomers maintaining and refurbishing the traditions of the Hebrides. Ardener re-established the apparently trivial as of exemplary significance and dissolved otherness as a matter to be created (rather than discovered), as much at home as abroad.

The tension, then, is that Ardener commonly resorted, especially early on, to a vocabulary of obvious structuralist derivation (including, from among his terms not mentioned so far, 'black box', 'linear chains', 'output', 'binary distinctions')

and so on), yet was practising a methodology on the small things of life that could be found anywhere and at any time, were experientially unbounded (not at all like a structure) and among which the surface深深 or signifier/signified distinction was of the loosest kind. In this empirical respect he was closer to Barthes than to Lévi-Strauss, though he disagreed with Barthes' view that semiotics should be part of linguistics: Ardener sided with Saussure, who argued for linguistics as part of a wider semiotics.

Now it is certainly clear that Ardener subscribed to a general semiotics, in the sense that he wished to relate the different communication media through which ideas and actions inform each other. This indeed is his idea of the 'simultaneity': signification straddles different channels and alters as it is understood, explained, renounced etc. We change that which we interpret in the very act of interpretation, but it is change that is ultimately 'generated' by the phenomenon of which we have become part through our act of interpretation. This view is now familiar and has reached us in more episodic and less systematic fashion via Geertz. I say systematic because Ardener was clearly very conscious of what he had written beforehand, so that ideas are referred back and connected very precisely. Through this continuity of conceptual overlap, however, Ardener gradually substituted lateral homologues for hierarchical levels of the appearance/essence type. As the chronologically ordered chapters proceed, they rely less and less on the basic structuralist idea of surface and deep and turn instead to, at most, a distinction between the hidden and the evident (in events) that twists inside out periodically, producing what Ardener calls parameter collapse and which is probably akin to what others have called paradigmatic change. Thus, the study of marriage as an institution that legally contains among other things sexuality can so easily become the study of 'outside' marriages and thence of 'prostitution', which reverses the paradigm by showing sexuality now as 'containing' the law in the sense of commonly being outside and beyond it.

IV

Chapman was right to arrange the chapters in the chronological order of their first appearance rather than of their actual publication. For it is in this way that we can see the shift from quasi-structuralist language to a use of vocabulary that becomes increasingly everyday and descriptive. It is indeed a shift from 'genre to life', which is how Ardener describes, in the penultimate chapter ('Social Anthropology and the Decline of Modernism'), the decline of modernism and its successor.

Yet there are distinctive sub-themes that punctuate the flow at different points, and, while it is against the spirit of his work to abstract them as separable, they are bound to be addressed as such. Thus, the issue of how to measure events and people when these same phenomena never remain sufficiently fixed to be

measurable by set criteria, is especially treated in the chapters on population and ethnicity—‘Language, Ethnicity and Population’ (first published in *JASO*) and ‘Social Anthropology and Population’—but recurs in others. It is not just that human populations have the capacity, unlike animal species or plants, to redefine themselves (to call themselves by different ‘ethnic’ names) at the very point at which you put them in a category to be counted. This is one problem. Another more fundamental problem is that human ‘groups’ are also constantly re-evaluating the criteria by which they identify themselves. The demographer presupposes a standardization of his/her data by resort to what appear to be such universal measures as gender and age, and so irons out the creases that would otherwise appear in the concepts that lie behind such measures. As Ardener says, the outrageous or anomalous become susceptible to a levelling-out operation. In other words, before we measure we have to define the unit of measurement, and to define it means taking into account peoples’ own definitions as well as our own, which, as we know, are affected significantly by this very process. Ardener was well aware of the pitfalls of statistical ‘truths’, having worked in this area in his early studies of fertility and divorce. He saw the above, later, chapters as keeping us on constant alert for this mutual relatedness of measurement and definition, and to the fact that to measure is always to raise problems of definition. It was, as with other sub-themes, a challenge to the tendency in social science to privilege an alleged underlying statistical objectivity and to separate it from what some might present as surface deviatorial behaviour.

The same concern comes across in the chapters—‘“Behaviour”: A Social Anthropological Criticism’ (another first published in *JASO*) and, to a lesser extent, ‘“Social Fitness” and the Idea of “Survival”’—that reject both naïve and sophisticated arguments alike that animal and human behaviour can be understood as commensurately similar. In many ways, however, Ardener presents the problem as that of the impossibility of translating across cultures according to a universally understood code: for different cultures, read animal and human, and see this as allegorical. The argument for the incommensurability of cultures, echoed by Feyerabend and others, is well taken as a methodological starting-point. But how would Ardener have reacted to the extraordinary bio-genetic changes that are now envisaged within science, whose implications are of patterns that go far beyond our facile distinction between human and animal? These after all are theories that in their experimental practice are wreaking havoc with even our own anthropological ideas of kinship: who is the mother of the child, or to whom does the child ‘belong’, and what now the significance of oppositional patterns of relatedness? Are we far from the factory-like production of babies for whom the sentiment of kinship could only arise through adoption, and could a notion of incest, and therefore of kinship *rules*, have any significance in such a system? As Strathern (1992) has been showing recently, bio-power indeed.

V

The mention of power raises a perennial criticism of Ardener's work, which is that, in its concern with the apparently small things of life and with semiotics as itself one of the allegedly small things, it failed to grapple with issues of tyranny, of great historical changes, and with the common questions of statehood and people. I think it is perfectly true that with Ardener's approach you can, so to speak, paint yourself into a semantic corner and, with great finesse, do no more than counter such charges with the claim that it is precisely the small things that both make up the large and act as a conceptual basis for it. Ardener would probably have accepted this point, to judge by the pleasure he took when I once remarked that his work on 'the woman question' was really a political statement, or at least a study of the mainsprings of power differences. Certainly his three papers focused on 'the woman question' ('Belief and the Problem of Women', 'The "Problem" Revisited', 'The Problem of Dominance'; chapters 4, 8 and 12 here) reached out to a much larger audience than any of his others and played a major part in pre- and post-feminist debates. The last seemed most directly addressed to feminism and, using the origins of women's dominance by men as a 'vehicle', formulated the argument that minor, often biological differences, can become socially and then culturally elaborated to form the basis of class, ethnic and other major social divisions, but that human consciousness need not remain so 'false' and unquestioning that we are condemned to be permanently enslaved by such predispositions. The ending here, with its curious slide into an uncharacteristic universalizing plea for a happy ending, is clearly weak and seems to reinforce the claim that there is a need for some kind of accommodation with history, a task that may well be that of Ardener's posthumous volume on Cameroonian coastal society over the last three centuries that we are promised.

VI

Perhaps the best way to read the volume is to not take too seriously the earlier, though quite long-lasting structuralist-like concepts but to focus instead on the unfamiliar use of familiar terms. For example, we learn so much more about the problems both of prophecy and of how apparently different events are related to each other through the idea of 'blank banners' ('Social Anthropology and Language'; chapter 1) and its cognate, 'hollow categories' ('Social Anthropology and Population': chapter 7). The former describes that moment of hesitancy in the mobilization of a 'movement' when people gather for a purpose they know to be important to them but for which they lack the language to express it. The latter idea catches admirably the conceptual awkwardness of ethnic self and other classifications, which often seem to come from nowhere: an ethnic group suddenly

becomes a highly visible unit; a former such group seems equally suddenly to have no substance, for its members seem mostly to belong elsewhere; in-between such apparent transformations are the areas of doubt, uncertainty and reformulation, as those who were 'dying out' seem now to have regathered while those who were many and strong are now said to be dispersed or 'lost'.

The notion of 'event richness' is especially interesting. It seems at first sight scandalous to suggest that the Bakweri are event-rich, in that everything that happens seems to them to be unique and so to have new and special significance, and that the Ibo, on their own admission, are event-impoverished, by virtue of the fact that they lead routine lives laced with occasional excitement whose outcome is, however, seen to be broadly predictable within a narrow range of possibilities. One is reminded of Gluckman's (1962: 34) equally scandalous remark that technologically simple societies have more ritual than complex ones. But, as an aspect of self-definition and therefore of experience, such distinctions seem inescapable, although to go beyond this broad generalization to other more interesting statements makes increasingly imaginative demands that may well result in the analytical complexity that suffocates the inspirational value of using 'natural' language.

VII

This takes us on to the question of whether it is at all legitimate to ask where Ardener's work leads. He himself abandoned the structuralist load that he had had to carry first (at a time when few others were believers). In turning to non-structuralist vocabulary, he makes it quite clear in the later chapters that the very process of unpacking ordinary 'natural' language subverted its openness: instead of *experiencing* the difference between a remote and non-remote area, we shall, after reading the last chapter, *classify* it on the basis of ossifying criteria. This is part of the contamination of the social, not so much by language, as Ardener put it, but by analytical terms. The salvation, however, is that new everyday terms and phrases are coined continually in every society and are consubstantive with and perhaps constitutive of events and thought-tendencies within it. There is, therefore, always more ethnography where that came from.

Ardener, it is true, used only ethnographic snippets in his papers, and it is highly questionable whether he could have said more, theoretically or epistemologically, in a full-length ethnographic monograph than he did say, with such economy, in his short papers. I certainly benefit from rereading his essays, but I am also always left with a nagging worry that he offers us only succulent tastes of a meal that we shall have actually to cook ourselves. Perhaps that is a fair division of labour. Or perhaps it reflects the gap between anthropological theory and ethnographic narrative rather than any failing on Ardener's part. I

would still have liked to have seen Ardener write the Bakweri monograph, if only to learn what difference, if any, it might have made. I suspect none, which is no reproach, but a recognition of the need to distinguish frankly between the ethnography that painstakingly produces the insight and the elegant crystallization of the latter for more general consumption.

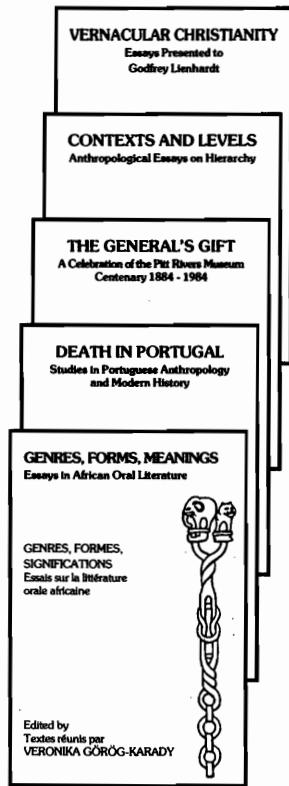
Others, including Chapman, Hastrup and McDonald, have written the book-length ethnographies that we still demand as evidence of apprenticeship in our trade, and these books are certainly highly regarded in the subject. The question that needs to be asked is how much one can tell nowadays from reading them that these and subsequent ethnographies have been shaped by Ardener's ideas. We know their tutorial provenance and can certainly see a distinctiveness. Yet, if Ardener's view of the prophet is correct, and if he was one himself, then his ideas will have passed, or will in due course pass, into common and unacknowledged usage, and as time goes on we shall not be able to recognize such distinctiveness. Prophets, after all, are unintelligible when they begin to speak, but, once their ideas are absorbed, become banal. By this definition, then, prophets only become so in retrospect, after their ideas have had their effect and become commonplace. It may be reassuring to suggest that, by this latter criterion, Ardener was not a prophet, for though he developed a language for empiricizing what we may identify as a structuralist and then post-structuralist trend in social anthropology that was often difficult to understand, and although many of his ideas have indeed percolated into the body of anthropological assumptions, there remain, especially in the essays gathered in this volume, intriguing suggestions and insights that will take a good few years yet to unpack and that remain far from banal.

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BOOK REVIEWS

DEBORAH B. GEWERTZ and FREDERICK K. ERRINGTON, *Twisted Histories, Altered Contexts: Representing the Chambri in a World System*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1991. xiv, 246 pp., References, Index, Maps, Photographs. £30.00/£9.95//\$44.50/\$14.95.

This is one of a number of important books, just appearing, that focus broadly upon the complexities of the ultimately unequal encounter between the West and various societies in the Pacific. Other examples include Nick Thomas's similarly titled *Entangled Objects* (Harvard, 1991) and Schieffelin and Crittenden's multi-perspectival account of the Hides patrol through Papua (*Like People You See in a Dream* (Stanford, 1991)).

The Chambri inhabit an island mountain in Papua New Guinea's Middle Sepik region. Culturally, they were dominated by their powerful Iatmul neighbours. Economically, they are members of a regional trading system (analysed by Gewertz in an earlier book) whose members were mutually dependent on each other's specialist products. The introduction of manufactured goods has both impoverished the trading system and created a need for cash. This the Chambri have few means of earning, apart from out-migration or selling artefacts (and Chambri culture more generally) to groups of tourists who travel up the Sepik River on luxury cruisers.

Chambri culture was documented earlier by Mead and Fortune ('the Tchambuli'), and Gewertz and Errington subsequently worked with the grandchildren of some of Mead's informants. This link is one minor skein of the title's 'Twisted Histories', which—through imagery, power, literacy, advertising and migration—tie the Chambri in complex ways to their anthropologists, to their neighbours, to tourists and to the Papua New Guinea state and world system more generally. 'Altered Contexts', the title's other half, alludes to the consequences for the Chambri of pursuing their cultural goals under these changing circumstances. At the most encompassing level, the authors suggest, these altered contexts can be grasped in terms of a distinction between 'commensurate' and 'incommensurate' differences. The mutual regional dependency of the trading system was one of commensurate difference; inequalities existed but were not structurally entrenched. The same is true of traditional Chambri social life more generally: differences in power and authority are quantitative and transient, so bigmen have potent rivals and humiliated initiates in turn become initiators. However, this system of commensurate differences has been contextualized by national and world systems, in which differences in development are hierarchical and incommensurate, and the parties involved are not mutually entailed as formerly.

The choices the Chambri make as they manoeuvre in these altered contexts, and the structural consequences, are documented and analysed though a number of sustained examples. The first two chapters focus upon the initiation ceremony organized by the powerful bigman Maliwan. Capitalizing on his links to the owner

of a cruise company, he invites tourists, and to their chagrin the authors, as paying guests. The revenue will allow Maliwan to fulfil traditional obligations; it will also bolster his claim to possess the power to attract resources (today, tourists), and to represent the Chambri to the outside world. The authors pause here to offer a succinct analysis of initiation as a process in which differences between the various Chambri social categories are first heightened and then resolved, the power of freshly unified adult society then being brought to bear upon the initiates. The Chambri at first attempt to incorporate the tourists as one further social category in this system of commensurate differences, but the tourists reject this classification in a variety of ways, maintaining themselves as separate, unentailed and ultimately superior. Moreover, Maliwan's tapping of tourist wealth for Chambri ends has unintended consequences. Control of the initiation is taken partly from Chambri hands. As they schedule the initiation for the tourists' arrival and modify and re-run bits of it for their benefit, the Chambri begin to find themselves defined in ways they do not like and cannot control.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus respectively upon migration and the conflict between senior men and 'youth': linked topics because a major goal of leaving Chambri Island is to evade the power of senior men who control the marriage system. Western images of freedom, mediated through advertising, literature and music, are important stimulants to escape, yet few young Chambri who espouse 'freedom' consider themselves any the less Chambri for doing so. Much of chapter 4 concerns Nick Ambri, leader of the Yerameri Drifters Band, a Chambri James Dean. Nick chose to stay in Chambri and confront the power of the bigmen by marrying the girl of his choice; inevitably, in the Chambri view, he died, a victim of his father's sorcery. However, Nick Ambri's life becomes something of a youth manifesto. During his final funeral rites, which first evoke and then deconstitute Nick as a person, Chambri youth dress in sun-glasses and their most stylish clothes and stage an all-night performance of his music, thus claiming these to have been essential parts of his being. But though the objects that are invested in advertisements with ideas of freedom are commodities, the authors conclude that so long as the Chambri subsistence base remains intact, people can 'flirt with Western representations, using them for their own purposes, within a system in which their fundamental identity was not, as yet, class based' (p. 146).

The last two chapters examine 'The Written Word' and 'Negotiating with the State'. Like commodities, literacy belongs to a world whose incommensurate differences may be imported along with the practice of writing. The authors describe how their own field assistant, Godfried Kolly, is stimulated to embark upon an indigenous ethnography, recording ancestral deeds and attempting to resolve discrepancies between the different accounts he is given and the events recorded in the Bible; for he comes to see the two as identical, with initiation, for example, as baptism. In principle, this process of inscription meets with the approval of senior Chambri men, who are concerned about the decay of knowledge of ancestral precedent, and who also wish to confirm Chambri's position as the Rome of the Sepik (Chambri provided catechists for other Sepik areas). However,

knowledge of ancestral precedent is both secret and constitutes important political capital; consequently, Godfried's systematization may, potentially, make him the most powerful Chambri who ever lived. In practice, therefore, senior men decline to provide details of their secret knowledge, and literacy's latent capacity to induce incommensurate differences remains to date unrealized. 'Negotiating with the State' similarly documents Chambri rejection of the incommensurate differences entailed in modern statehood. The Chambri do not see themselves as ceding power to a superordinate body that will act in the equal interests of all citizens; for the Chambri, rights are produced by social relationships, not prior to them. The ramifications of this are examined through cases in which Chambri attempt to negotiate with the state as though it is another kin group and decide whether or not law-breakers should be handed over to the police.

Twisted Histories, Altered Contexts is compulsively readable, in part because the material is presented through specific cases and individuals—including the authors themselves, whose long-term links with the Chambri, and the writings that have resulted from it, become elements in Chambri history. In these respects, and in the concern with individuals' subjectivities that periodically surfaces, the book is reminiscent of Read's New Guinea Highlands monographs. But the book's readability also contributes to the authors' clearly stated political wish, not simply to document the Chambri experience of change, but also to 'provide the basis for a politically compelling acknowledgement of common humanity' (p. 21). To the extent that so well-written a book will be widely used in teaching (not least within Papua New Guinea), this is a goal that is likely to be achieved. There are, however, some costs to the book's accessibility. The key concept of 'development' and the distinction between commensurate and incommensurate differences are insufficiently worked through. There is a tendency to define differences in power and authority as fundamentally 'commensurate' so long as they are temporary, which in the long run all hierarchies are. Application of the commensurate/incommensurate distinction is also particularly intriguing given Simon Harrison's recent account, in *Stealing People's Names* (Cambridge, 1990) of another Iatmul-dominated Middle Sepik people, the Avatip. Harrison discerns as a major theme of Avatip history the long-standing endeavour by the largest subclan to appropriate the totality of ritual powers and thus to construct incommensurate differences.

But though some of the local-global interactions treated here—tourism, migration, literacy—could have been examined individually in greater detail, for me the originality of the book lies in its taking the whole set of interactions as the focus. In doing so, the authors also transmute into data much material that tends to get pushed to the periphery of specialist monographs, yet is nevertheless a substantial part of fieldwork experience in Papua New Guinea: assisting informants in their applications for provincial and national government funds; uneasily mediating between tourists and community; listening to senior men complain of 'bighead' youths and youths complaining of conservative and repressive seniors; being pressurized to write to the Queen in support of bigmen's campaigns to be

awarded the MBE; and observing the local political uses made of earlier anthropological publications. It is partly because the book accurately reflects these aspects of contemporary fieldwork that it is also so vivid an account of the complexities of the Chambri's present situation.

MICHAEL O'HANLON

ROBERT W. HEFNER, *The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretive History*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1990. xxii, 251 pp., Bibliography, Index, Tables, Plates, Maps. \$34.95.

Hefner starts his study with the premise that 'recent attempts by interpretive scholars to represent social action as a "text", the significance of which lies in what the action "says" rather than what it "does"... are ill-conceived'(p. xii). His 'interpretive history' is avowedly Weberian and ultimately causal, and he writes with a sense that the formerly dominant modernization model for explaining change in the non-Western world by Western precedents has collapsed.

The mountain Java he writes about is actually the villages of the Tengger Highlands of East Java, more specifically those of the regency of Pasuruan and one in the regency of Malang. These people are sometimes depicted as remnants of the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit, persisting in a surrounding sea of Islamic culture, an issue that was the subject of Hefner's earlier book, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 1985).

Hefner notes that our understanding of Java tends to be based on a narrow, essentially lowland, conception of its regional variation and argues that greater attention needs to be paid to highland communities. Geertz has written about the religion and economy of Java based on research in a Brantas River valley community (Pare) as though it were representative for all of Java, and Hefner seems to do the same on a smaller scale, for, although he draws extensive contrasts between Tengger and lowland economy, he says little about other highland regions.

Hefner writes that though highland history is distinctive, it throws light on forces that have shaped Southeast Asia as a whole. He begins his account of this history with Singosari, the early thirteenth-century precursor to Majapahit, and continues on via the period of expanding Islam, the era of Dutch colonial rule, the Japanese invasion, the first decades of the Republic, the aftermath of the 1965 coup, through the 'New Order' government and the Green Revolution to the present. Necessarily, much of the information about this history does not derive directly from the Tengger Highlands. Nevertheless, Hefner effectively conveys the impression of a shifting pattern of circumstances and realities. Circumstances in Java have changed in significant ways, in large part because of overt government policies, since the early 1950s when Geertz and his colleagues were carrying out

the research of the so-called 'Modjokuto Project'. Consequently, recent studies, such as this one, have evaluated Javanese possibilities rather differently.

Hefner reaches a number of conclusions. Commercialization under Dutch influence did not revolutionize production, but led to changes in the relative ratio of staples to commercial crops. Capitalized production methods did not replace older forms, and the modest market-led expansion could not be sustained in the face of the depression and subsequent crises. The Green Revolution followed four decades of economic instability. Improved transportation, the use of fertilizers and new strains and crops, brought increased, if unevenly distributed, wealth, but the technology that has brought economic benefit has also brought ecological problems that threaten these gains. Agricultural changes have not produced proletarianization or the expansion of impersonal wage labour, and the emergence of more class-stratified villages has been muted by cultural norms of social autonomy: 'thrust into a national arena, these mountain Javanese sought not simply to maximize income or expand production, but to redefine community' (p. 29). Nevertheless, Tengger history shows that commercial change need not undermine traditional arrangements and that extended contact with capitalist economy need not lead to adopting all its features. The Tengger have managed to maintain a distinctive ritual and status scheme. In a pattern familiar throughout rural Indonesia, 'where wealth came into the village, it was carefully channelled into projects consonant with local forms of distinction' (p. 238).

Hefner appears never to refer to works in German. At any event, he does not discuss the German-language publications of Barbara Lüem, who has also recently studied the Tengger. Thomas Schweizer's recent *Reisanbau in Einem Javanischen Dorf* (Cologne/Vienna, 1989) discusses some of the issues taken up by Hefner and sometimes reaches similar conclusions.

Hefner has looked closely at an idiosyncratic Javanese region and used it as the basis for an ambitious review of the literature on Javanese economic development and a critique of social theory. His arguments are generally congenial and plausible. Java is, of course, one of the more important of the world's arenas for matching economic development to social need, and it is an overt testing-ground for development policy. As is to be expected, many of the factors affecting Tengger life are also important in Indonesian communities beyond Java.

R. H. BARNES

RONALD INDEN, *Imagining India*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1990. viii, 270 pp., Bibliography, Index. £39.50.

This is an important book, one that every anthropologist and historian of India should read. Some may come away irritated and carping at Inden's arrogance, but

they will not be able to deny the wit and agility with which he tackles no less a subject than the entire Orientalist edifice of knowledge of India. Moreover, while the anthropologist at least may feel that the alleged errors and distortions to which Inden draws attention are those to which he or she is now sensitized, by tracing the intellectual history of such errors and distortions Inden provides us with a valuable history lesson.

In brief, the book consists of a long, five-chapter introduction, which outlines and deconstructs that which has gone before, and a brief, one-chapter 'reconstruction' of one period of Indian history. In this sense the book reads like an inverted version of Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (where two chapters of deconstructive introduction are followed by seven chapters of reconstruction, plus some additional matter). Indeed, for the anthropological reader it is intriguing to glimpse the obviously very difficult relationship that Inden has with Dumont: approved of wholeheartedly for dismissing Eliade's Jungian mumbo-jumbo (pp. 124-5), yet criticized indirectly (through a criticism of Madelaine Biardeau) for throwing out the baby of human agency in history with the bathwater of specious evolutionist speculation (p. 126).

Throughout the book, Inden's aim is to deny power to a series of 'essences' that have been held up as determinative of Indian social formations and, instead, to locate agency in the will and action of the Indians themselves. These 'essences', detailed and meticulously picked apart in the four central chapters of the book, are 'caste', 'Hinduism', 'village India' and 'divine' kingship. All of these, at various times and in various combinations, have been held up by Anglo-American scholars as what Inden terms 'substantialized agents' or 'essences', static forces that lie behind and guide the actions of the men (and, presumably, women, though Inden has little to say about this), rendering everyone from the rulers of Indian kingdoms to the members of the village council powerless tools, capable only of expressing these deep and largely irrational forces.

Relying on backing from such intellectual heavyweights as Collingwood and, to a lesser extent, Foucault and Gramsci, Inden's main targets of attack are the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians of, and other writers on, India (particulary James Mill and Hegel). These are identified in the first chapter as being the source of hegemonic knowledge of India in Europe (and later, in America), a knowledge that forms the ground-plan of all later investigations of Indian history and society. It was such writers as these who paved the way for seeing a 'dreamy imagination' (p. 3) as the condition of the Indian mind, the antithesis of the rapier-like sharpness of European rationality. This was particularly so when Hinduism was considered, that vast sponge that absorbed all that came in contact with it, which was taken to be essentially feminine in character, and which thus enervated and feminized all who were involved with it. Caste too, the 'body' that carries the Hindu 'mind' of India, was thus an irrational social formation. Of course, for some (utilitarian rationalists such as Mill, for example), this irrationality was to be despised and replaced as soon as possible, while for others (the 'Romantics' as Inden dubs them, such as Sir William Jones,

and later idealists such as Eliade) the ‘irrationality’ of caste and Hinduism were to be admired for expressing a deep well-spring of ancient human feeling and knowledge, however hopeless this might be for maintaining a viable polity.

Inden’s main concern, however, is less with the imperialist and often laughable accounts of ‘the Indian mind’, than with accounts of the pre-British state(s). To this end, chapters 4 and 5 (on village India and ‘divine’ kingship), form a necessary prelude to chapter 6, the ‘reconstruction’ of the history of the Rashtrakutas—an ‘imperial formation’ as Inden calls it, which laid political claim to much of India between AD 753 and 975. Inden’s rereading of inscriptions and grants made by the Rashtrakuta kings suggests that they continually and actively reconstituted their kingdom in both time and space through elaborate rituals of bathing, processions and installation ceremonies. The Rashtrakuta kings were neither oriental despots (one view of divine kings) nor effete pleasure-seekers who deceived themselves into believing that they ruled over vast tracts of land, whereas in fact all Indian villages were self-governing autonomous entities. The polity of the Rashtrakuta empire is best seen, according to Inden, borrowing from Collingwood, as a ‘scale of forms’, an overlapping of complex agents (persons and aspects of persons that, however temporarily, may act upon the world with some common purpose) ranging from village councils and their headmen up to the Rashtrakuta Chakravartin, the universal ruler. The Chakravartin was not the agent responsible for the conquest and maintenance of his empire, nor were he and all his subjects the instruments of the agency of caste or Hinduism. Rather, he was the apex or centre of a series of concentric rings of complex agents, each dependent upon the other for the exercise of their agency and all dependent upon the Chakravartin and the rituals (actions) of the royal court to sustain and continually refashion the polity.

In a brief summary such as this I have had to leave unrecorded the many subtleties of Inden’s book, in particular the painstaking way in which he teases out a variety of Orientalist discourses and illuminates the sometimes fundamental disagreements between earlier scholars as to the nature of India. Quite apart from the main thrust of his argument, Inden also offers many comments and asides of direct interest to anthropologists. His discussion of the bathing rituals of the Rashtrakutas (pp. 233-9) is one such. He criticizes anthropologists who have discussed the ‘power’ that is supposed to be gained through initiation rituals (here *tejas*, with which the Rashtrakuta king becomes infused through the rites of bathing) as being conceived of as an objective force, akin to electricity. This power can then be used to control the universe, a typical irrationality of the constructed Hindu Indian ‘as a person trying to do something he obviously cannot do’ (p. 236). Nor, says Inden, does it help much to say that the ritual baths ‘purify’ as ‘almost every rite in Hinduism can be said to purify somebody or something’ (*ibid.*). Rather, Inden would prefer to see the king infused with divine will, a combination of desire and intellect, in short, a ‘world-ordering rationality’ (p. 237).

There are certainly problems with the book, the most serious of which is that by returning agency to the Indian other, a similar analysis must be pursued for the Orientalists themselves: who or what were the agents in the Anglo-French and US-USSR ‘imperial formations’ (as Inden dubs them, the latter succeeding the former as formulators of hegemonic knowledge about the Orient), and why did they produce the texts they did with the arguments they did? Certainly, having argued persuasively for the subtle complexity of the Rashtrakutas’ actions (who, through their rituals and claims to territory were not, according to Inden, seeking simply to demonstrate ‘control’ over time and space but were, rather, ‘striving, with every political act, to give a better account of the world than had their predecessors’ (p. 247)), Inden is careful not to make such reductionist assumptions about the agents of these formations. A second problem for the anthropologist lies in the treatment of anthropology itself. Although the discipline is mentioned along with such others as sociology and art history (e.g., pp. 66, 70) as one of the bearers of the hegemonic discourse about India, there is very little sustained discussion of the discipline, apart from reference to some rather elderly works on village India (Adrian Mayer, Srinivas) and the very circumscribed discussions of Dumont. One suspects that Inden found it in his best interests not to mention more modern works of anthropology (relating both to India and elsewhere, especially New Guinea) precisely because the idea of attributing rational purpose and self-willed agency to the subjects of anthropological investigation—in short, of seeing things in their terms—is now nearly commonplace. If, as he claims, Inden is seeking to displace the mistaken emulation of the natural sciences and is ‘committed to building on and extending the aspects of the social sciences and history that have been liberating for people and helping them to act as fuller, more knowledgeable agents’ (p. 22) it is sad that he did not investigate further into post-structuralist anthropology. Recent work in African history, which similarly attempts to accord agency to the subjects, is not mentioned at all.

None the less, this is a powerful and important book. It is packed with ideas and information, as well as wit (his comments on the Jungian and ‘New Age’ appropriation of Hindu mysticism (pp. 123-4) are especially acerbic). Even the potentially dullest and most specialist section, the reconstruction of the Rashtrakuta polity, brings vividly to life the endless and apparently vacuous eulogies of royal inscriptions and grants.

MARCUS BANKS

JULIA LESLIE (ed.), *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*, London: Pinter 1991. xviii, 267 pp., References, Index. £27.50.

The essays in this volume examine the historical and contemporary role of women in Hindu rituals, as well as Hindu women's perceptions of religious life and experience. The notion that women are merely passive victims of an oppressive ideology, dominated by men, is strenuously contested. Each of the contributors to the collection demonstrates that women do not simply conform to the model imposed upon them by Hindu men. Far from being quiescent and largely inactive, as women are typically portrayed in Brahmanical literature and often viewed by non-Hindu writers (including non-Hindu feminists), the picture that emerges reveals that women are, and apparently always have been, involved in the creation of their own identity, which they, themselves, positively construct. Yet it may not be assumed that women are opposed to men, or that women have a world-view that is radically different from men's. As Leslie writes, 'it is the small deviations from the norm which may be crucial, perhaps the way the apparently negative is transformed into something positive and powerful' (p. 3).

In order to delineate these so-called 'deviations', as well as to facilitate understanding of them, the volume is divided into four principal parts. The first of these is concerned with 'The Ritual Wife', the second, third and fourth with 'Power in the Home', 'The Ritual of Dance' and 'The Pursuit of Salvation' respectively. These four sections separate, in turn, into two distinct contexts: (1) interpretation of religious rituals encapsulated in texts written and compiled by men, and (2) women's perspectives on religious and ritual behaviour. However, while each of the contributors provides insights into these distinct areas of investigation, Mary McGee's essay is, perhaps, singularly noteworthy, and a useful place to start.

McGee analyses textual descriptions of votive rites (*vratas*) compiled by a male literate élite and compares them with contemporary statements by women. According to the male compilers, these rites enable women to achieve spiritual liberation (*moksa*), as well as promising more immediate, though lesser, worldly rewards. Since these secondary benefits are additional, votive rites are considered to be 'optional' (*kamya*) rather than 'obligatory' (*nitya*). But when McGee explores alternative evaluations, provided by her female Maharashtrian informants, there is a significant shift in emphasis. Of central importance is the belief that votive rites enable women to maintain marital felicity (*saubhagya*), a term which denotes 'good fortune' or 'auspiciousness'. This manifests itself in a woman by virtue of her wifehood. Now, since the term (*saubhagya*) is added to the list of rewards—and because the duties of the devoted wife (her *stridharma*) are directed solely towards the well-being of her husband and household—McGee contends that votive rites are never merely optional for women. Thus it appears that the label (*kamya*) is inadequate, since, for women, performance is invariably synonymous with obligation. Moreover, the quest for spiritual liberation, although an intended object of votive rites, does not seem to be the reason why women observe them.

Because *moksa* is held to be concomitant with marital felicity, it is not the first, but the second of these concerns that brings women within the orbit of the ceremonial framework. This also contrasts with the traditional male view. By placing stress upon 'acquisition' of the supreme goal (together with other inferior rewards), McGee shows that the entire orientation of women's lives towards 'maintenance' of the family is completely ignored. In this respect, the textual compilers fall short of recognizing the motives and intentions of women votaries.

These subtle differences that McGee identifies illustrate clearly that Hindu women may not be viewed in terms of passivity or indolence. And the manner in which women are actively, exegetically and purposefully involved in this complex process of construction is not limited simply to votive rites. As the other contributors forcefully argue, this also applies to sectarian movements, marriage ceremonies, classical and modern dance rituals as well as to female asceticism.

By way of conclusion, it must be pointed out, however, that the volume has one notable weakness: in more than 200 pages the 'nature–culture' controversy is not once addressed. Yet the book's challenge is directly related to important issues raised by this debate. The contention that women are closer to 'nature', while men may, contrastingly, be more easily equated with 'culture', assumes that women are more or less passive and unassertive. In the context of Hindu rituals and religious behaviour, this would be an essentially androcentric view, serving to reinforce the inherently biased model of women that Hindu men and male-authored texts allocate to them. It is unfortunate that the types of problem confronted by proponents of this thesis are never tackled explicitly in *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. Despite this criticism, however, the book deserves a prominent place on the reading lists of anthropologists and Orientalists.

GRAHAM DWYER

JUNE McDANIEL, *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1989. xi, 286 pp., Appendixes, References, Index, Tables. £45.00/£13.50.

The typical Indian holy man—in the Indian estimation as in the Western stereotype—is calm, ascetic, and in control, capable of feats of endurance or suppleness that ordinary mortals can only wonder at. June McDaniel's book describes a very different type of holy man and woman, important in Bengal, the mad saint. The mad saint may behave like a baby, weep uncontrollably, imagine him or herself to be Krishna's wife Radha, have luxuriant visions, beat and insult would-be devotees, and ignore or invert the etiquette and purity rules of polite society.

One theme of *The Madness of the Saints* deals with the ways in which Bengalis attempt to distinguish between divine madness and ordinary insanity. In fact, in nearly all the case-studies she describes and the biographies she translates the holy person was initially thought to be mad and taken by concerned relatives to doctors, exorcists, and Ayurvedic doctors for treatment. Only when these pronounced it not to be insanity, and when the 'patients' began to acquire disciples, did they begin to be taken as saints. Even then, some families could not accept the apparent madness as *bhāva*, a state of extreme emotion caused by god-intoxication. This concept seems to be shared equally by all Bengalis, and divine madness equally revered, whether they are Vaishnavas (followers of Vishnu, in this case in his form as Krishna), Shaktas (followers of Shakti, Shiva's consort), Muslims, or members of other, syncretic sects.

There is, furthermore, a crucial distinction in Bengal between *bhāva*, a state of intoxication caused by closeness to god, and *bhor*, which is possession by god. McDaniel writes: 'one woman, called a "*bhor* lady" by others, was scandalized when asked about her experiences. "I do not have *bhor*, I have *bhāva*!" she replied proudly. Possession trance (*bhor*) is associated with the poor and low caste, while *bhāva* belongs to several venerable religious traditions. *Bhāva* is more justifiable, a state of divine love or awareness, while possession trance often has practical ends (diagnosing and healing disease, asking the deities for favors) and demonstrates neither love nor awareness' (pp. 229-30).

The Madness of the Saints is, then, full of material that is grist to the anthropological mill, but the anthropological reader has to work hard to extract such culturally and sociologically significant points from the text. The book plunges straight into the subject with no preliminary setting of the scene. No anthropological accounts of Bengal or India are mentioned, not even those produced in Chicago. I. M. Lewis's *Ecstatic Religion* is listed in the references but is not discussed; we have to wait instead, until more than half way through the book, for a quotation from a novel by Anita Desai, to make the point, as McDaniel puts it, that 'religion has been both the way in and the way out for Bengali women' (p. 191).

McDaniel's technique is to translate extensive chunks of Bengali biographies of mad saints, and to summarize the rest, and then to comment briefly on the content. She supplements these written sources with interviews with living mad saints she met in Bengal. It is only in the conclusion that the context really emerges. Such mad saints invert the dominant, scripturally approved version of divine awareness. In the latter, one is supposed to first receive initiation from a guru, then practise ritual and yoga long and hard, gradually attaining glimpses of one's chosen god; glimpses that are to be made more vivid through discipline and control. Mad saints, by contrast, *begin* with dramatic, upsetting, and even bizarre visions of god. Ritual and initiations, if undertaken at all, are done only as a secondary legitimization; direct visions and experience of god are what it is all about. Since such saints are admired, however, and their own scriptural traditions are well established, there arises the secondary problem of how to distinguish

someone who is really a mad saint from someone who is merely imitating how a mad saint is supposed to behave.

In short, *The Madness of the Saints* makes available a mass of fascinating Bengali material. It is particularly good that McDaniel sets side by side all the different competing traditions of Bengali religion and shows what they share and how they differ. But her phenomenological, religious-studies perspective means that comparisons are made with Christianity, with European folk-tales, and with Freudianism, but only in passing and not very satisfactorily with other Indian regional traditions. There is no discussion of how these mad saints appear to laity who are not devotees, and even the devotees themselves are fairly shadowy. There is no attempt to relate the material to anthropological discussions of spirit-possession and renunciation in Hinduism.

DAVID N. GELLNER

JOHN EADE and MICHAEL J. SALLNOW (eds.), *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, London and New York: Routledge 1991. xii, 153 pp., Index, Figures. £10.99.

It was Victor Turner who put the topic of pilgrimage on anthropologists' list of contents. Although he got it so wrong, he published so much that others felt obliged to point out his errors. These revisionists have done their job so well that, these days, dumping on Turner has become *passé*. Of course, if Turner and his critics had bothered to read Robert Hertz's long paper of 1914 on pilgrimage in southeast France, they would have found most of their points and counterpoints already well set out in his admirably clear ethnographic essay. It is, therefore, deeply disappointing that none of the contributors to this collection cites this apparently forgotten paper.

Instead of crabbing *communitas*, today's anthropologists of pilgrimage see the phenomenon as a varied, contested domain that—like any other comparative concept—eludes easy definition. In so far as they can contain the topic, they view pilgrimage both as a field of social relations and as a realm of competing discourses. Thus a place does not become a shrine because of some intrinsic religious character it supposedly manifests, but because it can accommodate a diversity of meanings and practices. And a place becomes a major shrine, one of universalistic import, if it can bear the weight of interpretation applied by a multiplicity of religious discourses. A site like Lourdes, for instance, becomes famous and much visited because so many different types of clients can there find (or at least seek) what they desire. In other words, shrines are *inscribed* upon the landscape, and they are never definitively inscribed.

The contributors bring out the plurality of pilgrimage in a sophisticated, post-Turnerian manner. Bowman, focusing on Jerusalem, contrasts the discourses of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant pilgrimage to this sacred site. McKevitt looks at the way the villagers at one pilgrimage site feel its control has been wrested from them, and how its controllers now view them as almost diabolic characters who fail to live up to the Christian ideals that the site is meant to embody. Instead of contrasting the particular approaches of three different churches, Dahlberg compares the religious style of three different Catholic pilgrimages to Lourdes: one organized by an archdiocese, one for handicapped children, and one commercial venture. Eade, also at Lourdes, describes the tensions between collective discipline and freedom of expression, between lay helpers and pilgrims who wish to make the most of their visit. Stirrat shows how the new shrines that have been created in Sri Lanka in recent decades are defined less by place than by person, i.e. 'holy men' imbued with the power of the divine. Sallnow demonstrates the internally contradictory nature of Andean Christianity and the way locals use pilgrimage to try to reclaim, in a neo-colonial manner, their compromised cultural identity.

In sum, these carefully analysed papers give an accurate idea of the present state and theoretical richness of contemporary pilgrimage studies. No one writing on the anthropology of Christian pilgrimage can afford to ignore it.

JEREMY MACCLANCY

MALCOLM BULL and KEITH LOCKHART, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, New York etc.: Harper & Row 1989. xi, 311 pp., Index, Tables, Figures. No price given.

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDAs) emerged from the 'Great Disappointment' of 22 October 1884: the day that the followers of William Miller, a preacher from upstate New York, expected to see the Second Coming. A small band of the disappointed found a way of coming to terms with their mistaken prediction by believing that on that day God had begun the process of separating the salvational sheep from the goats, which would be completed at some unspecified time in the future. To that belief they added the requirement to keep Saturday rather than Sunday as the sabbath. Inspired by the writings of Ellen White—interesting that American fringe Protestantism should have produced so many women leaders; Mary Baker Eddy of Christian Science and Aimee Semple McPherson of the Four Square Gospel are further examples—the group grew to gradually become not only a denomination but an enclosed world. Ellen White's vision of the rightness of the health reform movement combined with the energy of John Harvey Kellogg (yes, that Kellogg!) to make the SDAs pioneers of nursing training, dietary improvement and medical missionary work.

From the first, the SDAs were distanced from the mainstream of American culture by their rejection of the American Dream of material fulfilment in this life in favour of the millennium. They were further made strangers in their own land by their Saturday sabbath, which prevented them from becoming involved in the evangelical and fundamentalist crusades of the late nineteenth century. The consequence of this double isolation was a turning inward and the creation of a variety of social institutions to complement their specifically religious institutions.

An interesting theme of Bull and Lockhart's book is the way in which SDA fund-raising (members typically give far more than a tenth of their income) and spending bind members into their alternative world. The vast bulk of SDA money is spent on SDA institutions (and even some of their best hospitals are run at a loss) that employ largely SDA members. Although the authors do not put it so crudely, there is a strong incentive for SDA members to stay in the Church to get back what they have put in. However, many do not stay. In an ironic process well documented by Bryan R. Wilson, the Church, for all its unhappiness with the American Dream, has been all too successful in helping its members attain worldly success. Upward social mobility was provided, not only by inculcating such appropriate values as asceticism and self-discipline (as did other US conservative Protestant denominations) but also by creating a 'fast track' for accelerated mobility. By creating its own institutions, it provided a protected demand for professionals and thus created an unusually large number of training and career opportunities for Adventists.

Although now very large (with about five million members) and successful in recruiting in many parts of the Third World, the SDAs remain something of a mystery, provoking very different but often strong reactions. For those who are interested in learning about SDA history, theology, ecclesiology and mores, this book will be an excellent source. The exposition is clear and well illustrated from the movement's publications; the commentary is sensible and occasionally witty. If there is one weakness in this authoritative account, it is its dependence on official published sources. We are told a great deal about what Ellen White thought about fiction, dancing and the opera (she was 'agin 'em'), but the sociologist and the anthropologist will want to know the extent to which such teachings informed the lives of early Adventists. There is also a lack of contemporary ethnographic material. Despite its length, the book gives little insight into the 'everyday life world' of an Adventist. Do they still avoid the cultural products of the secular mass media? Do they still not read novels? How do they decorate their houses? How do they vote? Where did they stand on the Moral Majority? We are left to guess, but Bull and Lockhart seem to be guiding us firmly to the conclusion that, for all the rhetoric, Adventists are no longer very distinctive.

STEVE BRUCE

PETER G. FORSTER, *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*, Hull: Hull University Press 1989. xv, 251 pp., Index. £7.95.

Much interest is now being shown by anthropologists in the relations between anthropology and the work of missionaries. In this many-sided affair, books and articles are emerging that show the help given to anthropology by missionaries, especially up until the Second World War. Attention is often focused on Roman Catholic contributions (Pater Schmidt and his school), on those of Anglicans (Denys Shropshire) and of continental Protestants (Leenhardt). The work of Scottish Protestants is rarely represented. For this reason, Peter Forster's study of T. Cullen Young (1880–1955) is to be welcomed.

Influenced by the life and work of David Livingstone (1813–73), himself a Scot and virtually self-taught, Cullen Young went to northern Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1904 as one of twelve missionaries sent out by the United Free Church Assembly. He was an accountant by training and also received a limited theological education. Not surprisingly, his duties in and around Livingstonia comprised supervising the accounts and teaching in and inspecting schools. He was ordained in 1914 whilst on leave in Scotland. During the military push into Tanganyika he organized interpreters. When the war was over he began to write primarily in the areas of language and history, and, later, anthropology. Like so many missionaries, he felt forced to leave his work for personal reasons. For him these were the education of his children and his wife's mental illness. The Youngs left Africa in 1931, never to return. He then worked in London and became the General Secretary of what was to become the United Society for Christian Literature. He eventually died of cancer in Scotland in 1955. He remained to the end a minister in the church but his views became less evangelical. Although he held that there existed mysterious forces beyond scientific explanation, he recognized the challenge of secular humanism and was eventually attracted to Quakerism. He believed that the justification for mission work was functional: that Christianity rather than paganism was better suited to modern Africa.

Cullen Young became interested in anthropology because he saw that whereas India had a literate civilization, in Africa only 'human documents' were available; therefore one had to learn from the people as they were. He saw the necessity of anthropological studies for understanding the 'cruel' elements of the social life of the local people, such as the killing of children without a mother and the treatment of twins. He was totally opposed to such 'barbaric' acts, but he also saw that anthropology could show the missionary which components of culture could be utilized for his own purposes. He was, of course, a self-taught anthropologist, but when he started work in Africa professional anthropology with fieldwork experience was unknown.

As he was without a great interest in theory it might be more accurate to call him an ethnographer. He concerned himself with two adjacent areas that are occupied today by the patrilineal Ngoni/Tumbuka people in the north of Malawi and the matrilineal Chewa in the central region. He was not the first missionary

to make ethnographic studies, but he went further than others and concentrated particularly on the Tumbuka. He wrote about their religious beliefs, taboos (a taboo, for him, was a combination of common sense and sympathetic magic), the *ng'anga* (traditional doctor), proverbs, folk-tales, and so forth. He contributed reviews and articles to *Africa, Man* and the *JRAI*, but perhaps his most useful contribution was *Notes of the Customs and Folklore of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, which appeared in 1931. He attempted, perhaps not very successfully, to develop the notion of a 'good village'. As a sensitive observer, he was opposed to stereotyping Africans. His work was academically acknowledged in 1950 when Ralph Piddington of Edinburgh University was instrumental in having him awarded an honorary M.A.

Forster devotes a long chapter to Cullen Young's achievements as a historian of the region. His concern was with the changes of fortune of the peoples of northern Malawi since the arrival of Europeans. He corrected previous attempts at history, not without criticism, and utilized verbal accounts from the students he taught of what had happened in the past. He was especially concerned with the Ngoni conquest of Tumbuka. Forster holds that Cullen Young's most influential contribution to scholarship was in the realm of history.

There are other chapters on education and literary matters, and finally one on political issues. Here should be noted Cullen Young's relation to, and influence on, Hastings Banda when he was resident in England. Banda's initial experience of mission education was in Livingstonia where Cullen Young was based.

Peter Forster, trained by Max Gluckman, has visited Malawi several times and presents a clearly written, sympathetic and comprehensive intellectual biography of a little-known figure: a Protestant missionary who produced valuable ethnographic and historical material for scholars interested in Africans living on the west side of Lake Malawi. The extensive bibliographies are also useful. And the book is remarkably cheap.

W. S. F. PICKERING

MARGARET JOLLY and MARTHA MACINTYRE (eds.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1989. xiii, 258 pp., Bibliography, Index. £27.50.

This volume is composed mostly of papers originally presented at a conference held in Canberra in December 1983, as part of the workshop on gender relations in the south-west Pacific. The title of the conference was 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Family in the Pacific', and although it is true that many of the papers go beyond the brief immediately suggested by the conference title, it seems rather

puzzling that neither 'Christian' nor 'Missionaries' appears in the title of the volume, as this would, I suggest, give a better indication of the material on offer.

The contributors make an effort to locate missionary activity within the wider colonial context, and missionaries are given an especial prominence throughout many of the book's twelve essays. The volume represents an exemplary collaboration between historians and anthropologists casting their nets over a wide area from Hawaii to Australia. The breath and scope of the material are impressive, and the manner of presentation is often entertaining and ironic. This is evident, for example, in Michael Young's evenhanded assessment, in 'Suffer the Children', of Wesleyan efforts to 'rescue' D'Entrecasteaux children from the influence of home and family, and in Roger Keesing's 'Sins of a Mission', which attempts to assess the impact of Christianity in Melanesia in an approach that he argues is both synchronic and direct as well as diachronic and indirect, employing as sources both oral traditions and documentary evidence.

In true postmodernist style the contributors perceive their task as one of deconstructing the colonial discourse, as well as other discourses that have been profoundly colonial in style. The reader is led to examine the power relations between colonialists, missionaries and indigenous people, and between the sexes, as the authors explore Christianity along dimensions that are at once 'religious', 'political' and 'economic'. When missionaries arrived in the region they brought with them their own models of domesticity and the family as well as assumptions about the place of women within the total scheme of things. Comparisons with events in Africa and elsewhere leap continually to mind.

Patricia Grimshaw details the attempts of New England missionary wives to transform the lives of Hawaiian women, ironically undermining some of those very aspects of Hawaiian culture on which Hawaiian women could build some measure of autonomy. Caroline Ralston outlines changes in the lives of 'ordinary women' in early post-contact Hawaii, while Nicholas Thomas explores domestic structures and polyandry in the Marquesas Islands. The reader is brought repeatedly to a greater appreciation of the intimacies of domestic life and of relations between men and women, major aspects of the total picture that were written out of former analyses and found no place in colonial records. The now familiar theme of invisible women runs through many of the papers, strikingly so in Donald Denoon's discussion of medical care and gender in Papua New Guinea and in Annette Hamilton's description of relations between Australian male settlers and their Aboriginal female companions. Mervyn Meggitt offers a rather depressing analysis of the position of women in contemporary Central Enga society as he outlines the complex ways in which, as far as men's power to coerce women and define their restricted role is concerned, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

Questions concerning the organization of space in the domestic and ritual spheres are explored by Martha MacIntyre, who details and discusses the reasons for the demise of Tubetube architecture, and by Margaret Jolly, who demonstrates how Christian sacred spaces in South Pentecost, Vanuatu, remain as segregated and as under male control as the older pre-Christian spaces were. Jeffrey Clark's

discussion of Christianity and social organization among Takuru Wiru sensitively portrays the dialectic that is set up within the encounter between different cosmologies, demonstrating that no simple notions of 'impact' or 'change' can adequately reflect the way in which Christianity has become integrated, for the time being at least, into a cosmology that reinforces male dominance and devalues women.

As can be seen, the range of these contributions is enormous, though, perhaps inevitably at times, depth of discussion is sacrificed. For example, there is no sustained exploration of the concept of 'conversion' and few attempts to pin down what actually goes on when an individual converts. Nor are there explorations of such matters as the notion of personhood, practices surrounding the body and issues of language, all of which, one suspects, are also germane. But this is probably to demand too much.

In their introduction, Jolly and MacIntyre state their major aim as one in which 'grand epistemological questions', such as the production and continuance of such notions as nature and culture and domestic and public, are set within 'the more precise confines of historical and cultural particulars' (p. 15). In this, they have certainly succeeded.

ANTHONY SIMPSON

JAMES L. WATSON and EVELYN S. RAWSKI (eds.), *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* [Studies on China 8], Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1988. xv, 316 pp., Glossary-Index, Plates. \$40.00.

This book represents the proceedings of a conference on 'Ritual and the Social Significance of Death in Chinese Society' held in Oracle, Arizona, in January 1985. It has been prepared as carefully as were the seven previous volumes in the series 'Studies on China' that have appeared since 1982 under the sponsorship of the Joint Committee on Chinese Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. The twelve articles are clearly structured, correlated with one another, and accompanied by detailed references and a Glossary-Index of Chinese characters to facilitate the search for particular subjects. The emphasis is on China since the fifteenth century, with a clear bias towards modern China. The Preface calls this the 'strategem of "beginning at the end"', which reflects the fact that anthropological research on the country has so far concentrated mostly on modern China. None the less, the theme of death ritual in early Chinese history appears frequently in the book.

Three of the original conference contributions, which were to be published elsewhere, are omitted. Two of these ('O Soul, Come Back! The Ritual of *fu* ("Recall") and Conceptions of the Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China' by Yü Ying-

shih and 'Dead but Not Gone: Cultural Implications of Mortuary Practices in Neolithic and Early Bronze Age China' by David Keightley) would have provided a link with earlier periods of Chinese death ritual, with definite benefit for the understanding of modern Chinese death ritual, but none the less the book offers much valuable material on Chinese mortuary practices in general.

The authors actually represented consist of six anthropologists, three historians and one sociologist. The two introductory articles, 'The Structure of Performance' by James Watson and 'A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Ritual' by Evelyn Rawski, show the varying approaches of different scientific disciplines to the treatment of Chinese death ritual. The anthropologist Watson starts from the principle that despite local and social variation, Chinese funerary ritual has a common basic structure. In late imperial times death ritual was more or less uniform in Chinese society. Watson writes, 'preoccupation with performance—rather than belief—made it possible for imperial authorities, local elites, and ordinary peasants to agree on the proper form for the conduct of funerals' (p. 18). 'By enforcing orthopraxy (correct practice) rather than orthodoxy (correct belief) state officials made it possible to incorporate people from many different ethnic and regional backgrounds, with varying beliefs and attitudes, into an overarching social system we now call China' (p. 104). With the eyes of a historian, Rawski discusses in detail Watson's theme of the primacy of performance over belief and concludes: 'Historians would thus argue that the primary agents of cultural integration cited by Watson—the state, officials, and local elites—did intend to promote orthodoxy through orthopraxy' (p. 28). Such differences in approach are discussed by the other authors in the book.

The second part of the volume is also valuable for its comprehensive treatment of the many aspects of Chinese death ritual. The basic research material varies, according to author, from local histories to academic literature and from information from newspapers and travel reports to fieldwork data, the latter having a particularly important part to play. Susan Naquin describes and analyses information on funerary practices from northern Chinese local histories published between 1870 and 1940. Stuart E. Thompson explores the symbolism of food, especially of rice and pork, in Chinese death ritual. James Watson deals with the social background and ritual roles of priests, musicians, corpse-handlers and the like in Chinese mortuary practices. Elizabeth L. Johnson describes and interprets the content, ritual and social significance of lamenting with regard to Hakka women's roles in death ritual and in Chinese society. Emily Martin is concerned specifically with the views of Chinese women on marriage, which involves their final separation from their natal home and represents for them a sort of death as well as the continuation of life. Myron L. Cohen discusses the 'social interpretation of death with particular reference to the emphasis or de-emphasis of salvation in different popular religious contexts'. Rubie Watson deals with the possible political implications of ancestral grave worship in south-eastern China. Evelyn Rawski shows how, in the Ming and Qing periods, imperial death ritual practice structurally resembled commoners' practice, though it also had a special

significance through its embeddedness in state religion. In 'Mao's Remains', Frederic Wakeman compares mortuary observances at Mao Tse-tung's and Chiang Kai-shek's funerals. Finally, Martin K. Whyte discusses the problem of continuity and discontinuity between traditional Chinese death rites and ideological and practical attitudes towards mortuary rites in the People's Republic.

The volume is heavily biased towards southern China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, north China only being dealt with, and then only historically, by Naquin and Rawski. It is to be hoped that future research on death ritual in China may be extended into this area too. It would also be desirable to take account of other kinds of material, especially literature (see the third omitted contribution, by Anthony Yu, 'Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit! Ghosts in Traditional Chinese Prose Fiction', which has, however, appeared in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (1987)), but also oral literature, which until now has not been explored sufficiently in connection with death.

MAREILE FLITSCH

JONATHAN HAAS (ed), *The Anthropology of War*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1990. xiv, 211 pp., References, Index, Figures. £30.00/\$49.50.

This volume comprises, in edited form, papers presented at an advanced seminar held at the School of American Research. Broadly, the purpose of the seminar was to relate recent research about warfare in pre-state societies to a general anthropology of war, the latter being interpreted by the conference chairman to include warfare among nation states. Specifically, the contributors sought to understand the causation of war and peace in pre-state societies as well as the effects of war on their evolution. The result is a collection of informative essays that are at once diverse in geography and history and uniform in interest and scholarship.

The authors' theoretical positions and perspectives are diverse also. Some of the perspectives concern different but complementary approaches to the study of war, whereas others relate to competing theoretical stances. About the former, basic distinctions are drawn between the origins of war, its maintenance as a going concern once begun, and the effects of war upon the societies involved. Since some tribal societies are peaceful, a further problem concerning the maintenance of war is defined. Some papers address the problem of how war is maintained in some societies while peace is maintained in others. Thomas Gibson compares war and violence in three groups of cultivators in a regional economy in Southeast Asia. One group, the Buid, were peaceful whereas the others were not. The physical and social ecology was similar for all groups and could not, therefore, explain the difference between them. Gibson argues that Buid peace persists through a value consensus where violence, aggression and competition are

negatively defined and sanctioned. When raided by others, the Buid did not counter raid, for neither bravery nor courage was esteemed by them; instead, flight was the customary and proper mode of response. Young Buid males, it seems, established their masculinity by making love not war. Other papers describe the peaceful Semai of Malaysia and Xinguano of Brazil, and it seems that the absence of war in all the above cultures relates to anti-violent value systems and low levels of stratification.

Three general factors tending to maintain war are distinguished: the loss of ingroup members, especially kin, creates irrational revenge needs, which once assuaged produce further like needs in the foe; secondly, where one group is attacked by another, it has a rational need to counter-attack, otherwise it might be eliminated—thus, once started, war tends inherently to persist; finally, the existence of a group with material and ideal interests in war, such as a warrior class. Robert Carneiro examines chieftain-level warfare in Fiji and Colombia, and shows the initial causes of war, the further causes produced by war that then sustain it, and the effects of war upon culture. The origin of war was chieftain rivalry, but its ensuing slaughter generated revenge needs among antagonists. These motives then acted independently to maintain wars of escalating hatred and ferocity, which occasioned each side to eat its prisoners, to inflict upon them the ultimate outrage. Although vengeance was its origin, cannibalism in time became gastronomic, as people grew fond of cooked human flesh. Concerning the effects of cannibalism, it produced not only new culinary customs, but also additional motives for war, since persons now needed prisoners of war in order to eat them.

The various authors favour different models of causation including the materialist/ecological, the biocultural and the historical. The materialist model relates war to competition for such resources as land and trade goods. According to this model, warriors may or may not be motivated by conscious desires for resources, but where not, as in honorific war, their victories might still improve the terms of trade. In such a case, warfare would relate, in an unintended but important way, to the material basis of culture. In a fascinating paper, Jonathan Haas argues that land and water scarcity led Indian bands in Arizona to concentrate on increasing food yields, and this cooperation produced tribalization at the local level. In contrast, scarcity created war among the newly formed tribes at the wider regional level. In a persuasive essay, Clayton Robarchek argues that material and biocultural models explain war as occurring deterministically in response to objective material and biological conditions. He describes a conflict over scarce resources among the Semai of Malaya that did not lead to war, but produced instead a compromise in shared values and institutions.

It seems to me that while a general anthropology of war must address all three problems identified above, both behavioural science and history incline to focus upon the causes and effects of war and neglect the problems of its maintenance. Research into modern war has revealed that the persistence of violent exchanges among armed adversaries is problematical. Wars can fall apart, and sometimes they do. Some of this research is cited by Clark McCauley, but other studies, such

as Roger Little's classic ethnography of defensive values in a platoon of the US Army in the Korean war, relevant to the issue of maintenance are not. The US platoon's response to battle was a spontaneously evolved consensus to avoid attacking the enemy, a consensus sustained by sanctions. Subsequent research suggests that defensive values are endemic in modern warfare and, further, that small fighting groups vary greatly in their disposition to attack. Battle confrontations differ, therefore, according to the antagonists' attitudes towards violence: first, where both are inclined to attack; secondly, where one is, but the other is not; and finally, where both are not. For instance, in World War I, defensively minded soldiers commonly negotiated tacit and informal truces in the trenches, and these persisted from the beginning to the end of the war, on both Western and Eastern fronts, and upon all others save Gallipoli. A *de jure* state of war existed, yet a *de facto* peace prevailed. As in tribal war, however, revenge tended to maintain war, for the ties of kin and comrades-in-arms are intense and, as killing occurs, produce revenge needs.

It would have been interesting and possibly useful if the seminar and this book had compared material from the study of modern warfare with that from tribal societies in the discussion of maintenance of both war and peace.

TONY ASHWORTH

COMMENT

Jenness and Malinowski: Fieldwork and Photographs

I should like to add to the discussion presented by Terry Wright in his recent essay in *JASO* (Wright 1991). Before doing so, however, it is worth remarking how the historical and visual interpretation of photographs, in its full complexity and fluidity, is at last finding a respectable place in anthropology.

Wright generously acknowledges both my comments on an early draft of his essay and the exhibition of Jenness's photographs that I have curated recently at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. It is unfortunate that Wright's essay was so long through the press, for new work, in connection with the exhibition in particular and with the history of anthropology and photography in general, suggests not only a somewhat different interpretation of the material than that he presents but also has substantial bearing on our understanding of the broader concerns of pre-cinematic visual anthropology.

I could go on at length about both Jenness and Malinowski as photographers, but my main concern here is with the former. While I agree with much of the detail of Wright's contextualization, I question the construction built upon it and the way in which it is used as a mechanism for polarizing the 'old' and the 'new' anthropologies of the beginning of this century. No one would be foolish enough to claim that Jenness was as fine an ethnographer or as visionary an anthropologist as Malinowski, but a different interpretative strategy would perhaps place him on a continuum of developing anthropological method, which underwent a brilliant crystallization with Malinowski. After all, to travel to Paris, as Jenness did, to meet members of the *Année Sociologique* (Richling 1989: 75) and to elect, in 1911, to do what amounted to individual fieldwork of a year's duration (albeit based at a mission station) does not suggest a man unaware of the changing shape of anthropology. Rather, Jenness's work should perhaps be seen as significant in exemplifying the hiatus in anthropological method between the collapsing evolutionary paradigm and the evolving sociological approach. As Stocking has pointed out (1983: 83-4), this period saw a flurry of intensive survey fieldwork that in many ways formed the basis of the British field tradition.

This contextual reorientation suggests a very different reading of Jenness's photographic work. It seems to me that the crucial contextualizing link here is one that Wright overlooks, that is, the Cambridge Torres Straits expedition of 1898. Maret certainly alluded to it when raising funds for Jenness's expedition (Oxford University Archives: UDC/C/2/4.f.6), and Jenness received advice from members

of it, especially Haddon, Rivers and Seligman, as he made his preparations (*ibid.*: ff. 55-7). Indeed, Haddon's prescriptions for field photography, which drew on his experience in the Torres Straits, were published in the 1899 edition of *Notes and Queries* (BAAS 1899) that, as Wright points out, Jenness had with him in the field.

Although his methodological approach was more limited than that of the Torres Straits expedition, the latter's influence on Jenness comes across strongly in the photographs. Jenness was attempting to mirror photographically what he hoped would be a systematic survey. This is borne out in both the subject-matter and the style of the photographs. They encompass physical anthropology, social structure, ritual, technology and art; some more successfully than others. The camera does not impose a structure on the subject (Wright 1991: 56) in any overt way; rather, it is the unobtrusive 'snap-shot' style that is striking and significant. It is a gentle, 'unmediated' record of everyday life: the subjects are rarely posed in interventionist terms (see Bateson and Mead 1942: 49-50). On the whole, subjects are relaxed, unconcerned about the camera, suggesting an immediacy, even intimacy on occasion, rather than, as Wright argues, the photographer's physical and cultural distance. For example, there are close-up photographs of funeral ritual, of women making pottery and of people gardening, suggesting a considerable degree of access. There is sometimes a suggestion of the subjects' bewilderment, but seldom the tension of intrusion. Within the limited framework of the fieldwork of the time, Jenness's photographs stand up well. Further, Jenness's photographic account is not a vision of ethnographic purity, but one that acknowledges the operation of historical processes and encounters: for example, the activities of the mission station at Bwaidoga and Jenness and Ballantyne's feeding of starving women and children.

Three of the four Jenness photographs reproduced in Wright's essay (Figs. 1, 2 and 3) cannot be claimed to be representative of his photography, indeed they were not even taken on the northern D'Entrecasteaux Islands; the fourth (Fig. 9) is barely more representative. Certainly, 'anthropometric' photography was one aspect of Jenness's overall agenda, but it is the *only* aspect that fits the polarized model of an anthropological dead-end. The published volume, *The Northern D'Entrecasteaux* (Jenness and Ballantyne 1920) is, indeed, devoid of sociological interest and provides a dispirited record of unsuccessful fieldwork. Perhaps, in this instance, image rather than text should be seen as the lasting legacy of the fieldwork.

I shall not comment at length on Malinowski's photography, for the reinterpretation of Jenness's material and its significance has been my primary concern. However, I should like to make two related observations that might go towards a reorientation of what I should argue is an over-polarized interpretation of Malinowski's photography. Even allowing for very different fieldwork circumstances and anthropological vision, both Jenness and Malinowski used photography in broadly similar ways, in that for both of them photography remained a product of, rather than a part of, the process of fieldwork (see Spindler and Spindler 1967:

x-xii). As Wright points out, Malinowski's diaries are full of references to photography. He was interested (though he later denies it (1935: 461)), and the results are good, both technically and ethnographically. Nevertheless, one cannot necessarily equate photographic activity with its being integral to field enquiry. There are hints in the *Diary* that photography was sometimes something of a displacement activity (see, for example, Malinowski 1967: 145, 163, 274, 276), and such a reading is supported by Malinowski's own retrospective assessment of his field method. Thus alerted, we may begin to see patterns emerging in his photographic corpus. Perhaps Malinowski should have the last word here:

One capital blot on my field-work must be noted; I mean the photographs...I treated photography as a secondary occupation and a somewhat unimportant way of collecting evidence. This was a serious mistake. In writing up my material on gardens I find that the control of my fieldnotes by means of photographs has led me to reformulate my statements on innumerable points...I have committed one or two deadly sins against method of field-work. In particular, I went by the principle of, roughly speaking, picturesqueness and accessibility. Whenever something important was going to happen, I had my camera with me. If the picture looked nice in the camera and fitted well, I snapped it...I put photography on the same level as the collecting of curios—almost as an accessory relaxation of field-work. (1935: 461)

ELIZABETH EDWARDS

I was very interested to read Elizabeth Edwards' comment concerning my essay. I agree with her initial point that scholarship in the area of ethnographic photography has expanded dramatically over the last five years, but would question her interpretation of the photographs in question and her reading of my essay. For example, I think it unfortunate that she collapses my argument into the sort of polarization I had aimed at the outset to avoid. However, Edwards rightly points out that Jenness should have been aware of the wider theoretical debates of his period, though whenever he committed pen to paper (or, in my view, subject to camera) there is little evidence that he was. Nevertheless, there remains a marked difference in the photographic work of Jenness and Malinowski that reflects their overall anthropological standpoints—different, but not exactly polarized. The essay aimed to address some of the factors that may have accounted for this difference.

I agree with Edwards that I should perhaps have placed Jenness's photography in the context of the Torres Straits expedition. But in doing so, my argument would have been reinforced: the photographs resulting from this expedition are accomplished in their use of the available photographic technology and reflect clearly the prevailing anthropological theories. Thirteen years later, Jenness was producing images that are not only less enquiring anthropologically than those

produced by the Torres Straits expedition, but less so than many of the 'snap-shot' images taken by travellers and missionaries of his period. (As historical documents, however, they have accrued a unique value, demonstrated both by Michael Young's recent showing of Jenness's photographs to their subjects' descendants and by the exhibition of Jenness's work at the Pitt Rivers Museum.)

The Samarai anthropometric photographs (taken after his Paris trip!) were included in my essay as examples of Jenness's formative approach to fieldwork, upon which he expanded in his writing. As soon as he arrived at Goodenough, he subjected some additional sixty people to his anthropometric work. I believe, therefore, that the Samarai images remain indicative of his photographic starting-point and demonstrate clearly his initial regard for his subjects.

Finally, whether or not Malinowski found photography as 'something of a displacement activity' has little relevance: his preoccupation with photography remains, and further proof of his enquiring and accomplished use of the medium is evident in the images themselves—as my essay aimed to show. In addition, Malinowski's first fieldwork photographs from Mailu, to which I have recently had my attention drawn by Michael Young, would seem to support my thesis. They are as 'posed and stilted' as Jenness's are dull and uninspired: they too suggest distance from his subjects. In Mailu, Malinowski did not learn the native language and lived, like Jenness, in the missionaries' house. In my view, as marked a change as was to occur in Malinowski's photography, occurred later in Jenness's anthropological career in his Arctic photography, where he too (if, in this context, the metaphor is appropriate) 'stepped off the verandah'.

TERENCE WRIGHT

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INTRODUCTION: OLD POSITIONS AND NEW CONCERNS

W. S. F. PICKERING

THE five essays that constitute the core of this special issue of *JASO* are all concerned with the findings of anthropologists concerning the work of missionaries and its effects. The essays were originally given, along with a number of others, in a seminar series held at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, during Trinity Term, 1990.¹

The seminar series was the idea of R. H. Barnes and myself and came about as a result of conversations we had with a number of anthropologists who were visiting Oxford at the time. By a strange coincidence there appeared to be a common interest among them and us in the role and work of missionaries, as well as local churches, in societies in which they were doing their fieldwork. Later, other scholars and students, who were known to be concerned with the subject, were asked to contribute to the series.

During the past decade or so, the relations between anthropologists and missionaries have not been given as much scholarly attention in Britain as they

1. For various reasons, the following papers could not be included here: Stephan Dietrich, 'Mission and Religious Politics in Flores'; W. S. F. Pickering, 'Catholic and Protestant Missionary Work: Ideals and Ideal Types'; Aylward Shorter, 'Issues in Inculturation and Its Application in Africa'; and Harald Skar, 'Inculturation, Liberation and the Role of the Catholic Priest in Highland Peru'.

have in the United States.² The present upsurge of interest in the United States is in part due to the persistent and energetic activities of missionaries from that country, both Catholic and Protestant. But in the UK, where secularization has bitten more deeply into the way of life, there has been relatively less missionary activity in recent years and anthropologists have generally steered clear of analysing the work of missionaries. To become acquainted with anthropologists' attitudes to missionaries as recorded in the literature, one has to look at rather dated material, which in any case is not very substantial, and at just a few recent articles.³ These essays can in no way be said to make up the deficiency, but at least they make a contribution to a neglected area. Further, it is hoped that they will encourage others to contribute to the subject, through both general discussions and by providing case-studies.

Past Relations

It might be argued that anthropologists and missionaries have nothing or little in common, save that they work amongst foreign peoples, and that they are mostly Westerners. One group claims to study a society objectively or, some would say, scientifically; the other has the aim of changing a society, or at least a radical part

2. See Luzbetak 1983: 2. Among recent books published in the United States that have dealt exclusively with the relations between anthropologists and missionaries, and related issues, may be mentioned Whiteman (ed.) 1983 and Salamone (ed.) 1985. The meetings of the American Anthropological Association in 1977 and 1982 included discussion of missionary work. Moreover, some anthropologists have given space in standard textbooks to the work of missionaries: see Hiebert 1983; Keesing 1976: 462 ff. In addition, the anthropologist Mary Taylor Huber has published a book on contemporary developments in the Catholic Church in Indonesia (Huber 1988).

3. In an article in the *International Review of Missions* Malinowski made a plea for a greater understanding between missionaries and anthropologists (1936: 495). Around the same time, Schapera showed an interest in missionary work, both religious and educational (1934: 54-5; see also Eiselen 1934). The contribution of missionaries to social anthropology was praised by R. R. Marett (1938: ix). R. Piddington, in his introductory books, referred to the achievements of missionaries in quite positive terms (1950: 10-12; 1957: 670-80). More recently, an article by a Dutch scholar appeared in *Man* suggesting that the aims and pursuits of anthropologists and missionaries have a lot in common (Geest 1990). Earlier, in 1982, a controversy broke out in *RAIN* between some anthropologists and alleged fundamentalist missionaries (see Merryfield 1982 and correspondence in subsequent issues). It is difficult, if not impossible, to point to an article of recent times, let alone a book, written by a British anthropologist that focuses on the relations between anthropologists and missionaries. This assertion takes into account the fact that British anthropologists have often had to deal with the work of missionaries in their field studies.

of it, in a Christian direction. Nevertheless, the two have inevitably come into contact and, as a result, a sort of love-hate relationship has grown up, often more strongly felt by anthropologists. The various phases of this love-hate relationship have still to be carefully and systematically analysed (but see Arbuckle 1983: 182). Suffice it to say here that the love part of the relationship was stronger in the early days when missionaries had been in the field long before the anthropologist arrived. What missionaries had achieved was of considerable help to many anthropologists (see Rosenstiel 1959). Missionaries often knew the local people well, and often better than many European administrators did. They were pioneers in searching out hidden tribes. Their reports were used by early 'armchair' anthropologists to build up their new 'science'. They sent back to their home countries artefacts and 'peculiar objects', which later found their way into various museums. Not only did missionaries tend to have specialist knowledge of local religious practices, but they were also amongst the first to master local languages and dialects and to produce written forms of them, including grammars and dictionaries. All this was necessary for preaching and for translating the Bible, and for making converts. Moreover, some missionaries have produced excellent ethnography. Since they often remain in the field for a long time—Catholic missionaries usually more or less all their lives—they have often been in a position to become far more authoritative than the relatively short-stay anthropologist. Again, some missionaries, especially from the inter-war period, have also been academically trained anthropologists.

Once the initial help had been given, however, the anthropologist proceeded with little or no regard for the missionary. Indeed the latent 'hate' element began to appear. The common criticism was that the work of missionaries helped to break up age-long cultures. It was they, the missionaries, more than any other Western intruder, who wanted to change the ideological and 'philosophical' system at the heart of every local culture. In place of the old, bastard substitutes were created, which were half-European, half-native, and which gave rise to apathy or anomie (see Stipe 1980). The charge levelled against missionaries has been all the more strengthened in recent times by the emergence and legitimization of religious pluralism in Western society, a decline of adherence to Christianity in Europe and by the collapse of European empires—empires that propagated a sense of cultural and religious triumphalism.

More Open Churches

Especially since the end of the Second World War, the traditional Christian churches have taken on board a number of liberal and humanitarian ideals. In facing up to religious and cultural pluralism in their home countries, they have adopted a much less critical and destructive approach to the culture of missionized societies. They have become more sympathetic in their judgement of the local culture and, as a consequence, in their missionary policy. The policies of abolition

of the 'pagan' culture and the insertion of the trappings of European civilization have been replaced by policies of accommodation and acceptance of elements of the local culture. Today, missionaries sometimes go so far as to repent of the errors of their predecessors, who implanted a gospel embedded in, what are now held to be, some of the absurdities of nineteenth-century Western culture. To be sure, this more gentle, less assertive approach has been accompanied by a decline in missionary activity originating from many European countries. The decline is due to a variety of reasons, but the following may be considered the most important. First, a falling away in the numbers of individual men and women who feel themselves called to be missionaries. Secondly, the secularization of Western society. Thirdly, the new policy of many missionary societies that the best agents for evangelization are local clergy and laity, rather than expatriates: a policy determined, in part, by the fact that Christianity in many non-Western countries, especially in Africa, is growing through the work of local clergy and missionaries. This policy of restraint characterizes the traditional churches. It is not so evident in fundamentalist missionary societies, especially those based in the United States, most of which remain totally unsympathetic to local customs and traditions and continue to pursue a policy of cultural imperialism. Fourthly, some new, independent countries, such as India, formerly under colonial rule, refuse to allow Western missionaries to operate in their territory, unless they work as doctors, nurses, agriculturalists, teachers or engineers.

Anthropologists' New Attitudes

Anthropologists have also changed. A few decades ago, some began to turn their attention to groups or institutions that were not strictly parts of preliterate societies. The discovery of new tribes, relatively untouched by Western civilization, was becoming rarer and rarer, and interest switched to such previously overlooked areas as government administration, education, trade, the army, urbanization and tourism. It is hardly surprising that in the examination of the effects of colonization, the work of missionaries began to receive attention too. One approach of anthropologists interested in these matters has been to study the effects of local mission stations or churches on the local culture. In such studies, the following sorts of questions are asked. How far has the local society been Christianized? Do the local people try to combine Christianity with elements of the indigenous religion (see Schreiter 1985: 145; Bastide 1959)? What are people's motives for converting to Christianity? What are the relations between the local Christian leaders and those of the native religion? Such questions have parallels with those asked by the sociologist of religion, who, amongst other things, attempts to analyse the inner structure of religion, its control over individuals, the distribution of power in religious institutions and the relation of religion to other institutions—all, of

course, within Western society. As the findings of the sociologist can be said to be of some help to church leaders, so one would imagine that the findings of anthropologists would be of importance for missionaries. Thus there is the possibility of a reversal in the roles that characterized the earlier period: the missionary can now learn from the anthropologist. This was the ideal of Pater Schmidt (see Dietrich below). But there have been other advocates, the anthropologist and missionary, Denys Shropshire (1938), for example, and the French Protestant anthropologist, Roger Bastide (1959). And in more recent times some fundamentalist groups in the United States have begun to utilize anthropology in their missionary work (see Stoll 1990: 84-90).

Culture: Meeting-Place of Anthropologists and Missionaries

Because the anthropologist attempts to be ideologically and, therefore, religiously neutral, he cannot commit himself, in his professional capacity at least, to the truth-statements of a religion. By contrast, every missionary projects an ideology that he or she wishes to propagate, expressed in such concepts as Truth, the Gospel and the Church. This ideology, or 'block of truth', is not open to radical change. It may be seen as timeless, or universal, or divine—perhaps a divine revelation—and as such is not to be tampered with.

The missionary is thus propelled by an inner conviction that he has to propagate the truth, no matter the cost, and missionary history is full of accounts of those who have been prepared to go to the extremes of suffering to proclaim their convictions. Such an attitude transcends the relativism of the anthropologist, who views all religious systems as being man-made and may hold further that particular systems are necessary or the 'best' for given societies.

To understand the work of the missionary, it is necessary to come to terms with the conviction about the truth that the missionary holds. That a missionary does or has done damage to the evangelized society has to be accepted as a consequence of the conviction. But it might also be interjected that what counts as 'damage' is open to debate and involves the application of what are very often unacknowledged criteria. Deciding what is 'good' for a society is at the very edge, if not within, the realm of the normative.

But do such contrary attitudes create an unbridgeable gulf? For some, that is precisely the position and there the matter rests. For the more liberal-minded and sensitive, however, there is the possibility of bridging the gulf: not with regard to the central issue perhaps, but through a mutual concern for the culture of the society studied by the anthropologist and in which the missionary operates. It is impossible in this short introductory essay to develop the idea, other than to say that the anthropologist and the missionary would more than likely agree that culture is man-made and is, therefore, man-altered. For example, the missionary

might be prepared to alter or utilize components of the culture if it would advance the work of evangelization or strengthen the local church. It is precisely here, however, that missionaries are divided amongst themselves: some would value the work of the anthropologist in analysing culture for this purpose, others would not.

The possibility and/or desirability of missionary-engineered change has, over time, given rise to one of three outcomes. The first is where the missionary either disregards totally the local culture or openly condemns it. Whichever, the missionary imposes his own culture on his converts. This can be called cultural colonization. The second response occurs where the missionary, sensitive to the local culture, evaluates it and decides which parts of it can be utilized by convert Christians and which parts have to be rejected. Such a policy or attitude is referred to here as cultural accommodation; another term might be missionary acculturation. The third possibility is when Christianity is absorbed into the local culture with little or no discrimination. This cultural absorption is very near to, if not identical with, syncretism and has always been feared by missionaries, since, like syncretism, it means the denial of the eternal nature of the central truths of the message. All these responses may be seen as lying along a continuum, with total cultural colonization at one extreme and total absorption at the other.

The variations in denominational policies with regard to such positions is too complex to be dealt with here. Nevertheless, it should be noted that some degree of cultural accommodation has been the policy of the Church from earliest times. It first emerged when Christians, constituting nothing more than a Jewish sect, began to proselytize around the Mediterranean and farther afield. In this process the Church had to come to terms with alien religions and diverse cultures. As a result it 'naturally' adopted cultural accommodation, often with much debate and division.

The missionary is not always aware that he or she is in fact the carrier and transmitter of three cultures. First, the missionary is a member of the general culture in which he or she is brought up—middle-class American, working-class French. Secondly, as a bearer of Christianity, the missionary proclaims a religion whose doctrines and forms of practice emerged in a particular culture or set of cultures two thousand years ago. A third cultural component is, however, also present in so far as Christianity is itself historically and culturally interpreted, giving rise, for example, to the ultramontane form of Catholicism, or to the neo-orthodox Calvinism of the mid-twentieth century. Thus, three cultures are intertwined within the individual missionary, though that does not mean they cannot be separated for analytical purposes. If the missionary or church leader can accept the man-made nature of the culture in which she or he is immersed, then the possibility arises of some kind of positive and creative relation between the missionary and the anthropologist. Such a possibility has recently been opened up further by the ecclesiastical policy of inculcation, to which attention must now be given.

Inculturation

Farther along the continuum than cultural accommodation, closer to absorption, stands the notion of inculturation, which has now become widespread as a result of Vatican II (1962-6). In the history of the Catholic Church there have been a few missionaries who have advocated cultural accommodation by being sympathetic towards and actually retaining some religious or semi-religious components of the local culture. The most famous of these pioneers in post-medieval times were de Nobili in India and Ricci in China. At Vatican II it was acknowledged that much missionary work undertaken by the Catholic Church had been accompanied by what might be called cultural colonization, or very limited cultural accommodation. In this respect, both early and later missionaries had been guilty of foisting alien cultures on to missionized people. Further, Euro-American culture, with its superior technology and science had carried with it elements that have been instrumental in producing secularization and an erosion of moral values. In trying to negate these trends, a policy of inculturation was introduced, a policy that implies that the importation of Western culture into missionized societies should be cut back to a minimum and its alleged deleterious effects on local Christianity greatly reduced. In practice this means that as much as possible of the local culture is to be incorporated into church life. This means the utilization of a culture, different from those of the missionizing church, by which it is hoped that the preaching of the Gospel or the establishing of a church will be more effective and offer a 'truer' Christianity. There is nothing new in this, of course, other than that it has become an official policy of the Catholic Church.

But the same church has also given inculturation a more metaphysical meaning. As a result of Jesuit influence at Vatican II, a significant advance was made in viewing the inculturating process in theological terms—for example, defining it as the incarnation of the Gospel in particular cultures (see Shorter 1988: 10). The use of theological language may also be seen in the way a local Catholic church sets about its task to 'purify', 'elevate' and 'perfect' the local culture. As in the case of cultural accommodation, so in inculturation, the Church makes normative judgements about cultures. It is as much concerned for the evangelization of a culture as a whole as for the conversion of individuals. Pope John Paul II (1991: 177) has declared that the process is 'not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures'. This, however, involves a selection process for determining what is authentic and what is not, what can become part of a Christian, indigenous culture and what cannot. This is no longer a utilitarian position but a socio-theological one about the nature of specific cultures. It is, of course, not free from sociological and theological challenges. (For further comments on inculturation, see Barnes below.)

Protestants, like Catholics, have always had to deal with the problem of the relation of the Gospel to local cultures, not least on account of translating the

Bible into local languages. Perhaps prompted by the Catholic policy of inculturation, some Protestants have attempted recently to look at the issue systematically, in a way they have never done before. In so doing, they have adopted the concept of contextualization. The concept is, of course, viewed differently by different groups, but generally speaking there are three schools of thought. One sees contextualization as applicable only to preaching the Gospel and advocates the use of cultural forms, symbols, language etc. as a means of communicating the missionary's message. Cultural knowledge has a simple function for the missionary; it is solely utilitarian. A second use of 'contextualization' is rather more sophisticated. Here a distinction is made between the unchanging component of the Gospel and those cultural aspects with which the Gospel may be associated. There are clear similarities in this case with cultural accommodation. The third usage of 'contextualization' implies the examination of a whole culture and the attempt to discover the 'needs' of the people. Having discovered these 'needs', action is taken according to biblical principles. The difficulty here, of course, is to interpret precisely these 'needs'. Interpretation can range from the need to translate the Bible into the local language to the need for liberation theology, or African or Black theology. Today, Protestants are agreed that the old Gospel theology was often deficient, not least in being totally unconcerned with social justice and the culture of the local society.

In using the term 'contextualization' Protestants are thus divided and lack that coherence evident in the Catholic policy of inculturation. In relating inculturation to the doctrine of incarnation, Catholics give it a firm, unified theological basis. Protestants, on the other hand, see contextualization either in relation to such utilitarian functions as preaching the Gospel, or in relation to bringing about social reform in the name of the poor. Of course, opposition to inculturation on the part of some Catholic theologians arises from the fact that it makes no judgement about social justice and in particular about the need for the Church to be biased towards the poor.

Some Protestants prefer the notion of 'indigenization' to that of contextualization. 'Indigenization' implies the creation of independent churches out of those founded by Western missionaries. Many traditional Protestant churches had this as an ideal at the turn of the century, if not before. It is, however, an impossibility for the Roman Catholic Church, since every church has to be controlled by the centralized authority, Rome. But in practice, indigenization can also mean that when Christianity is implanted in an alien society it is to some extent modified and moulded by the local culture. When the degree of indigenization becomes excessive and the Gospel radically changed (from a Western theological position), something akin to syncretism results. The result may be seen as heresy, to be avoided at all costs.

It is not the purpose of this collection of essays to deal systematically with issues relating to inculturation, especially as the movement is in its early days. It has, however, been put into practice and some of its effects have been observed first-hand by contributors to this collection (see especially Burke and Barnes). It

is hoped that readers might welcome the opportunity to reflect on some of the issues at stake in implementing this new policy. There are, doubtless, those, both inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church, who would question whether inculturation is an altogether moral procedure. Is it moral to analyse local culture for the purpose of interfering with it and as an aid in preaching the Gospel (see Barnes below)? And there are great hermeneutical problems in interpreting a particular culture, let alone upholding a particular theory of culture (see Schreiter 1985: ch. 3). Who makes the decisions about which elements of a culture are acceptable for incarnating the Gospel? Further, if the wish is to restore the 'genuine' or indigenous culture of a people who have in some way become Westernized, how can one be sure of reproducing the original culture? And should not this whole process apply with equal validity to Western society?

The Present Essays

Aware of what is happening in the churches in the areas in which they are working, some of those who contributed to the seminar series on which this collection is based were prompted to give papers concerning the socio-theological policies of inculturation or contextualization. This encouraged the organizers to include the word 'inculturation' in the title of the series. However, not all those who were asked to contribute a paper addressed themselves directly to the issue. All the contributions gathered here are, nevertheless, concerned with the relations between anthropologists and missionaries, and more specifically, with cultural accommodation.

Perhaps the first person to apply the techniques and findings of anthropology to assisting the work of missionaries was Pater Schmidt (1868-1954). In the light of the current interest in inculturation, his work needs to be widely known and carefully evaluated. He attempted to found a school of sophisticated anthropology that would offer a form of anthropological underpinning to Christianity. Inculturation, as has been noted, brings to the surface many issues, some of which are as theologically problematic as those raised by Schmidt's theories and assumptions. Stephan Dietrich's essay deals with such problems in detail.

A case-study that directly contrasts Catholic and Protestant approaches to mission work is presented by James Howe. The San Blas Kuna of Panama were missionized by a Catholic priest from 1907 to 1911. He left suddenly and was followed almost immediately by a Protestant woman missionary from the United States. She worked in the same community between 1913 and 1925, using the buildings erected by the Catholic missionary, and with many in her congregation who had once been Catholic. The Catholic missionary emphasized the social and cultural difference between himself and the Kuna. The Protestant missionary, however, had a policy of superficial universalism and saw all people as essentially

alike. Howe shows the ways in which the two missionaries tended to reflect their 'home' backgrounds. The Catholic, preaching about hell and God's wrath, reflected the right-wing, hierarchical aristocratic characteristics of contemporary Spain. The Protestant, emphasizing a personal relation to God, projected her working-class background, stressing literacy and teetotalism.

Charles Macdonald deals with the Protestant New Tribes Mission in Palawan in the Philippines. The mission began work in the 1960s, but due to health problems the outposts were soon abandoned. Today, only a handful of families consider themselves Christian. Macdonald holds that Christianity, as transmitted by the fundamentalist New Tribes Mission, has not brought about any lasting change in traditional values and beliefs. This is not so much because of active resistance, but rather because the new religion entails a complete rejection of local culture. Despite similarities between indigenous and Christian ethical values, the incoming religion offers a completely new ideological configuration. It also implies, of course, that the missionaries have not taken seriously enough the possibility of cultural accommodation or contextualization. They thus remain ignorant of, or indifferent to, the local culture.

As a theological policy, inculturation affects more than local churches. It has been applied in various institutions within the Catholic Church. In this respect, religious orders, which have undergone great cultural changes since the time of Vatican II, are no exception. Problems are particularly acute in indigenous orders in ex-colonial nations where the influence of European Catholicism has left an indelible imprint. Sister Joan Burke was commissioned by the provincial superior to study a predominantly African group in Lower Zaïre. Much attention was given in her study to examining the way local concepts, values and decision-making processes were introduced into community life as a result of Vatican II, as well as the problems that have emerged subsequently. Burke's conclusion is that greater consideration should be given to anthropological analysis of what actually happens when inculturation is introduced.

On his recent return to Lamalera, Indonesia, R. H. Barnes was able to encounter at first hand the process of inculturation. He compares the recent policy of utilizing components of local culture with what went on in the past, when missionaries directed the Catholic community with a firm hand. Frequently, their approach was negative towards such matters as local marriage customs and pagan sites. Although there is today a more positive and subtle response from missionaries, Barnes holds that Catholic practice, both in the past and in the present, remains one of cultural intrusion. The policy of inculturation, he argues, is no exception.

It might reasonably be pointed out that this set of essays is one-sided, as nearly all the contributions are from professional anthropologists. In fact, two contributors to the original seminars were field missionaries who, at the same time, have had training and write as professional anthropologists. That more field missionaries did not contribute to the seminars is to be regretted. There are two reasons for this imbalance. First, the papers were originally given at the Institute of Social

and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford, by a number of anthropologists who happened to be there at the time. Secondly, it was difficult to find missionaries, especially Protestants, who could make a valid contribution to academic debate. With its greater resources in man-power, the Catholic Church is at an advantage in dealing with such issues as the relations between missionaries and anthropologists. It is to be hoped that the future may see some redress in these imbalances.

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MISSION, LOCAL CULTURE AND THE 'CATHOLIC ETHNOLOGY' OF PATER SCHMIDT

STEFAN DIETRICH

I

WITH the adoption of the principles of accommodation, inculturation or contextualization of Christianity within the diversity of cultures (Luzbetak 1988), the attention of missionaries and missiologists has turned to anthropology. There is now a missiological anthropology, understood as a 'specialised form of applied anthropology' (*ibid.*: 43). This concern for anthropology among missionaries is foreshadowed by the work of Pater Schmidt, who for Luzbetak represents the 'real beginnings of modern mission anthropology' (*ibid.*: 50).

Indeed, Pater Schmidt (1868-1954) was the founder of a formidable tradition of anthropological research. Starting from German historical anthropology,¹ he

This essay is a shortened and revised version of a paper originally written during a stay at St Antony's College, Oxford, during the academic year 1989-90. I wish to express my thanks to the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk which made that stay possible. The translations from original German and Dutch texts are mine. A copy of Ernest Brandewie's book on Pater Schmidt (Brandewie 1990) reached me only after this essay had been prepared and accepted for publication. While I do not always agree with Brandewie's conclusions about Schmidt's work, the present essay would have benefited in places from a prior reading of his book.

1. I use the term 'ethnology' for culture-historical anthropology and the term 'anthropology' for the wider perspective within which 'ethnology' represents a specific approach.

developed his own theory, *Kultukreislehre*.² In addition, he was the driving force behind the establishment of a complete research infrastructure, consisting of a journal (*Anthropos*), a monograph series, an institute ('Anthropos-Institut'), a museum ('Pontificio Museo Missionario-Etnologico Lateranense') and a workshop ('Semaine d'ethnologie religieuse').³

While the concept of missiological anthropology did not exist in his time, he nevertheless envisaged a relation between anthropology and missiology. Then as today, the project was an 'anthropology at the service of the faith' (Luzbetak 1988: ch. 8). Or, as Pater Schmidt himself emphasized, 'the *cooperation of ethnology with the mission is one of the most effective means* used by divine providence' (Schmidt 1928: 118; original emphasis). The historical context seemed right. During the period in which Pater Schmidt's ethnology developed, the Roman Catholic Church adopted the principle of accommodation, or adaptation (see Pickering above). The missions were exhorted to respect the 'inalienable rights of the non-Christian peoples' in their own culture (Thauren 1927: 23). The concept of accommodation represented the first stage of a more 'respectful approach' (Masson 1967: 9) towards local cultures, later taken further at the Second Vatican Council.

The aim of the present essay is to outline some features of Pater Schmidt's ethnology, and then to assess briefly its importance for missionary practice.⁴ I shall argue that Schmidt's ethnology was irrelevant for mission work, or rather that it did not go any further than existing theological-missiological concepts. Schmidt's ethnology was projected not so much as a tool for missiology, as it was a forward defence of Catholicism on the European 'front'. For that purpose, it was built on theological assumptions. It was this assimilation of world cultural history into theology that reduced the role of ethnology in the mission field, since it could not add to what theology already provided.

2. *Kultukreislehre* literally means, and is usually translated as, the 'theory of culture circles', a 'culture circle' (*Kultukreis*) being something like a 'culture complex'. Sometimes Pater Schmidt spoke simply of a *Kultur* ('culture'), and I shall follow this usage here.

3. On the life, work and ethnology of Pater Schmidt, see Andriolo 1979; Beckmann 1954; Bornemann 1954a, 1954b, 1954c, 1956, 1979, 1982; Brandewie 1983; Henninger 1956, 1967, 1979; Mühlmann 1953; Pajak 1977; Rahmann 1956; and Rivinius 1981.

4. I shall refer to material from the island of Flores (East Indonesia), one of the many mission fields of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) (see Piskaty 1963), of which Pater Schmidt was a member.

II

Schmidt had studied Oriental languages while he was enrolled at the University of Berlin for three semesters (1893–95), but in anthropology he was an autodidact. Apart from the actual stimulus of contacts with missionaries at St Gabriel and correspondence with missionaries in New Guinea, there was a more general intellectual impetus for moving into anthropology. This had nothing to do with concern for overseas missions but was rather an attempt to provide a forward defence for Catholicism against (real or imagined) adversaries in the academic world.

First, there was the defence against criticisms of Catholics as being backward and anti-intellectual. In the nineteenth century, the Church had drifted away, and distanced itself critically, from public social and cultural life, against which it built ‘a separate religious, intellectual, artistic subculture [*Sonderwelt*]’ (Maier, quoted in Rivinius 1981: 18; see also *ibid.*: 15–20; Berger 1973: 171; Hoffmann 1982). In theology, movements that tried to break out of this self-imposed isolation by adapting to nineteenth-century thought were suppressed (Rivinius 1981: 31–2; Brandewie 1983: 31–7; McBrien 1980: 216–19). On the secular side, such organizations as the Görres-Gesellschaft (founded 1876) aimed at raising the standard of scientific knowledge among Catholics, thereby assuring Catholics a respected place in public life (Rivinius 1981: 22). Pater Schmidt’s ethnology was part of this forward movement into science.

The journal *Anthropos* (founded 1905), then, could represent ‘a brilliant refutation of the charge of benightedness [*Geistesfinsternis*] and suppression of science, which is so often raised against the Church and Her servants’ (Schmidt 1905: 11). Through their articles in *Anthropos*, missionaries could contribute to gaining the respect and recognition of the scientific public for the achievements of Catholics in ethnology and linguistics (*ibid.*: 8), provided that scientific standards were observed (*ibid.*: 14–15; Schmidt 1923: 46; see also Knecht 1988: 28–9).⁵

Secondly, there was the defence against ‘naturalistic’ theories of religion (see Preus 1987: 152). Anthropology, in particular, had produced various theories on the origin and evolution of religion and society that were regarded in Catholic circles as representing a veritable attack on the teaching of the Church, since they ‘explained, without supernatural intervention, the origin of the true religion’ (Bouvier 1914: 25). In a letter, written several years before he began his career in anthropology, Schmidt expressed the same concern, whereas, he continued, ‘the proper study [of comparative religion] puts in an even stronger light the supernaturalness of our Holy Religion, as well as the excellence [*Vortrefflichkeit*]’

5. A ‘Guide for Ethnographic Observations’ (Schmidt 1905: 21–37), the journal *Anthropos* itself (especially the contributions on data collection and systematization (listed in Rahmann 1956: 3)), and such workshops as the ‘Semaine d’ethnologie religieuse’ (see Semaine 1913, 1914) were meant to assist the missionary in producing professional ethnographies.

of Her inner essence and outward validity' (Schmidt to Janssen, 5 March 1895; quoted in Bornemann 1979: 279).

This was, more or less, the programme of his later work and leads directly to the apologetic element in Pater Schmidt's ethnology (see Brandewie 1983: 24-31). The combination of science and apologetics in a 'Catholic science' (Bornemann 1954b: 678) or a 'Catholic ethnology' (Utsch 1922) followed from a theological position that insisted 'on the possibility of religious knowledge won by the reason as well as by revelation, and on the necessity of rational proofs of the natural foundations of religion' (Schmidt 1931: 34; see also Brandewie 1983: 36-41). Positing reason and metaphysics as sources of religious knowledge, proposing that reason and revelation cannot contradict but must support each other, and preferring to rely on reason in the defence of supernatural truths made it possible to require science to adduce proofs for religious truths (see Schmidt as quoted in Bornemann 1954b: 679).

Schmidt required of the missionaries a 'religious reverence for facts', not because of a notion of empiricism, but out of precisely this idea of the unity of the empirical and the revealed: 'filled with the conviction that *nature and revelation can never really contradict each other*, the missionary will never describe a fact with less accuracy, or indeed suppress it, out of religiously apologetic considerations' (Schmidt 1905: 17, my emphasis; see also Brandewie 1983: 13).

Countering 'infidel' evolutionism had become possible because of two circumstances: scientific criticism of evolutionist theories, in which respect Pater Schmidt was to take up culture-historical anthropology but, for obvious reasons, ignore functionalism; and the publication in 1898 of Andrew Lang's *The Making of Religion*. It was most probably this work that made Pater Schmidt see, as Bornemann writes, the connection between 'ethnographic data on the belief in a Supreme Being and a primordial revelation which is part of the official Catholic teaching' (Bornemann 1954b: 675; see also Bornemann 1954c: 337, Brandewie 1983: 14-20, 41). The profane science of anthropology, this 'weapon against revealed religion', could now be turned against the 'infidels' in order to show, on their very field, the falseness of their theories and the truth of Christianity.

To sum up. Schmidt's ethnology was, at various levels, addressed primarily to the European public, both academic and non-academic. It was meant to be a scientific discipline, proving the ability of Catholics to work in this field, and an apologetic discipline, proving the natural foundations of Catholic doctrine. These two aspects were unified in the concept of 'Catholic ethnology', which assumed, in the tradition of scholastic philosophy, that nature and Catholic doctrine cannot contradict but must instead support each other. Through his ethnographic contributions, the missionary was taking an indirect part in a 'struggle' fought out in Europe.

III

Let me now circumscribe a few substantive elements of Schmidt's ethnology in order to show how 'science' and 'theology' were fused in such a way that the product, *Kulturreislehre*, became a useless tool for the missionary in the field. Schmidt produced a 'therapeutic theory' of mankind (see Berger and Luckmann 1979: 130-32). That is, he posited a healthy state (primordial culture), provided a pathology or theory of deviance (decay, degeneration), a diagnostic apparatus (the culture-history method) and a therapy (Catholicism). Or as Paul Arndt, the missionary ethnographer of Flores, wrote, the missionary is the 'physician', the heathen is the 'patient', ethnology provides knowledge about the 'illness' (Arndt 1954; see also Gusinde 1958: 12). The problem was that ethnology diagnosed conditions that were already predicated on theological assumptions—it only expressed 'scientifically' what was already known theologically.

Schmidt's methodological approach was culture-historical and decidedly anti-evolutionist (see Brandewie 1983: 60-110). Like the evolutionists, he operated with a concept of 'our contemporary ancestors', who in the *Kulturreislehre* were called the 'ethnologically most ancient peoples', since they were assumed to represent the earliest form of human culture and society, i.e., contemporary hunter-gatherer societies (especially the Pygmies). They were regarded, however, not as representing the starting-point of universal evolutionary development but as representing the beginning of historically divergent developments.⁶ That is, from the earliest or primordial culture developed three so-called primary cultures: (1) the patriarchal totemistic hunters, (2) the matriarchal agriculturalists, and (3) the patriarchal nomadic cattle-breeders. From these, further developments, brought about by migration, conquest, diffusion etc., led to the development of three secondary cultures through a simple one-by-one mixing of the primary cultures (1+2, 2+3, 1+3). After that, a mixing of all three primary cultures brought about the tertiary cultures and the rise of state and civilization (presented schematically in Schmidt 1931: 240-41, 1964: 3-11, 60).

Along with universal evolutionary stages, Pater Schmidt also rejected the principle of increasing complexity as a measure for developmental stages. He replaced it with the old theological notion of degeneration (see Schmidt, F., 1987). First, religion is radically decontextualized, as an independent reality *vis-à-vis* 'profane civilization'. The former is a matter of the soul, of man's ability to recognize his true relation to God. The latter relates to technology, economy, politics and the 'formal-intellectual realm'. Second, religion is defined in terms of dependence (Schmidt 1931: 2) and worship takes the form of acts of homage, supplication and gratitude. Third, the Christian assumption of the primacy of religion as the foundation of society and ethics, and especially of the family and marriage, is established. Before this scheme, the history of cultures unfolds itself as deviation from the original, pure state, as degeneration of religion caused by

6. See works cited in note 3 above, especially those of Andriolo, Brandewie and Pajak.

original sin (Schmidt 1964: 298) or man's hubris, a 'change in the religious feeling of dependence' (*ibid.*: 179).

The primordial cultures were monotheistic and had, based on religion, the nuclear family, permanent monogamy and an exemplary moral code. They received monotheism through primordial revelation, for which they were prepared by their intellectual faculties. Although their technology, or civilization, was simple, they possessed a 'high' form of religion. From there on, progress was limited to profane civilization, whereas there was no trace of 'any positive evolution of man in the realm of morals, religion and aesthetics' (quoted in Bornemann 1954b: 672-3; see also Schmidt 1931: 85, 1964: 177-8, 293, 297-9). With increasing technological abilities and growing productivity, man's dependence upon nature decreased, his self-confidence grew, and he began to deny his dependence upon God (Schmidt 1964: 179). He then invented all kinds of false and irrational 'doctrines' (animism, ancestor cult, idolatry, polytheism) and, worst of all, magic, the extreme opposite of religion (Schmidt 1931: 155). With false doctrines (the latest of which were socialism, materialism, Bolshevism etc.), morality and the family also experienced a 'decline'. The evolutionists' notion of progress was, therefore, an illusion; the degenerative development of religion, after all the basis of society and ethics, could only lead to the downfall of civilization (see Schmidt 1964: 298-9).

IV

In 1928, Pater Schmidt published what one reviewer called a 'programmatic article' (Beckmann 1954) on 'the significance of ethnology and science of religion for mission theory and mission practice' (Schmidt 1928). It was to remain his only contribution of this kind. As I have indicated above, the real 'relation of support' was not from the ethnologist to the missionary, but rather the reverse: the missionary as ethnographer had to support the ethnologist for debates on the home front. More than that, the conceptual framework of *Kultukreislehre* ethnology was largely useless for the missionary in the field.⁷ The ethnologically negative evaluation that is so apparent in Schmidt's writings on primary (1 and 2), secondary and tertiary cultures was already well enshrined in the theological imagery of the 'heathen' (see Rzepkowski 1979).

The Dutch anthropologist Henri Fischer quoted approvingly C. C. Berg, who had underlined the importance of anthropology for the missionary: 'He can, of course, observe a lot during a long stay in the mission field, but to understand the

7. I should stress that I am not concerned here with the whole spectrum of accommodation by missionaries and I refer only to those instances that relate to the *Kultukreislehre*. For a different situation, see e.g. Bekkum 1954.

meaning of what he observes is only possible through intensive study' (Fischer 1932: 62-3). In *Kulturreislehre*, however, it was not the point 'to understand the meaning' of the observed culture, because, as a whole, it had none. A culture was the end-product of a long mixing of traits originating in the (reconstructed) primary cultures, making it into an arbitrary, 'disordered and virtually meaningless' array of elements (Huber 1988: 86), or a melting-pot of such conflicting elements as a moon cult and a sun cult (see e.g. Arndt 1929, 1931, 1936, 1937; Bader n.d.). The elements became meaningful only in so far as the observer could relate them to their provenance (totemic culture, matriarchal culture etc.). Otherwise, there was not much else to be understood: 'In most cases I knew no better way for compiling [the ethnography] than simply to list the various accounts of each topic one after the other. This method produces a colourful mixture of bits and pieces...yet it comes closest to reality' (Arndt 1932: 3). The missionary could at least refer to origins, and origins constituted the meaning of the elements. To the native, however, his culture remained meaningless: 'As to sun and moon myths, nobody any more has the slightest idea that they have anything to do with sun and moon' (Arndt 1931: 738; see also Vroklage, as quoted in Verheijen 1951: 35, n. 1). The people 'live off the capital of previous millennia' (Arndt 1938: 23).

Apart from locating the origins of various elements, the role of ethnology remained very unarticulated. Of course, Pater Schmidt stressed (1928: 130), it can help to isolate the good elements in a culture. These are, not surprisingly, the traces of primordial revelation. Ethnology can help to understand the 'ancient fact: *Anima humana naturaliter christiana*' (Gusinde 1958: 14), and to unearth the 'seeds of the word', which had been buried by deviant developments (Bouvier 1913: 29).

On the island of Flores in Indonesia, much missionary ethnography was directed towards the study of the Supreme Being. Where it was found that it indeed reflected original monotheism, its name was adopted for the Christian God. But was painstaking ethnographic study necessary for this? Not always. Two years after his arrival on Flores, Arndt published a small article on the Supreme Being (in the Ngadha region) containing all the major points of his later extensive publications on the topic (Badjawa 1925a; see also Badjawa 1925b).⁸ Was ethnology necessary at all for this? It seems not. Nineteenth-century missionaries came to the same conclusions as the missionaries on Flores without the help of *Kulturreislehre* (see Raison 1978: 540-42). The necessary theological concept, indeed, had long been available; the missionary had only to apply his ingenuity.

8. While the articles are actually signed 'Paulus Badjawa' they cannot be by anyone else than Arndt. His first name was 'Paul', he was stationed in the Ngadha district whose administrative capital is Bajawa, and the content of the articles fits very closely with his later writings. It should be noted that Arndt always followed closely the framework of *Kulturreislehre*. Ironically, Schmidt was not convinced by the conclusions of the missionary ethnographers concerning the supposed traces of primordial monotheism on Flores (see Bornemann 1956: 649-59). The study by Verheijen, who had linguistic training, on the Supreme Being in west Flores (Verheijen 1951) is a different matter.

Apart from this ‘contribution’ to accommodation, *Kultukreislehre* could not offer much more to the missionary. It did remind him that, even after original sin, man was capable of producing naturally good, or morally indifferent but in other respects good, things (Schmidt 1928: 131; Gusinde 1958: 14, 19); hence adaptations of, for example, indigenous house forms for churches and missionary houses, songs, dances and melodies. Especially with regard to the family, however, it carried a generally negative message—almost everywhere: ‘sad corruption of the essential duties and functions of the family’ (Schmidt 1928: 121-2). And the same went for ‘brideprice’, that ‘monstrous product of mother right’ (Arndt 1950). But was it necessary for missionary practice to know the *history* of the corruption of the family, and the origin of marriage payments, when missionaries opposed local family forms and marriage payments anyway?⁹

Again the question arises, ‘Did missionaries really need ethnology for their practical work?’ Having read a purely ethnographic article by a colleague, one all but anonymous missionary comments:

All this study of ethnology should not really be our final goal, but it must be used very consciously and clearly for our pastoral work...I am little interested in [ethnographic facts] in themselves, except as an illustration of, e.g., permanent fear, *Angst* psychosis, or as proof that all heathen cult ritual is without spirit and soul. (S 1949: 158)

It should not be surprising, therefore, to read Pater Arndt complain: ‘several times people have told me that ethnological studies serve no purpose; and where there are books [about ethnology], they are not read’ (Arndt 1959: 98; see also Knecht 1988: 34 and Kirby 1990).

The need to acquire knowledge of local culture focused on the practical, pastoral level. Further, precise ethnographic knowledge was needed about what was going on among the Christians in order to act correctively. This was very much stressed by Arndt. He complained: ‘One of [the missionaries] once told a newcomer that he shouldn’t ask too many questions, otherwise he would have too much to forbid his Christians’ (*ibid.*). Precise knowledge was not only necessary for monitoring generally the Christian communities but also for teaching and confession. Beliefs, names of spirits and associated practices had to be known by name so that catechumens could be instructed more precisely about what was forbidden (Arndt 1954), as well as so that during confession questions could be put correctly for a proper formation of conscience (Anonymous n.d.; Swinkels 1952: 251).

9. On the problem of traditional versus church marriage, see Prior 1988. On ‘nuclear’ and ‘extended family’, see the exchange between Mitan (1956), who prefers to see family forms as purely civil institutions, and Tol (1957) and Pehl (1959), who see the ‘extended family’ as ‘wholly founded on heathenism’. See also Arndt 1950.

V

This essay has dealt with a specific period of mission history and its involvement with anthropology. I have tried to reveal the fundamental problems of this ‘cooperation’: the rootedness of Pater Schmidt’s ethnology in theology or, to put it in Verheijen’s (1953) words, the construction of ethnology as an ‘ethno(theo)-logy’. The *Kulturreislehre* could not solve anything in the confrontation between missionaries and local cultures. It could only provide quasi-solutions to missiological or theological problems. Because Pater Schmidt’s ethnology was formulated on theological foundations, it could only give the same answers as theology, disguised in ethnological terminology. Hence also its non-contribution to the missiological notion of accommodation.

Since the 1950s, missiological thinking has gone in new directions, and in that respect the period I have discussed is closed. Yet I wonder if some of the problems of using ‘anthropology in the service of the faith’ have not remained. The notion of ‘primordial revelation’ has persisted as a theologically useful concept. Today, it is related to the idea of the ‘anonymous Christian’ that is widely accepted in theology (Luzbetak 1988: 124-5; see also Shorter 1983: 188-90), and for which it provides one of the theological foundations (Fries 1970: 349-50). In common with Pater Schmidt’s thinking, this new concept also looks for the ‘seeds of the word’ and the ‘preparation for the Gospel’, and thus to the manifestation of God’s universal salvific will in other cultures. For testing the authenticity of these ‘seeds’, an evaluation of cultural elements ‘in the light of the Word of God’ (Shorter 1983: 177) is necessary. I suspect that this just repeats the dissociative approach of the *Kulturreislehre*, isolating elements and choosing those that lend themselves to a positive theological evaluation. Seen from the perspective of anthropology this may be problematic, but it remains a purely theological problem—it does not, like *Kulturreislehre*, turn theology into a theory that is then presented as anthropology. Anthropological insights may be useful, useless or simply distracting, for they are rooted in a different interpretative framework and because such insights change.

Accommodation theory was as dissociative as Pater Schmidt’s ethnology. It regarded cultures as something like supermarkets with good, harmless, not so good but useful, and bad things, according to Christian values, from which one could choose for moral (right in own culture) or tactical (make conversion easier) reasons (Thauren 1927: 25). The gradient was from clothing, ways to build houses and good manners at the positive end, to social values, beliefs and religious practices at the negative end. Although the notion of accommodation has been replaced by inculturation and similar notions, the question remains whether a new missiology, informed by modern anthropology, can escape such distinctions. Looking at the examples given by Luzbetak (1988), my impression is that it cannot. Missiology must maintain the distinction between the ‘essentials’ and ‘non-essentials’ of Christianity, defined theologically, and prescribe what must change in a culture and what need not. When anthropologists look at ‘accommodation’ or ‘inculturation’

they do so rather differently. They observe the process of ‘inculturation’ among Christians themselves, trying to explain and understand what has been observed, not prescribing or recommending policies.

As early as 1928, Pater Thauren pointed out that ‘external accommodation’ (buildings, dress, etiquette) was becoming increasingly irrelevant with the spread of Western civilization and, one might add, the Christianity frequently associated with it (Thauren 1928: 967-8). Later, various writers noted that the younger generation of indigenous Christians, who wanted to be ‘modern’, was much less linked to ‘accommodated’ elements from traditional culture. Under these circumstances, it was recommended that the Church should not tie itself to old forms that are bound to disappear—perhaps to be appreciated only from a distance (Bettray 1967: 39-45; Meot 1980: 54; Djawa 1970: 19; Anonymous 1957).

The question arises, ‘What is the “indigenous standard” applied in “accommodation”, “inculturation” etc.? For example, what about those societies of whom it is said that analysis of the structural variety is particularly apposite, that is, the structure represents a relatively unified picture of the culture, or a sector thereof, but is also an abstraction subsuming variations (Arndt’s ‘colourful mixture of bits and pieces’: see above) of the empirically observed (see Allen 1990)? But the missionary can hardly work at the level of structure as a ‘standard’; he has to struggle at the practical level with the variations and pragmatics of a culture.

Situations of change are even more intricate. Again, I would point to the process of ‘inculturation’ performed by societies themselves, or by sectors or classes of societies. The history and sociology of Christianity in Europe, with its religious fissions, unorthodox movements, heresies, syncretisms, renewals, reforms and theological schools, is suggestive in this respect. These differential ‘inculturations’ of Christianity, as some of the very terms imply, have been generally disapproved of by the churches. The novelty of European religious history, according to Gladigow (1988: 23), is the assumption that one system of meaning (religion) ought to be obligatory for all sectors of a complex society. As a rule, however, as far as is historically traceable, societies have been characterized by an ‘over-supply of different, alternative, cooperating or complementary’ systems of meaning. Is the notion that Christianity can be inculturated in a generally valid culture a transfer of a European perspective? Or is it, within that same framework, a method for maintaining unity by preventing ‘wild’, uncontrolled inculturation?

In the last decade or so, there has been some discussion of the relation between ‘missionaries’ and ‘anthropologists’ (see Stipe 1980). The formulation is itself somewhat unfortunate since it suggests a personalization of a problem that is located at a different level, i.e. that of the relation between missiology and anthropology, their approaches and aims, and whether anthropology can sensibly be a ‘servant of the faith’. Even more unfortunate has been the isolation of the bases of what is seen as a ‘problematic’ relation: social change and religion as illusion. The former need not be discussed since there is no anthropologist who prescribes non-change. The idea that anthropology treats religion as illusion

reflects, I think, the threat felt by theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from the ‘profane sciences’.

There can be no doubt that religion in anthropological analyses is very ‘real’, whether in its social function, or as an intellectual system or system of meaning, or even as an independent variable in social processes. The point is that social and human sciences treat religion as a ‘human product’ (Gladigow 1988: 16), that they look at religion, as Peter Berger (1973: 177-80) says, *sub specie tempore*. The question of whether one might look at religion *sub specie aeternitatis* or theologically, is a question that does not concern anthropology as a discipline. Berger’s distinction needs further discussion, but it may suffice here to underline the different methodological approaches of theology and anthropology. Claims of absolute truths are, for anthropology, empirical data of a given culture that by themselves do not require approval or denial from within anthropology. Berger has coined the term ‘methodological atheism’ to characterize the approach to religion as a human product without any implications of falseness or truth. Just to mention the word ‘atheism’ seems to have been provocative. Shorter opposes ‘methodological atheism’, since it involves a denial of the object of belief, and juxtaposes it to an acceptance of ‘religious determinants, or divine reality itself, as an independent, non-empirical category or variable in social analysis’ (Shorter 1983: 2). Seen in that way, anthropology within theology may make sense, but Shorter does not represent the basic contrast properly. The expression ‘denial’ may have been motivated by the term ‘atheism’, but it should refer, in the first place, to a (necessary) methodological stance (‘human product’). Religion can, nevertheless, be treated as an independent variable, though non-empirical categories like ‘divine reality’ have no place in anthropology.

To insist on the radical difference between the approaches towards religion of anthropology and theology brings to mind an indirect connection. The description, study and analysis of religions began in theology. It produced terminologies and classificatory and analytical schemes that continue to be used even though they have been emptied of their theological contents (Bernard and Gruzinski 1988, Gladigow 1988: 22). The theological ‘origins’ of terminologies does not, of course, mean that they are not of use in human sciences—but caution is required if we are to avoid introducing distinctions that have arisen within the history of a particular tradition, the sort of caution noticeable in the reluctance in present-day anthropology to distinguish sharply between ‘religion’ and ‘magic’.

Given their different aims and methodologies, can anthropology and missiology cooperate at all, and in what? Or rather, can anthropology serve missiology? On the whole, I would say not, except perhaps in the superficial sense of giving anthropologically phrased support to missiological positions. Of course, if a missiologist or missionary studies anthropology, then it can become a valuable intellectual stimulus for reflecting on questions, the answers to which will, however, always be theological. To put it differently: anthropology cannot answer theological questions, but perhaps it can be used by theologians to help in framing well the questions—and, in consequence, the answers.

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PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AND PALAWAN NATIVES: DIALOGUE, CONFLICT OR MISUNDERSTANDING?

CHARLES MACDONALD

HAVING spent a number of years with the Palawan natives of southern Palawan Island in the Philippines, pursuing a study of their cultural and social organization, I have had several occasions to observe contacts, or rather the results of contact, between the Protestant New Tribes Mission and the native population. In this essay, I bring together a few of these observations, with a view to assessing the cultural impact of missionary work on the local culture and the meaning of the biblical message from the native's point of view. There are, however, many gaps in my data, since I tended to work in areas where the presence of missionaries was least felt.

The indigenous population of southern Palawan Island comprises an ethno-linguistic group of about 50,000 people who call themselves 'Palawan'.¹ They speak an Austronesian language and are predominantly shifting agriculturalists.

The paper on which this essay is based was prepared while I was a Deakin Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford. I am grateful to the college for its support.

1. A number of fancy ethnonyms are used in the literature: Palawanun, Palawanin, Palawani, Palawano etc. Their self-ethnonym is Palawan, sometimes including a glottal stop or a lengthened middle vowel: Pala'wan, or Pala·wan.

This indigenous group is made up of a number of local subcultures, often with their own dialect, while one of the main areas of difference between these groups pertains to the kind of religious beliefs and ceremonial life characteristic of each. To assess the nature of the impact of missionary work, one has to take these differences into account. To this day, the majority follows an indigenous polytheistic belief system that includes various ritual events, ranging from the shamanistic seance (Macdonald 1973) to elaborate ceremonies involving the spirits in a kind of ritual play (Macdonald 1990).²

Living in relative isolation, in a frontier area with no communication infrastructure until the middle of this century, the Palawan were only superficially exposed, and only in some parts of their territory at that, to Catholicism. There was, however, no systematic attempt at Christianization, nor did religious orders establish missions in this part of the island. There are, however, parish churches in Brooke's Point, Quezon and other such towns. Islam has been an influence for at least five centuries in the Sulu Archipelago, and a fringe element of the Palawan population became, nominally at least, Muslim, forming an as yet unstudied indigenous cultural group called 'Islam' or 'Panimusan'.

A Protestant Mission

Since the 1960s, the New Tribes Mission (henceforth NTM), a Protestant fundamentalist mission, has established itself in southern Palawan, with its headquarters in Brooke's Point and Puerto Princesa, the provincial capital, and in field stations in the hills. Missionary work has been carried out mainly by Australians and Americans.

Missionary work in southern Palawan actually started before the Second World War but was restricted in the main to the towns. A family of Scottish missionaries arrived in Brooke's Point, together with a group of Chinese Protestant families, and made contact with a few groups of natives, especially those whose children had been sent to the Christian school at Brooke's Point. During the war, these missionaries went into hiding among the Palawan people of Punang—one of the staunchest animist communities in Palawan—before being rescued by submarine.

The NTM involves several denominations. It is a mission based on faith, with an emphasis on sanctification developed by Protestant churches in Europe during the nineteenth century. Its theological basis is renewal through baptism and it stresses the notion of election with reference to the apocalypse. It is an agency

2. I have analysed the Palawan belief system and ritual life in several papers and books (Macdonald 1973, 1977, 1981, 1988, 1990).

that aims at conversion and specializes in a specific kind of intervention: linguistic work and the translation of the Bible.³

Members of various denominations, sometimes with a professional training in such fields as linguistics or anthropology, work for NTM on limited contracts. Financial support is provided by various Protestant churches and private and academic foundations, as well as out of the NTM's own funds and profits. In 1990, the NTM's 2300 members were working in various countries around the world, mainly in Central and South America.

The NTM strategy of proselytization relies not only on linguistic and translation work, but also on individual conversions. A member of the indigenous community is selected and trained as a linguist/translator. This training is accompanied by an attempt at individual in-depth conversion, which becomes more feasible as the trainee lives for an extended period of time with the missionary and his family. After the translation work is completed, the new translator/convert goes back to his community and becomes a missionary himself, a representative of the same church or denomination as his mentor/trainer. In order to support the new native missionary, and keep his faith alive, he is offered the financial means to start a small business, which it is hoped will promote him socially. Later contact is maintained by means of letters, parcels, and recorded messages, designed to heighten the convert's awareness of himself as a representative of the Church. In short then, the NTM strategy relies on short-term but intensive action aimed at the creation of a nucleus of converts equipped with the means to continue the missionary work by spreading the biblical message in the vernacular language or dialect.⁴

My own observations confirm the points made so far concerning the NTM's conversion strategy. The apparently well-funded mission displayed impressive logistics in the field, with airstrips, radio communications, a small plane and suburban-style dwellings for the missionary and his family, complete with water-tank, plumbing, electrical power plant, and so on. Two main mission stations were located on the west coast near Quezon and in the Kulbi area in the southernmost part of the island. During their residence, missionaries actively proselytized, built chapels, conducted Bible classes and taught parts of the Gospel and the Old Testament. In the meantime, linguistic work was conducted with a view to translating the Gospel into the native language. To my knowledge, two translations have been completed, in the dialects spoken in Quezon and Kulbi.

In 1989, the sites of Mägkälip in Kulbi and Iljän near Quezon, were deserted and the mission infrastructure dismantled. Grass was growing tall on the airstrips and the buildings had all but disintegrated. During the course of their missionary

3. The better-known Summer Institute of Linguistics does similar work. With its larger membership, of some 6000 in 1990, it concentrates on major groups, while the NTM, with a membership in 1990 of only 2300, focuses on smaller and more isolated groups.

4. I am indebted to Dr J. Garcia-Ruis of the Groupe de Sociologie des Religions, CNRS, Paris, for most of the above information concerning the NTM. See also Stoll 1990: 17, 85.

work, however, the NTM had trained a few trusted converts to become, in their turn, religious educators. When I did fieldwork in 1989 in Kulbi, and before that in the Quezon area in 1983, Sunday schools were held among small groups of a dozen or fewer converts, who read the Bible in Palawan, sang hymns and prayed. Whether this actually amounted to real conversion is discussed now.

While missionary work is in progress, and when missionaries are present, the effects on the local social life are very striking. Having, by aerial reconnaissance, selected sites for their greater population density, missionaries locate themselves within easy reach of a cluster or clusters of settlements.⁵ The NTM provide social and health services to the community, supplying them with free or cheap medicine and sometimes with emergency evacuation by air to the town hospital in Brooke's Point. The sheer presence of the missionary and his family, with its enormous (to local eyes) equipment and supply of consumables exerts a strong appeal. The creation of an educational programme, along with a sense of being looked after by a member of a social group with powerful connections, also contributes to the mission's attraction.

After a while, a trade system emerges, with goods, health services and drugs flowing one way and attendance at Bible classes and sermons flowing the other. It is unquestionably because of the goods and services offered that native people tend to cluster around the mission station. As a result of this process, nominal conversions take place and a core of 'Protestant' Palawans start to attend church and to abide by the rules set by the mission: i.e. non-participation in traditional 'pagan' ceremonies and rituals, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, avoidance of divorce and polygamy, the saying of prayers at mealtimes, etc. This conversion process has a collective aspect to it, inasmuch as a whole local group or a set of closely related families usually 'enter' the new faith and embrace its way of life together. This induces a division in the community, but the social consequences are unclear, since Palawan society does not lend itself to the emergence of clear-cut political factions or competing groups. The social disruption caused by the mission has, in my view, limited effects, due to the fact that the traditional social structure is characterized by extreme segmentation, as well as because religious leadership is divorced from jural and political leadership.⁶

With the departure of the missionary, things change again and a number of those who had chosen the new faith revert to the old customs and ritual practices.

5. The Palawan settlement is generally made up of small scattered hamlets of two to ten households at walking distance from each other. In the Kulbi area, the settlement pattern is somewhat denser and large local groups of twenty households and more may be found. The presence of the mission may temporarily modify the local settlement pattern by inducing a concentration around the mission station.

6. As we shall see below, the situations obtaining in Kulbi and Quezon are somewhat different. The Kulbi subculture features a rather exceptional degree of political and religious (i.e. ceremonial) unity.

Communities clustered around the mission station scatter, the makeshift chapel is not attended to anymore, and whatever is left of the Christian gatherings and practices takes place in the private homes of the remaining converts. From this, it may be concluded that the NTM missionary work has had no large-scale impact, and that most of the interest generated by the presence of the missionaries and their teachings actually stems from a desire to take advantage of the support and services they provide. This may, of course, be in line with the NTM strategy of aiming at the conversion of a chosen few rather than mass proselytization.

As has been said, however, a few do keep the new faith alive by conducting Sunday schools, praying before meals, and trying (though not terribly successfully) to observe Protestant prohibitions, like abstaining from alcoholic beverages. Even if the phenomenon of conversion remains marginal, its reality begs the anthropological question of what the Palawan perception of Protestant teachings might be, both as a belief system, and as a set of values or principles of moral and practical conduct. In order to address this problem I shall examine briefly two individual cases of conversion, together with their specific cultural and religious contexts.

Ajup, the Two-Minded Believer

The first case is that of Ajup, from the Quezon area. Ajup (Felipe, by his Christian name) is an extremely intelligent middle-aged man, well versed in the ancient lore and a man of keen intellectual curiosity. Rather poor, even by local standards, and in no position to exert leadership, he is, however, an average well-adjusted member of his community. He is married with children, and engages in the usual farm work and economic activities practised in the region (shifting agriculture, gathering of forest products, fishing). He is also a specialist in certain healing rituals but is in no way a widely known ritual specialist. His conversion to the Protestant faith expresses itself in statements to the effect that 'Prutis' (the Protestant way) is good, or better (than animistic beliefs). He prays and attends Sunday school with a small following of other converts. In spite of his avowed dedication to these religious positions, he drinks alcohol and attends non-Christian rituals conducted by his elder brother.

I acquired some degree of intimacy with Ajup, who was my main informant during several months of fieldwork in Känängkaqan, in the Quezon area, in 1983. It became very clear that Ajup was a devoted and faithful follower of the ancient ways, and particularly of the beliefs entailed by ceremonies conducted by his brother and other relatives. At the same time, he was almost desperately clinging to the faith he had acquired through the Protestant missionaries. This might seem odd, but it can be understood, at least partly, through a brief examination of the local belief system.

In a Durkheimian fashion, the religious morphology of cult organization is the mirror image of the social morphology (scattered autonomous local groups with no overall leadership) of the Quezon subculture. Each local group seems to have its own 'parochial' ceremonial life, together with its own spirits or divinities. These are called upon to attend and speak in seances, during which the ritual specialists are possessed by them in a state of trance (i.e. a temporary loss of sensory contact with the immediate environment, as it is defined locally). In addition to these kinds of rituals, including trances, spirit possession and dancing to the beating of gongs, people seek to contact spirits that they come to know through dreams or revelations. In this manner, each local group (itself a kinship-based unit) has its own religion, so to speak, with its own deities and spirits, as well as ritual rules, ceremonial schedule and ritual specialists.

In interviews with Ajup and other informants it became clear that religion here has to be understood as a continuing process of acquiring new knowledge about the supernatural world, and of sharing such knowledge in a wider social circle. This knowledge is based both on a personal individual experience and on beliefs and practices inherited from elders and through descent. The result is a mosaic of cults and beliefs, none of them gaining full acceptance by the entire regional community. A certain degree of scepticism towards any kind of belief pertaining to the supernatural world, and a continuing attempt, at the same time, to gain new knowledge about it, are characteristic traits of the local people's attitude in these matters.

It is quite understandable, therefore, that people trained in both 'parochial' scepticism and religious eagerness should be drawn to a new kind of religious experience, while retaining some of their old caution about anything that is not grounded in the experience and authority of the ancestors, very close relatives and neighbours. The context thus provides the answer to the problem of the seemingly two-minded attitude of Ajup and others to the new faith.

Täjä, the Young Entrepreneur

The second case is that of Täjä, from Kulbi, near the Mägkälip mission station. He also was one of my main informants while I was conducting fieldwork in 1989, and I had a close view of his ideological inclinations during long and intimate conversations in his home at Tägbütuk. Like Ajup, he came from extremely traditional Palawan stock, was still a well-integrated member of his community and had retained a faith in the religious teachings of the, by then departed, Protestant

missionary.⁷ Large posters showing Old Testament scenes decorated the walls of Täjä's home, and each Sunday I overheard hymns being sung by a group of neighbours and their host on the porch. Prayers were said before meals, with closed eyes.

There are, however, a number of social and personal differences between Täjä and Ajup. First, Täjä was more literate than Ajup. He had attended high school and, more importantly, had been a linguistic informant and collaborator with the NTM's Bible translation team in Puerto Princesa, where he lived for more than a year. This made him a very well trained informant, with the skills of a professional linguist, as well as a very knowledgeable Bible reader. Besides, he was much more enterprising than Ajup from a social and economic point of view. Acquiring land and cultivating it with a water-buffalo, he had established a successful farm with irrigated rice-fields. He was also a small trader and had a small itinerant retail goods (*sari-sari*) store. His two children attended the nearby government school and his family in general was better off than the average. Finally, he was playing an active social role, being a neighbourhood leader and acting as an arbiter, although not a very senior one, in litigations. He was generally regarded as a potential regional leader, with the makings of a *kunsyal*, or municipal councillor.

In spite of this area remaining very isolated and very conservative in lifestyle, its religious and social atmosphere is quite unlike that obtaining in the rest of the Palawan culture. As noted above, settlement patterns are denser and there is a sense of regional unity totally lacking in Quezon. Tuking, the most senior ritual and customary-law leader, became the centre of a converging, if informal, group of people throughout the entire region. Yearly harvest ceremonies are meant to cleanse and protect the land. Villagers flock to this annual event, and the collective religious life is then concentrated in one place under Tuking's ritual leadership.

From the political point of view, the social life of Kulbi is characterized by prolific litigation. But, unlike in Quezon, the process through which disputes are settled seems to be more rigorously implemented and the elders appear to carry more weight and authority in administering the litigation. Local groups are both larger in size and more cohesive. There are also many individual variants in the belief system, though this has not resulted in a proliferation of local cults. A mild form of possession prevails, but trances are not a very prominent feature of the religious life. In other words, it seems that people are more ready to leave religious and ceremonial expertise to a few selected specialists than seek themselves to contact supernatural powers.

7. The Mägkälip mission had been occupied by two missionaries in succession, an Australian and an American. They both left a favourable impression on the local population. They had both learned enough Palawan to converse. However, I heard some people complain that they tended to barter medical help with attendance at Bible school and formal conversion.

All this makes for a quite different context from the one existing in Quezon. As far as Täjä is concerned, he is, or wants to be, a 'modern' progressive agent, fully aware of problems of local economic development. His belief that the new religion goes hand-in-hand with social and economic progress accounts, in my view, for his continuing allegiance to the Protestant faith. The fact that he keeps in touch with his overseas benefactors and friends, as well as the advantages derived from his partnership with the NTM in Brooke's Point and Puerto Princesa, cannot, however, be discounted as factors encouraging his allegiance to the Bible scheme. These facts fit very neatly into the NTM's conversion strategy. Let it be noted, however, that Täjä has in no way discarded all belief in traditional Palawan lore, as a general body of wisdom.

Protestant Fundamentalism and Palawan Paganism

I want now to assess the ideological differences between the Palawan belief system and Protestantism, but before doing so, I should like to point to some factors that may or may not facilitate the conversion process. Protestantism emphasizes the observance of a code of ethical behaviour that has to be strictly followed. Missionaries are unequivocal in their rejection, not only of traditional rituals and ceremonies, but also of such social practices as polygamy, divorce, and the consumption of alcohol.⁸ Inasmuch as the rates of divorce and alcohol consumption are lower in Kulbi than in Quezon, one might expect resistance to conversion to be relatively weak in the Kulbi area and relatively strong in the Quezon area.

Alcohol consumption and divorce rates, however, do not appear to be determining factors; other elements are at play. For instance, the Quezon people seem to be more at ease than the people of Kulbi with the notion of prophecy and more ready to accept Jesus Christ as a charismatic historical figure.⁹ In both areas, as well as elsewhere among the Palawan, the ethical values of compassion, pity and kindness to others are expressed by the term *ingasiq*, which is readily translatable by the English term, and Christian concept of, 'charity'. Thus there are a variety of factors that point to a possible compatibility between both religious ideologies; and there are a variety of extraneous elements that might or might not facilitate the conversion process.

8. For a comparable account of a fundamentalist sect doing missionary work among the Navaho, see Rapoport 1991: 741.

9. This would be even more true of the belief system of the central highland area, not dealt with here, where the concept of a *tungkul*, a divine-like human figure who is also a shamanistic ancestor endowed with miraculous powers, leads to a ready acceptance of Jesus Christ as a figure of this type.

I should like to emphasize now seven aspects of the biblical message that are totally unrelated to the object and purpose of Palawan beliefs and ritual systems.

First, the Palawan belief system is basically polytheistic, even though the existence of a unique supreme being is postulated, and has no unified or written doctrine. In contrast, Christianity is monotheistic and has a well-integrated doctrine and theology based on a single book, the Bible.

Secondly, Protestant Christianity, especially that of the fundamentalists, strives for a position of dominance and universalism that is completely foreign to the Palawan religious mind. Local believers make no claim whatsoever to a message of universal truth. From the outset, the dialogue between the ideological interlocutors is undermined by the fact that Protestant missionaries think in terms of truth and error, whereas the Palawan people think in terms of a variation in religious experience. This is an extremely important point. It accounts for the fact that missionaries think they are competing against another religion, while the natives see the Gospel as another path towards the same truth they were already seeking. At the same time, it might also help to explain temporary conversions, inasmuch as Christianity appears to Palawan as just another kind of religious knowledge to be experienced for a while.

Thirdly, the foundation of all major Palawan rituals is the attempt to make contact with supernatural beings who have a material existence and who dwell within reach of human spiritual perception. Contact with God, as a supreme being, is not sought. There is no need, and it is not considered appropriate, to address God (Ämpu'), except in certain ceremonial circumstances, and a relationship with him is not the object of ritual practice. Central to this view is the Palawan theory of the person, who is considered to be made up of internal and external material principles, the cohesion of which has to be maintained by rituals. Human-like supernatural beings threaten or promote the cohesion of the individual person and that of the social body. In one way, most of Palawan ritual practices may be interpreted as dealing with external agents unrelated to Ämpu'. By stressing the need for contact with the supreme being, missionaries attempt to explore a field of spiritual activity that is not deemed relevant by the Palawan.

Fourthly, the Protestant believes in an internalized individual contact with God, whereas the Palawan ritualist is inclined to a kind of externally induced (through trances, dreams etc.) contact with the spirits and other human-like beings living in his environment. Although the Christian believer seeks a continual renewal of his contact with God, his quest is not directed towards the discovery of as yet unknown elements of the divine realm. By contrast, the Palawan is engaged in an unceasing quest for new revelations. Palawan ritual is thus an epiphany rather than a communion.

Fifthly, one of the most striking features of the biblical message is its stress on an ethical code of behaviour based on transcendental principles. Animism has no ethics. The Palawan religious system, in its various manifestations, has a very loose relationship with a code of conduct. As members of a social organization based on kinship, residence and a set of political rules, enforced by elders in a

codified system of arbitration, Palawan do, of course, possess an extremely well-developed and articulate ethical system, with values and rules applying to social and human relationships. The connection between the religious and the ethical systems rests on a somewhat unspecified reference to the supreme being and the ancestors as the ultimate source of this code of behaviour. Values vested in concepts like *ingasiq*, 'compassion', respect for human life (Palawan culture being non-violent to an extreme degree), incest avoidance and so forth are ultimately validated by the teaching of the 'ancestors' and 'divine wisdom', but are not precisely matched with ritual practices and beliefs concerning spirits, nor with major myths. In short, Palawan ethics are an immanent property of human relations and are not conceived of in teleological and transcendental terms.

Sixthly, a further twist in this complex of religious and ethical traits is the centrality of the notion of evil in the mind of Protestant missionaries. After twenty years of fieldwork and close association with animistic 'pagans', I have never come across a clearer case of literal belief in the physical existence of evil forces, and its development into an integrated ideological system, than that of American Protestant fundamentalists. Most Palawan are quite ready to believe in the physical existence of the devil, but none of them would be ready to make it the centre of their religious convictions. Good and evil agents seem rather to be partners in a balanced interaction, one that is expressed in ritual practice. For example, the retrieval of the soul of a sick person captured by a forest creature, or the complex ceremonial rituals of Quezon and Punang are meant to ensure an equilibrium between benevolent and malevolent forces.

Lastly, it should be stressed that Palawan beliefs and ritual practices present a picture of a system of material and immanent forces in the social realm and in the natural environment (itself inhabited by a host of human-like beings). In contrast, the missionaries base their views on transcendental values. Palawan listeners do not, in general, grasp such a discourse, and when they do, see no point in it, since they already have a well-developed ethical system of their own, which is similar in many ways to the Christian one.¹⁰

Conclusions

By examining various aspects of the Palawan world-view, belief system and ritual practice, as well as other social and cultural elements, I have tried to assess the meaning of the biblical message, seen from the Palawan point of view, and its

10. The Palawan struck me as rather puritanical, albeit very tolerant, as highland people usually are in this part of the world. They show extreme consideration for human life and obsessive respect for other people's freedom of behaviour.

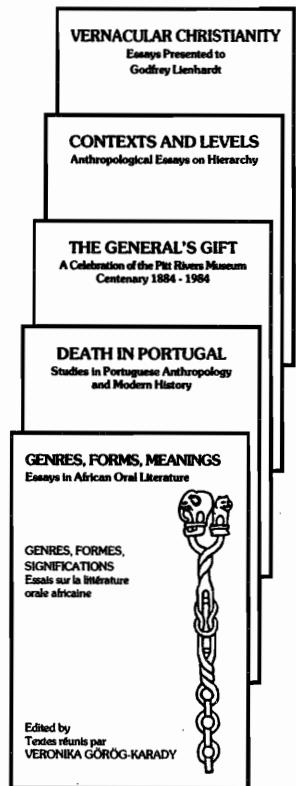
impact on the natives. There are a number of, so to speak, extraneous elements that might encourage Palawan people to be favourably inclined towards Protestant teachings—NTM's support services, for example, or recognized similarities with their own world-view in the importance of compassion, charity, restraint etc. Conversely, and in accordance with the tenets of their local beliefs and practices—the importance of rice-wine ceremonies and their high divorce rate, for example—they might be expected to prove highly resistant to conversion. More important are those internal elements that make the biblical message difficult or impossible to translate into Palawan cultural and ideological idiom. The NTM's Protestant ideology is not in conflict with the Palawan system of belief, despite what the missionaries firmly believe. It deals with such values and concepts as the notions of a one-to-one, internalized, relationship with God and a transcendental theory of ethics wholly unrelated to Palawan values and concepts. In other words, the Protestant 'religion' and the Palawan 'religion' are not contending for the same field of truth, any more than astrophysics and biochemistry are dealing with the same area, or the same aspects, of the objective world.

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**PROTESTANTS, CATHOLICS AND 'GENTILES':
THE ARTICULATION OF MISSIONARY
AND INDIGENOUS CULTURE
ON THE SAN BLAS COAST OF PANAMA**

JAMES HOWE

Introduction

IN making cultural sense of the encounter between the Western self and exotic other (Todorov 1984), the process of missionization holds a place of special interest and significance (e.g. Axtell 1985; Beidelman 1982; Bowden 1981; Burkhardt 1989; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Colonial agents, planters and policemen sometimes have cultural agendas; missionaries always do. Missionaries, however much or little they accommodate their work to local realities, always confront indigenous institutions and practices (Hutchinson 1987; Axtell 1985: 71-90; Neill 1986: 151-66). And to one degree or another, missionaries attempt to make the other into a special version of the self.

Good missionaries—from the scholar's point of view—also record their experiences at length. As a contribution to the cultural study of missionization, a field still in its infancy, I discuss here the encounter between the San Blas Kuna of Panama and two obligingly self-revealing missionaries, Father Leonardo Gassó, SJ, and Miss Anna Coope. The Kuna, an indigenous people, numbering perhaps 10,000 at the turn of the last century, lived in some thirty villages scattered along the Caribbean San Blas Coast, many on small inshore islands, others still on the mainland. Heavily engaged in selling coconuts and buying manufactured goods

from merchant vessels, the Kuna had several hundred years' experience of dealing with Westerners. Some had been touched, very lightly, by missionization in earlier centuries, and in theory they were Colombian citizens. In fact, however, they insisted on political and cultural separation, even after Panamanian independence from Colombia in 1903.

A Sketch of Mission History, 1903-25

The twentieth-century missionization of the Kuna began with Panama's 1904 constitution, which entrusted the Indians within its borders to the Catholic Church, a measure that combined policy and faith with expediency: lacking the means to subdue the Kuna and faced with more urgent tasks closer to home, the government was glad to delegate the Indian problem to others, at least for the moment. The party initially in power, the Conservatives, headed by President Miguel Amador Guerrero, generally favoured close church-state ties, but the numerically dominant and anticlerical Liberal Party did not.

In 1904 and 1905, President Amador opened friendly contacts with the leaders of a pair of adjacent San Blas villages named Nargana and Nusatupu. In 1906, the young chief of Nargana, Charly Robinson, who had been taught to read and write by English-speaking Protestants on the Colombian island of San Andrés, brought a group of sixteen boys to be educated at government expense by the Christian Brothers of LaSalle. Later the same year, the Bishop of Panama recruited Father Leonardo Gassó, a Spanish Jesuit and veteran missionary, to carry Christianity to the Kuna. After a few months spent in language-learning and translating a catechism into the indigenous language, Father Gassó set out in March 1907 for Nargana, where he was warmly received by Chief Robinson and part of the local population.

Others, however, reacted less positively. Gassó's aggressive programme of catechization threw Nargana and Nusatupu into turmoil and provoked intense hostility from the rest of the Kuna. After repeated delegations to Nargana and numerous threats, a flotilla of canoes attacked the island in late 1908, only to be repelled by Charly Robinson with government-supplied arms. In 1909, when Gassó visited a friendly island further to the east, Kuna enemies sacked the village a few days later (Gassó 1910a). By about 1910, however, several more priests and brothers had joined the mission and Gassó looked forward to the rapid conversion of all the Kuna.

As it turned out, these hopes were dashed by renewed dissatisfaction on Nargana and Nusatupu and intransigence elsewhere. When the Liberal Party gained control of the government in 1912 and discontinued financial support for the mission, Gassó abruptly departed for Spain. Though other priests and brothers persevered for a while, Jesuit resources were diverted to Asian missions

(Misioneros Hijos 1939: 114), and, except for sporadic visits, the Church left San Blas alone until 1928.

Gassó's Protestant successor was Miss Anna Coope, a British citizen who had lived in the United States for some years. Having already tried unsuccessfully to enter San Blas in 1909 (Gassó 1911a; Coope 1917: 79-103), in 1913 Coope received an invitation from Charly Robinson to begin an English-language mission school on Nargana. She too stirred up local controversy and hostility from other villages, and in November of the same year, Nargana was attacked again, though with no more success than before. Coope did better than Gassó, however, in attracting a devoted cadre of supporters, and despite the convulsion that followed when she convinced Charly Robinson to prohibit alcohol, she and a colleague were soon entrenched on both islands.

In 1915 and 1916, however, the Panamanian government finally began imposing secular control over the coast, establishing schools and small police posts on Nargana, Nusatupu and two other islands. Competition between government and mission schools and a challenge to Coope and Robinson from Catholic-educated youths returned from the city led to open conflict in 1919. By July of that year, the police had put down two uprisings by Robinson's group, passed local control to the young Catholic radicals, suppressed Coope's schools and begun forcing Nargana women to abandon traditional dress. Although Coope hung on for five more years, her mission had already effectively ceased to function (Howe 1990).

Through the early 1920s, the police expanded their sphere of control, actively suppressing Kuna practice on each newly pacified island (Howe 1991), until early 1925, when an insurrection (in which Nargana and Nusatupu did not participate) drove them from San Blas. US intervention led to a peace treaty between the Panamanian government and the rebels, and in the aftermath Coope was evicted altogether. Missionaries eventually returned—Franciscan teachers in 1928 (Puig 1948: 182), a Protestant alumnus of Coope's school in 1932 (Iglesias and Vandervelde 1977)—but 1925 marks the effective end of the first, heroic and largely unsuccessful phase of missionization.

The leaders of the two pioneering missions, Gassó and Coope, paralleled each other in many respects. Occupying the same site, even the same buildings (which she took over after he left), and claiming many of the same individuals as adherents, both missionaries were strong-willed, brave and pugnacious. Both wished to exclude the national society, Coope because it was Catholic and Latin, Gassó because it was corrupt and modern. And each saw the other as an emissary of Satan.

Gassó provided quite full, if one-sided, accounts of his activities, which record in vivid dialogue his arguments with Kuna opponents. His primary testament, a lengthy diary for 1907-8, issued in instalments by a Spanish missionary journal (Gassó 1911-14), was supplemented by a catechism (Gassó 1908) and grammar,

and by several published letters.¹ While Anna Coope's memoirs (1917) are sketchier and less revealing, documentation of her work also includes published letters (Keeler 1956: 148-66), Panamanian government documents (Howe 1990), Kuna oral testimony and other material (Dietrick 1925; Iglesias and Vandervelde 1977).

The present essay, leaving aside the more general subject of missionary competition (Howe 1990), focuses on the encounter between Kuna belief and practice and its Catholic and Protestant counterparts, in other words, on the articulation of indigenous and missionary cultures. Many aspects of this encounter were influenced or determined by less overtly cultural factors, of course, such as rifles. None the less, the results of their efforts—and much of what is interesting about the missionizing process—depended in large part on the way that aspects of Kuna culture resonated with their Catholic and Protestant counterparts.

The Kuna and the Catholic Mission

The encounter between Leonardo Gassó and the Kuna (he called them 'gentiles' rather than pagans) was fundamentally conditioned by his sense of alterity, of the radical break between Spanish Catholic self and savage other: 'an Indian thinks one way, a white man another; their likes are altogether different' (1909b: 237; see also vii, 133; x, 206; xxi, 39; xxii, 112). Highly ambivalent about the Kuna, Gassó oscillated between contempt, calling them savages, children, even beasts (iv, 56; xiv, 18, 43; xxi, 39, 66), and appreciation for their industry, moral commandments and other virtues (x, 204, 206; xi, 228-9, 250). He judged that intellectually the Kuna 'certainly surpass all those [savages] of America, although they are still Indians' (x, 206), and in contrasting them with the degradation of modernity he waxed even more enthusiastic: 'It is certain they lack for nothing, except to know and love Christ and keep his law and for the rest they enjoy more than anyone' (x, 227). Kuna virtues, however, he credited to an eighteenth-century missionary and even at his most admiring, he never forgot that they were still Indians.

Across the gulf between his culture and theirs, Gassó perceived antithetical parallels. Opposed to some practices because he found them offensive (noisy drunkenness) or immoral (infanticide), he felt the strongest enmity towards those roles and institutions most like himself and the Church. Although Kuna ritual is in fact carried on by a great variety of specialists—seers, exorcists, puberty

1. The book-length diary appeared in instalments from 1911 to 1914. Because the same page numbers occur in different parts of the diary, citations are given here by chapter (roman numerals) as well as page. For the letters, see Gassó 1909a, 1909b, 1910a, 1910b, 1910c, 1911a, 1911b, 1913; see also Canduela 1909; Fernandez 1911; Gurruchaga 1909; Mejicanos 1914; Valenzuela 1912.

chanters, medicinal curers, chiefly mythographers and several kinds of chant curer—Gassó mistakenly lumped them all into one category, *apsogeti* (a term properly used only for exorcists). Both he and the Kuna readily identified these ritualists as his equivalents and natural rivals (vi, 88; vii, 133; ix, 163; xiii, 16; xx, 280; xxi, 66). The form of ritual most like a mass or prayer service was the sacred gathering, in which chiefs sang to their assembled followers while maintaining contact with their deities, Great Mother and Great Father (Howe 1986). Gassó loathed this 'diabolical cult', whose leaders he tagged 'the Sanhedrin' (vi, 88; xxi, 39; 1909b: 236). Both sides channelled their struggle through rival events, scheduling catechization and gatherings at the same time to force people to make a choice between them (xxi, 40; xx, 135). And as Nargana divided into two camps, catechumens contrasted the mission building and the gathering hall as 'the House of God' and 'the House of Errors' (xxi, 40, 67; xxii, 135; 1909b: 233).

Gassó's sense of radical difference was mirrored by his Kuna opponents:

What do you think? God created the dog and to this day it's a dog; God created the jaguar and to this day it's a jaguar. God created the hen and to this day it's a hen. God created the Indian and now they don't want to let us be Indians. (vi, 86)²

They exploited their alterity, moreover, to defend themselves against proselytization:

We don't want a Father; because, look, the English have their religion and their priests or Fathers; the Germans have their religion and their Fathers; the Yankis their religion and Fathers; we have our religion and our fathers. Why don't you go to those nations and leave us alone? (Gassó 1910a: 334; xx, 280; xxi, 66-7)

Kuna religion resembles Christianity in a number of respects—an angry paternal creator god, a beloved mother, a sacred homeland, a long series of frustrated prophets, a strong sense of human iniquity and fear of divine punishment—parallels that can facilitate either syncretism (as has happened more recently) or opposition. Despite what Gassó has to say, it is unlikely that many Kuna took seriously the notion of two completely separate gods and creations (vi, 88; x, 227; xi, 250; xxi, 66-7), but they did insist that different religious rules, practices and dispensations applied to Indians and foreigners (v, 57; x, 227; xiv, 43; xv, 64; xx, 280). In effect, they divided conceptually to resist spiritual conquest.

Ironically, Kuna resistance in these terms forced Gassó to argue strongly for a sort of uniformitarianism, insisting that there was a single God with one message for all peoples who, in His sight at least, were essentially the same (xv, 64). The

2. It is clear that Gassó reconstructed dialogue for his diary. I am confident, none the less, that the remarks he quotes correspond to Kuna sentiments, which I also heard articulated during my fieldwork.

terms of Gassó's proof, however, betrayed his ambivalence. Pointing out that all people descend from Adam and Noah (xvi, 89), he made the common claim that Blacks, Whites and Indians stemmed from different sons of Noah, one of whom had mocked his father, thus condemning his Indian descendants to nakedness and drink—an argument that implicitly reaffirms separation and difference between peoples (xiv, 42, 43).

This duality of equivalence and opposition between missionary and 'gentile', it should be emphasized, did not exist in a vacuum. As is true of many or most Christian missionaries (Beidelman 1982: 27, 212), opposition to rival faiths and unhappiness with the modern world, which in his case could only be called loathing, conditioned Gassó's ambivalent attitude toward the 'gentile' other. Whatever the flaws in indigenous culture, he found it vastly preferable to 'the savagery of the Protestant gringos, imported in the form of rum, phonograph and *mone*' [sic] (xiv, 18); the corrupting influence of West Indian traders and sailors ('ambassadors of hell'; xiii, 17); the lurking danger of Protestant heresy; and the abominations of Liberalism and Masonry (iv, 56; v, 21; x, 185, 204, 206-7; xiii, 17; xxi, 40). Even in his fear and hate, however, Gassó appreciated the irony that his pagan opponents also rejected the outside world, while mission supporters like Charly Robinson yearned to embrace it (vi, 86; x, 185; xi, 229).

Gassó played a double game, not only with Robinson's progressive faction (vi, 86), but also with the government that supported the mission. His real goal was not to pacify the Indians for Panama but to create a social order in imitation of the Jesuit *reducciones* of earlier times in the Americas (xvi, 106; xix, 232; Fernandez 1911: 287) and to found a separatist theocratic society devoted to piety and prayer, supported by a few secular authorities but otherwise entirely under mission control.

Gassó's authoritarian utopia confronted a largely egalitarian reality. Kuna chiefs, chosen democratically, monitored closely and treated with minimal deference by their followers (Howe 1986: 79-106), seemed to Gassó intolerably weak (ix, 162, xvi, 105-6). He taught villagers to doff their hats to chiefs, rise when they entered church (ix, 38) and salute them with 'Praised Be the Most Holy Sacrament!' (iii, 235). He tried to stiffen Robinson's resolve (xii, 15; xvi, 105-6) and to strengthen his hand with guns, titles and moral support (ix, 162, 183; xv, 67; xvi, 88) and at the same time to dominate him. (He saw no contradiction between the two.) The Kuna, though sensitive to differences of prestige among leaders and ritualists, refused to let anyone, especially a chief or missionary, set himself above them; an attitude summed up for Gassó by their inability to kneel (v, 56): 'Like wild animals they do not understand about order or submission' (iii, 235; xi, 229). He thus gave the highest priority to humbling the Kuna and to imposing order and hierarchy on egalitarian anarchism in every way, from corporal punishment and kneeling to regular mealtimes (ix, 184; x, 204; xii, 17; xvi, 105, 106; xx, 16).

His efforts produced an inevitable reaction. The Kuna objected not just to receiving orders in particular, but to the more general demands for subordination, hierarchy and dependence that they recognized as inherent in the mission

programme (xii, 16). A verse from chiefly chanting attributed to the leader Nele Kantule, which I heard in 1985, sums up these demands with eloquent brevity: ‘Someone wearing foot-tip clothes [robes], “I am your father,” someone says to me. The foreigner says he will make himself my father.’

If Gassó and the Kuna differed radically in social attitudes, they shared a fundamental belief in supernatural intervention in daily life and the power of magic. Gassó was convinced, for instance, that Saint Joseph had kept his boat in harbour until a letter arrived (i, 57), that converts caught more turtles, and that those who faithfully attended mass caught more fish afterwards (ix, 162; xx, 16; xxi, 39; xxi, 136-7). He was convinced, moreover, that his frequent threats of hellfire and earthly punishment were regularly carried out for him by God (xxi, 67; xxii, 136): a wood-cutter who worked on Sunday, for instance, was half-killed by a log; an old man died because his sacristan son apostatized; a ship’s captain who abused the priest had his arm broken in a sugar-cane press; a ship’s pilot who thwarted Gassó was drowned; a chief whose men harmed the mission building was eaten by a jaguar; the leader of the pagan Kuna died of smallpox; and the mission’s fiercest opponent on Nargana was asphyxiated over a fire—for all of which Gassó rejoiced! (vii, 132; ix, 132; xiv, 43; xvi, 67; xx, 280; xxi, 39, 66)

Catechumens may have taken pleasure from the promised economic benefits of conversion, as Gassó suggests (xxi, 38), but in the absence of an established cultural preoccupation with gaining wealth through supernatural means, such claims did not strike a chord. With Kuna fears of sickness and spiritual danger, however, the missionary tapped a richer and more easily exploited vein. He seems to have overcome initial resistance on Nusatupu in part by agreeing to baptize its children and by intimating that baptismal medals protected against devils (vi, 88; ix, 161). As the struggle on the two islands intensified, he pitted the power of holy water, the sacraments and Catholic medals and pictures against native medicine. Especially active in converting the dying (they tended to backslide less than the healthy (xiv, 42; xvi, 89, 106)), he repeatedly contended with relatives at the patient’s hammock-side, substituting crosses and pictures of saints for the carved ‘idols’ used in Kuna medicine (1909a: 208; 1911b; vi, 88, 109; xvi, 89-90, 106).

Gassó was sure that his methods had effected several miraculous cures and that the water of St. Ignatius had saved catechumens from epidemics (xxi, 39). How the Kuna tallied up the score in the contest between rival magics is unclear. Certainly they did not abandon indigenous medicine: an important convert of the mission continued his curing practice for several decades more (Iglesias and Vandervelde 1977), and even on late twentieth-century Nargana (which is now quite acculturated) the few remaining practitioners have a large clientele.

The favourite weapon in the priest’s arsenal was brimstone: ‘the curse of God will fall upon you; sicknesses and misfortunes will come upon you, you will die in your infidelity and you will descend to be burnt’ (vi, 88). As convinced of the persuasiveness of such threats as of his own power to carry them out (‘Oh great hell, how many you put in Heaven!’ (ix, 184; xxii, 136)), he was dispassionate enough to note how often the Kuna shrugged them off (vii, 133, 134; xxi, 66-7;

xxii, 136; 1910a: 333). Despite their appreciation of human wickedness and fear of God's wrath in this world, their cosmology put little emphasis on punishment in the hereafter. Here perhaps most of all, Kuna opponents invoked their radical alterity: ‘“What? All of us be burnt? Hah! That will be you *huacas* [foreigners]...because we are going to see our Father”’ (i, 203).

Gassó's teaching methods articulated with Kuna belief and practice more successfully than his threats did, at least on the surface. Like most Catholic missionaries, he emphasized catechetics, that is, systematic rote instruction in prayers and key points of doctrine, which converts were to memorize and recite. The particular catechism he used (Gassó 1908) was based on a model from earlier New World missions thought appropriate to simple Indian minds (xviii, 186). In addition to prayers and affirmations, it included the commandments, acts of confession and contrition, lists of sacraments, sins, works of mercy, enemies of the soul, and so forth, as well as a series of questions and answers on points of doctrine, to be recited in formal exchanges between priest and faithful.

Undoubtedly, catechetics appealed to the Kuna because it conformed to traditional expectations about learning. Kuna men competed for prestige and influence by setting themselves to memorize supernaturally powerful texts used in curing and other ritual; in the case of chiefs and sub-chiefs, they learned and enacted cosmology and mythology. Whether or not catechumens hoped to affect the spirits with the new texts, they certainly anticipated social benefits in the human world.

The catechism itself, which Gassó translated into Kuna with the help of native assistants before he ever saw San Blas, must have puzzled his flock, because it is often ambiguous or confusing and, in places, completely unintelligible. Among the virtues listed, for instance, Hope (*esperanza*), is translated as ‘to wait/anticipate, called *esperanza*,’ while Temperance is ‘to hold back one’s heart, belly and all, called *templanza*’. Similarly, ‘the Sacraments of the Holy Mother Church’ are rendered ludicrously as *Dios Inna*, ‘God’s home brew’. Gassó also oversystematized the Kuna language in accordance with others he already knew (xxii, 112; Puig 1948: 151), elaborating word forms that are rarely used or totally unknown, thus, like other missionaries before and since, producing a new dialect of the native language.

These confusions probably mattered little to the Kuna, who did not expect to learn the meaning of the esoteric verses they memorized until late in their apprenticeship. Even when understood, moreover, the new teachings did not require a radical shift in belief. The commandments were mostly familiar and unexceptionable, as Gassó himself noted (xi, 228, 229, 250), and to recite the ‘Ave Maria’ one needed only to add the Virgin to the Kuna pantheon or to assimilate her to Great Mother.

The oral nature of catechetics mattered intensely to Gassó. Fulminations against the church's commitment to schooling recur throughout his diary (esp. vi, 85; xv, 64), and he even tried to have his catechism printed in a typeface so unusual that students could not transfer the ability to read it to sources of

contamination like newspapers and Protestant versions of the Bible (xviii, 186). Catechumens, however, vehemently demanded education for their children (Valenzuela 1912: 258; Gassó 1913: 346). In addition to its practical benefits, they perceived schooling as an even stronger version of apprenticeship, a modern path to prestige and influence, as indeed it later proved to be. Acceding to their desires only grudgingly and partially, Gassó was in the end defeated in no small part by his own distrust of literacy.

More than being merely a site of contention, Gassó’s catechetics exemplified the systematic miscommunication typical of the missionizing process, in which the parties to an interchange interpret it in terms of radically different presuppositions (Burkhardt 1989). For Gassó, catechetics entailed a fundamental change of belief and commitment; for the Kuna, it offered a new path to traditional social goals. For Gassó, the authoritarian nature of catechizing as a social event, which limited catechumens to two-word answers ('After he died on the cross, did he return to rise again living?—Yes, Father') epitomized the proper form of society as a whole. For the Kuna, who deferred to their teachers but few others, submission in the limited context of apprenticeship implied nothing about the rest of life. Even face-to-face in the same small room, the two sides could not bridge the gap between hierarchy and equality.

The Kuna and the Protestant Mission

In the fundamental matter of her attitude towards the Kuna other, Coope was the diametrical opposite of Gassó. Coope saw everyone (with the possible exception of Catholic priests) as essentially alike, all of them sinners and souls to be redeemed. When confronted by hostility from women on one Kuna island, Coope records, 'I could not help thinking of the way many so-called Christians treat a woman of the street, shrinking from even the touch of her clothing. These Indian women are made of the same sinful tendencies' (Coope 1917: 87). And the interest taken by some women on another island in her clothes and hair provoked the thought: 'Oh, vain woman, everywhere the same! Colour does not change the natural curiosity and vanity' (*ibid.*: 91). In her remarks on Kuna culture, she recognized women's dress as an ethnic marker—'they would not be Indians without beads—but even then she reverted to universalism: 'Dame fashion is as tyrannical in San Blas as in other parts of the world' (*ibid.*: 174). And she concluded a chapter, profiling 'Some of My Boys', with the remark, 'you see they are just as human as the boys in America' (*ibid.*: 147). To Coope, the other was essentially the same.³

3. The differences between Coope and Gassó in this respect are of course not absolutes but matters of degree; but they are great none the less.

In her case, uniformity also implied equality. No respecter of titles or social distinctions, she dealt with everyone directly and informally, including on several occasions, the President of Panama. Her warm personal manner and lack of pretension evoked a very positive response from Kuna students and followers. Her egalitarian outlook had its limits and contradictions, especially concerning 'Spaniards', by which she meant Latin Americans: she worried, for instance, that Panamanian teachers would bring servants, who 'are of the low dirty class' (see Keeler 1956: 165). Far from challenging Caesar or the established order, moreover, she urged her readers to be 'obedient to those over you, whoever they may be' (1917: 178). And much like Gassó before her, she tried to get her way by controlling Charly Robinson, though she never sought the same sort of total domination, either of the chief or of his village, that Gassó had. Ultimately, however, she saw herself and the Kuna as equal and alike, because all were sinners capable of redemption:

Some people have an idea that if they could only go to a far-away heathen land where the people are so different from those at home, they could do great things with them. But let me say for the benefit of those people that the heathen have as much knowledge of evil as our educated teachers at home, for the fallen nature is theirs to contend with just as much and it comes to the top in a remarkable manner. The colour of the skin does not hinder its manifestations, and education does not eradicate it; only the blood of Jesus Christ can do that. (*Ibid.*: 147-8)

Coope's accepting attitude had another side to it, however. Taking everyone as essentially alike, she had little curiosity and a very superficial understanding of Kuna culture. Her ethnographic observations, both in her memoirs (*ibid.*: 165-75) and in notes circulated in the Canal Zone,⁴ are much more perfunctory than Gassó's. Her relaxed, incurious attitude, combined with a minimal knowledge of Kuna and only a modicum of Spanish, seems to have left her floating on the surface of village life, only aware of the currents swirling below when Charly Robinson told her about them.

Coope did not try to suppress much in Kuna practice, except alcohol. Although she objected to 'that horrible custom' of piercing infant girls' septa for noserings (*ibid.*: 170), she was content to encourage the practice's eventual disappearance through example and argument, and she disagreed strongly with the coercion with which the government began to suppress noserings and leg-bindings in 1919 (see Keeler 1956: 158). Despite her strong personal belief in faith-healing (1917: 29) and a willingness to treat cuts and scrapes, she did not press the point when Indians usually preferred their own medicine. She condoned or ignored Kuna religion, asserting with complacent obliviousness that 'they do not seem to have any spirit of respect or worship or reverence at all' and alluding to Kuna

4. See File 80A-15, Records of the Panama Canal, US National Archives and Record Service, Washington, DC.

magic as 'Obeahism'. According to Samuel Morris, one of Coope's students whom I interviewed in 1979, her willingness to tolerate village gatherings, which she dismissively alluded to as 'pow-wows' in her notes, and to overlook their religious nature, accounts in no small part for the reduction in conflict with Kuna traditionalists during the ascendancy of the Protestant mission.

She did, however, confront and suppress drinking, sparking a huge row. It is important, however, to understand her target. She set herself against a universal vice, as prevalent and dangerous in her own country as among the Indians, not against a trait peculiar to indigenous culture. She could not ignore the fact that Kuna drinking occurred primarily in the context of female puberty ceremonies, but as far as she was concerned, the ritual was little more than a pretext for getting drunk: a 'chee-chee' (Coope's rendering of the Spanish word *chicha*) 'really is a drunken spree over a girl's coming to maturity'. Thus the problem was not with satanic alterity, with institutions and practices in opposition to the true faith, but with universal sin.

If there was a dangerous cultural other from which the Kuna needed rescue, it was not paganism but 'the villainy of the Spanish people Rum and Rome ridden' (see Keeler 1956: 165). Like Gassó, she tended to lump her disparate antagonists into a single enemy force, repeatedly insisting, for instance, that priests smoked and drank (1917: 126, 138). If paganism could be allowed to wither away slowly, Catholicism had to be discredited immediately. All of the images and 'idols' left behind by Gassó, whose symbolic power Coope had no trouble recognizing, she threw into the sea, except one saved as an 'object lesson': 'I laid the image down and stepped on it, asking: "Can it feel, can it help us, can it hurt me, can it get up?"' (1917: 118). The pagan other, for Coope as well as Gassó, constituted not one side of a polarity so much as one point of a triangle of oppositions, on which the strongest negative charge flowed between true and false Christianity.

Coope's theological differences with Catholicism—her disapproval of a 'wafer god', Mariolatry, and the 'worshipping of graven images'—were spelled out bluntly (1917: 95-7; Keeler 1956: 150). She also rejected the doctrines of the Anglican church in which she had begun, as well as Methodism, to which she had been exposed in England (see Keeler 1956: 150; see also Coope 1917: 10). In Rhode Island she had been swept off her feet by a 'holiness' revival (1917: 22-3), and she joined there a 'dissenting' church that Keeler (1956: 10) identifies as Nazarene. A believer in scriptural inerrancy and the second coming (see Keeler 1956: 150; also Coope 1917: 23-4), her preaching among the Kuna, as far as one can tell, does not seem to have been heavily apocalyptic, and the orientation of her independent and non-denominational mission seems best characterized as charismatic rather than fundamentalist in the strict sense (Sandeep 1970). In her memoirs and letters, hellfire is not mentioned much.

Emphasis fell instead on salvation; on a personal, mystical relationship with Jesus; and on an end to sin, which in practice meant abstinence from alcohol. In the short and medium run, Kuna who forswore drink, attended services and supported the mission seem to have satisfied its requirements: the details of

Coope's theological orientation, as filtered through her practice, thus made light demands on adherents. Only key individuals, namely Charly Robinson and Coope's most promising male students, were pressed to find Jesus sooner rather than later.

Conversion in Coope's mission, it must be stressed, was not renunciation of a pagan religion in favour of Christianity, conversion from one faith to another, but abandonment of sin and acceptance of Jesus. Not only was its essence personal and ineffable rather than dogmatic, but it was a universal state or process, no different for Charly Robinson (Coope 1917: 154) or Coope's students (*ibid.*: 132) than for her own unbelieving parents (whom she had brought to Jesus after decades of effort) or for Coope herself (*ibid.*: 38-42, 15). Here again, the Kuna were not the other, just a somewhat exotic example of the same.

Coope's methods, finally, resembled Gassó's only in that both tried to entertain their students (she tried harder) and both used Charly Robinson to tell stories and interpret their words to the Kuna. As sources of enjoyment and inspiration rather than supernatural control, music and texts had a less powerful role in the Protestant mission and as far as one can tell, Coope taught her students through Bible stories, poems, skits, and exhortation rather than through dogma and memorization. In short, the model was Sunday school.

Even the inspiration of Sunday school, however, yielded to the practicality of learning to read and write, because Christianity for the Kuna was to rest, eventually, on the foundation of direct contact with the Bible, which presupposed literacy. Until the Panamanian government suppressed her schools in 1919, Coope pushed ahead almost unceasingly, five days a week. And because the Kuna of Nargana wanted schools so desperately (and because, other things being equal, most of them preferred instruction in English), she won support. If the government had not introduced its own schools in 1915 and then a few years later, suppressed hers, it seems clear that her education-centred approach and her egalitarian, universalist ideology would have carried her mission a long way. Whether she would have made Christians of the Kuna is another question.

Discussion

A subject as rich as the missionization of San Blas cannot be exhausted in an essay or two. For lack of space, I have only touched in passing on language and translation in missionary practice, neglecting altogether such relevant topics as the relationship between proselytization and nationalism and the anglophone and Hispanic cultural imperialism in Coope and Gassó's work (see Howe 1990). Kuna fears of sexual depredation by outsiders, the importance of which in the mission field Gassó immediately recognized (ii, 206), I hope to discuss elsewhere.

Here I have focused attention on perceptions of alterity and their consequences, on the effects of opposition to rival missions and the secular world on such perceptions, and lastly, on one of the most common processes in missionization, a matching up of equivalents in the cultures of missionizers and missionized. This process is evident in attempts at translation and cross-cultural communication. As Burkhardt (1989) has shown with subtlety and elegance for sixteenth-century Mexico, evangelists must work through native categories whose range and connotations may differ radically from those of their closest Christian equivalents (see Nida 1966). That the same kind of cultural articulation also shapes action is most apparent when, as in Gassó's case, missionizers and missionized have a strong sense of equivalence and rivalry, but it also occurs in less blatant form with Coope and others like her. In her case, the matching up was not between her mission and the sacred gathering or between icons and 'idols', but between temperance and licence, between traditional apprenticeship and literacy and between two varieties of egalitarianism. The examples of Coope and Gassó thus tend to correct the emphasis elsewhere on the overwhelming effects of dominant ideologies and practices: missionaries, at least, must to some extent adapt to the cultural forms they hope to eliminate or transform.

The striking contrasts between the two missions in the way they articulated with Kuna culture obviously derive in large part from differences in the personal and cultural baggage that Gassó and Coope brought with them. When I first began to consider the two together, the peculiarities of their characters and the immediate historical situations seemed to explain their differences more convincingly than any broad Weberian contrast between Protestantism and Catholicism, especially as Gassó seems in some respects to resemble late twentieth-century fundamentalist missionaries more than he does contemporary Jesuits.

I am now persuaded, if not of missionary essentialism, at least of continuity in practice and the typicality of Coope and Gassó: even at their most seemingly idiosyncratic they shared a great deal with their predecessors and co-religionists. Much of James Axtell's (1985: 43-127) account of Jesuit missionization in seventeenth-century French North America, for instance, could apply with only small changes to Gassó three centuries later—a conclusion that would undoubtedly have warmed his traditionalist heart. The Jesuits in colonial Canada, unlike rival orders, lived among their charges, whom they struggled to isolate and protect from the corruption of *voyageur* and settler society. In each band and village missionaries built a core faction of converts, while waging spiritual warfare against pagan resisters. Working in the native languages, Jesuit missionaries made efforts towards tolerance and accommodation, at the same time that their inflexibility on key points led them to oppose and suppress much of native culture (see Pickering above). They ridiculed indigenous religious beliefs, made a point of substituting Catholic medals for native amulets and, confronting native ritualists at every turn, they tried to demonstrate their own superior magical powers. Like Gassó, they put less emphasis on heaven than on hell, frequently invoking God's wrath against Indian opponents. Baptism and the other sacraments were presented as magically

efficacious protection against spirits, and missionaries took credit for supposed cures, for their own resistance to introduced diseases, and even for converts' economic success.

Still more striking is the degree to which Gassó reproduced turn-of-the-century Catholic attitudes from his native Spain, especially those typical of the Society of Jesus. As Frances Lannon notes (1987), the Catholic Church in Spain was extremely conservative politically, and no group more so than the Jesuits. Strong supporters of the class system and the privileges of the aristocracy, as well as of hierarchy and submission to authority as general social values, Jesuits were outspoken in their opposition to modernism and liberalism, which had been declared a sin. Reactionary in the literal sense of the word, they yearned for a return to an idealized past, in which the predominance of Catholic values and the complete exclusion of other religions were not in doubt: 'nostalgia for a former golden age became a ferocious weapon in the present' (*ibid.*: 38, 146). And in both France and Spain, ultramontane Catholicism emphasized providential intervention in human affairs and the 'the immediacy of the supernatural' (McLeod 1981: 48). The closeness of Gassó's thought to this cultural configuration is apparent even in the new name, Corazón de Jesús, that he bestowed on Nusatupu, evoking the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which represented 'the extreme Right of the Catholic political spectrum' in Spain (Lannon 1987: 29), and in the patron he found for his mission, the reactionary Marqués de Comillas, most prominent Spanish lay Catholic of the era (*ibid.*: 31, 147-55, 171).

Even the seeming peculiarity of Gassó's opposition to schools makes sense in the Spanish context. It was not only that he feared the bad effects of exposure to the liberal media, nor just that he dreamt of a return to the patterns of earlier New World missions, in which instruction had been oral, it was also because he came from an order dedicated to the schooling of the Iberian upper classes (*ibid.*: 69, 77-84), élites whose Indian equivalent he had no intention of fostering in San Blas. The point was not to elevate the Kuna or to confirm them in their xenophobic pride, but to humble them, to *reduce* them to Christianity. Even as Christians they were to remain the other.

Coope makes equally good sense in her home context, displaying the theological orientations and preoccupations of her generation of charismatic, evangelical Christians. Her sturdy egalitarianism, which served her so well with the Kuna, derived from a conviction that the one true measure of social worth was salvation, which could be found only in an intensely personal relationship with the deity. Less educated than Gassó, she saw literacy as the key to understanding truth. And in her obsession with drinking, she reflected the high-point of the temperance movement in the early 1900s and its success in establishing alcohol as a religious, and not merely a social, issue.

What stands out, I hope, is not that missionaries import social and political attitudes along with the Gospel, which is by now a truism. It is rather the extent to which, and detail with which, ideologies and social programmes worked out in Valencia, Lancaster or Rhode Island are implemented in Panama or New Guinea.

Back home, ultra-conservative Jesuit Catholicism and working-class charismatic Protestantism presupposed particular institutional contexts, particular social currents, particular sets of friends and enemies. In their new settings none of these applied, but the projects and mindsets continued on the same course, interacting with a radically different social environment and encountering new fields and new enemies, notably each other.

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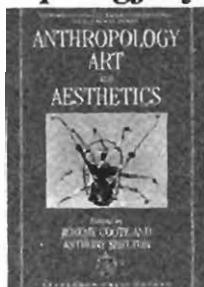
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RESEARCH IN A POST-MISSIONARY SITUATION: AMONG ZAÏREAN SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR

JOAN F. BURKE

1. *Introduction*

THIS essay describes my anthropological study of a specific institution of the Catholic Church, a Zaïrean sisterhood.¹ It was commissioned by a predominantly African group of sisters living in Lower Zaïre, members of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The membership of the congregation in Zaïre today is almost entirely African. More than three-quarters of the one hundred sisters in Zaïre are local women. Most of them are second- or third-generation Christians. There are very few expatriates still working in the region.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, whose mother house is in Belgium, were founded in 1804 by a Frenchwoman, Julie Billiart, for the education of the poor. During its first hundred years, members of the congregation worked almost exclusively with girls and young women. It is not primarily a missionary order, although today its nearly three thousand sisters are to be found in eighteen countries throughout the world. As the membership of the order has become more

1. The research project was carried out over eight years (1980-88), during which time I lived and worked with the sisters in Lower Zaïre. After completing a study for the Zaïrean sisters themselves, I expanded the material in a more academic form as a doctoral thesis in social anthropology (Burke 1990). For a discussion of field methodology, see Burke 1989.

culturally diversified, so the question of inculcation (see Pickering above) has become an important issue. The principal work of the congregation is in education. In Zaïre, the sisters work in primary and secondary schools, in technical education and teacher training as well as in rural dispensaries and outreach health education programmes, and in basic development with village women. They serve primarily rural populations.

Members of the Sisters of Notre Dame first went to the then Congo Free State in 1894 to work with girls and women in rural areas, their work focusing on child care, hygiene and other 'domestic arts', basic medical care, cultivation of subsistence crops and, after a while, basic literacy. Until the late 1960s, most of the sisters who went to the Congo were Belgians. During the 1940s and 1950s, they helped train the first members of a local African congregation and in 1959 began to accept African women into the order, including some members of the local congregation. The sisters in the newly independent Congo became an established, independent province at the end of 1961. Since 1975, all the provincial superiors have been Zaïreans.

In 1980, at the beginning of my study, almost all of the African sisters in the congregation were Ntandu-Kongo from Lower Zaïre, with a few Yaka from the Kwango. The ethnic composition was beginning to change when I left in 1988, with more Yaka women joining, as well as a few Ndibu-Kongo from the region west of the Inkisi River, and a Tetela sister from the Kasai. Since then, women from the capital, Kinshasa, of varying ethnic backgrounds, have shown an interest in joining the congregation.

Sister Mbwanga Elisabeth-Marie, Provincial Superior from 1975 to 1981, who initiated the project described here, saw it as a means of documenting the evolving inculcation of the sisterhood, and in particular the ways in which the Zaïrean sisters were adapting the sisterhood to their social backgrounds as Kongo women. Sister Mbwanga asked me, as an anthropologist and member of the order, to carry out the study in the hope that it would help the sisters to become more conscious agents of their own self-definition. The initiation and conception of the project place it squarely in the wider context of discussions of inculcation.

When I went to live among the sisters in 1980, I was surprised to hear myself addressed by the villagers as 'Mama Kioni' (Kioni being a Kikongo rendering of 'Joan'). This was in marked contrast to the more usual greeting of *maseri* (the Kikongo rendering of the French *ma soeur*) that I remembered hearing on my previous six-week visit to the country in 1971. Eventually, 'Mama Kioni' became for me representative of the way in which the sisterhood was being socially reconstructed. Most of the African sisters grew up in the Kongo villages of Lower Zaïre. The Kongo are matrilineal and perceive the sisters in matrifocal terms. The 'celibate women of the mission' in this area of Zaïre are understood, in terms of the metaphor of maternity, as spiritual and social 'mothers for all the people', in marked contrast to the metaphor of sisterhood commonly used in Europe.

2. *The Early Africanization of the Church in Zaïre*

Before considering further the immediate context of the research project, I wish to reflect on the earlier history of the Africanization of the Church in Zaïre.

From very early on, the missionary church in the Belgian Congo put a priority on the development of local clergy and the Africanization of church personnel. Only four years after their arrival in Lower Zaïre in 1896, the Jesuits had been ambitious enough to set up a minor seminary. Although this project was abandoned within a year, it demonstrates the missionaries' resolve from the beginning to develop a local clergy. The first ordination of Congolese was in 1917, and on the eve of independence in 1959 there were 369 Congolese priests (Markowitz 1973: 115). The Jesuits, who worked in the Kisantu Diocese of Lower Congo, where most of the sisters of the order are based, succeeded in establishing a minor seminary in Lemfu in 1922 and a major seminary in Mayidi in 1933. The first three Congolese priests were ordained for the diocese in 1937. The first Congolese bishop was consecrated in 1956. Two further Congolese bishops were consecrated in 1959. By 1968, a majority of the country's bishops was Zaïrean. In 1972, 26 of the 46 Zaïrean dioceses were headed by Zaïrean bishops.

An interest in what later came to be known as 'inculturation' was already evident in the Church of the Belgian Congo in the 1940s. Among the more notable precursors of this movement in the Catholic Church were a number of expatriate missionaries and Congolese, including Placide Tempels, G. Mosmans, V. Mulago and J. Malula.² What is known today as the Catholic Faculty of Kinshasa was founded in 1957 as part of the University of Lovanium. From the start it has consistently encouraged the development of an 'African theology', especially through the teaching and writings of faculty members Mulago, Ngindu-Mushete (e.g. 1978) and Tshibangu-Tshishiku.

Slowly at first, and then more rapidly, African sisterhoods began to develop in the Congo. By 1955, there were 870 African sisters in the three Belgian colonies (Norberta 1955), most of whom were members of diocesan orders. Most of the local congregations in the Belgian Congo were founded prior to the end of the Second World War, 13 of the 24 being founded between 1930 and 1945 (Pro Mundi Vita 1980: 8). According to Church statistics, there were in 1970 almost 400 Zaïrean brothers and more than 1100 sisters. There were 29 entirely African congregations in Zaïre in 1979. The same report states that 2164 of the 4220 Catholic sisters working in Zaïre in 1979 were African (*ibid.*: 7).

One reason why there has been considerable interest over the last twenty years in what is termed the 'inculturation' of religious life in Zaïre has been the large number of local brothers and sisters. In 1979, the association of the superiors of the women's religious orders, USUMA (Union des Supérieures Majeures en République de Zaïre), organized a week-long colloquium on 'La Vie religieuse

2. See, for example, Tempels 1949; Mosmans 1961; Mulago *et al* 1956; and Malula's lecture (quoted in Mosmans 1961) making the case for a 'Black Christianity'.

féminine au Zaïre'. One of the topics addressed was how the sisters themselves understood the meaning of the inculcation of religious life. Among the points summarized in the final report of the colloquium were: 'This way of life does not uproot a Zaïrean sister from African realities as some have falsely said. In fact there should be no rupture or divorce between the local sisters and the Zaïrean population' (USUMA 1979: 23). The reports of the meeting's proceedings show that the discussions were by no means limited to theoretical concerns. There was frank exchange on such practical problems as the relationship of the sisters to their families, interpretations of the vow of poverty, difficulties met with by sisters studying in public institutions, and misunderstandings—especially by clerics—of the sisters' commitment to celibacy.

The early interest in inculcation of church practices may also be due to Belgium's position as a centre of the 'liturgical renewal' that preceded the Second Vatican Council. Archival sources document missionary encouragement of the use of local music, drums and other instruments in Catholic ritual. It is not surprising that, shortly after the Second Vatican Council had encouraged liturgical renewal and the use of vernacular languages in Catholic ritual, Zaïre quickly responded. As early as 1973, a Zaïrean rite of the Mass was introduced in an experimental form in Kinshasa. When it began to be extended into the rural areas, it was welcomed with the same enthusiasm and appreciation that it had received from the townsfolk. The Zaïrean rite of the Mass received formal approbation from the Vatican in 1986.

3. The Research Project

Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a keen interest in the Catholic Church in the importance of a dialogue between faith and culture (see Schreiter 1985; Shorter 1988; Burke 1990: ch. 6). This came to be known, particularly in the African context, as the theology of inculcation. In the words of the conciliar decree on the missionary activity of the Church, 'Let [Christians] be one with their fellow countrymen [*sic*]...giving expression to their Christian life in the social and cultural framework of their own homeland, according to their own traditions' (in Abbott 1966: 611). Following Vatican II, Pope Paul VI gave added impetus to the development of a theology of inculcation. His 1967 letter *Africæ Terrarum* (see Hickey 1982: 176-97), addressed 'to the hierarchy and all peoples of Africa', demonstrated a very optimistic view of African traditions and spiritual values. In 1969, he became the first Pope to visit sub-Saharan Africa. At an all-Africa symposium of the Catholic hierarchy in Kampala, he addressed the bishops saying:

The expression [of the one faith], that is, the language and mode of manifesting it, may be manifold. Hence, it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius, and the culture, of the one who professes this one faith.

From this point of view, a certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable. An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense you may, and you must, have an African Christianity. Indeed you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to perfection such as to find in Christianity, and for Christianity, a true superior fullness, and prove to be capable of a richness of expression all its own, and genuinely African. (Quoted in Hickey 1982: 203-4)

This theological tendency within the Church was reinforced by the growing concern for self-expression in the political arena throughout the world, especially in newer nation states, whose rulers reacted against decades of colonial tutelage. In Zaïre, the latter was formally expressed in the 'policy of authenticity' launched by President Mobutu in the early 1970s. Both the religious and the political movements encouraged people to greater self-consciousness and reflection on their cultural roots and experience. Even as early as 1971, when I was first in Zaïre on a visit, sisters told me that the president of the republic had said publicly that the celibacy of the religious life was inauthentic since historically there was no such tradition in Africa. This was a source of considerable worry to sisters who wanted to be true daughters of their people, while being faithful to the life they felt they were called to in the sisterhood.

Changes in the composition and organization of the order in Zaïre at the time had heightened the level of consciousness among the members. Between 1962 and 1978, there were two sisters from the British Province who worked alongside the Belgians and Zaïreans. From 1969 onwards, there were also a few Americans. This allowed the African sisters to witness variations from the familiar ways of the Belgian sisters in the interpretation of the sisterhood as well as in ways of relating to local people. The leadership of the province was also assumed by Zaïrean women. The first African provincial took office in 1976, and in the following year a Zaïrean was appointed as mistress of novices. All these factors made the local women more aware of their 'equal standing' within the congregation at large, reinforced by their greater opportunity to participate in the order's international gatherings.

The eight years during which I carried out my research comprised a very opportune time for the study. The older generation of Zaïrean sisters, who had entered the community in the 1940s and 1950s, still had vivid memories of their initiation into the life of the order, and of the models and expectations presented to them at the time that influenced their conception of the Catholic sisterhood. They spoke of their experiences in the 1960s as a Zaïrean minority among Belgian missionaries. With the 'second generation' of sisters, who joined the community after independence, they lived through the middle 1970s when many of the expatriates—particularly those who had held the principal positions in the communities and institutions of the province—left Zaïre. By the 1980s, expatriates were becoming an ever diminishing minority. During the years I lived in Zaïre,

the Kongo sisters were assuming full responsibility for the province. In this sense it constituted a post-missionary situation. Although my research documents the adaptations of a particular kind of institution introduced by Catholic missionaries, what it actually describes is how the Africans themselves have transformed the sisterhood.

4. *Research Findings*

As I tried to understand the form of the sisterhood that was evolving among the Zaïrean sisters, it became increasingly apparent that they were interpreting their experience in terms of models derived from four major sources: (1) life in the Kongo villages from which they came; (2) initial training in the congregation and experience of living with expatriate sisters; (3) Catholic mission practices, especially in the period preceding Vatican II; and (4) post-colonial political and urban culture. These models are not necessarily consciously held, nor are they equally important in all cases. The impact of the contemporary political and urban culture is particularly subtle. The primary sources for my understanding of it were the images projected by national radio and television broadcasts, the orchestration of visits by public officials and the directives given to schools for the daily *animation* sessions, in which students are required to chant slogans and songs prepared by the national bureau of the youth wing of the president's party. There was often a striking contrast between convent rhetoric and community practice. There were five areas of community life in which the influence of Kongo village life could be seen: (1) the sisters' self-understanding; (2) their models of social relationships; (3) the role of authority figures in group decision-making; (4) the causes and expression of social conflict; and (5) the ways in which social conflicts were handled and resolved.

My approach was a sociological one, in which I considered only the observable dynamics in the life of the group, with a particular emphasis on identifying the consistent, repetitive patterns that emerged. The data were drawn from concrete experiences in communal life. I did not address questions of religious belief. The first parts of my study, treating perceptions of womanhood and patterns of social relationships, demonstrated how the sisters were reconstructing the sisterhood in terms of Kongo metaphors and idioms. The latter parts revealed areas in which there was a considerable gap between commonly articulated rhetoric and actual practice, particularly in the role of the superior in group decision-making, and in how the sisters coped with conflicts among themselves. In both areas it was evident that the religious training that the sisters had received when joining the congregation contradicted in several ways how such matters would be understood and dealt with in the Kongo villages where they had grown up. Throughout, the data pointed to underlying tensions between expatriate

and Zaïrean members, as well as among the Kongo sisters themselves. To the extent that the Zaïrean sisters were aware of these conflicts and differences, they seemed to be much freer in sorting out for themselves the choices they wanted to make. This has become easier since they became the dominant majority holding almost all the positions of responsibility within the province and its institutions. It became clear to me that the transformation of the sisterhood by the African members was not a matter of a simple choice between Kongo models and foreign alternatives. It was, rather, a question of the dynamics of the group's continual integration and rejection of different organizational possibilities and its perception as to whether these were appropriate or not in terms of its lived experience.³ A striking aspect of the study was the historical documentation of how the sisters have come to understand their choice to commit themselves to a life of celibacy (see Burke forthcominga). Most of them have grown up in the villages of the matrilineal Kongo. Their perception of celibacy is matrifocal, that is, it is understood by them in terms of the metaphor of maternity. The sisters see their vocation as a call to a social and spiritual maternity among their people. As I mentioned above, it is quite common for Catholic sisters—whether local or expatriate—to be addressed as *mama*. The title of address more commonly used in Europe and North America, sister, is only ever used in its localized French form *maseri* (from the French *ma soeur*), rather than the Kikongo equivalent *mpangi* (sister/brother). The application to the celibate sister of the title *mama*, the usual form of address for a Kongo woman who has borne children, implies a different perception of sisters from that held by Westerners.

The kinship terminology used, as well as observed patterns of social interaction, show how the sisters draw on Kongo idioms in structuring and patterning social relationships among themselves (see Burke forthcomingb). The language used reveals how the religious community is recreated, as a micro-society, through linguistic patterns derived from the Kongo household. The two dominant Kongo-derived models of social relations I term Kimpangi and Kimbuta. The former refers to the relationships between kin members of the same generation, the latter to relationships between members of different generations. These models are manifested not only by the sisters' use of kinship terminology appropriate to these relationships, but also by associated patterns of social interaction. The recreated micro-society includes not only living and dead members, as in Kongo clans, but also expatriate groups and individuals, incorporated through kinship terms. This use of the idiom of Kongo kinship within the community seems to have developed spontaneously since the mid-1970s, the time when Kongo sisters became dominant in numbers and authority. There does not appear to have been any formal discussion before it was

3. Such continual integration and rejection is, of course, characteristic of all living societies. The work of Erekosima and Eicher (1981; see also Eicher and Erekosima 1982), on what they term the 'cultural authentication' of imported textiles among the Kalabari of West Africa, offers interesting parallels for the study of the 'inculturation' of Christian practices.

incorporated into the sisters' everyday language. Even though French remains the common language of the community, among themselves the sisters address one another as *yaya* more commonly than *ma soeur*. *Yaya* is the Kongo term of address for one's older sibling.⁴

Drawing on the Kongo ethnographic studies of Joseph Van Wing (1921, 1938), P. J. Mertens (1942), Wyatt MacGaffey (1970) and John M. Janzen (1967), and my own observations in local villages in the region, it is possible to identify two models of authority. The more authoritarian one I term Kimfumu (*mfumu* being the Kikongo word for a chief and the prefix *ki-* a signifier for 'concerning'), while the more consensual type may be called Kinzonzi (*nzonzi*, being the Kikongo word for conciliator or facilitator). In the first instance, the locus of decision-making is the chief; in the second instance, it is the group for which the chief serves as the articulator of the consensus view at the end of a long palaver. The former model was reinforced by the colonial administration, and by the missionary priests in the hierarchically organized Catholic Church. In contrast, the Kinzonzi model seems to have been more frequent in everyday village life, with chiefly authoritarian decisions only operating in very restricted domains.

The Zaïrean sisters often said that 'the Superior decides all', reflecting the Kimfumu model. This was no doubt emphasized in their mission training and initiation into the congregation. Close observation of actual decision-making, however, suggested a quite different picture. Although the emphasis on the Kimfumu model greatly shaped the 'ideology of chiefship' among the Kongo sisters, and was the more commonly articulated rhetoric, the Kinzonzi model figured prominently in the arrangement of daily affairs. The sisters were very critical of authoritarian superiors.

Other contradictions between rhetoric and practice in the area of group decision-making also suggested that there was a considerable 'lack of fit' between convent and Kongo social organization. The ways in which community members coped with conflicts among themselves differed from the usual pattern of clan palavers observed in Kongo villages. It also revealed contradictions between local models and those stressed by Belgian missionaries during the early training of Zaïrean sisters.

The palaver, with its extensive 'talking out' of problems by all members, is the common method adopted in Kongo villages for both inter- and intra-lineage disputes, including charges of witchcraft. It illustrates clearly how the Kinzonzi model operates. Kongo Sisters rarely have recourse to the palaver model to address social tensions in the community. In the village, simple interpersonal conflicts are often resolved by the individuals immediately concerned, sometimes with the aid of a third party. Relative age is an important determinant of the

4. Indeed, *yaya* is used even when an older sister is speaking to a younger member. In the lay Kongo kin group a younger brother or sister would always be addressed by the term *nleke*. Among the sisters it is very rare to hear another called *nleke*. The sisters explain this in terms of their showing respect to one another.

procedures followed, especially in deciding on the necessity of enlisting a third party. When the Kongo sisters admit to small conflicts among themselves, they often resolve their differences in a similar way. At other times, however, two contradicting models seem to operate.

Even more important than the virtual absence of the use of the palaver for the resolution of social conflicts in the community is the extent to which the expression of conflict is literally muted. Whereas local villagers—especially women—give expression to their feelings and ‘let off steam’ in a very unrestricted way, their expression is toned down or even wholly repressed among the Kongo sisters. This is probably due to their internalization of an ideal of the religious life received from the missionaries. The following words, from the Gospel according to Matthew, were often quoted in community: ‘I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother, “You good for nothing!”, shall be liable to the Council; and whoever says to his brother, “You worthless fool!”, shall be liable to the fire of hell’ (Matt. 5: 22). Apparently, not much thought was given to interpreting or explaining this statement in terms of local psychology; nor was it given to the words of St Paul ‘Let not the sun go down on your anger’ (Eph. 4: 26)—and I never heard anyone quote the first part of this verse, ‘Be angry, but do not sin’. These counsels, interpreted literally, left no time for the cooling down of aroused emotions. For the Kongo sisters there was an unspoken tension between their sincere desire to live up to the Christian ideal and the practical difficulty of having no way to let off steam, which, in contrast, is so generously allowed for, expected even, in the village. Kongo sisters often even denied that they have any pent-up emotions. In marked contrast to villagers, the sisters tended to either repress or totally deny any conflict among themselves. Since there was little inclination even to recognize the existence of strained relations, Kongo methods of coping with the tensions of group living and of handling internal disputes were not drawn upon. Although the Kongo sisters have socially reconstructed the Catholic sisterhood by using, adapting and transforming Ntandu institutions and social sensibilities in other areas, this is not yet the case in conflict resolution.

5. Afterthoughts: Missionaries and Anthropologists

The aim of my study was to help the sisters situate and visualize their own experience more clearly. An anthropological approach, with its comparative perspective, may often sharpen the analysis of what seem to be, for the members of a group itself, insignificant, mundane and banal daily experiences. Because to the actors they appear to be of so little importance, they frequently remain at an unconscious level of awareness. This is particularly so when people are living

through a period of considerable social change and reorientation. The descriptions and observations offered in my study were those of an outsider. Their aim was to stimulate reflection on the part of those who are living the experience and thus to help them become more conscious agents in shaping their own lives as African members of a religious congregation with roots in early nineteenth-century France.

A study of this sort—indeed any ethnographic endeavour—needs to carefully record coexisting contradictory models and internal conflicts. Such tensions indicate domains of continuing negotiation and adjustment in the group's developing identity. An approach that respects persons as the active subjects of their own history has broad implications for studies of minority peoples and colonial regimes, as well as for mission ethnographies.

The intention of the project was to focus on the inculcation of religious life. My approach was quite different from that frequently seen in books and articles on inculcation by missionaries and theologians. It examined patterns and practices in the life of the Catholic sisterhood in Lower Zaïre today as they are being interpreted by Kongo members of one particular congregation. It was not concerned with how an African theology of religious life might be formulated, nor with prescribing how the members of the congregation might adapt the received institution to their social and cultural setting. Rather, the study examined how the sisterhood is perceived and understood by the Zaïrean sisters and the Kongo people among whom they live. What has happened in the communities over the thirty years since Kongo women first joined the order appears to have been a spontaneous development, rather than the consequence of any preconceived programme of 'Africanization'. Consequently, my study presents a reconstruction of the Catholic sisterhood from a quite different point of view from that which informs most of the sparse literature on this topic.

In recent years, many studies have examined the question of inculcation. Most such research within ecclesiastical and missionary circles has developed along two main lines of inquiry. First, there is the investigation of local African institutions with a view to adapting them to Christian practice, an approach often coupled with an historical approach (see Schreiter 1985). Secondly, there are those studies that aim to develop a theological base for promoting the inculcation of the Gospel and church institutions. These often remain at a rather abstract, theoretical level. They may be helpful, and have a place, in intellectual circles, but they are not necessarily immediately useful to the people involved. My method has been much more empirical, as well as being directly concerned with the lived experience of a particular group of African sisters.

My research calls into question the many quasi-anthropological studies of inculcation by students of theology. Their approach is all too often premised on what the Asian theologian Pieris (1988: 52) calls 'an instrumental theory of inculcation', which aims at using local cultural categories as tools for doctrinal transmission. These studies are also too frequently concerned with orthodoxy and orthopraxis—a common preoccupation of clerics. My research also calls into question anthropological writing that has approached the study of missions

primarily in terms of formal structures and bureaucratic organization, with too much emphasis on a clericalized Church with its hierarchy and rituals.

In his study of African Christianity in seventeenth-century and colonial Soyo, Richard Gray points out how 'there is nothing static about orthodoxy, and one of the most powerful influences for theological development has always been the encounter with different cultures' (1990: 77). He further states that 'Christianity in Africa was never synonymous with the missionaries' understanding of the faith; the encounter with Africa involved a process of interaction in which Africa's distinctive characteristics and contributions have become ever increasingly prominent' (*ibid.*: 84). The starting-point of any research of this kind must be the experience and perceptions of the people concerned as active subjects, not passive objects. Here lies one of the major weaknesses in the type of study carried out by Beidelman (1982). His monograph focused almost exclusively on the missionaries. Moreover, his material shows no openness or objectivity in treating the group researched, when a minimally sympathetic posture is necessary for any anthropological endeavour. In Beidelman's representation of the mission situation, the Africans with whom the missionaries interacted are not active agents in the encounter. This is not to say there is no value in such critical studies, but they need to take account of the people themselves.

My research project, undertaken at the invitation of the sisters themselves, demonstrates that the 'objects' of evangelization may themselves be interested in how anthropologists perceive their situation. A degree of reflexivity may help the anthropologist interpret the field experience; it may also serve to empower those peoples undergoing social changes brought about by encounters with other groups and traditions to be more conscious agents in integrating, adapting or utterly rejecting alternative ways and institutions. Clearly, by the very nature of their enterprise, missionaries set out to be agents of cultural change. But those who are the receivers/hearers of their messages are not obliged to be mere passive agents. The research project described here suggests that a serviceable testing-ground for the validity of the inculturation approach to the study of missions may well be provided by anthropological studies of post-missionary situations.

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A CATHOLIC MISSION AND THE PURIFICATION OF CULTURE: EXPERIENCES IN AN INDONESIAN COMMUNITY

R. H. BARNES

Introduction

A PERENNIAL concern of Christian missionaries, as well as of anthropologists, is the extent to which the tenets of a proselytizing religion are compatible with the cultural practices of a people undergoing conversion (and, conversely, the extent to which these practices are acceptable to holders of the new faith). This quandary has caused much discussion, especially recently, in the Catholic communities of eastern Indonesia.

In June 1987, after a five-year absence from the village of Lamalera, Lembata, in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia, I returned with a four-man British film crew to make a television documentary about the villagers' contemporary way of life (Blake 1988). Much of the film's interest focused on their fishing economy, which includes the hunting of large manta ray, as well as porpoise and whales. However, making a record of subsistence activities was not the only object. We were keen to cover religion, education, modern economic activities and participation in national political life.

In all of these aims we were reasonably successful, partly due to the fortunate fact that the brief four weeks we were there were extraordinarily eventful. An example of this is that during our visit the youngest son of the former district leader (*kakang*), Ignasius Ile Mandiri Dasion, was ordained a Catholic priest in the local church in a ceremony that brought dignitaries and descendants of the village from far and wide.

Lamalera and Catholicism

Lamalera is an entirely Catholic village, and has been so since the 1920s. The village was, however, first visited by two Dutch Catholic missionaries, J. de Vries and Cornelius ten Brinck, in June 1886 (Heslinga 1891: 68-9). In 1986, the year before my latest trip, the village was host to an even larger contingent of visitors as it celebrated 'One Hundred Years of Religion'. De Vries and ten Brinck were Jesuits, members of an order that had been working in the Flores area since 1863, following the transfer of the territory from Portugal to the Dutch East Indies in 1859. The Jesuits remained in the area only until 1920, when they gave it over to the Societas Verbi Divini (or SVD). The first SVD missionaries, Petrus Noyen and Konstantin van den Hemel, opened a station on Flores in 1915 (Piskaty 1963: 10-21). Although missionaries visited Lamalera periodically after 1886, the first permanent missionary stationed there was the German Bernhard Bode in 1920 (Bode 1925).¹

In an interview filmed for the documentary, the resident Catholic missionary, Father Arnold Dupont, spoke of the likelihood that foreign missionaries would soon be needed less. Indonesian priests, being of the same nationality as the villagers, could, he thought, be expected to be more effective as religious leaders. In the course of the interview Dupont spoke of the interest that Indonesian priests took in 'inculturation'.

My absence of five years between 1982 and 1987 corresponded to a period of growing interest in, if not the actual introduction of, the concept of inculturation, which Shorter (1988: 5) insists is a theological rather than an anthropological concept.² What may have been the first seminar on inculturation in Indonesia took place in Yogayakarta, Java, in 1983 (*ibid.*: 10). Meanwhile, it has taken hold within the church in the Flores area. Seminary students have been assigned the task of writing about the concept from the perspective of their own local cultures, and the English SVD priest, John Mansford Prior, has undertaken a study of customary marriage among the Ata Lio of central Flores as an empirical investigation of the problems of inculturation (Prior 1988). Furthermore, the

1. For a summary of the main events, see Barnes 1986. For a discussion of the mission in the colonial context, see Dietrich 1989 and above.

2. The quasi-anthropological concept of 'inculturation' gained popularity in the 1970s, mostly through the writings of Jesuit authors (Schreiter 1985: 2; Luzbetak 1989: 69; Shorter 1988: xi, 10; see also Pickering and Burke above). Shorter (1988: 10) says that the term was first used by Joseph Masson, a professor at the Gregorian University in Rome, in 1962; but according to Luzbetak (1989: 405) it was already in use in the 1930s. Catholic theologians distinguish the word from the anthropological terms 'acculturation', the adaptation of one culture to another, and 'enculturation', the way in which a person learns his own culture. Schreiter (1985: 5) comments that while 'inculturation' is widely accepted in church circles, 'it causes some difficulties in dialogue with social scientists in that it seems to be a dilettantish kind of neologism on the part of non-scientists'. I am grateful to Sister Joan Burke for helping me find my way into the literature on this topic.

Centre for the Investigation of Religion and Culture Candraditya (Pusat Penelitian Agama dan Kebudayaan Candraditya) at Ledalero in Maumere, Flores, has announced a programme of research into local religious beliefs in order to establish the relationship between syncretism and inculcation (Puslit Candraditya 1989).

Luzbetak compares this new concept of inculcation with the accommodation of non-Christian cultural elements, which he holds to be a process as old as the Church itself:

Accommodation insists that, inasmuch as such non-Christian elements can and indeed do exist, the universal Church and the sending churches may, and indeed should, allow local churches to incorporate such elements as part and parcel of the local Christian community's behaviour. In fact, such 'neutral' and 'naturally good' elements may be employed as contact points with Christianity. They can form a useful and important bridge between Christianity and 'paganism'. (Luzbetak 1989: 67)

However, accommodation has largely been in the hands of cultural outsiders. Inculcation involves a process of 'contextualization', i.e. 'the various processes by which a local church integrates the Gospel message (the "text") with its local culture (the "context")' (*ibid.*: 69). For Shorter (1988: 4), inculcation is the interactions of 'faith' with culture. Luzbetak (1989: 78) divides culture into three levels, viz. form, integration and the dynamic systematic whole. There is no need to dwell on this schema in order to understand the implications of his assertion that inculcation must go beyond the first of these levels and focus on the second and third. Christianity, in this view, must take hold of whatever it is that integrates a culture and makes it what it is, its basic principles.

A seminar held at Ledalero in 1988 took the position that Christianization did not mean uprooting people from their own culture, obliging them to adopt European culture, and asked rhetorically whether a person must become 'Western' in order to become truly Christian (Anonymous 1988). This line was expressed forcefully by Hubert Muda, who argued that for too long missionary attitudes toward other religions were limited by Western conceptions of monotheism and that the process of decolonization coincides with the resurgence of traditional religions and cultures. According to Muda, since Vatican II inculcation requires a dialogue with local faiths (Muda 1988).

Subsequently, Mantovani wrote that 'the partner' in such a dialogue would be someone professing a traditional religion or a Christian whose culture remains that of the traditional religion. There would be no dialogue if one partner was regarded as lower, childish and primitive. The good name of traditional religions has been damaged by the claim that they are 'primitive': 'the first step is to rehabilitate traditional religions, then to provide a theology of the traditional religions, and finally to renew religion from within' (Mantovani 1989: 30-32). He continues:

Universal religions, including Christianity, regard traditional religions as inferior. Missionary practice has been influenced by this attitude. We honour Hinduism,

Islam and so on, and we attempt a dialogue with them, but we regard traditional religions as 'being primitive', as religions therefore which may be gotten rid of. This attitude is based on ignorance. (*Ibid.*: 41)

According to Mantovani (*ibid.*: 29), before a dialogue can begin the missionaries must study the local symbol system and culture. The purpose is not merely to become as familiar as possible with customary law or to discover the cultural grammar that gives meaning to the variety of local custom. Instead, missionaries must understand the system itself. A case in point concerns the ancestors. Only the cultural system can reveal whether attitudes toward the ancestors are compatible with the convictions of Christianity.

In Prior's perspective, inculturation contrasts with those initiatives of the 1970s that attempted to 'deepen the faith' of 'simple people'. The problem had been interpreted then as one of ignorance and a lack of understanding, due both to a general lack of formal education among the peasant population and to a lack of sufficient numbers of clergy:

My move from coastal town to the mountainous interior [of central Flores, among the Ata Lio] in January 1981 brought me into direct daily contact with village life, with the peasant farmers' living traditions, beliefs and customs...here, in the village, although the people were by no means as active in formal Catholicism as were the Christians in town, faith was transparently open, utterly honest and deeply personal. All this contrasted with what was happening on another level: the village Florenese have been lapsing from active sacramental practice at a steadily increasing rate over the past 15 years. The Church as taught by the incoming Catholic institution, and the faith as believed by the populace seem to be steadily diverging on their own individual paths. (Prior 1988: 1-2)

With the lapsing rate continuing apace in the Ende Archdiocese, Prior speaks of a decoupling of village religion from institutional religion: 'Is the Florenese Church an example of an inculturated faith, or a case of a theologically indefensible syncreticism?' (*ibid.*). As he acknowledges, neither question is neutral, and each speaks for the stance of the enquirer. Somewhat gloomily, Prior concludes that the Church in Flores only paid lip-service to Pius XII's exhortation in 1950 not to decree the suppression of native custom before proving that it is 'indissolubly linked with error, or immorality or absurd superstition' (*ibid.*: 54). Later, he writes:

Coming from the outside as an invading culture, the institutional Church speaks for a Beyond, that which is outside from the village, of a wider world, a broader canvas, a universal vision which is mediated to the local culture through ritual led by the incoming clerics. The incoming Church has not succeeded in establishing a 'Catholic culture', it has not been able to build up a 'pure Catholicism'; it has appropriated the village culture through a prolonged process of assimilation and has decided upon a geographically universal spread of the Church throughout the

island rather than concentrating upon the development of a 'deep' or intense form of the faith. (*Ibid.*: 181).

Of course, in making these remarks Prior reveals, as he acknowledges, his own position in a debate carried on within the Divine Word Mission.

This recent blossoming of interest in inculturation provides a context for understanding, at least, unverified rumours circulating in Lamalera in 1987 that Catholic priests from Lamalera wanted to restore the old culture, including the village ritual temple (*korke*). A plan under consideration by members of the three most prominent clans to retrieve the sacred stones (*nuba nara*) perhaps had more to do with the government's programme to encourage the refurbishment of traditional culture for purposes of attracting the tourist trade than to changes in theological fashion. That Catholic priests might seriously discuss such steps, however, appears not entirely out of the question, given calls for the Church to become open to other, including local, religions and an allegedly new recognition that salvation may be achieved outside the Church (Muda 1988: 25, 27). My source expressed both support for these moves and some anxiety about the possible outcome, as well as the conviction that no such step could be taken so long as a European missionary was resident in the village.

Since Bode established a permanent mission in Lamalera in 1920, there have been only four missionaries. The second of these was Bruno Pehl, who took over from Bode when he fell seriously ill in 1951 and served until 1962, when he was replaced for a time by Kurt Trummer (see Beding 1986a: 61). Pehl was a stern disciplinarian, who employed a rhetoric that had little in common with inculturation. For example, concerned about the problem of providing pastoral care to 6000 Catholics in twenty small villages, he wrote that the priest 'must bring it home to the Christians, to compel them and force them, to leave their small villages and come to the large ones with their churches and schools, even if they have with much effort and sacrifice built beautiful small chapels' (Pehl 1955: 132).

Speaking of the need to break up extended family dwellings and to impose the rule that every new family must provide itself with a separate house *before* the Catholic wedding may take place, Pehl wrote:

For years I have pointed out before every marriage in an almost unmerciful way to both young and old that they are already Catholics in Lamalera and that therefore they must follow the 'Catholic' marriage regulations. That means in practice one pushes the old-fashioned, heathen marriage arrangements somewhat into the background and in the best of circumstances completely forgets them! I maintain the principle that at every suitable or unsuitable opportunity I hammer into their heads: bridewealth affairs must be changed into an affair of an orderly house for the young couple who are to marry. To express it more primitively: provision of bridewealth means Heathen Marriage, provision of a house means Catholic Marriage! (*Ibid.*: 88)

Though the character of the rhetoric has changed, this principle has been maintained, and, as I have witnessed, at least occasionally it causes bitter anger among family members responsible for making the necessary arrangements. This is not the place to describe the sociology of marriage, a standard topic in the social anthropology of this region (see Prior 1988; Barnes 1977), but it may be noted that it is always a collective matter with serious obligations on, and implications for, a wide range of relatives. It is precisely these collective implications that Pehl was not willing to tolerate.

Seventy years of direct missionary supervision has brought substantial changes in marriage practice and customary law. Freedom to choose one's spouse is assured. There is also now a lack of uniformity in the degree to which people live up to the obligations to make marriage prestations, and some confusion about what those obligations are and how values are reckoned (at least in comparison with my experience in the neighbouring Kédang culture). Nevertheless, the form remains the same and marriage is still central to the collective life of the community.

The mission completed a church in Lamalera in the year that Bode established himself there.³ He also placed a small chapel in every quarter of the village (Windt 1936: 198) and set out to force the community to give up heathen ceremonies, at which, by his own account, he was soon successful (Bode 1925). However, success is also a matter of interpretation. Certain ceremonies having to do with good fortune in fishing have long been in abeyance, following the death or conversion of the native priests.⁴ Others, such as the ceremony at the beach to mark the opening of the fishing season, have been taken over overtly and reshaped by the missionary. At the centre of the stretch of beach where the boats are housed is a place where whale bones were stacked up. This place had ceremonial significance in the traditional religion, and it is there that Bode

3. The first building used for religious services was a bamboo construction in the lower village, which soon had to be dismantled. For a time thereafter, a storehouse, previously a Chinese store, was used. From 1915 until 1920 services were held in a school building in the upper village. In 1920 craftsmen from the mission station at Larantuka, Flores, erected a church with walls made of earth mixed with lime. In 1931 this building was struck by a typhoon, necessitating its demolition. In 1932 the villagers erected a more substantial structure, with cement walls and a tin roof, which was still in use when I first visited the village in 1971. In 1963 they commenced work on a much larger church, which was consecrated in 1975, the older church then being torn down (Beding 1986a: 42-3).

4. Worstbroek (1937: 27) records that when Bode began work, thirty 'sorcerers' wished to know nothing of Christianity. He then quotes Bode's rather gleeful comment that 'remarkably, almost all of them died within a very short time'. Three leading priests of the village religion, Krofe, Prason, and Haga, led a long resistance to conversion. Bode attributed this opposition not to firm and full conviction, but to their desire to be better off than others, for which they were prepared to resort to sly and coarse menaces: 'Being a *molan* [native priest] was a profitable berth'. However, by 1925, he had completed the conversion of the village, including two of his three opponents. Only one remained unprepared to become a Christian (Bode 1925: 116, 131).

established a chapel named for St Peter. The annual service to mark the opening of the fishing season still takes place there.

In recent years, Dupont has attempted to incorporate into the ceremony traditional costumes and ritual language. He has not, however, always been satisfied with the results or with the spirit in which the villagers have participated. Indeed, on occasion the villagers have felt that the Christianized version of the ceremony has not been successful in bringing luck for the fishing and have asked the lord of the land, whose prerogative in these matters the mission has supplanted, to quietly perform the rite again in a more effective form.

I have described elsewhere (Barnes 1986) how educational and religious opportunities made available by the mission gave the villagers of Lamalera a head start over people from other villages in moving into modern occupations and the professions, including higher education and publishing. They have kept abreast of modern developments within the national environment as well as any group in the province. It would, indeed, be wrong to say that the villagers are entirely unwilling participants in the Christianization of their traditions, or that the missionary is the only agent for change in this regard.

Among the novelties introduced since my last visit to Lamalera was a Catholic grotto, in a location called Dua Fero in open land to the east of the village, where during our stay Father Dupont conducted an outdoor mass. Unlike many other features of the sacred landscape of contemporary Catholicism, this site had not been chosen because of its significance in the pagan religion.

One area in which the ritual life of the community continues traditional precedent in vigorous form is the set of rites connected with building, using and maintaining the boats. Formerly, these rites would have been accompanied by the sacrifice of such animals as chickens and goats. Where in the past they would have used chicken blood to asperse the boats (Barnes 1974: 143), in recent decades they have substituted holy water. This practice was the subject of an interesting BA thesis that, more in the spirit of the 1970s than in that of inculcation, criticized this use of holy water as a form of syncretism (Kuben Odjan 1973).

Another area in which there has been a marked impact on local culture is that of ritual language. Like so many other eastern Indonesian communities, Lamalera has, or had, a special form of formal speech used for conducting ritual and relating legend (see Fox 1988). It would be impossible today to witness the use of this language in anything like its original setting. Indeed, it may be doubted whether many could claim any knowledge of it at all.⁵ Nevertheless, attempts are made to draw on the Lamalera dialect in Christian ceremonies, though in a much altered form. Examples may be found in the printed text of the mass performed on 22 June 1986, in celebration of the centenary of Lamalera's Catholicism (Beding

5. Examples of this form of speech, in dialects of the local Lamaholot language spoken farther to the east, were recorded by Father Paul Arndt in the 1930s and 1940s (Arndt 1951). Some traditional songs may be found in a published grammar of Lamaholot as spoken in Lamalera (Keraf 1978).

1986b; see also Hajon 1971). The precedent for incorporating the Lamalera dialect into Catholic ritual dates from 1921. Bode used the dialect as he spread his mission across the island, and in 1937 it was employed in the preparation of a prayer book for all the churches on Lembata (Keraf 1978: 2). Mass is now conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and since the great majority has been educated to some extent in that language, the service is accessible to almost all. The Lamaholot language, therefore, has very little remaining ritual function, except marginally as songs and traditional phrasing are worked in to give local flavour to family and community ceremonies.

Art is another cultural feature in which Christian and traditional themes meet. In 1987, the altar wall of the church was painted with a large and effective painting of Christ on the beach in Lamalera, surrounded by villagers, boat sheds and characteristic fishing paraphernalia. Christ's clothing and physical features resembled those characteristic of the community. The artist who produced this mural derives from the village.

When the present church in the upper village first began to be used in 1975, the previous church was taken down, leaving only the raised stone and concrete flooring upon which it was erected. In conjunction with the centenary celebrations, Dominikus Labanoni Batafor, a trained sculptor and native of Lamalera, now living in Maumere, Flores, produced a commanding statue of Bode, which now stands at one end of this platform. Bode is portrayed in a cassock, his right hand stretched forward in blessing. The sculptor has, however, placed him on a *hāmā*, the bamboo harpooning platform that extends beyond the bow of the village whaling vessels. Below the bow, Batafor has inscribed the following:

Pater Bernardus Bode, SVD
 ✝Bilshausen, Jerman 20-08-1885
 †Steyl, Nederland 20-08-1978
 Berkarya di Lamalera-Lembata 1920-1951

Suba guburo, majo pajoro
 Nagarisip sama funo feli gere

[Father Bernard Bode, SVD; Born Bilshausen, Germany, 20 August 1885; Died Steyl, The Netherlands, 20 August 1978; Laboured in Lamalera, Lembata, 1920-1951.]

[Naga Peninsula [the south-west point of Lembata] with a sea breeze, sheltered by an umbrella, see the glow, like that of a star emerging from the surface of the sea.]

Boats carrying passengers from Larantuka, Flores, round the Naga (Dragon) Peninsula into the open Savu Sea toward the end of the journey to Lamalera. Since, for Lamalera, Larantuka was the source of Christianity, the religion is associated with this direction. Indeed, 'Serani' (Christianity) is another name for

Larantuka. A sea breeze at the south-west point of the island indicates that no dangers are in sight. Coming from this direction, Bode was a protector, emerging like a star rising from the sea. The fact that his birth and death dates coincide is remarked by villagers. In Indonesian conceptions, a person who has lived a good and long life will die when his days are complete, the date of his death coinciding with the date of his birth.

There is some irony in the fact that Bode appears at the bow of a whaling boat, emphasizing his role as a leader of the community. Villagers have often listened to sermons advising them of the desirability of doing away with their whaling. For a variety of reasons, this side of their subsistence economy has been in marked decline for over a decade (Barnes 1986: 308-12). However, even in 1987, and in the face of the continued drift of educated young people into non-traditional occupations, villagers insisted that whaling and fishing from the large boats would never disappear completely. That they continue to rebuild and maintain their boats even under present conditions is evidence of how closely community identity is linked to them. The boats are linked directly to the relationship between the living and the ancestors.⁶

Education has been another area of tension, which reached a peak in 1981-2. The mission provides education within the village up to the level of junior high school, and generations of boys and girls have benefited. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, the issue arose as to whether one of the schools should be transferred from the church to the government. This issue became entangled with disputes about a small kiosk linked to the mission. Damaging, and perhaps ill-considered, charges were made, and the church issued excommunications against a number of prominent villagers. Eventually, aspects of the controversy were even aired in the regional Catholic magazine, *Dian*, in 1982. Fortunately, steps were taken to resolve the dispute, and by 1987, apologies having been offered and reconciliations achieved, the dispute was settled.

Conclusion

The shifts in aim and self-conception within the SVD mission in the Sepik that Huber (1988) has described have parallels in the Flores region (see Dietrich 1989). Some of these changes in attitude have been signalled by the literature reviewed in this article. Others are described in the recent study of the Flores SVD by the Anglican priest Paul Webb (1986).

6. Although the missionaries have been unsuccessful in reducing the importance of this aspect of Lamalera life, secular influences may have a greater impact. In 1987, one of the boats was rebuilt (with commercial timber and nylon rigging and bindings) to give demonstrations of simulated whaling for groups of tourists brought to the village for the purpose.

While it is true that European missionaries in the past indulged all too often in ethnocentrism, denigration of alien belief and cultural arrogance (cf. Beidelman 1982: 5), the new doctrine of inculturation is designed to ameliorate precisely these faults in mission practice. In some hands it may be put to imaginative use. To the degree that Indonesian nationals eventually assume genuine control over religious practice *and Church resources* (which need not mean the exclusion of Europeans), some form of accommodation with the local culture may be inevitable. Nevertheless, there is something deeply ambiguous about inculturation in a hierarchical church. Too often, the rhetoric of inculturation suggests a process of taking over local religion or, at least, stops short of conceding its self-sufficient independence from Christianity.⁷ Perhaps Beidelman's definition (1982: 2) of colonialism as 'cultural domination with enforced social change' describes the context of mission activity in Africa of the 1950s better than that of Indonesia in the 1990s, but the question of self-determination is still relevant.

The mission did arrive and establish itself in colonial circumstances. Its commitment to development through the Flores-Timor plan, financed in part with the assistance of the West German government (see Webb 1986: ch. 12), allies it with the national government's ideology of development and has given it immense prestige. The 1980 census shows that 79% of the population of the East Flores Regency declared themselves Catholic, and the figure for the whole of the Flores region is an even more impressive 86% (Biro Pusat Statistik 1981). As the SVD brother, Bill Burt told Webb (1986: 177), 'in Flores there are two governments. The official one and the richer and possibly more influential one, the Church.'

Beidelman applied his definition of colonialism not only to the influence of former colonial powers, but also 'to domination of the poor and uneducated masses by a privileged and powerful native elite fiercely determined to make changes for whatever reason' (1982: 2). The situation in Flores is of course not quite as bleak as this, from which the Church does take satisfaction. Nevertheless, the individual's freedom of choice, and indeed that of the Church as well (Webb 1986: 174), is limited by educational and economic circumstance, and by history and the political context. Limits are set by the colonial experience, by the traumas of the 1965 coup, by the state ideology of Pancasila (sometimes interpreted as insisting on commitment to one of the world religions), and by the shutting down of effective grassroots political activity by the Suharto government.

Many or all of those who might have provided 'partners in dialogue' from the other side of the divide were prevented from doing so by Bode, nor were they allowed to train replacements. In many respects, the appropriate time for inculturation would have been the beginning of the mission period. Nevertheless,

7. Although he ultimately takes a positive view of inculturation, Pieris claims (1988: 52-3) that inculturation is often 'the insertion of "the Christian religion minus European culture" into an "Asian culture minus non-Christian religion"'. Thai Buddhists have bitterly criticized the use of their sacred symbols for Christian purposes and have charged that this form of inculturation is a form of disguised imperialism.

these are different times and the people of Lamalera are different. Given an opportunity to engage in an effective dialogue permitting them to exercise a larger say in community religious practice, they will want to do so in terms of their present interests and experience. They will certainly not wish to reconstruct forgotten practices of the past, although it would be interesting to see just what is remembered and valued.

Webb (1986: 174) speaks of the signs of disappointment and disillusionment among the older priests in the face of the changes following from Vatican II that loosened their control in the villages. Younger Indonesian priests, in contrast, are enthusiastic, although there is still a strongly European flavour to church worship. But the young may eventually become conservative too. It remains to be seen whether the practical implications of inculturation are as radical as some readings of the literature about it would suggest, or whether it will in fact prove to be a rhetorically softer but equally intrusive means of directing cultural and religious change by a largely external and hierarchically organized institution of authority.

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BOOK REVIEWS

G. E. R. LLOYD, *Demystifying Mentalities* [Themes in the Social Sciences], Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1990. viii, 156 pp., Bibliography Index. £27.50/£10.95/\$49.50/\$14.95.

Geoffrey Lloyd belongs to that illustrious line of Cambridge classicists who have found anthropology useful for their own work and have then contributed to it. The value of this contribution has been duly recognized by anthropologists, who have asked him to give some of their most important lectures. Two of the four chapters that constitute this book were, in their original form, the 1985 Rivers lecture at Cambridge and the 1987 Frazer lecture in Oxford. Not surprisingly then, this work addresses a question of central interest to anthropologists: 'What is the validity and usefulness of the notion of mentalities?' (p. 1).

Lloyd points out that although Lévy-Bruhl's distinction between two 'mentalities' has been much criticized, in fact the idea of different mentalities has been widely adopted in many disciplines, especially in France. The problem is that there is no definition of 'mentality', and the term is used in a variety of senses. Furthermore, which criteria are to be employed in distinguishing between different mentalities is not clear, nor has the question of how mentalities change been addressed. Lloyd sets out to examine the whole question with reference to classical Greek thought, which is so often regarded as the origin of our own scientific rationality. He also attempts to place the development of the ideas within the political and economic setting of the period, so that they are rooted in a particular social context.

Lloyd starts off with two important distinctions: first, between literal and metaphorical (as classically illustrated by the argument surrounding the Nuer statement 'twins are birds'); and secondly, the general contrast between the pre-scientific and the scientific mentality. With regard to the first, he argues that where such a distinction does not exist it is distorting the actors' discourse to force it on them. In the ancient Greek context it was the creation of this distinction as a form of polemic that was the crucial factor. Equally so with the second, in which particular modes of inquiry, which we now recognize as scientific, were advanced in arguments in opposition to older 'non-scientific' ideas.

In chapter 2 Lloyd turns his attention to the contrast between magic and science, or more exactly that between *muthos*, which is unverifiable, and *logos*, which is known to be true. Once again Lloyd demonstrates how this contrast developed in the debates of Greek thinkers, and he stresses that magic, science (and religion) do not each belong to different 'mentalities', but are to be found equally mixed, not simply in the ideas of one society but in the mind of a single individual. From here he moves on to another subject, viz. proof. It is important, Lloyd claims, to distinguish between the practice of proof and 'an explicit concept corresponding to that practice, a concept that incorporates the conditions that need to be met for a proof to have been given' (p. 74). He demonstrates that it was in

Greece in the fourth century BC that the concept of proof became explicit, although the practice of proof is very much older than that.

With these three studies completed, Lloyd feels safe to embark on a little judicious comparison, and for this purpose he turns to Ancient China. He identifies a number of similarities and differences, of which perhaps the most significant are those concerning the respective economic and political environments of Greece and China that allowed for the development of particular lines of inquiry. He fully appreciates the complexity of the answers required, but feels there is evidence enough to claim that explanations are better sought 'in terms of the specificities of styles of inquiry and of interpersonal exchange' (p. 134) than in a resort to different mentalities. Indeed, Lloyd makes the telling point that 'to appeal to a distinct mentality is merely to *redescribe* the phenomena that are found puzzling or in need of explanation' (p. 5; original emphasis). Although anthropologists have in recent years avoided the use of mentalities as a form of explanation, they are not free from the type of fault referred to, as the continued allegiance to such notions as 'communitas' bears witness.

There is far more in this small book than a review can do justice to. However, the argument is made with such clarity that it requires no third-party exegesis; it should be readily accessible to anyone interested in the topic.

PETER RIVIÈRE

STANLEY JEYARAJA TAMBIAH, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* [The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1984], Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1990. xi, 187 pp., Notes, Bibliography, Index, Plates, Figure. £25.00/£9.95//\$42.50/\$13.95.

The nature of, and boundaries between, magic, science and religion have been the subject of considerable, and often polemical, debate since anthropology was established as a 'science'. Because presuppositions of rationality underlie this debate it strikes at 'the grand problem, which is at the heart of the anthropological enterprise: How do we understand and represent the modes of thought and action of other societies, other cultures?' (p. 3). In other words: how are we to achieve the translation of cultures when our perspective is a Western one? Tambiah's goal in *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, then, is to assess the validity of these three concepts as 'general analytic categories in comparative studies' (p. 1). In order to achieve this he attempts to contextualize these concepts by tracing their history in the stream of Western thought and by examining the issues in the debate on rationality. The book, however, is disappointing.

On page one Tambiah tells us that his 'itinerary' will begin with the late British Victorians, such as E. B. Tylor and James Frazer; move across the Channel

to the French *Année Sociologique* school of Durkheim and Mauss, and those, such as Lévy-Bruhl and Maurice Leenhardt, who interacted with them; then return to Britain to deal with Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, before finally moving on to the 'moderns'—Evans-Pritchard, Robin Horton, John Beattie and Ernest Gellner. This is not, in fact, the journey on which Tambiah takes us. Frazer is referred to 'as a footnote to Tylor' (p. 42); Durkheim, Mauss, Evans-Pritchard and Gellner are mentioned only in passing (how can you discuss anthropological conceptions of magic, science and religion without careful attention to Durkheim and Evans-Pritchard?); and Radcliffe-Brown and John Beattie appear only on page one. We are, however, presented with the ideas of such other people as Wittgenstein, Keith Thomas, Freud, Alasdair MacIntyre and a host of others.

Tambiah lays the historical foundations of the concepts listed in the book's title in the first two chapters. In chapter one he gives us several thumbnail sketches: the history of the concept of 'religion' in Western thought from Roman times to the Protestant Reformation; the Judaic legacy of magic as ritual action independent of the gods; the Greek origins of science; and the relationship between the scientific revolution and the Protestant reformation. The second chapter focuses on the Enlightenment and is a continuation of the first. Much of the discussion is based on Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971). During the Enlightenment, Puritan ethic displaced God from the immediacy of people's lives; positive science came to define an autonomous realm for itself, and religion came to be seen as an object worthy of scientific study. It is Tambiah's submission that the Victorian theorists' 'conception of "religion" as a system of beliefs, and the distinction between prayer and spell, the former being associated with "religious" behaviour and the latter with "magical" acts' (p. 19) is a Protestant legacy. These chapters are the most interesting. It would have been good to have had more.

Chapter three, 'Sir Edward Tylor versus Bronislaw Malinowski: Is Magic False Science or Meaningful Performance?', is mistitled. Malinowski is not discussed until the next chapter and Tylor occupies only about one third of the text, the remainder being devoted to Frazer and to Wittgenstein's encounter with him. Wittgenstein's rejection of Frazer is treated by Tambiah in several lengthy (i.e. full-page) quotes. For Tylor and Frazer, magic was a pseudo-science or false science. For Malinowski, whether magic was true or not was irrelevant; magic was contextually meaningful and, like religion, was sacred, whereas science was profane.

Chapter five is the pivotal chapter in the book, moving away from magic, science and religion toward a discussion of rationality. Lévy-Bruhl's distinction between 'prelogical' and 'logical' mentalities establishes the theme for this chapter: the issue of two coexisting modes of thought and action as they impinge on our understanding of science and religion. In addition to Lévy-Bruhl, Tambiah presents the ideas of Lucien Febvre, Maurice Leenhardt, Robin Horton and Sigmund Freud, among others. The chapter reads, however, like a series of book reviews united not so much by their contribution to a debate initiated by Lévy-

Bruhl but because they fit the chapter's theme. Indeed, one section looks at Carol Gillingsham's *In a Different Voice* (1982), which discusses male and female modes of thought. Furthermore, Tambiah fails adequately to relate his discussion to science and religion. Science, magic and religion are simply abandoned in favour of rationality, reasonably enough, but it is an abrupt rather than a smooth transition, and we are not given a satisfactory explanation for the change.

In chapter six Tambiah grapples with four interrelated topics: the delineation and implications of rationality as a mode of reasoning and as a process of constructing knowledge; the question of relativism in regard to the psychic unity of mankind and the diversity of cultures; the translation between cultures; and the commensurability between sociocultural phenomena and concepts. His discussion leads him in the end to the paradox of relativism, that is, that the proposition that 'the truth and also justification of a society's beliefs is relative' is either itself relative, in which case it lacks universal applicability, or the proposition is an absolute in which case it is a self-contradiction. Tambiah rightly points out that many anthropologists fail to consider the implications of this philosophical problem, saying that 'if, as many anthropologists do, we are prepared to argue that on a certain issue societies or cultures A and B hold different views, and each in its context is justified, true or meaningful, we should be prepared to defend this judgment as having *absolute* validity for us, and provide the necessary proof' (p. 128). Tambiah thus sets himself a task that occupies the remainder of the chapter: overcoming relativism. His solution is to argue that moral or religious systems address certain universal existential problems but differ in their emphases, commitments, styles or preferences—an argument he defends by presenting three brief case-studies. He is unconvincing, however, in that he says that 'it is the social body that writes and enforces the rules of the game: what shall count as the relevant evidence, what constitutes proof and so on' (p. 142). In other words, any proof he presents must be considered as relative, so what reason do we have for believing him?

The last chapter, 'Modern Science and its Extensions', is, despite his disclaimer in the final paragraph, a critique of Western science. Tambiah sees science as two-dimensional, being comprised of an internal framework—the bodies of specialized knowledge, the methods of science, the technical applications, and an external context—the intervention of society in the application of science, socio-political and economic interests in science, the social construction of knowledge and the impact of history. Because science is so much a social undertaking we should not assume that Western science *ipso facto* has the right answers.

Although *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* is easy to read, the thread of Tambiah's argument is difficult to follow at times. The various authors' ideas are poorly integrated, standing as independent variations on a common theme rather than serving as illustrations in a sustained argument. There is thus, also, little that is new. The idea of the book, however, is an excellent one and does strike at the central issues in anthropology, but the topic is enormous and

requires considerably more space than it receives (the book contains 14 pages of plates and 3 pages of accompanying captions that not only bear little relevance to the text but also reduce the actual text to 137 pages). The subject deserves better treatment, especially from an author of Tambiah's stature.

CHRIS HOLDSWORTH

PAUL CONNERTON, *How Societies Remember* [Themes in the Social Sciences], Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1989. vi, 115 pp., Indexes. £25/£8.50/\$39.50/\$11.95.

This short and stimulating book makes a seemingly straightforward argument, which its author summarizes as follows: 'If there is such a thing as social memory...we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms. In this way I shall seek to show that there is an inertia in social structures that is not adequately explained by any of the current orthodoxies of what a social structure is' (pp. 4-5).

The style in which Connerton advances his position relies on persuasion by example, rather than deductive argument. Thus, there are two dense pages on different versions of the Orestes-Electra myth to illustrate the point that myth is more variable than ritual. Although the underlying question—how do societies (or aspects of them) persist unchanged through time?—is the same as that found in another recent short book, Pascal Boyer's *Tradition as Truth and Communication* (Cambridge, 1990), the way it is tackled could not be more different. Boyer adopts the dry, scientific style of Oxford analytical philosophy, whereas Connerton's model seems to be the apparently anecdotal but actually carefully crafted rhetoric of Foucault.

Anthropologists may find some of Connerton's generalizations too much. He begins one paragraph, 'Consider the case of village life'. In constructing a before-and-after model to delineate the modern condition, he derives his picture of the premodern situation not from the works of historians or anthropologists, but on the basis of two essays: Thomas Mann's 'Freud and the Future' and Paul de Man's 'Literary History and Literary Modernity'. Connerton's favourite author, cited many more times than any other, is Proust. No attempt is made to ask why some traditions and some societies have more commemorative rituals than others, nor to ascertain whether some societies remember in different ways from others. When he discusses commemorative rituals in world religions, only Judaism, Christianity and Islam are considered. In showing how rituals need to be habitual to work, he fails to consider the point that in complex societies rituals are usually the province

of specialists, so that the most significant rituals may be far from habitual for the laity.

Despite all these qualifications, Connerton has raised important issues and his book is a useful 'think-piece', rich in historical examples. His attack on cognitivist accounts of continuity and his account of the logocentric bias of European thought are convincing. More consideration does need to be given to habits, a subject often shied away from in anthropology because of its associations with old explanations that characterized non-European peoples as 'slaves of habit' or enmeshed in a 'cake of custom'. Rather than Connerton's stress on bodily habits, I would have liked him to focus on *emotional* habits. Then, perhaps, he could have moved closer to his stated ambition, proclaimed rather than fulfilled here, of advancing a new notion of social structure.

DAVID N. GELLNER

BRENT RICHARDS WEISMANN, *Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in North Peninsular Florida*, Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press 1989. xv, 179 pp., Bibliography, Index, Figures, Maps, Plates. \$15.95.

Although this volume is intended primarily for a readership with an interest in the historical anthropology of Florida and the southeastern United States, it also addresses a number of issues that are of concern for anthropology world-wide, notably ethnicity. Thus, the Seminole, as with so many other peoples that have been the object of twentieth-century ethnological investigation, appear actually to have emerged as a distinct ethnic group only in the later colonial period, around 1800. None the less, the author identifies clear continuities with earlier Mississippian cultures, particularly the Creek, rejecting previous analyses that had tended to suggest either that the Seminole were marginal to these groups or that their culture was a response to Euro-American contact.

Establishing historical and archaeological linkages in the period prior to 1800 has been hampered by the fact that the proto-Seminole were immigrant into northern Florida from around 1600 onwards, the author identifying the cause of this dispersion as general weakening of chiefly authority across the southeast, during the period 1300-1500. In turn, this process of social fissioning was greatly enhanced by both the early deerskin trade and the later establishment of a strict 'one trader-one town' policy by the British. Accordingly, chiefly authority became further limited to the village, while both the 'nuclear family', as well as individual men and women, emerged as primary economic units.

By 1800, a distinct Seminole ethnicity had coalesced, giving rise to the observation that these economically sovereign individuals and their close kin were

politically related, via traditional matri-clan affiliations, 'like beads on a string'. Thus, countering economic forces for increasing individualization were such military and political factors as persistent Creek raiding of the more dispersed Seminole settlements, as well as the advent of U.S. administration in Florida, resulting in containment on reservations and an end to free trade.

This analysis enables the author to identify the paradox that it was not the 'clash of cultures' that led to the demise of the Seminole but the similarity of Seminole and Euro-American self-definition; both cultures stressing individual performance and competition, with the same economic resources, principally land, at stake. For such reasons, it has been difficult for earlier commentators to appreciate the authenticity of Seminole culture, it being assumed that this stress on individual competitiveness was a measure of Seminole deculturation, rather than a creative, native response to the opportunities afforded by external trade. As the author stresses, this kind of social process has been largely opaque to ethnographic analysis.

Unfortunately, however, theoretical problems concerning the relation of 'culture history' to the multiplicity of other 'histories' that might be constructed are left largely unaddressed in this volume. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the author will return to this topic in the future.

NEIL L. WHITEHEAD

ANTHONY F. AVENI, *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks, and Cultures*, London: Tauris 1990. ix, 358 pp., Index, Plates, Figures. £16.95.

Aveni is a professor of astronomy and anthropology at Colgate University and is also an archaeologist. He has edited and written a number of scholarly books on archaeoastronomy, particularly in reference to Central America and Peru. This book is intended to make much of this material available to a more general readership, while placing it in a world-wide cultural and historical perspective. The result is an engagingly written and reasonably up-to-date introduction to the cultural history of time, calendars and clocks.

It begins with a brief set of aptly chosen examples of adaptations to natural rhythms in animal life. These are followed by discussions of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the book of Genesis, Hesiod's *Theogony*, a Babylonian creation myth, possible Ice Age lunar calendars and a Sumerian token system of accounting. Aveni goes on to trace the history of the Western calendar before getting, by way of the Nuer and the Trobrianders, on to the area of his own research strength, namely the Maya, Aztecs and Incas. Before his concluding chapter, he works in the Chinese, with Indonesian asides. Aveni mentions India in passing, but generally leaves out the massive early Indian development of mathematics, logic, astrology, astronomy and calendrical systems. The coverage is thus imbalanced.

However, if taken to be essentially about pre-contact Central and South American calendrical systems, then the book can be commended for its serious attempt to compare them with developments in Europe and Asia. Aveni appears to do justice to these achievements without exaggerating them. Furthermore, the comparisons often illuminate aspects of European and Asian time-systems in novel ways.

Aveni does stray sometimes in his treatment of the Asian literature. For example, he attributes a record for calendrical intricacy to the Kédang, who, he claims, have ten kinds of weekly cycles, ranging from one to ten days in length. The Kédang have no such thing. Presumably he has misremembered a description of Balinese notions by Clifford Geertz in his *Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali* (1966, p. 45). The suspicion that he is confusing Bali and the Kédang is confirmed in chapter 10, where he refers to 'Chinese and Balinese joints of time', whereas in the previous chapter on Chinese time-reckoning he had drawn on not Balinese material but my own on Kédang. (In any case, in discussing metaphors appropriate to time, I merely said that if I were to choose a metaphor from the Kédang language, it would be that of joints or *woq*. This metaphor is not, so far as I know, in overt use for that purpose in Kédang, although obviously I would not have suggested it if I did not think it got close to the way the Kédang represent events in time.)

One would have to agree with Aveni that 'time is many different concepts and ideas' (p. 10). It is interesting to learn that, according to experiments by Stephen J. Gould concerning the pattern of expansion and decline of natural species, the diversification of species *does not* take place in exactly the same way as it would if we were to 'run the clock of time in a backward direction' and that the history of life is a one-way process. Similarly, the neutral K meson, a subatomic particle, decays in an interval of time that would be different if time were reversed. This discovery contradicts a theorem in quantum mechanics that predicts that a reversal of the direction of time would not change the pattern of subatomic decay.

Mayan cities carried sun time 'locked within their walls': 'keeping the right time was an intimate part of the Maya notion of city planning' (p. x). A Mayan correction table used in predicting the motions of Venus allowed an accuracy of within two hours in five centuries. Mayan Keplers and Newtons operated cycles that, according to inscriptions, were as long as 64 million years, and one inscription may go 500 million years into the past. Aztec and Inca time-systems were not as accomplished as the Mayan, but were nevertheless impressive.

Many of the topics are covered in easily available secondary sources, some of which Aveni refers to in the notes. This is, however, somewhat more than a secondary work, as it presents original arguments about the place of the more developed American traditions in the world history of time-reckoning. Accepting that there are limitations in the book's scope, reflecting the author's own interests, his unique combination of skills make this an unusual and very acceptable introduction to a demanding, but fascinating branch of anthropology. A complementary study dealing with Arabic and Asian time-systems would be most welcome.

WILLIAM F. HANKS, *Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1990. xxiii, 580 pp., Index, Diagrams, Photographs. Price not given.

This book is far more than a complex and extremely detailed linguistic ethnography of Maya in Yucatán, Mexico. It discusses many important theoretical issues and sets standards both for research and for the presentation of the results of that research. I fear British publishers would no longer consider a work of this detail and size.

In his Ph.D. (Chicago, 1983) Hanks examined place and time deixis. This data is now re-examined in the light of further fieldwork that has permitted him to explore person deixis as well. He is, therefore, able to analyse the complete field of deixis, in a manner that owes much to the influence of Bourdieu and Merleau-Ponty. It is impossible in a short review to do justice to the richness of the data or to the complexity of Hanks's argument. I will confine myself to presenting some of the distinctions that form the basis of his analysis.

Hanks's definition of deixis is as follows: 'the term *deictic* in traditional grammar designates (roughly) linguistic elements which specify the identity of placement in space or time of individuated objects relative to the participants in a verbal interaction' (p. 5); to which is footnoted the following: ' "Deixis" designated the *indexical denotational* function of linguistic forms whereby they contribute to the individuation of referential objects relative to indexical contexts'. Hanks's own contribution lies in the use he makes of the differing concepts of 'frame', 'framespace', 'framework' and 'field'.

Frames are 'generally defined as coherent schematization of action and experience'. They are 'schematic structures on the border between the semantic system of language and native typification of practice'. They 'function as pragmatic templates in which roles and categories are configured in standard (if not entirely fixed) ways' (p. 78). Typical examples are the participant frames of discourse in Maya (and many other societies) that are 'speaker', 'addressee' and 'referent'. Another example, more idiosyncratically Mayan, may be the frame of cardinal location with four directions and a centre, often represented (by Maya as well as by their ethnographer) as a square perimeter with a central point. This is physically realized time and again in the construction of houses, in the relation of a house to the compound in which it is located as well as in the swidden fields in the country. The process of clearing a field begins with a shamanic rite in which the altar layout anticipates the actions that follow. Two sides of the perimeter of the field are cut using aligned sticks to define two straight, perpendicular lines. The space thus defined is then cleared. The final field is rectangular and is thought of as having a central point. A detailed analysis of shamanic practice shows how the altars and prayers connect both bodily orientation (participant frame) and the different spatial frames, that of the four cardinals and centre prominent among them.

The further term 'frame space' is introduced to allow for the fact that actors act in the light of frames other than those actually in play. Such 'virtual' frames constitute 'the socioculturally defined constraints on action' but they are not reducible to pre-existing rules (p. 80). In such arguments, the influence of Bourdieu is most apparent.

Frameworks may be thought of as the actual events and interactions in which the schemata of the frames are brought into play. Reported speech is a good example. In reporting the speech of another person I project myself and my addressee(s) from the immediate frame to that of the speech event that I am reporting. Shamanic ritual is more complex again. These are frameworks in which several different frames may be instantiated with various relations to one another: 'frame work' in other words. The difference between frame and framework is summarized thus: 'social actors bring [frames] to interaction as part of their already shared knowledge of the world, whereas they produce and revise [frameworks] in the process of interaction itself (p. 295).

We are told how Mayan people talk, not just to one another but also to both dogs and babies (neither of which can answer back). Such a level of detail and the sustained analysis of the data must be welcomed, despite the text's hard reading. Cynics will say that much laudable effort has been spent on a description of a few twigs without giving us a view of the forest. Where is the overview? How does this help us understand social structure? Focus on the minutiae of conversational interaction may not leave room for the social contexts within which that interaction occurs. Hanks is fully aware of the possibility of such criticism. He gives much more than purely linguistic data. We learn about household organization, work practices and both the theory and everyday practice of shamanism. Moreover, Hanks shows how the details of linguistic usage *reveal* social structure. For example, the man leading a work-party speaks as if everyone present shares his (physical) viewpoint even when his juniors manifestly do not. When the juniors address the leader they do not assume (presume) such symmetry. Power has many forms: its holders control not just work but also the verbal accounts of the work. The lesson I learn from this is that verbal utterances may well provide a guide to the shifting hierarchies of power within a group, in circumstances where the division of power may not be as clear-cut as that within the work-party.

In sum, this book represents a substantial contribution to both Mayan anthropology and to anthropological theory. It provides a refreshingly empirical antidote to post-modern ethnography. Hanks appears as a conversant in many of the examples, his mistakes are corrected and the reader is able to learn with him. He spares us, however, a detailed account of his feelings, rightly judging that we are more interested in learning about Maya than about another American academic. The book should be in every library, if not on the shelves of every working anthropologist.

DAVID ZEITLYN

EDWARD SAPIR, *American Indian Languages, Part 1*, Vol. V of *The Collected Works of Edward Sapir* (ed. William Bright), Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter 1990. 538 pp. Appendix, Phonetic Key References. DM220/\$99.00.

Volumes V and VI of the collected works of Edward Sapir are intended to bring together his shorter papers on American Indian languages. Whereas Volume VI, to be edited by Victor Golla, contains articles on Athapaskan, Na-Dene, Penutian, Wakashan, and Salishan families, the present one is devoted to Hokan and Uto-Aztecán languages and the relationship between Algonkin and the remotely situated Californian languages Wiyot and Yurok. The papers are all strictly linguistic in character, and many of them (reviews, encyclopedia articles, linguistic maps, and so on) are of primarily historical interest because of their influence on subsequent linguistic work.

The anthropological interest of this publication lies primarily in the record it preserves of Sapir's attempts to improve the linguistic sophistication of North American ethnography and descriptive linguistics, in Sapir's then radical proposals to reorder the classification of native American languages, and in a single paper of 1923 on the Algonkin affinity of Yurok and Wiyot kinship terms.

One of Sapir's more radical departures was his attempt to demonstrate, through lexical, morphological, and phonological evidence, that the Yurok and Wiyot languages belonged to the Algonkin family. At the time, Truman Michelson attacked this hypothesis, although it was substantiated after Sapir's death. The various papers in the debate between Sapir and Michelson are reproduced here.

Anthropologists, as well as linguists, may also still find interest in Sapir's essay on the linguistic publications of the Bureau of American Ethnology [BAE], the quality of which, he decided, ran 'a very long gamut indeed', from the amateurish to work of 'as high a standard of phonetic finish and morphological insight as one could hope to find anywhere in descriptive linguistic literature' (p. 65). As someone who has used the BAE's publications on the Omaha in my work, I am gratified to see that Sapir thought that the Revd. J. O. Dorsey's publication on *The Cegiha Language* (1890) was one of three BAE works that represent the 'high-water mark' for the series in phonetic quality and that Dorsey's text material 'can more than hold its own in comparison with much that followed' (pp. 65, 67). It is important, however, to remember that this review was published in 1917, and that in work republished here Sapir had a strong influence on improving the phonetic standards and phonemic practices of the BAE and other contributions to American Indian linguistics.

There are thirty-five papers by Sapir in this volume, with two more by Kroeber and two by Michelson in the appendix. The editor has divided the papers of the main text into five sections, each provided with an introduction. There is a photographic frontispiece of Sapir in 1915 or so, a note to the reader, a preface and an introduction to Volumes V and VI. The appendix ends with a phonetic key to Sapir's publications. Publications containing typographic complexities have been photographically reproduced, while the rest have been newly typeset. One

consequence of this procedure is that some printing errors in the original publications have been retained.

Most readers will find this a work to be dipped into for a variety of highly specific reasons. Every university ought to have the entire series in one of its libraries accessible to anthropologists, ethnohistorians, psychologists and linguists.

R. H. BARNES

ANN FIENUP-RIORDAN, *Eskimo Essays: Yup'ik Lives and How We See Them*, New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press 1990. xxii, 269 pp. Bibliography, Index, Illustrations, Maps. No price given.

The Yupiit are Eskimos of southwestern Alaska, an environment very different from the more northern Arctic shores, the lands of the Inuit. This book's task is two-fold, as indicated in the subtitle: to represent Yup'ik life and thought accurately and to articulate, or identify, the images transposed upon 'Eskimos' by the Western imagination. The result is a dynamic encounter between 'Yup'ik and Western thought and cultural representations'; indeed this encounter is 'the central theme' (p. xiii), and the dynamic is maintained throughout the text, as each essay, from different vantage points, or on different topics (ranging from ecology to warfare), poses a question about 'Yup'ik lives and how we see them'.

The author—respected for scholarship within both the Yup'ik nation and academic circles—manages well the task of interpreting this on-going encounter. The study thus becomes as much about 'Western' as about 'Eskimo' modes of life and thought, reference being made to certain presuppositions that underlie 'Western' culture, particularly to notions of possessive individuality.

Richly varied yet unified, the book includes a chapter (surprisingly) titled 'Robert Redford, Apanuugpak, and the Invention of Tradition', that describes the creation of a film, or cinematographic saga, based on Yup'ik tales, in which the creative process involves: (a) Yup'ik stories about Apanuugpak, an Achilles-like figure; (b) their selective presentation by a storyteller to a film maker; (c) the latter's interpretation of them; (d) their further interpretation by the production company headed by Redford, who would play the leading role; and finally (e) the film's eventual presentation to the Yupiit youth, for whom this medium is replacing their elders' oral tradition, hence the 'invention of tradition'.

This book would, therefore, be of interest to ethnographic and other film makers, as well as to readers interested in traditional Yup'ik social organization, subsistence ideology, and cosmology; as well as those interested in modern Yup'ik religions (Eastern Orthodoxy and Moravian Christianity), contemporary political organization, known as the Yupiit Nation, and native views, in contrast to those of the state, concerning land management.

The material is readable, an accomplishment in itself, as the author has translated the details of scholarly anthropological, ethnohistorical, and even theological knowledge into well-written prose that maintains a propelling vitality from beginning to end. The book should therefore appeal to the general reader also, whose imagination could thereby be stimulated toward more accurate images regarding the Eskimos. A practical 'objective' of the author has thus, in fact, been achieved: 'to bridge the separation between informed scholarship and popular concepts' (p. xiii).

S. A. MOUSALIMAS

NORA MARKS DAUENHAUER and RICHARD DAUENHAUER (eds.), *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís: For Healing Our Spirit—Tlingit Oratory*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press/Juneau, AK: Sealaska Heritage Foundation 1990. xxxv, 569 pp., Illustrations, Map, Bibliography. No price given.

Tlingit oratory—from southeast Alaska: the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America—is given particular expression during memorials: hence, part of the meaning intrinsic to the book's title, *For Healing Our Spirit*. And the memorials remain very much at the heart of modern Tlingit life, as the dates of these selections attest; for most of the speeches date from 1968 to 1988, with two older examples recorded on wax cylinders in 1899.

The memorials, themselves comprised of traditional patterns of reciprocity between social moieties and clans, are described by the editors in a comprehensive, (153-page) introduction. The editors criticize the extension of the term 'potlatch' from literature about other Pacific Northwest Coast cultures and articulate 'a new and different understanding' (p. xi) by focusing on the healing aspects of these Tlingit memorials, for example, the 'talking of grief' through oratory. To place the speeches within their proper cultural setting, the editors further explain in detail Tlingit social structure and clan crests, the vocabulary of the Tlingit spirit world, and the treatment of spirits during the speeches.

The oratory itself is analysed as literature, with reference to its general structure, its use of simile and metaphor and its 'levels of meditation'. Each of the speeches is presented with numbered verses and with a transcription of the original Tlingit facing a page of English translation.

The editors are themselves Tlingit, one by birth and upbringing, the other by intermarriage and tribal adoption; and both are published poets in their own right. Is it necessary to highlight the value of this oratory and its explanation and translation by Tlingit poets? They explain the culturally specific elements of the memorials within Tlingit life and indicate the universality of meaning contained within the poetic speeches.

This book is the second in the series *Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature*. The first volume, *Haa Shuká: Our Ancestors* (1987), presents Tlingit oral narratives in the same manner.

S. A. MOUSALIMAS

MALCOLM CHAPMAN and HELEN MACBETH (eds.), *Food for Humanity: Cross-Disciplinary Readings*, Oxford: Centre for the Sciences of Food and Nutrition, Oxford Polytechnic, for the International Commission on the Anthropology of Food and Food Problems 1990. 164 pp. (For price see below.)

The study of food is such a potentially broad topic that all too often the investigation of its different aspects is fragmented into a host of separate sub-disciplines, only some of which are in any form of contact with one another. Yet the practitioners of these different academic specializations could benefit greatly from learning what their kith in other departments are up to. All the more reason, then, to cheer the publication of this compact collection of papers.

Disciplinary variety is the keynote of this edition: there are papers by social anthropologists, biological anthropologists, an aid worker, a developmental psychologist, an environmental biologist, a nutritionist, a geneticist, and an economist, as well as one by two students at Oxford Polytechnic who worked together with Oxfam on the formula for a high-energy biscuit to be used as part of famine-relief operations. The geographical scope of the contributions is similarly wide: from south Wales to sub-Saharan Africa, from India to Ethiopia, from Nepal to New Guinea, and so on.

The editors introduce and place each paper in its appropriate academic context. In this way, even those unfamiliar with, say, the intricacies of nutritional analysis or neurophysiology will still be able to learn something from each contribution. For this reason, this collection will be an invaluable addition to the reading list of any interdisciplinary course on the human sciences. It is available (for £8.95 plus £1 postage and packing) from the Centre for the Sciences of Food and Nutrition, Oxford Polytechnic, Gypsy Lane, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0BP.

JEREMY MACCLANCY

DAVID LEVINSON, *Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective* [Frontiers of Anthropology, 1; ser. ed. H. Russell Bernard], Newbury Park etc.: Sage Publications 1989. 108 pp., Appendixes, References, Indexes, Tables, Figures. £12.95.

The one unarguable description one could apply to this book is 'ambitious'. It sets out, no less, to 'address the worldwide reality of family violence' by means of a comparative study based on data held in a massive archive of ethnographic material, the Human Relations Area Files in New Haven, Connecticut. Levinson, who is vice-president of the company that created the files, uses a sample of ninety societies, ranging from Bushmen and small South American Indian tribes to Greeks and Malays, to test major theories about the causes of family violence and to suggest means by which it might be prevented or controlled.

The weaknesses of comparative studies of this nature are well known. The data are often unreliable or incomplete, huge differences in the cultural meaning of apparently similar practices are lost from view, and societies that may exhibit wide internal variations in behaviour have to be classified as though homogeneous. Thus decisions have to be made on whether, for example, 'wife-beating occurs in 49% or less of households', or on whether the mother or the father is the 'principal disciplinarian' in bringing up children, when the source of information may be an ethnographer without knowledge of the language or any particular interest in family relationships, and when perceptions of what is meant by wife-beating or discipline inevitably vary. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the enterprise is in vain. Cautiously as any finding has to be treated, the results are fascinating and, perhaps most importantly, suggest many areas for future researchers to explore in more depth in individual societies.

It is apparent, first of all, that while human beings have devised an impressive range of ways of inflicting pain and humiliation upon their families, from gang-rape of girls and the binding of body parts to the killing of wives and forced suicide of the aged, by far the most common form of family violence is wife-beating—be it as a result of sexual jealousy, as punishment, or simply at will. This is the phenomenon to which Levinson pays most attention, and he makes a significant contribution to the dauntingly complex debate about its causes; the sections on the physical punishment of children and other forms of violence are of marginal interest by comparison.

While not producing a fully integrated theory of wife-beating, the author puts forward what he calls a 'sexual inequality conflict model' of the phenomenon, reflecting his findings that its presence is predicted most strongly by four factors: sexual economic inequality, violence as a common means of conflict resolution throughout the society, male domestic authority, and restrictions on divorce for women. When all four are present, he claims, there is a strong likelihood that wife-beating will occur in a majority of households in the society.

The above is particularly interesting when read in conjunction with his analysis of 'wife-beating interventions'—i.e. the informal mechanisms used by each society to control or mitigate wife-beating, which may include, for example, immediate

intervention by neighbours, public censure of husbands and the possibility of divorce. The main conclusion is that, while outside assistance for the wife is the most effective, the availability of such assistance is less likely in societies with the economic and power relations that promote wife-beating in the first place. In other words, strategies to reduce violence by strengthening external intervention will have only limited effectiveness unless they are combined with fundamental changes in the underlying power structures. Feminists could hardly ask for a stronger endorsement of their fundamental argument that economic and social inequality between the sexes lies at the heart of violence against women.

One of the other interesting conclusions to emerge is that family violence is significantly correlated with the frequent use of violence as a means of conflict resolution in the wider society. The implication is that a general culture of violence develops in some societies, expressing itself in a variety of contexts. Conversely, Levinson identifies sixteen societies among his sample of ninety in which family violence of any kind is rare, noting that most of these also exhibit less violence in other social relationships. He gives as an example the Central Thai people, who apparently value individualism but at the same time generally behave in a 'polite, gentle and non-aggressive' manner with each other. Other striking features of the society are equitable divisions of labour and property holding between men and women. The costs include a high divorce rate, a surfeit of gossip and relatively frequent suicide attempts.

Ultimately, it has to be recognized, many of the conclusions depend upon shaky evidence, and the book is replete with crude generalizations about the nature of societies and the behaviour of their members. Even so, the enterprise is eminently worthwhile, both as a spur to further research and as a contribution in its own right to a most important debate.

MIKE MAGUIRE

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AFRICAN AESTHETICS: MOVING TO SEE THE MASK

NICOLAS ARGENTI

The world is like a mask dancing,
if you want to see it well you do not stand in one place.

Chinua Achebe

1. *Introduction*

THE highland region of Northwest Province, Cameroon, known as the Grassfields, is a homogeneous culture area made up of many small polities headed by chiefs, or kings, known locally as fons. Although the languages spoken in the area are all semi-Bantu, and the various chiefdoms have been coexisting, trading and intermarrying for centuries, group identities and languages are upheld extremely conservatively. Oral historical accounts of the migrations of the various groups—Chamba, Tikar, Bamum, Bamileke—and their supposed cultural origins

This essay is a revised version of part of a pre-fieldwork Ph.D. proposal presented to University College, London, in 1991. As such, it represents reflections on the approach I intended to take in the field to the material in question. I am indebted to Sally Chilver, Jeremy Coote, Susanne Küchler, David Napier, Michael Rowlands, Buck Schieffelin and many others for their comments on the research proposal itself and on earlier drafts of this essay. Having now (April 1992) spent three months in the field I am pleased to say that, thanks to their help, the ideas presented here do not appear wholly wide of the mark.

are maintained as meticulously as are the genealogies of clan heads, which go back on average six generations or so.

One of the characteristics noticed by the first Europeans to reach the area in 1889, and much commented on ever since, is the abundance of material culture, and the elaboration of everything from household utensils and furniture to royal portrait sculptures, architecture, secret society masks and divination figures. These objects were enthusiastically and exhaustively collected, first by German, then by French and English colonial officers, missionaries, explorers and ethnographers, and later by an international body of patrons, buying either in Cameroon or on the European and US markets. This has resulted in an enormous stock of Grassfields artefacts in Western museums. Both these and those still *in situ* have been subjected to analysis by researchers interested in the possible meanings to be found in the rich iconography of the material.

Throughout the Grassfields, decoration of carved and/or beaded artefacts is characterized by geometric designs associated with certain animals, which in turn signify status ascriptions or other associations in the social structure. The major designs are those of the stylized frog, spider, lizard, python, bush cow, elephant and leopard. The last four are associated especially with the fon, while the frog is often spoken of as symbolizing fertility and the spider as symbolizing the supernatural (through its connection with the ancestor spirits in the ground). The spider, accordingly, is used in divination practice throughout the area. All of these associations between animals, motifs and social or cosmological categories form part of the informants' overt knowledge, and can be elicited readily in interviews. Over the past twenty years or so, these motifs have been researched by anthropologists interested in linking them to Grassfields social structure. For example, the American scholars Christraud Geary (1983, 1988), Paul Gebauer (1979) and Tamara Northern (1973, 1988) have set out detailed schemas of the symbols involved and the attributions that informants in the Grassfields gave them. In addition, Harter, a medical doctor who spent a lot of time in the area in the 1950s, has produced a large, well-researched and lavishly illustrated volume on the subject (1986), which takes an art-historical approach to the appreciation of the artefacts. Harter concentrates on formal appreciation of the works he presents. Objects are assessed on the basis of finesse of execution, quality of the medium, balance, proportion etc. In this type of analysis the overt, verbalized and relatively static meanings of the objects are focused upon.

Brain and Pollock (1971) likewise conducted very good field research, but went further than Harter in firmly setting their analysis in the local context, providing a rich social backdrop for their account of the production of artefacts amongst the Bangwa people. However, their approach was also beholden to the art-historical tradition. This means that although their work is to a large degree 'contextualized' in the manner of Baxandall's (1972) analysis of Quattrocento Italian painting, the presuppositions of their research were still by and large ethnocentric ones. Although the rituals during which pieces are displayed are well described, Brain and Pollock's appreciation of a sculpture is couched in terms of

the 'beauty' of the object, the accomplishment of the carver's style and so on. As I shall try to show, however, these factors are not paramount in how the informants attribute value to a piece, in spite of the verbal testimony they might sometimes give.

In her publications on the Bamum, Geary (1983, 1988) goes further than any of the other authors in avoiding Western-orientated interpretations of the material. Rather, she offers the alternative model of a symbolic system based on the expression of power. Her view of material culture as of greater communicative than 'decorative' value has suggested the direction taken in this essay. Like Brain and Pollock, she has elicited many verbal statements regarding the relation of objects of material culture to status and political power. In this essay, I intend to proceed from her theoretical position—that iconography serves to preserve or enhance the power of the élite—to examine how objects signify and how they remain significant in a dynamic socio-political setting.

Most of the works on Grassfields iconography mentioned above tend not to go beyond an exegesis of the representational or symbolic meanings of artefacts based on taxonomic identifications obtained from informants. While such research has advanced the understanding of objects taken as isolated entities, as well as of museum collections and photographs, it does not address the question of the interactive social significance of the artefacts, beyond making a few suggestions as to the functional roles the objects might have played.¹

My aim in this essay is, therefore, a twofold one. On the one hand, I wish to show how the overt definitions and correspondences gathered in fieldwork can be used to examine a whole other set of associations and signifiers in a realm commonly represented as quite distinct from the aesthetic. On the other, I wish to suggest ways in which the prevalent views on African aesthetics, including the assumption that we are dealing with 'art', which is to be appreciated in 'aesthetic' terms, can be re-evaluated. The very concept of 'African aesthetics' is too often a transposition of Western aesthetic standards to non-Western artefacts, a concept born of the purely visual interest that European painters and sculptors working at the turn of the present century began to pay to this class of objects. As stated above, there have been some efforts at contextualization, but here too, once the material has been set in its geographical and social context it is too often assumed that it plays a similar or identical ideological role to that played by Western art in the analyst's own society.

1. One problem that this style of research does not elucidate, and which needs to be addressed, is that of the prevalence in museum collections of ambiguous representations (monkey/man, leopard/elephant) and of a number of exceptions to the norms of Grassfields iconography that would render the systems elaborated in many studies meaningless unless those exceptions are rejected out of hand as 'anomalies' atypical to the style. It is my opinion that such exceptions form part of a system of dissent from the *status quo* of Grassfields styles that could be examined (for example) in the light of the internal cultural differences between the Grassfields polities so emphasized by the people themselves (Warnier 1985).

It must be emphasized, however, that I do not intend to devalue Grassfields artefacts by reverting to pre-aesthetic, evolutionist models of non-Western artefacts as merely functional objects. The category of the aesthetic plays an important role in the model I shall use, but my purpose is to place the aesthetic in its social and political context. To this extent, I agree with Wolff's (1983: 21) timely exhortation that

We need to rescue some concept of the aesthetic both from the imperialistic claims of the most radical sociology of art which would equate aesthetic value with political worth, and also from the total relativism and incapacity into which the self-reflexivity urged by the social history of the arts and of criticism might lead aesthetics.

2. *The Theoretical Background*

Until relatively recently, the vast majority of studies of the material culture of West and Central Africa were based in a popular Kantian tradition and essentialist in outlook, viewing 'art' as a universal category in which 'gifted' individuals expressed purely aesthetic categories with little or no relation to a wider social context. It was in reaction to this tendency in the subject that studies emphasizing context above form began to emerge. While many innovative sociological studies of aesthetics were produced in the 1970s, Flores Fratto (1985), amongst others, has called for a return to form—a move that need not entail the essentialism and reductionism of earlier analyses, and which would avoid the early sociological tendency to reduce the field of material culture to the status quo of a static social structure: it has the potential to react against as well as represent it.

A balanced analysis of non-Western aesthetics must, therefore, be founded on a solid grounding in the social context in which the artefacts are produced and/or consumed, but will also consider seriously iconographic and formal questions and their relevance for the significance of the objects. What is needed at this stage is a theory that distances itself from the reductionist interpretation of material culture as the objectification of verbal thought processes and addresses the relation between the objective historical conditions within which the individual operates and his *experience* of cultural objects and events (or objects as events).²

2. See Deliss (1990: 11) for a perceptive description of the origins of the reductionist tendency in Western criticism and its perpetuation in the 'primitive' art market. Her suggestion that 'the Western definition of art falls into disarray the moment it attempts to come to terms with transformations which have taken place in these cultures since the 1960s and decolonization' is applicable to later explanatory models, both objectivist and subjectivist, that are steeped in or influenced by the Western tradition.

Jules-Rosette's 'aesthetics of liberation' (1984: 230) may prove to be seminal in forging a move away from art-historical analysis, for which an emphasis on context and process over iconography in the construction of meaning is vital. Armed against adopting any overly subjectivist or essentialist models, thanks to Jules-Rosette's explanation of the importance of economic conditions, this essay examines the possibilities for a return from her concentration on structures and market forces, and their implications for an extreme relativism, to the artefact. Artefact production and stylistic variation in the Grassfields *is* largely an interactive process, and following Jules-Rosette we can pose the question of the extent to which economic, social and political factors in the area determine form and meaning in objects of material culture, in comparison with the degree of influence that objects have on these factors. This question of the ratio of the direction of causation between historical conditions and individual ingenuity, action/reaction, begs investigation.

The art historian Michael Baxandall (1985) sees the artefact, not as a symbol, or concatenation of symbols, the hidden meaning of which it is his job to reveal, but rather as a record of the events leading to its existence. In this sense, his approach is akin to Kopytoff's (1986), with its concentration on the biography of objects as constitutive of their significance. This diachronic approach is one of the positive contributions that traditional art history makes to the study of material culture—provided it is seen, not as an explanation of an object's 'meaning', but is used rather as a means of examining the processes that lead to the affective and politically significant loading of an artefact.

Paintings are seen by Baxandall as acts, efforts in problem-solving that embody the strategic intention of the maker in response to the context in which he lives and works in specific, observable formal qualities: 'the maker of a picture or other historical artefact is a man addressing a problem of which his product is a finished and concrete solution' (1985: 14-15). This position suggests helpful ways in which to approach the analysis of artefacts in the field, through the elucidation of topical social problems, aspirations and goals, and their formal interpretation. Seeing the artefact occurring in time as the solution to a problem provides a means for acknowledging the maker's volition and intentionality in his particular response to a given set of circumstances. This view of the active position of the producer can be applied to the consumer in the Grassfields as well. In the case-studies below I try to point out how the movement (the process of acquisition, display and resale or gift) of artefacts is a complex, dynamic process of creative interaction in ways similar to the creation of artefacts. In both situations, what Wolff (1983: 19) calls the 'aesthetic disposition' is applied to socio-political ends, with respect both to the producer, and to what Eagleton calls the 'consumptional producer' (1976: 166-7) or active consumer. Seeing the work of a Grassfields sculptor, potter or weaver in terms of a 'pattern of intention', as Baxandall (1985: 70) does Piero della Francesca's painting, not only makes it possible to see innovation as dynamic response to the producer's environment, but also suggests that artefacts can supply

opportunities for performative constructions of meaning (or solutions) for subsequent owners and viewers, as well as for the original maker.

Objects signify in terms of the actors' experience, but this experience often reflects concerns that go beyond the aesthetic. In addressing the problem of why the aesthetic is especially suited to non-aesthetic roles, Baxandall goes beyond the maxim that objects are 'good to think with' to the suggestion that an artist's reactions to his aesthetic experiences can be translated into a coherent system of change in, or even subversion of, the status quo. I would stretch this proposition, with Kopytoff (1986) and Bourdieu (1972) in mind, and draw it into a properly anthropological theory, interpreting the stated goals of the actor in terms of his or her (partial) understanding of the objective historical conditions in which he or she operates.

This understanding is not of a literary or scientific nature, but rather an affective one, in which limitations are 'felt' rather than explicitly understood, in a way that could be achieved only through a process of aestheticization. A sense of the limitations of the sphere of possibilities, which Bourdieu (*ibid.*) terms 'habitus', is often expressed metaphorically in the material world, either as naturalized and self-evident, or as undesirable or risible and therefore contested. The case-studies below examine the ways in which the actor or interest group can or cannot reinterpret significant artefacts in a dynamic interaction with their own aspirations and historical situation. Küchler (1988) shows how this process occurred cross-culturally with respect to New Ireland *malangan* sculptures in the hands of Western art historians, dealers, collectors, curators and anthropologists. Even more significantly, however, she points out how the aesthetic plays an essential role in the creation of a memory that mediates the struggles for identity and land in northern New Ireland. The influence of this approach on my treatment of the case-studies that follow has been to demonstrate how undeniably aesthetic experiences can relate to social and political ends without losing their specificity in the process. Kopytoff (1986: 84) makes the related point that objects are not only ordered according to social rules, but are also constructed/reconstructed and defined/redefined by people, and that through this process people construct *themselves*.

Ever since the publication of *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* in 1972, Bourdieu's aim has been to transcend the objective/subjective, structuralist/phenomenological dichotomy with his 'praxiological' position, according to which the significance of artefacts is examined in terms of internal systems of homology and differentiation that provide the context for the expression and justification of systems of social distinction. The praxiological approach interprets the spoken, overt understanding of naturalized, seemingly arbitrary practices as a misrecognition of interested activity strongly influenced by forces in the agent's social environment, or *habitus*.

The aesthetic tastes and preferences of groups, as described by Bourdieu (1984), can be read as thrusts in a perpetual struggle to gain control of the social space within which relations of power are enacted. To this extent, Bourdieu's

study is very useful in getting at the heart of the social significance of art, yet without relinquishing a focus on the materiality of the artefact in question and on the strategic importance of perceptions and critical opinions in the ongoing formation of the social structure.

Bourdieu's real innovation resides in his moving away from abstract structuralist models without reverting to the political triviality implied in textual analyses of form and style as more or less self-referential systems (see e.g. Geertz 1983). Bourdieu achieves this by drawing attention to the process whereby objective historical realities are *felt* rather than thought, by being embodied or aestheticized as lived experience (and, therefore, made natural, self-evident) through patterns of behaviour and, by the same process, the aestheticization of material culture; that is to say, the creation of the impression that their social significance actually inheres in them, rather than being expressed merely through the systems of distinction that operate through them (1984: 29). This focus on the social relations underlying the creation of meaning, and the means by which Bourdieu transcends the subjective/objective opposition, neither alternative of which is finally satisfactory in accounting for the emotional and political value of material culture in West Africa, is the most important aspect of his theory for the problem at hand.

Bourdieu's aversion to 'subjectivist' aesthetic analyses pushes him too far along his continuum to take seriously into consideration individual strategies. However, a focus on such strategies makes it possible to examine—without necessarily falling prey to phenomenological description—the construction of social practice and political realities and their emergence from the fundamental level of individual discourse about, and use of, artefacts; i.e. the constant invention and creation of the habitus through the created world rather than its reproduction.

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital (1972) is also very useful for building an anthropological understanding of material culture. It sets the aesthetic sphere firmly within the grasp of anthropological enquiry by revealing the vital importance of that which is usually misrecognized in Western academia, and in the West more generally, as distanced from necessity when, in fact, it is so often at the crux of the struggle of groups and individuals for self-representation and self-definition.³ In fact, the social drive to maximize symbolic capital, whether

3. The present situation in the British art world is a good example. Private companies are negotiating for greater involvement; a situation in which they would not only sponsor independently produced works and exhibitions but actually be included in planning them from the earliest stages of production and design. According to a report in the *Independent* newspaper, the audience at a BBC Radio 4 debate on the arts gasped when John Owens, director-general of the Building Employers' Federation and a member of the council of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, addressed them in the following terms: 'Sponsorship is not a charitable activity; it is a marketing activity. But the arts organisations are producer-led. They think first of an exhibition...and then they go to the sponsor. If they went to the people who provide the sponsorship at an early stage and discussed with them how to meet their marketing needs, there would be more sponsorship' (quoted in Lister 1992). The strong emotive reaction

'conscious or unconscious' (1972: 81), permits Bourdieu to see behaviour as under the control of the agent while at the same time emphasizing the directed and directing nature of practice. Furthermore, the notion of symbolic capital as misrecognized, or only partially apprehended, by the actor-in-time addresses the question of why the sphere of material culture should be chosen over a verbal medium: he/she can move within it according to implicit or ambiguous feelings or preferences, which are not thought out explicitly enough to be verbalized but which nevertheless can form the basis of a rational, working system of practices that are made all the more effective through their aestheticized self-evidence.

The specificity of aesthetic experience that Bourdieu shies away from recognizing can actually be reconciled with the sociological significance of aesthetic objects. In Wolff's words, 'the experience and evaluation of art are socially and ideologically situated and constructed, and at the same time irreducible to the social or the ideological' (1983: 84). With respect to the contemporary use of material culture artefacts in West Africa, it need not be idealistic or essentialist to acknowledge the power for social change of the maker and consumer of art 'as a kind of rhetoric, a mechanism by which people may influence, persuade, define or redefine the social world around them' (Flores Fratto 1985: 32). Picton exemplifies this point in a study of the connotations of the hoe for the Ebira: 'a simple "utilitarian" thing turns out to have wide-ranging "symbolic" connotations. We see the hoe transformed thereby, though it would be difficult to talk in this way in Ebira for our "seeing" is so taken for granted as to render such discourse meaningless' (Picton 1990: 56).

Meaning, or rather significance, lies not in the objective historical conditions of an artefact, nor in a set of supposedly disinterested aesthetic considerations of the maker's, but rather in the *relations between* the object, the maker, the consumer and their ever-changing socio-political conditions. This is not a structuralist theory of meaning, arising from the relations of parts to each other in an aesthetic system, but rather a reconstruction of the social significance of the artefact, and those involved with it, from the way individuals interact with and succeed in causing others to react to it for specific ends. The aim of the present essay is to show how this reconstruction can address 'humanity's most basic work of invention and freedom' (Flores Fratto 1985: 38) in relation to the influence of the 'structured and structuring environment' (Bourdieu 1972: 174-5; 1990: 55-6).

While acknowledging Deliss's attack (1990: 5) on the fetishization of the individual that runs through the art-historical tradition, I should stress that my emphasis on the importance of acknowledging the individual does not stem from

of the public to these sallies from the corporate world reveals well the prevalent notion in the West that aesthetics is, or ought to be, a quasi-sacred field separate from economics. Although the marriage of the two categories of art and socio-economic relations is seldom so gross as this example implies, the hermetic separation of the two is a culturally specific ideal that even in the West only emerged in the nineteenth century.

a wish to fetishize his or her material production as imbued with a perfectly self-contained ‘gift’ or mark of ‘genius’, but rather to emphasize the formative relation between the affective potential of artefacts and the historical conditions in which they operate. It is only by concentrating on the individual’s embodied understanding of the historical conditions (his experience of them, or, more exactly, his sense of the self-evidence of the restrictions they place on his activities), in this case evinced in his or her material production and form of consumption, that the dual current of formative influence running between the actor and his or her social structure is to be understood. The field of aesthetic statements and interactions thus built up forms a discourse that is both enriching and enriched by its affinity to separate social and political fields of discourse.

Grassfields iconography represents a rich field for interpretation, but the most significant ‘meanings’ to be drawn from it are not those that the ethnographer will initially elicit by questioning informants. The apparent banality of single-stranded ascriptions of signifying relations between certain geometric designs and their equivalents in the animal kingdom needs to be reconciled with the very real fear, respect and strong emotion with which the people of the Grassfields respond to the sudden appearance of a mask or a ‘thing of the palace’. These single-stranded ascriptions, although they certainly exist as normative ideas, do not suffice to explain the changes that occur regularly in Grassfields art—changes that emphasize the appropriation of ‘foreign’ objects, whether from the West or from other parts of West Africa. The ascription of unilineal correlations between the iconography and certain animal species is not an end in itself, but rather instrumental in the creation of a structure of greater significance. In other words, the verbal statements regarding the material elicited by ethnographers to date are only markers, instrumental as labels for identifying designs and placing them in a cosmological schema for future reference.

The failure of the meaning-centred approach to account for the emotive value and immediacy of aesthetic objects—what Wolff (1983: 84) and Fuller (1980) refer to as the ‘specificity’ of art—or for their dynamic movement and transformation in the Grassfields, points to the need for a theory that will account for these shortcomings. In the next section I shall try to show how the immediacy of the aesthetic and its dynamism make it an optimal field of discourse in which to represent and affect the socio-political field. In this manner, with the help of material from Brain and Pollock’s *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture* (1972) and an article by Eugenia Shanklin on the Afo-a-Kom (1990), I hope to show that the material culture of the Grassfields is still more versatile and sophisticated than previous analyses have suggested; and perhaps to point the way to a more generalizable approach to West African material culture. The example from *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture* illustrates the point that ‘meanings’ elicited through verbal statements and Western art-historical exegesis furnish only the markers upon which an aesthetics of interaction is based. Eugenia Shanklin’s article is then referred to in order to illustrate how these markers are used in strategies serving political ends.

3. *Bangwa Sculpture*

In *Bangwa Funerary Sculpture*, Brain and Pollock offer a good example of the disjunction that results from analysing non-Western artefacts according to Western values. For example, the statement that 'some Bangwa pieces in European museums are no more distinguished than rough-hewn carvings made by youths to pass away a few minutes' (1972: 60) may be true from the sculptor's point of view but it is not pertinent in social terms since it is not its execution that lends a piece its importance. Again, in a comparison between two sculptures (*ibid.*: 61, plates 31 and 32) the authors describe how one of them is badly carved, 'an example of uncertain, unskilled workmanship' (*ibid.*: 60). The authors realize that this does not have anything to do with the age of the object or declining standards, since the thing in question is 'a highly valued old work' (*ibid.*), but they go on to describe the nefarious effect of European interest in old-looking carvings as the root of the problem of alleged shoddy workmanship. Their acceptance of European standards at face value does not sit comfortably next to their own admission that aesthetic criteria are not pertinent in assessing a piece's value in the Grassfields. This is evident in the statement, which the authors themselves supply (*ibid.*: 64), that

to many Bangwa what the European is buying is not an object of aesthetic interest; they do not believe that a night mask is really going to sit in a museum for people to stare at. For them, the huge prices are being paid for their supernatural powers, which the ancient ritual experts gave them and which will be used to their advantage by the Europeans.

What is needed for a sociological analysis of West African artefacts is not an assessment of quality based upon Western standards, but a contextualized exegesis of the dynamic creation of significance—both evaluative and strategic, or socio-political—in a diachronic model.

This accords with my view that Grassfields sculpture is not judged indigenous-ly on aesthetic criteria in the conventional sense of the term. Rather, there is an alternative interpretation of value, linked to the maximization of symbolic capital on several levels, that is often expressed in the literature on the Grassfields, and by informants themselves, as power. Power in the Grassfields is strongly associated with masks, divination figures and other objects. It is not conceptualized in an abstracted, politico-theoretical form, but *experienced* as the fear of certain objects that have undergone ritual processes and interdictions, and embodied in ways of acting, social choreography, and so on. The examples that follow are attempts at interpreting Grassfields aesthetic notions as objectifications of social, political and cosmological categories and values in the production, display and movement between owners of artefacts.

Ceremonies and rituals are not inherently empowering (although they may be spoken of as such). Nor is the carver's product inherently powerful, although it is experienced as such through processes of aestheticization and objectification. The respect in which a secret society sculpture or royal portrait eventually comes

to be held is derived from, and serves as shorthand for, its strategic significance (defined as the opportunities for the accumulation of symbolic capital or changes in the social structure to which an object can be applied). The experience of this power, embodied as fear and respect, emphasizes the particularization of the artefact, which is singled out as extraordinary in its treatment from then on. It is customarily hidden from the sight of all but a few powerful initiates for most of the year and only taken out for certain rituals, or in such exceptional circumstances as war or regulatory society activities. This exceptional treatment is likely to lend a further significance to the object, or to validate its original status, through its individualization in the creation of a biography (Kopytoff 1986).

These ceremonies, like the objects displayed during them, are not significant individually, but form part of a process of signification. They provide the site for a field of reasoning that is quite separate from the sphere of oral communication, and which is not generally understood through consecutive reasoning but emotionally experienced by the association of the artefact with the experiences of the individual, for example, of his or her subordination to and/or implementation of power. This means that when assessing the value of a piece, a Bangwa informant will be less concerned with its execution than with its biography. It is not aesthetic standards that will constitute the pertinent criteria for the elaboration of its significance, but, on the one hand, the biographical details concerning whether or not the piece has been sacralized, which secret society it belongs to, which rituals it has been displayed in, how many times it has proved its efficacy, and, on the other hand, formal questions regarding its 'fit' in the style category in which it is placed and how conformist or subversive of the dominant style it is. Biography and form are two fields regarding which a social and political discourse can be engaged in through artefacts.

The distinction between what the maker and the consumers see in a single artefact is best examined by qualifying the distinction between these two categories. The formal elements of an artefact comprise the sphere in which the maker exercises his will *vis-à-vis* the social structure, while his critical success or failure in the eyes of the dominant culture, his social career and the biography elaborated around his product after it leaves his ownership are the points at which the consumer takes over the creative stance in relation to the artefact and becomes a producer in his or her own right—the points at which production and consumption merge in a single creative process.⁴ Secrecy and regularized ritual help to form the framework within which objects become emotionally loaded for their viewers. The exceptionality of revelation, the brief glimpse of the mask or royal figure controlled by a few individuals, mark those objects that have been sacralized over those that have not and help to sustain or challenge the existing tradition. Within the category of those that have, secrecy also marks those that are more effective, and thus more powerful.

4. This idea is analogous to Barthes' active reader (1970) who structures the text as much as the text affects him; the signification flows in both directions.

If we accept this view of things, for the time being at least, many of the statements that Brain and Pollock make come to fit more neatly into place. It becomes understandable, for example, that the only people assessing sculptural work on purely formal grounds are the sculptors themselves—from whom much of the authors' data in fact came. The sculptors are the only ones concerned with producing the raw material that is seen by the rest of the society as unfinished until consecrated by the ritual experts, at which stage supplementary decoration and colour is often added. Only at this stage does the object assume its full identity and integrity. Before this, all sculptures form part of the historically undifferentiated production of the sculptor. Furthermore, we can easily understand how the formally awkward piece in Brain and Pollock's plate 32 (1972: 61) could be valued more highly than its more finely carved counterpart in their plate 31 (*ibid.*). When biography is the main criterion of significance, the question of value depends upon the history or historicization of the piece. This, rather than its formal characteristics, is what will dictate the way it is perceived.

The greater value of the rougher piece can also be explained formally, in terms of its liminality in relation to the accepted category of such works. The carver's behaviour is definitely extraordinary according to the authors' informants (*ibid.*: 43). Although Brain and Pollock interpret this according to the modern Western perception of artists as Bohemian types, all these (selective) details add up to a social construction of the carver Atem as a liminal character, outside the bounds of ordinary Bangwa behaviour. Similarly, Ben, another well-known Bangwa carver, 'like many other artists...is considered odd by his friends and relatives' (*ibid.*: 44). This liminality is emphasized by the fact that most carvers are of noble birth. Indeed, carving is one of the few occupations that a noble can be involved in without adversely affecting his status (which leads to questions outside the scope of this essay regarding the occult power of the nobles of the Grassfields). This liminality is not surprising when the artisan is considered in terms of the extraordinariness of his production. He whose role it is to produce the raw material of what will become objects of such arresting strategic and emotional salience is bound to be set apart to some degree.

The evidence that Brain and Pollock supply concerning the constant innovation of Bangwa carvers is also interesting in this vein. Atem is reportedly 'apt to be swept up by any fad' (*ibid.*: 43) and 'new ideas and foreign paints and ornaments may be added [to the artefacts] without upsetting traditions' (*ibid.*: 59). This liberal attitude extends even to the post-modernist 'bricolage' of using industrially produced plastic dolls and guardsmen's bearskins in dances. Considering the generally conservative self-representation of the Grassfields people, however, and their emphasis on tradition and ancestry, the carver finds himself trapped between the horns of a dilemma: to provide a conservative society with a liberal, dynamic interpretation of what 'good sculpture' is, yet without transgressing the stylistic norms to such an extent as to isolate his work from references to them, thus attracting ridicule or rejection. Forced to walk this dangerous line, the carver is marginalized by the mainstream of society. Both horns of this dilemma do,

however, stem from the same impulse: that of local differentiation within an otherwise homogeneous cultural superstructure.

This impulse to differentiate is expressed at the local level of chiefdom affiliation, as well as at the national level of the Francophone/Anglophone division, an increasingly hot issue in Cameroon that forms the tacit or overt basis for much of the political struggle occurring in the country. Just as the preservation of discrete languages and distinct customs serves this end, so does the ongoing creation of difference through varied styles in the production/consumption of artefacts of material culture. Change and continuity can thus both be applied to the same ends, and traditionalism and iconoclasm can serve equally well as strategies of dissent from the dominant order.

Having posited the particularization of the artefact—the marking of its identity—as a major aspect of the significance of the performance in which it is involved, it remains for me to explain the pertinence of this process. In the first place, meaning in the conventional, overt sense is rejected in favour of a more dynamic, plastic model. According to this analysis, the object accumulates significance through its biography as well as through its form. To a certain extent, form will influence subsequent biography, but the artist is not the only agent engendering strategies through the use of material culture. Those who interact with it after him also can. The following example, taken from an article by Eugenia Shanklin on a commemorative sculpture from the chiefdom of Kom, illustrates the process by which individuals can appropriate an object at any stage after its production and recreate it to strategic ends.

4. *The Afo-a-Kom*

The Afo-a-Kom was stolen from the chiefdom of Kom in the Cameroon Grassfields in the early 1970s and eventually turned up for sale at a prestigious New York art gallery in 1973, at which stage the *New York Times* began to publicize certain details of the sculpture's history. The articles, along with others in *Esquire* and *National Geographic* (for specific references, see Shanklin 1990: 96) precipitated a national appeal for the restitution of the sculpture to its place of origin. Even the name Afo-a-Kom, 'Thing of Kom', was only applied to the object by a Cameroonian diplomat in the United States after the matter was making headlines. Thus we can see from the outset that the object itself, let alone the circumstances of its appropriation, is extremely ambiguous.

In her article Shanklin examines the nature of this ambiguity by elucidating the (very different) perceptions of the Afo-a-Kom that various interest groups promoted during the course of negotiations for its return to Kom. In the United States, journalists working for the *New York Times* and staff of the National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC, formed a liberal pressure group

campaigning for the return of the sculpture to Kom. The Cameroonian central government in Yaoundé, initially represented by its embassy in Washington, formed another interest group, while the fon—and eventually the people—of Kom formed a third group. When the Americans began to campaign for the return of the object on the grounds of its ‘sacred’ significance to the benighted people of Kom, the local fon quickly capitalized on this American tendency to paternalism by spreading rumours of local droughts, crop failures, mass depression and hysteria, all associated by the local people with the loss of the Afo-a-Kom. Ostensibly, he did this with the object of pushing the Americans in the direction they were already showing signs of falling: of returning the object as a means of enhancing their self-image of benevolence and open-minded honesty.

By getting them to return the object, however, the fon realized he would be increasing his prestige enormously at both the local and national levels by having tricked the powerful, rich Americans into giving up the Afo-a-Kom to a tiny African chiefdom. The Cameroonian central government, who constantly urge national unity over local identity in the fledgling independent republic, were very much opposed to this interpretation of events. To them, the Afo-a-Kom became an embarrassment and a nuisance. Seeing that the fon was using it to gain prestige for one ethnic group, and hoping to diffuse the situation, they tried, but eventually failed, to exhibit the Afo-a-Kom in Yaoundé as a *national* treasure belonging to Cameroon as a whole.

Apart from providing an example of radically divergent ideologies regarding objects of material culture in separate societies with differing cosmologies and expectations, what is most interesting about this chain of events, in the context of this essay, is the view of the Afo-a-Kom taken by the fon and people of Kom. Shanklin’s first point is that the rumours of crop failures and other cataclysmic premonitions were all a tongue-in-cheek construction of the fon’s, designed for the benefit of the American press with the aim of getting the object returned. The people of Kom, as Shanklin explains, see royal memorial sculptures as highly important, and even powerful, but not in any sense divine or sacred. This is very clearly illustrated by an anecdote told me by E. M. Chilver, who was in the Grassfields in 1963 with Phyllis Kaberry. On a visit to the palace in Kom, they saw the Afo-a-Kom lying face down on the muddy floor of one of the compound huts, its decorative bead covering strewn about the place. When Mrs Chilver asked what it was, she was given the unceremonious reply: ‘furniture’. This episode demonstrates perfectly how an artefact can repeatedly pass in and out of a state of emotive salience according to its treatment. The Afo-a-Kom may have fallen out of use, or simply been seen by Chilver at a time of year during which its significance was dormant, waiting to be activated through annual display, but it gained power immeasurably as it came to be viewed in the context of the events developing around its life history.

The precedent for the sense of the importance of the Afo-a-Kom is, however, rooted in the secrecy with which such objects are usually treated. Such things are traditionally closely guarded by a small group of élite palace officials, who

undergo rites to enable them to withstand the object's power and display it only once or twice a year to the general populace. Before the return of the Afo-a-Kom from New York, most of the people of Kom had in fact never laid eyes on it. The secrecy surrounding the object, and the ritualized respect with which it was treated led to its perception as a thing of great power. But what did the power itself signify?

The explanation that something has some attribute X or Y because it is treated as if it does seems tautologous. As with the Bangwa case, however, the power of the object stems from its fit in a category of objects that embody aestheticized social values. The discourse an artefact is engaged in begins with its formal relation to its style category (the class of objects it is perceived as belonging to): a relation that carries the potential to signify. This potential can be exploited through the elaboration of events in the biography of the object by interested individuals and groups. Being emotively charged, yet ambiguous enough to be applied to changing contexts, these objects represent valuable opportunities for appropriation to strategic ends.

This is not the case, however, if treating something in one way conveys some message on a different level. In the case of the Afo-a-Kom, what is most significant about the high degree of respect surrounding the object is the emotional intensity generated around it. This is not to say that some specific message is thus communicated, but rather that *whatever* message is associated with the Afo-a-Kom will bear the poignancy and vividness of something deeply felt: the object turns any matter associated with it into a 'hot' issue. Given this state of affairs, it is very much in the interests of anyone trying to further his or her ends to associate such an emotively charged object as the Afo-a-Kom with them, thus lending a saliency and vindication to the matter at hand.

This is exactly what the fon of Kom did so successfully when he plotted for the return of the 'sacred' object. Suddenly, an emotionally loaded object came to be associated with the whole question of identity, boundary and power in the Cameroon Grassfields, giving the fon an extremely powerful symbol with which to enhance his local and national prestige and influence. In this situation, it is hardly surprising that the central government was so opposed to the organization of a major public ceremony welcoming the object back to Kom—a position which the American escorts of the artefact did not understand and about which they registered great frustration.

Whatever was stressed in the fon's interpretation of the Afo-a-Kom, 'aesthetic' consideration of the object in the conventional sense of the term was pretty low down the scale, though this is not to say that matters of form were not important. The fact is that the artefact had to conform, or at least relate, to the norms of a certain category of Grassfields sculpture before it could be mobilized successfully to political ends as an emotionally salient marker. Given the object's value as a good example of a particular category of Grassfields aesthetics, the pertinent but ambiguous, relative and ephemeral constructs that define the region of a symbolic dynamics of politics, could then be engendered. The biography of the object is

related to its form in the same way as its consumer is to its producer. In both cases, the seeming distinction gives way to a diachronic perspective that treats both sides of the syllogism as strategies carried out by individuals in interaction with the social structure.

Concerning the Afo-a-Kom then, the overt significance of ancestral association, timelessness and allusion to the history of the people of Kom was enormously enhanced by the object's peregrination through the prestigious art establishments of the First World, but dependent upon the niche the artefact occupied in the tradition as a fine example of a relatively rare style. At the ground-level understanding of the object, this chain of events enriched the Afo-a-Kom's biography beyond measure, thus increasing its power accordingly. This understanding of the artefact is clearly expressed by Shanklin (1990: 67):

In Kom eyes, the statues are not sacred but they do have great power, and their power makes them objects of reverence, beyond monetary value...Whoever carved them [the Ufwu-A-Kom statues, of which the Afo-a-Kom is one] they are products of the reign of the most powerful Kom Fon; their power derives from his aegis and from the reverence for age that is characteristic of Kom culture.

This power can be seen as resulting from an objectification of the symbolic value of the object as an opportunity for the enactment of strategies by interested individuals and groups. This is not to say, however, that the formal significance is impassively constituted by the social structure; rather, all later elaborations depend primarily on what they can signify from the raw material of the form and iconography of the object, their relation to the categories they operate in, and the emotions consequently attached to them from their original production. No artefact is a *tabula rasa*; this is at the heart of the connection between one's personal experience of the artefact and the objectification of one's objective historical conditions.

Shanklin goes on to describe how the death of Fon Nsom in 1974 was attributed to the Afo-a-Kom, which he set eyes upon twice, whereas a fon is only ever meant to see it once during his reign. In this process of emotional loading, the biography of the object funnels attention toward it. A progression from this process into higher levels of metaphor and abstraction plays upon the fit of the object in its formal category and on its biography as a springboard for a wider system of social and political ramifications, which validate the emotional salience of the artefact. It would not be out of keeping, therefore, if the story of the Afo-a-Kom were seen on this sliding scale as at once part of a process of historicization and (at least originally) as an appropriation of the object to a specific interest or strategy.

It follows from this that elaborated significance is not tied inherently to the stuff of the artefacts that it springs from, and that it is versatile and dynamic, forming part of a complex of construction and reconstruction that works in a triangle of influence between form, biography and individual and group strategies. This is the sense in which Chinua Achebe's dictum (1988: 365) that to get a good

view of the world or of a mask, one should not stand in one place is most apposite. Just as one needs to move around the mask, which is also moving, to see it in its three dimensions, so too does one need to look at artefacts in the Grassfields from the vantage-points of various fields of discourse, or struggles in the wider social fabric, to grasp the full significance of their aesthetic.

5. Conclusion

In dealing in this essay with the interactive significance attributed to artefacts in the Grassfields, sometimes without reference to iconographical factors, the nature of the object as signifier may at times have seemed arbitrary: arguments emphasizing individual volition and the treatment of artefacts for maximization of symbolic capital in dynamic situations may have obscured formal considerations. Indeed, one could be led to wonder what is so important about particular artefacts, when their significance seems to hinge upon occurrences not directly related to their form. Why did a certain statue make a better signifier than any other one, or for that matter, than a Ghanaian plastic doll or a Chinese enamel pot? There must, in the end, be something about the signifier itself that is significant—or which makes it a particularly apt vehicle for signification—or else the whole question of the arbitrary attribution of meaning founders in the lack of particularity of the single artefact.

Emotionally loaded objects are largely self-justifying: because they frighten, many mysterious occurrences are explained in terms of them; and because of the rich historiographies thus built up around them, they are frightening. It is not sufficient, when seeking to understand West African iconography, to look at the single example, gather oral testimony on it from informants in the field, and elaborate a system, however clever, from the verbal data. Systems elaborated from the standpoint of symbols, coded meanings and textual analysis (such as historical, art-historical, functionalist and structural-functional systems) are doomed to reveal only part of an artefact's social significance. An exegesis from semantic material, although essential to an understanding of the significance of artefacts, will never be sufficient if, as I have argued above, the more influential (or affective and thereby effective) aspects of decorated objects are not part of the verbalized sphere of communication of the informants, but rather embodied by them as the naturalized experience of the objective historical conditions in which they interact.

I have tried to argue that elements from all the theories discussed in section 2 above can be helpful in finding the significant continuities and differences in the designs, as well as in the biographies of objects in dynamic historical conditions. It is in the endless possibilities of both form and biography that each artefact's signifying integrity is to be found. The full significance, from an anthropological

perspective; of the signifying integrity of an object will not be apprehended with respect to the single object, nor to the relations of one object with its style category (form) or its life history alone. Rather, I have tried to advocate that it is through a diachronic study of the relationship between a style category and the objective conditions in terms of which that category gains its salience—and which can themselves be affected by changes in the category effected by producers and consumers, or *productive consumers*, in the society—that an understanding of an object's socio-historical significance is to be reached.

The last paragraph of section 2 above suggests that there are parallels to this approach that could be applied fruitfully to the analysis of ceremonial and performance in Africa, both of which are so intimately related with artefacts. Again, it is not the single event, or parts of it, that are significant in anything but a trivial way. For one thing, and this essay could be criticized for failing to do this, it is essential to recognize the enriching echoes and interrelations between aesthetic fields in a community—masking and dancing or masking and music—as well as between these aesthetic fields and the socio-political realm. Secondly, the significance of an aesthetic field lies largely in the opportunities that alterations in its performance, or control of its production and consumption, provide not only for reflecting but also for constructing and reconstructing the social and political conditions of the interested individuals and groups.

Finally, amongst the many ends left untied here, three questions are particularly in need of attention. First there is the means by which the artefacts that we have been discussing come to be appropriated by the various élite groups in the Grassfields (or elsewhere). Secondly (though this is perhaps not a separate question), how they manage to model the thing to their intentions more or less successfully in different situations. And thirdly, how this relates to the maintenance or alteration of power relations. These questions could lead to more concrete ones regarding the creation and maintenance of difference and social closure, and how transgressions of these conservative practices come to be accepted or rejected through local systems of criticism, which are the observable face of socio-historical change.

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PROLEGOMENA TO ANALYSES OF CHANGES IN ASPECTS OF BALINESE LIFE ON LOMBOK

ANDREW DUFF-COOPER

Importance resides not in things but in people;
something is important because someone makes it important.

Hocart

I

IN the first place, the present study considers what Western academics have suggested animates Balinese social life. This consideration is followed by accounts

Editors' note: This article was submitted to *JASO* in May 1991 and accepted for publication a few days before Dr Duff-Cooper's death on 4 August 1991. It is published here with the kind permission of his family and of the executor of his literary estate, Dr. Gerd Baumann, who has also approved the edited version of the text for publication. In accordance with the author's wishes a copy of the unedited text, along with a number of Dr Duff-Cooper's other papers, will be deposited with the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, University of Leiden.

Field research in Pagutan, western Lombok, was carried out for about 21 months between 1979 and 1981 with the financial support of the Social Science Research Council, the Emslie Horniman Anthropological Scholarship Fund, and the Philip Bagby Fund of the University of Oxford, and under the auspices of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (LIPI). I am indebted to these bodies and to my hosts in Pagutan.

of what each of four Balinese people might respond to the question, 'How do you construe the vitality and dynamism of your form of life?' The final section assesses what these people's views have to say about an evolutionary or processual model of Balinese life on Lombok. Unless specified or otherwise clear in what follows, 'Balinese' refers to that form of life.

II

Nearly thirty years ago, to go back no further, it was asserted that 'rivalry for prestige (in its purest sense, without economic perquisites) is an exceedingly important element in the Balinese social climate' (H. Geertz 1963: 53). Almost fifteen years later this assertion, it seems, had become: 'it is the guaranteed lag in the hoped-for congruence of prestige and power that animates [Balinese] social life' (Boon 1977: 184). Not quite the same period elapses and this 'very important point' is rendered into other words as: 'the vitality and dynamism of Balinese social life is dependent on the gap between "pragmatically earned versus divinely endowed status"' (Howe 1989: 67).

The scenario envisaged is, for example, as follows. Groups of people, or individuals, compete for prestige, status and power. Those who come out on top may be of a less fine estate (*bangsa*) or, within one estate, of a less fine rank than those who do not. It is this disjuncture that is said to animate and to be the driving-force of Balinese social life; and not only the disjuncture, but also the processes that lead to it, accompanied as they are by changing alliances as others hitch themselves to those perceived to be on the way up or detach themselves from those seen to be going down (see, for example, Schulte Nordholt 1980; C. Geertz 1980).

An important way of dealing with that disjuncture is to claim a finer title, and its trappings, as defined by the system of the four estates (*catur bangsa*: Brahmana, Ksatrya, Wesia, Sudra, from finest to least fine). Thus Howe suggests (1989: 67) that

the central aspect of the status hierarchy is not that it unequivocally fixes everyone's position, but rather the opposite: simultaneously it provides both a framework within which the divergence between ritual status and political power can be understood, and also a set of cultural rules by which attempts can be made to reduce the incongruence.

Howe is the latest in a line of writers (e.g. Geertz and Geertz 1975: 122; Boon 1977, ch. 8; C. Geertz 1980; Schulte Nordholt 1986) who want it that within and among the Ksatrya, Wesia and Sudra estates there has always existed title mobility, that the estates have never constituted closed groups, but that the view that they

do and did is a result of Dutch administrators projecting a view of Indian caste on to Bali.¹

In a recent study (Duff-Cooper 1991a) I argue against the contention that people's positions are not unequivocally fixed within one of the four estates—which is not to argue that the four main categories are closed groups—on a number of theoretical and empirical grounds. Prime among these are that if they were not, the divergence (incongruence, disjunction) referred to could not be perceived as such and the second-order functions pinpointed by Howe could not operate; and that I was taught on Lombok that one's position or place (*linggih/tegak*)² was decided by birth.

However, I do not suggest there, but do now, that Howe and Boon, to concentrate on these two theorists, build a theory of change into their opinions about present-day Balinese social life. In the former, change is reliant upon the motivation of individuals (e.g. Howe 1989: 64, 67-9). This reliance is odd, and might be judged disastrous, in explaining aspects of a form of life where 'a notion of individualism of the western kind' (*ibid.*: 50) is generally not evinced (see Duff-Cooper 1985a). In the latter, it was noted, the vitality and driving-force of Balinese social life is dependent on the disjunction (lag) referred to. It is not clear whether the relationship referred to is supposed to be causal. If it is, it is then unlikely in the extreme that the lag should play the role in Balinese life ascribed to it: 'the idea of a single efficient cause does not appear to have been fruitful, or even thought likely to be so, in any discipline at all' (Needham 1962: 122); and furthermore it might be thought inapplicable, again, to Balinese ideology (ideas and values in social action), which is seemingly not causal in character (Duff-Cooper 1986a; Guermonprez 1987: 110). If the relationship is not supposed to be causal, Boon does not say what he considers it to be. We could guess—but neither way is satisfactory.

These writers, and others, also evince the familiar functional bias of sociologistic approaches and the generally concomitant prejudice that accords priority to politico-economic processes and places cosmology at an explanatory remove—or else, which is as unhelpful, extracts cosmology from the rest of Balinese life and places it apart from other aspects of it. Such procedures are again not consonant with Balinese ideology, which—its students often repeat in line with what the Balinese constantly aver one way or another, but which seems not to have been heard by those students (cf. e.g. Schaareman 1986: 142-3)—is pervaded by 'religious' ideas.

Our theorists, then, repeatedly refer to Balinese social life, or to aspects of it, as though this were a substantial unit. Apart from reference almost never being

1. See, for example, Guermonprez 1987: 159 n. 34. Guermonprez is inexact in stating that Boon was the first to draw attention to these matters, as the Geertz and Geertz reference shows.

2. The first word given in this way here and below is the fine (*alus*) Balinese, the second, the coarse (*kasar*) Balinese.

made to the Balinese of Lombok or of Sulawesi, say, who are, of course, as much Balinese as the Balinese of Bali, if their wholly justified claims are taken seriously; and apart from us not knowing what Balinese social life is like in many places, such an approach ignores what they say—‘different village, different *adat*’—amply borne out by Korn (1932; see also e.g. C. Geertz 1959: 991, 1964: 32). Or if difference is recognized, then for the sake of theoretical novelty, as it seems to be, the data are deformed by glossing over difference and concocting three types that are supposed to be evinced on Bali along geographical lines (e.g. Howe 1989: *passim*; Korn 1932: 77, 179; cf. Schaareman 1986: 2). Such a procedure does not work (Duff-Cooper 1990a), and again it takes no real heed of the differences between what different Balinese people at different times and in different places say and do.

Moreover, the fixation with those Balinese who, like the Gianyar dynasty, appear to have improved their social position, or who, like the Karangasem dynasty and the Pandé Tusan, seem to have lost ground, leaves out of account the very large number of Balinese people who (the ones I know at any rate) deprecate such self-regarding manipulations of the system (in the former case) and whose own lives are spent simply trying their upmost to secure them within the constraints imposed by the institutions that frame their existences on earth. My view is that these people would see those opinions and the limited view upon which they are based for what they are: the narrow constructions of a certain far-from-disinterested class of people that reflect the mentality of the places where they arose and the time when they did so; and that they would respond to them with the healthy disregard and scepticism that in general they evince for ‘officials’ and for the expertise they claim to possess (see Duff-Cooper 1985b), agreeing with Feyerabend (1987: 217; cf. Hocart 1939: 201) that ‘one cannot trust received opinions...even if they should happen to be supported by outstanding scholars in the relevant fields’.³ The questions to be addressed here are then: ‘How do Balinese people construe the vitality and dynamism of their form of life?’ and, ‘What do their views say to us about evolutionary models and Balinese life?’

At the turn of this century, Shimazaki, a Japanese novelist, made the point (see Shimazaki 1974: 107) (subsequently made independently by Hocart (1939) and much later by such social anthropologists as Hefner (1985: 13-22) and Guermonprez (1987: 52 n.2))—a point implicit in the familiar emic/etic distinction—that different classes of people and/or individuals respond differently to the same thing. As Hefner (1985: 19-20) puts it, people have ‘minds, feelings, and biographies that

3. Officialdom, in its turn, ‘for the most part holds modern (Western-influenced) ideas, together with an urban antipathy and contempt towards the (“poorer”, “uneducated”) village population’ (Schaareman 1986: 14). It is not the case, incidentally, that the Balinese are ‘fashionably up to date in denying anyone, except conceivably Divinity, a privileged access to reality’ (M. Hobart 1985: 112, 1987: 44). As Angela Hobart (1983) writes, ‘It is only the common man who cannot establish the truth-value of beliefs. An enlightened man may transcend his senses and gain comprehension of a higher order of reality.’

are never as stereotyped as our analytic ideal types might suggest...hence different actors bring different attitudes, feelings, and knowledge to the same social dramas. Once there, moreover, they frequently occupy different positions in the performance'; and position has implications for access to, and likely interest in, it.

'Free-floating abstraction' is not always the most desirable analytical strategy to adopt (Rich 1986: 218), but it can never be entirely circumvented, especially in a study like the much abbreviated present one. To an extent though, it can be brought down to earth again, so to say, by the consideration of people's attitudes, feelings and knowledge. What I judge might be the responses of four Balinese people—three men and one woman—to our first question are thus presented next.

This approach could be challenged on a number of both general and specific grounds. First, it purports to speak for other people, but it is not obvious that one can properly speak for another—no one truly knows another, nor indeed him- or herself—or *a fortiori* for others, especially when, as in the present circumstances, they thereby become (unwitting) exemplars. My responses to these objections are that I lived closely with the people I try to speak for and that (others who know Balinese forms of life would agree) they are spread socially fairly widely by the important criteria of relative age, sex and status. More particularly, I have to say that responses to questions put in the field are not reported. What follow in the next four sections are, rather, educated guesses, to a greater or lesser extent, which can, however, be checked by anyone who doubts what is written there. I justify the recourse, against which Hocart inveighs (1937: 351), not only on pragmatic but also on other grounds already explicated at length (Duff-Cooper 1987a: 63-4); as well as with reference to Rich's authoritative advocacy (1986: 136-55, esp. 148-9) of different forms of 'educated guesses', in particular '(auto)biomythography', as essential to classes of people (Rich's main concern is 'woman of color and/or lesbians') who have been silenced in various ways; and by the fact that 'in science faint heart never won fair lady' (Hocart 1970: 13).⁴

III

Bi' Pon, a Sudra of minimal formal education living in Asak, one of the Balinese villages that comprise the *désa* Pagutan, was probably in her mid-forties when we

4. As I have shown elsewhere (e.g. Duff-Cooper 1990b), I incline to the view (Needham 1978: 75-6; Hobart 1987) that social anthropology is more akin to novel- and poetry-writing than to 'science' as generally understood (but see Duff-Cooper 1984: 36; see also Feyerabend 1987: 294).

were first introduced.⁵ The compound where she lived with her husband and others of his local descent group (*turunan*) was small but exceedingly well appointed and cared for, with brick-and-glass living quarters, fine open pavilions (*bale*), and a small but elaborate compound temple (*mrajan/sanggah*).

Whenever Pedanda Gdé (see below, sec. VI) and I visited, usually after dinner, we were cordially received and handsomely entertained with coffee and cigarettes, betel and sweetmeats, and often a proprietary brand of arak or brandy; and if I felt like it, a masseuse would be summoned to give me an invigorating massage for which Bi' Pon insisted on paying. All of this demonstrates that Bi' Pon was of a local descent group of means; but she was also wealthy in her own right, as it were, through holding rights in what I gathered was an extensive hectarage of rice-fields and in disposal of produce from dry gardens, as well as through money-lending.

Bi' Pon often visited the Gria (see below, sec. VI), and was always well-received both by Pedanda Gdé and his wife, the Pedanda Istri, and by others resident there. Whenever she came she had gifts (coconuts, fruit, coffee-beans, or tobacco) with her; and on days when the ancestors and gods in the Pedanda's compound temple were especially honoured, she ate some of the left-over offerings—for Bi' Pon and her marital descent group were *sisia* to Pedanda Gdé's Surya (lit., sun), with whom she had 'constantly' 'a giving-receiving relationship' (Hooykaas 1964: 235; see also Duff-Cooper 1985b, 1991b).

Bi' Pon, though rather short, walked tall and straight, a striking woman though not perhaps beautiful and without the fine features that can be seen among the three Balinese finest estates (*triwangsa*). Her ready smile was particularly charming, and a fine trait in Balinese eyes, as was a steady flow of banter and repartee, directed at the Pedanda and his wife and others, usually about me and about her willingness to be a foil for the Pedanda's humour. Jokes generally revolved around money and sex.

Particularly striking were Bi' Pon's large, almond-shaped, black eyes that flashed with a bright gleam. They seemed to say that here was a woman who had seen life, as indeed I later learnt from the Pedanda she had. Rather than 'marry' in her late teens or early twenties, she had entered various relationships that are seen as a man borrowing (*selang/ngilih*) a woman from her natal descent group. Almost none of the conventions that apply to 'marriage' apply here, where any children are 'illegitimate' (*astra*) and where the relationship, which is understood as being based mainly on sexual attraction, can be ended at any time by one or other partner simply dropping out of it. Bi' Pon had thus been what men at least call 'naughty' (*nakal/kual*; Ind. *tunasusila*). Only much later had she agreed to marry a widower as his second wife. All 'naughtiness' then stopped.

5. Bi' is short for Bibi, 'aunt'; Pon is the third day of the five-day week (*panca wara*)—see Goris 1960 on the Balinese calendar—and also means 'pound'. I do not know why Bi' Pon has this personal name.

As a married woman, though without children, Bi' Pon's main concerns (as they seemed to me) were essentially those of most married women: to support her husband and relatives, and more particularly their ancestors and gods in the compound temple and in the other temples—village, *désa*, 'national' (see e.g. Duff-Cooper 1986b)—to which he and they were connected by descent, residence and otherwise. She was also a business woman, concerned to secure profit (*aget*) from what she and her husband had (but see below, sec. V). She was a generous *sisia* to Pedanda Gdé and his wife, and they bestowed their favour on her in return.

Naturally, it did the Pedanda and his relatives no harm to have such a wealthy, generous and entertaining *sisia*; and concomitantly the standing of Bi' Pon and her marital descent group was probably enhanced by the attentions of the Pedanda, a man of the very finest Balinese status and in his morning meditation a vehicle for the very high god Siwa and maker of holy water (*tirtha*) of the finest kind. Yet Bi' Pon never gave the slightest hint that for her the vitality and dynamism of that part of Balinese social life that she lived was dependent upon a gap in her divinely endowed status (Sudra) and her achieved status; nor that she ever conceived of herself as of any estate other than Sudra, which I am sure the Brahmana at the Gria Taman also saw her as, and only as. For Bi' Pon, the driving-force and vitality of Balinese social life were doing what was required ritually of her as a married woman, and what her material circumstances appeared to her to require her to do, namely augment them and employ them as a right-minded Balinese should and does, for her own and others' benefits. (It should here be noted that a money-lender 'is deemed to do the borrower a favour by granting a loan' and that 'the borrower is placed in a debt of gratitude even if the loan is paid back with interest' (Gerdin 1982: 212).)

It might seem as though Bi' Pon confirms the view (e.g. M. Hobart 1980a: 2-3) that a prime Balinese concern is to order life 'advantageously' through action, as though all Balinese subscribed to an incipient market rationality. A person's good fortune or ill fortune (*aget lacur*), however, is ultimately dependent upon the will and humour of his or her ancestors and gods (e.g. M. Hobart 1978: 75). This suggests that to conceive of Balinese people as continuously trying to order their lives so as to place themselves in social situations that will result in them obtaining maximum advantage is to misconstrue what is going on here. The question, 'What is "thought" in Balinese ideology?', anyway remains.

'Thought' is *idep*, one of the three powers or ways (*tri paramana*) of knowing, of which the others are 'energy' (*bayu*) and 'sound' (*sabda*) (e.g. M. Hobart 1985: 125, 1986a: 148-9; see also Duff-Cooper 1990c). In line with the attribution of these three ways to aspects of the Balinese chain of being, *idep* is the finest, highest and most abstract of the three and is thus an aspect of the 'Great God Unimaginable', Sang Hyang Acintya or Vidhi, the Balinese high or highest god (see e.g. Sugriwa 1963: 23, Hooykaas 1973: 44).

These three powers are connected with such other aspects of Vidhi as the three qualities (*guna*), the three 'paths' (*warga*), the four estates and the three heavens (*loka*). Analysis of the relationships that hold among these sets and of their

relationships to the Balinese conception of the person (Duff-Cooper 1985a) suggests that in Balinese ideology a Balinese is far less free to think him- or herself into an advantageous position, as it were, than romantic individualism might wish. The kinds of thoughts to which people are disposed, in the senses both of what the thoughts are about and their nature, are determined to an extent by birth (one's estate and the other people to whom one is related through birth) and by what they have done, said and thought (and also what their relatives have done, said and thought) in previous lives; and by the days of their birth, and the personal names they are given. All these matters produce a person's thoughts, words and deeds.

If all this were not some way from some Balinese people, let alone all of them, trying to order their lives 'advantageously', two further grounds suggest that Balinese ideology does not posit a direct relationship of any kind between reasons and ends. First, Balinese ideology seems not to posit 'cause' as a distinct mode of relation but to elide what 'we' generally distinguish as causes and reasons, and then to correlate these with their 'effects' (Duff-Cooper 1986a; M. Hobart 1985: 118). Second, to the Balinese

talk about rational means and ends without referring to the situation and to the actor is...gabeng, ill-formed and incomplete.... In place of a dichotomy of means and ends, the Balinese commonly recognize a triad, by adding the agent with his, or her, tastes, perceptions, emotions, and interests. (M. Hobart 1985: 124-5)

In Balinese terms, then, accounting for the behaviour of, say, Bi' Pon is very complex and evinces markedly different ideas from the psychological, philosophical and politico-economic ideas that 'we' might employ to account for similar behaviour. But there is no reason why those ideas should not be taken just as seriously as, it is to be expected, are Balinese ideas about other such aspects of their forms of life as 'black' magic, say, where difference from what 'we' think is more readily conceded—if, that is, Balinese ideology is to be taken seriously.

IV

Wayan Cara was about eighteen years old when he first introduced himself to me, showing me how to make *saté* during cremation rites held at the Gria Taman. He turned out to be from the Sudra-only village of Baturujung, headed by I Nengah Semer (see below, sec. V). Like Bi' Pon he had had only minimal formal education, but his economic situation differed hugely from hers. His father and mother and some of their many children (Pak Cara was their fifth-born) lived out in the rice fields in a nominally temporary settlement (*pondok*) that had become permanent for them since they had lost their compound in the village through the father's gambling. (He had been expelled from the village council (*banjar*) for not

repaying loans, and henceforth lived from hand to mouth, selling palmwine (rather too much of which he drank himself), or doing a little day-labouring from time to time.) Pak Cara's father's brother and his wife and two children lived in a very small, ill-kept compound in the village, while in another very small run-down and often dirty compound (Duff-Cooper 1985c: 35, fig. 3) lived his mother's brother, wife and family, his mother's divorced sister and sons, and his mother's mother, a lady who looked very old indeed and who was blind, and an elder, also blind brother.

Cara, as everyone used to call him, divided his time between these three places, the village spring where people gathered to talk and bathe, and the compound of a very wealthy village local descent group for which he worked, earning perhaps Rp. 30.000 (then c. £17) and his meals for three months' work. 'Work' consisted mainly of labouring in the descent group's rice fields and doing odd jobs, running errands, and so on.

Pak Cara was slight, but generally taken to be very handsome. He was known too as a very hard and reliable worker, and as being very generous, when he had anything to be generous with—which was not often because like other hard-working, generous young men he was also an inveterate gambler on cock-fighting. Whatever he had went mainly as stakes or on paying off debts incurred through gambling. Indeed, I was warned to be careful with what I had: when a cock-fight was in the offing, money and things, even one's sandals, were apt to disappear (usually sold or pawned), because Wayan, like others, would become 'hot' (*kebus*).

Wayan was particularly prone to getting 'hot'. 'Cara' applied to a child means one who sulks or cries because he or she is angry, and his mother told me that that was why he was given the name. Wayan was not on speaking terms for various reasons with three of his elder brothers, and when he made what 'we' might call emotional attachments, e.g. to his father's brother's daughter, to hard-working Muslims with whom with other Balinese he made an on-going rice harvesting team (*kelompok*) (see Duff-Cooper 1989), or to me, they were fierce and passionate and consuming. These strengths of emotion he also displayed when conflicts arose between Balinese and local Muslims, when Wayan was in the vanguard of the young men lined up in the rice fields to fight, or between him and others, me included, when he adopted a principled but essentially self-denying position. His attachments to the ancestors and gods, especially the Bhatara in the *jaba*, the temple in the outside court of the village temple (*pamaksan*), could not be faulted: again he was very hard-working, not only at such tasks as preparing meals (offerings) for them and others present at such events as temple festivals, but in dancing and sitting up with them, entertaining them perhaps for two or three nights, as well.

Wayan married his father's brother's daughter, his *misan*, a marriage that is too 'hot' for some (Korn 1932: 472), and they now have two children, named, as I'll be forgiven for recalling, after my sister and me. Sadly, though, he could not provide for his family in the village, so he and his wife and children took a government-paid passage to southern Sulawesi and a hectare-and-a-half of land

there. (Government plans to construct a petroleum works where he and his family and others have built houses and cleared ground means that shortly they will have to move again.) He compared his situation to mine, living away from where we were born out of necessity, but looked forward to us being together again, in the house we built together in his father's brother's compound, 'as before' if only briefly,⁶ and ultimately to being cremated in Baturujung so that he can be with his ancestor-gods (*lelangitan*, from *langit*, sky) there.

Clearly any talk here about a disjunction between divinely endowed and pragmatically earned status would be absurd. And, in the light of the struggle that Pak Cara has had not to sink under the weight of the problems life has dealt him, it would be at the least insensitive and impertinent to attempt to translate his concerns into such terms.

Pak Cara, like Bi' Pon, is Sudra, and I think he knows that as things are among the Balinese that means that, given the circumstances of his relatives, his life will consist of hard, dirty, physical labour. Moreover, he has had neither the education, nor the inclination to get one—nor has he the connections that might change his life. This, though, he can to an extent do through the cock-fight and at such other times as temple festivals, when the beings of the essential, timeless (*niskala*) realm are sacrificed to, materially and/or with labour. These sacrifices may be rewarded by a gift (*pica, anugrah*) from the gods, in the form of a win on the fight, good health, a congenial family life, or such like. Pak Cara has good health and a more or less agreeable life with his wife and children, I gather, but little else and little to look forward to. In as much as life is vital and dynamic for him, it consists of work, mainly in the fields but also for the essential beings just mentioned, in the attempt to make his life 'complete' and 'happy' (see Bosch 1960: 63). I have not the heart to ask Pak Cara whether he thinks he has ever had, has, or will attain such a life.⁷

V

I Nengah Semer, the Head (Klian) of Baturujung must have been in his early sixties when we first met, on the week-long rain-ensuring rite Pekelem held annually at the crater lake (Segara Anak) on Mount Rinjani, the Mahameru, under one aspect, of the Balinese on Lombok. He later told me that I then commended myself to him by asking, as we sat around a spluttering fire in the rain of a cold

6. For a reunion in the village in April 1989, which finally could not take place, Pak Cara had permission to be away from Sulawesi for only one calendar month including travelling time from there to Lombok and back by boat.

7. For some of the reasons/causes why such a life may or may not be achieved, see M. Hobart 1980b: 63-5.

night halfway up to the summit, 'Why are we here?' This question he interpreted as intimating a properly inquisitive attitude to the hidden things of existence.

Upon our return from Rinjani, Pak Semer invited me to lunch, and our relationship developed until I moved out of the Gria Taman into the village where he helped Pak Cara and me renovate a dilapidated house in the latter's mother's brother's compound—though I generally took coffee and meals with Pak Semer in his compound (Duff-Cooper 1985c: 35, fig. 2), a large one by the standards of the village, and extremely well appointed and well kept. Pak Semer turned out to be a wealthy man. He was also extremely intelligent and kind, and always prepared to discuss with me whatever might be on my mind, be it a dream to be interpreted, a rite to be better appreciated, or an emotional response to be guided into. Such attentions to me merely added to his duties as Head of Baturujung, as a member of a number of irrigation associations (*subak*), as a full-time grower of rice, and as a man much in demand by others. He was generally greatly respected, not only in the village but far more widely, by Balinese of all estates and also by Islamic Sasak.

In his youth, Pak Semer had been a womanizer, a strong drinker, and an inveterate and heavy gambler both on cock-fights and on cards (*cuki*), but he said that, as he got older, he felt less inclined to behave in such ways, though he could still drink with the best when I moved into the village. A serious illness, however, put a stop to even that. When he came out of hospital he gave up drinking and worked harder than ever, both in the fields and around the compound, at his administrative duties, and making visits of homage (*maturan*) to temples, where he presented our offerings. Finally, he began to officiate in the village temple. His life had, indeed, taken on that 'renunciatory quality' that characterizes the role of the very old in Tengger (Hefner 1985: 82), as it does, or should do, for any 'old' Balinese people—'old' either through marriage, but more especially through years or through consecration as a 'priest'.

Pak Semer told me that he had worked for the Japanese when they had occupied the island during the Second World War. I was shocked by this, both because of the stories told about Japanese brutality and arrogance towards the people, especially the young women, and their property and (I suppose) because of received ideas I had about collaboration with an enemy. But Pak Semer was a pragmatist. Encouraging and assisting the Japanese war effort seemed likely to get rid of the Dutch, for although he admired Liefrinck and Goris—as a child (as I gathered from someone else he had known) he had seen Liefrinck—he realized that they were in his country for what they could get out of it, and the same went for all imperialists. Nor could he abide officials from town, especially those who came to 'advise' about things the villagers knew far more about.

Pak Semer could be characterized as a conservative radical. For him, Balinese ideology framed the world in which he and others lived, of course, but he was prepared to question aspects of it by, for instance, maintaining that knowledge that is 'officially' reserved to Pedanda, which is *aje were*, could be divulged to and/or employed by such people as himself who were aged and in the necessary calm,

still state of mind. He was intensely critical of anyone who he felt did not behave properly, i.e. modestly, kindly, and generously, with others (see Howe 1989: 50), such as the person who in other circumstances would now have been king (*Anak Agung*) in Pagutan as well as the *Pedanda Istri* (see above, sec. III). And he rebuked the young who were overkeen to attribute to old and ugly women especially such unbecoming traits as a propensity for black magic, which he none the less knew as a real aspect of Balinese life, regaling us with such tales as one about a very beautiful woman from another Balinese village in Pagutan who on a date with him had turned into a vicious monkey. He also knew that Balinese ideology did not have all the answers in the modern world (which ideology does?), and was eager to investigate innovations. He bought a powered plough, scoffing at traditionalists who had it that such machines ruined the soil in the fields, and was making sure that his son had a good formal education.

As for the vitality and dynamism of Balinese life, Pak Semer would say (I think) that these consisted in people living it as fully and as hard and properly as they could. They would *not* include being dissatisfied with one's lot, be it acquired or divinely endowed status, either behaving in the self-regarding ways adopted by a Sudra Kubayan in Pujung (Howe 1989: 67-9) or adopting 'the cold reasoning of the business man, banker, or capitalist' (Mauss 1954: 73), in an attempt to close the perceived gap between the two (see Duff-Cooper 1990e: 21-3).

On the other hand, as trustee for the time being of one's local descent group's real and other property one has a duty to make the most of it by hard work informed by intelligence and knowledge, but also a duty to use the proceeds of that work not only for the benefit of oneself and one's own but also for the common weal. And, of course, one is as good as, no better or worse *qua* human being than, the next man or woman, who are as good as oneself and one's relatives as human beings (*jadma, manusia*), in principle at least. Naturally, differences obtain among classes of people: there are men and women, old and young, essential and material, 'us' of greater and lesser extension and the rest, rich and poor, *triwangsa* and Sudra. It is not the differences as such that matter, for they are in the nature of things; what counts (I think Pak Semer would maintain) is what is made of them.⁸ Given these views, it becomes readily intelligible how the Sudra Pak Semer and *Pedanda Gdé, Brahmana*, to whom we now turn, were, before the latter's consecration (see e.g. Korn 1928), the closest and most constant of companions.

8. Pak Semer, and *Padanda Gdé*, would, I know, agree that Balinese life is an ordered whole (*un tout ordonné*); but I am also sure that they would take issue with the contention (as I have repeatedly taken issue with it) that 'ordered' is equivalent to 'hierarchical' (*hiérarchisé*) without qualification, if 'hierarchical' and other forms of this word are counterposed with 'equality', 'egalitarian', and such like (Guérmonprez 1987: 199, see also e.g. 54, 62-5; see also Howe 1989: 54, 50). The order that Balinese life as a whole evinces consists partly of relations (symmetrical and asymmetrical) represented vertically and/or horizontally. 'Symmetry' does not equal 'equality', nor 'asymmetry' 'inequality' or 'hierarchy' (Duff-Cooper 1991b). For a fuller description of the principles that order Balinese life on Lombok, see Duff-Cooper 1991c, 1991d.

VI

Ida Pedanda Gdé Madé Karang invited me to live at the Gria Taman (Duff-Cooper 1985c: 34, fig. 1) about a week after I arrived on Lombok, a gracious gesture I am extremely grateful for. I stayed there for nearly a year, and was a regular visitor for the rest of my time on the island. Pedanda Gdé would not accept money for rent and food, but left me to discover that one has a duty to support such statuses through the giving of gifts (*mapunia*) (see e.g. Duff-Cooper 1991b).

The Pedanda instructed me in ‘divine cosmic order and harmony, and...life and actions [including written and spoken language] in agreement with this order’ (Schärer 1963: 75). But he warned me, after a few weeks, against being too serious: study, he maintained, should be leavened with what seem like more frivolous pursuits—listening to music and *derama*, playing cards, attending cock-fights, just sitting chatting, drinking and laughing, and womanizing. Not all these could be followed with the Pedanda. He could not properly attend cock-fights, blood offerings to demons (*bhuta*), nor womanize, nor go out to have fun (*macanda-canda*; Ind. *main-main*) (note the ‘renunciatory quality’ mentioned above); but he could and did advise me about these aspects of Balinese life, for before he was consecrated he had been a great gambler and womanizer, and had a number of illegitimate children to prove the latter at least.

The Pedanda had not long been consecrated when I was living at the Gria, but the mystical services that he could provide—meditating (*maweda*) at marriage and cremation rites, for instance, dealing with illnesses as a medicine-person (*balian*)—seemed to be greatly in demand. This was in part at least undoubtedly because he was the son of his father, now the Pedanda Bhatara (*bhatara*, god, protector) who used often to fly to Europe to visit Queen Wilhelmina, though he seemed still to be in the Gria at such times, and who was freed (i.e. died) when he was over 110 years (i.e. extremely old).

Although the Gria is very extensive, and in some ways rather grand with its moated temple, Pedanda Gdé was far from wealthy; and I sensed that when he and his relatives held rites it was a trying time for him making clear to his *sisia* (see above, sec. III) that he wanted to ‘work’ (*makarya*, i.e. hold a rite) and leaving it up to them to provide him with the wherewithal to do so on a scale commensurate with his status, as a Pedanda, the very finest of all the statuses defined by the system of the four estates. Rites were held satisfactorily at the Gria; but the Pedanda made clear when he reminisced about when his father was alive that he and his relatives could no longer hold such rites as then, when the Gria was festooned with white cloth and wave after wave of guests would be fed formally for weeks, perhaps months on end. The impossibility was grounded both in the descent group no longer having the huge resources required and in it no longer being becoming to behave so gorgeously. The climate of the times did not allow it.

None the less, the Pedanda was strict in other ways. A niece of his who allowed herself to be taken in marriage by a young Wesia was with little ado

'thrown away' (*kutang*) (Duff-Cooper 1991a); and the old observances as to language and other ways of keeping the purity and fineness of such a status were strictly adhered to, though menstruating women were no longer sequestered in a special hut in the western gardens of the Gria, they just did not address nor speak of the Pedanda; and seating arrangements dispensed with the vertical markers of relative status formerly employed, at least on non-formal occasions.

He was marvellous company though, and was always laughing and making jokes either about me, and my suitability as a consort for the male transvestite (see Duff-Cooper 1986c) who lived in Sukedana in Pagutan, about Bi' Pon and others like her, and in particular about Pedanda Gdé Ketut Rai, the Head of the Organization of Pedanda of Lombok (Ketua Majelis Paruman Para Pandita Lombok) who was very old and decrepit and meditated in a hardly audible and very slow voice that Pedanda Gdé thought inappropriate. Although Hooykaas (1966: 10) authoritatively describes this aspect of the rite as 'murmuring', Padanda Gdé thought that the mantra should be sung forthrightly and firmly, as befitted the goddess Sarasvati. If the Pedanda was keeping rain at bay (*ngerang*) for people holding a rite, he would try to make it rain on Pedanda Ketut Rai, and often succeeded.

But Pedanda Madé Karang was in the end deadly serious about his role in Balinese life. There was no question of one taping his yogas, not (I think) because he was worried that my research might be subtly intended to encourage conversion to Christianity or Islam (cf. Hefner 1985: 161) but because it was simply not done; nor was there any question of him not meditating daily, as soon as possible after sunrise, for the good of the realm, and not considering that the holy water that Siwa then makes through Pedanda was the key to many of the ways in which the Balinese differed from, and were superior to, Muslims. When I required support for permission for a second year of research in Indonesia, Pedanda Gdé wrote a letter of support to the Indonesian Academy of Sciences in Balinese script; and when the Pedanda accepted an invitation from the Bupati to attend a meeting of the Muspida at the Jaman Mataram, the provincial capital, we went together dressed, as he insisted, in formal Balinese style.

Clearly, in these latter cases Pedanda Gdé was saying something about himself and more generally about the Balinese and me; and in the others he was affirming a lived commitment to a moral universe. It is at once impudent and inhumane to try to translate such deep commitments to such fundamental and far-reaching matters into terms of prestige and status. It is to trivialize those concerns, moreover, to suggest that the Pedanda could ever concur with the view that it is upon the gap between divinely endowed and acquired status that Balinese life is dependent for its vitality and dynamism.

I am quite sure that were he asked Pedanda Gdé would aver that what animates Balinese life is Ida Sang Hyang Vidhi, the high or the highest god of the Balinese, 'the Supreme Being, or Intelligence', 'Order, what orders' (M. Hobart 1986a: 150; 1986b: 11, 25 n. 8; see also 1987: 30), which is pervasive in *all* aspects of that life. And that this form of life is in every significant regard

opposed and superior to Islam, which none the less has usurped the proper place of the Balinese on Lombok, who after all used to rule Karangasem in Bali too (Liefrinck 1921: 371). Such reversal of proper order naturally means that the country is 'ruined' (*usak*) (see e.g. Weck 1937: 39).

These are the proper and prime concerns of Pedanda Gdé, who fights in the vanguard against further encroachments from the values and institutions of Islam. In comparison with the importance of these concerns, those of the sociologist are as nothing, and vulgar too.

VII

To answer our second question—What do the concerns expressed by our four exemplars have to say about an evolutionary model of their form of life?—abstraction is again necessary. Through abstraction it becomes apparent that those concerns, as expected, tend to accord with the 'sacred duty' (*dharma*) of the estates of the people expressing them. The Sudra Bi' Pon, Wayan Cara and Pak Semer, whose *dharma* includes the traditional duty to labour in the fields, are mainly concerned with the material; the Brahmana Pedanda, whose *dharma* is to deal with the highest and finest mystical aspects of the powers to which, Balinese ideology has it, the Balinese are subject, is mainly concerned with the essential. But not exclusively of course: the former are also concerned with the essential, the more so the older they have got, while the Pedanda is also concerned with the material.

In other circumstances, this approach by way of structure, form or patterns could be developed to include ultimately all aspects of Balinese life (see n. 8 above); but the present study aims to consider what our exemplars' concerns (which would be found to be widely expressed by other Balinese) can tell us about the constitution of an evolutionary scheme that is processual. None the less, our starting-point must here be Vidhi, I think, as it has been in earlier work in the structural or formal mode: Vidhi is the basis of Balinese life, everything derives from Vidhi, and Vidhi pervades everything.

Vidhi may be construed as perfect bilateral symmetry, in the guise of Sunya, the Void, of which the asymmetries of the essential and the material realms are finer and coarser transformations (see e.g. Duff-Cooper 1988). There are at least two ways in which this basic model, greatly elaborated with a blueprint to render it processual elsewhere (Duff-Cooper 1990b: fig. 3, appendix), can also be rendered processual. One way is by the use of computer graphics (Duff-Cooper 1987c), the other is to consider Vidhi as the simplest aspect of Balinese life of which all other aspects are more and more complex transformations. Both these approaches, though, have drawbacks: the first, from the computer being alien to Balinese ideology, at least as it is in Pagutan; and the second, from the arbitrariness of saying that Vidhi is the simplest aspect of Balinese ideology—

whether this is so depends upon the definitions of ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ adopted (Duff-Cooper 1990d). More germane here, perhaps, neither approach takes lessons from the concerns of our exemplars.

Another route to a processual model, more acceptable here, is given by Vidhi being construable, in the guises of the bisexual icon Ardhanārīśvara and as the famous couple Jayaprana and Layon Sari, as the united female and male principles, *pradhanapurusa*, which are together life (Duff-Cooper 1985a: 72, 1987b: 65-6). This social fact can be expressed dynamically: the union, separation, and (re)union of the female and the male principles (more abstractly, of two opposed entities) make life. Hence, perhaps, the very frequent sexual intercourse that a newly married couple has (Duff-Cooper 1985c: 415) and the theory that repeated intercourse is necessary to ensure the union of semen and blood that produces life.

This dynamic view of Vidhi appears to inform what Schaareman (1986: 69) refers to as ‘the Javanese religious-philosophical conception of history’ in the fourteenth-century *Negarakrtagama*: ‘the empire is conceived of as dividing and reuniting in a continuous repeating cycle’. When the empire is united, Sang Hyang Hana, ‘Being’, obtains; when it is divided, Sang Hyang Tana, ‘Not-Being’, obtains. Apart from these ideas being discernible in ideas about the married couple, their significance here is that all the concerns expressed above (secs. III-VI) involve unions, separations, and (re)unions. In these unions and (re)unions people make exchanges (*masilur*), in the broadest sense to include exchanges of language. All of these transactions could probably be shown to replicate and to reaffirm Vidhi, Life, in various ways.

It has repeatedly been said (e.g. Hocart 1970: 35; Weiner 1980: 71; de Coppet 1981: 200; Howell 1989: 419) that exchange is what animates any form of life and allows it to continue—a view that appears to be subscribed to by Balinese ideology, in which union, which is life and life-promoting, is superior to separation (e.g. Swellengrebel 1960: 41). A processual, evolutionary model of Balinese society might then be arrived at by considering changes that have occurred in exchanges made by Balinese people with other people, both Balinese, essential and material, and non-Balinese. Such a consideration would not constitute mere empiricism if, first, it employed the insights that Mauss and others have brought to the topic and if, second, it employed indigenous categories (e.g., in the present case, material/ essential, coarse/refined, female/male, Sudra/*triwangsa*, not Balinese/Balinese, low/high, outside/inside) in the analysis of those exchanges. Such an approach, furthermore, recognizes the importance of structure, form or patterns in such ideologies as that of the Balinese and would be free both of the reliance upon an untenable view of social anthropology as a kind of natural science of society and of the notion of progress which ‘leads in anthropology...to procrustean stages, the presumed inevitability of which gives them a normative character’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962: 17) and which vitiates early attempts at such models.

A full appraisal of this suggestion, by analyses, must for reasons of space wait upon other occasions; but at least the ground has been prepared for that work. Before concluding, though, two points should be made. While considering

exchanges pinpoints specific aspects of (Balinese) life where changes are occurring, explanations of why they are doing so will in all likelihood be less readily, if ever, achieved (see Needham 1971: lv)—but it is even less likely that they will ever be arrived at unless serious notice is taken of the concerns of those whom they most affect.

That leads to the second point: *all* aspects of Balinese life are candidates for analysis, for three main reasons: first, that we know that even ‘animal’ activities such as hunting, fighting, eating and sex are never merely animal in human society but are conventionalized, and as such they are disregarded in favour of kinship or marriage or ‘status’ only because of some prejudicial theoretical concerns. Secondly, these concerns, we have seen, do not at all run in tandem with those of the people whose form(s) of life are the object of study and many of whom (it has been shown above and elsewhere) attribute greatest importance to precisely these aspects of their lives, in the main disregarded by theorists. Thirdly, Balinese metaphysics (*sarva-surya*) teaches (what analysis confirms) that all aspects of Balinese life, in deriving from Vidhi, are pervaded by Vidhi; ‘officially’ some aspects are finer than others, it is true, and analyses will take account of such relative evaluations.

But these evaluations do not justify the analyst ignoring what ‘we’ might consider the more mundane or the supposedly less manifest and immediately observable aspects of Balinese life, for the analyst must survey all facets of social life (Needham 1962: 75); nor do they justify promoting some of its finer aspects (e.g. ancestors and gods and the temples where they are periodically located) above other aspects of that life (see e.g. Guermonprez 1987: 199, 200): ‘How can we make any progress in the understanding of cultures...if we persist in dividing what the people join and in joining what they keep apart?’ (Hocart 1935: 16).

I was constantly told by Pedanda Gdé, Pak Semer and others that the complete person should be conversant with as many aspects of Balinese life as he or she could be within the limits imposed by the dharma of the estate into which he or she was born. We have no such limits imposed upon us. Analysis will do well to reflect these facts: they will then demonstrate that we have listened with serious interest to the Balinese, that we have profited from what they have tried to teach us, and that we are trying to appreciate as they do how Balinese forms of life are ordered, though changing, wholes. They may also lead to theoretical advance, for the real key to this (Needham 1971: cvi) is ‘the *comprehension*’, by the most intense imaginative effort to think in terms of their classifications, ‘of singular modes of social life’.⁹

9. Substantial weight is lent to the suggestions of the present study, and especially those in sec. VII, by Robert Jay’s claims (1969: 246) both that ‘it is possible and...profitable to treat all social relations as embodied in sequences of exchange’ and that Lévi-Strauss (see e.g. 1953: 536), Douglas Oliver (see e.g. 1955: 277; 1958) and Firth (see e.g. 1959: 340-42) have indeed done so; see also Parsons (1975: 44), who claims that ‘exchanges in major part elicit and direct change’. These particular references were discovered too late to be incorporated into the body of the text.

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COMMENTARY

GLOBALIZATION AND NEW ETHNOGRAPHIC LOCALITIES: ANTHROPOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON GIDDENS'S *MODERNITY AND SELF-IDENTITY*

JOHN KNIGHT

HERE is a warning to all professional observers of social life: the world they would claim to represent is increasingly subject to a specific form of instability that can be traced back, in part at least, to the practice of scholarly representation itself. For professional observers are themselves *socially observed*, their writings read by those written about, and this observational reciprocity has profound implications for the procedure of professional social observation.

In *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) Anthony Giddens takes further the deliberations on the nature of 'late modernity' outlined in his *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) to deal with precisely this issue. In the earlier book he presented the institutional contours of a distinctively modern social world; in his new work he fills out the picture of this world by elaborating on the character of the modern self that animates it. As the examples given in *Modernity and Self-Identity* indicate, Giddens directs his discussion to 'late modern' societies; yet the 'modernity' he presents is a global condition that implicates not only those who study 'modern' societies, i.e. sociologists, but also those who were traditionally the students of *other* societies, i.e. anthropologists. The debate in sociology about globalization is of growing theoretical and practical concern for anthropologists because it addresses the issue of the shape and character of the places they study in the contemporary world. Here my concern is to indicate how and to what extent Giddens's picture of globalized modernity is relevant to anthropologists; and I do so by focusing on one aspect of it, that of *locality*.

For Giddens, modern institutions differ fundamentally from all preceding forms of social order. There are two distinctive features to them: their global extent and the way they enter into personal experience and self-understanding:

Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. One of the distinctive features of modernity...is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other. (1991: 1)

His aim is thus 'to analyse these interconnections and to provide a conceptual vocabulary for thinking about them' (*ibid.*). It is crucial to appreciate this *dual* concern, because only then can the difference between the more familiar 'globalization' theories and this one be appreciated.

That we live in 'one world', an 'interdependent world', a 'global order' etc. is a common sentiment today, couched in a well-worn vocabulary. 'News' to us can be news from anywhere; the world is inexhaustible, both as an object of observation and as a source of information. This communicational, infrastructural aspect of globalism, in addition to political and economic institutions, is what tends to be the focus of theories of globalization. Until recently, anthropological concern has tended to focus almost exclusively on local contexts. It is this scale of phenomena that can be most usefully subjected to ethnographic investigation. Globalization theories are of less concern to us in themselves than for what they can tell us about the local contexts we negotiate professionally. In other words, what we tend to ask of globalization theories is first, what ethnographic implications they have and second, the extent to which they can contribute, as a supplement, to ethnographic documentation. This concern with human locality has had the salutary effect of inoculating anthropologists against one of the principal dangers of globalization theory: that whereby clichés of 'global space' and 'one world' are received in a way that contradicts the multifaceted human relationship to place.

Recent anthropological contributions to the debate about the way human beings are constitutively implicated in particular spatial environments (e.g. Ingold 1986; Moore 1986) serve to underline (whatever their specific differences) the pre-eminence of locality within anthropology. Yet it may be that the contemporary global order is such that our implicit theories of locality do require rethinking, and that a theory of globalization will only suffice when it allows both for the continued salience of locality and for its reconstitution in the context of a new ecology of local and global relations. In other words, if it is to have credibility a theory of globalization should be at the same time a theory of localization. The debate on globalization has tended to oscillate between homogenizing and heterogenizing perspectives, and this persists despite the frequent calls for this problematic to be transcended (e.g. Featherstone 1990: 2; Appadurai 1990: 295). Giddens's theory neither entails the erasure of local contexts by means of a

globalizing dynamic nor does it require the simple addition of 'global factors' on to already existing localities. Instead, he offers a theory of the localizing implications of the global order. This is because the key site of globalization in late modernity is the self.

Selves

Modern selves are unlike their forebears because they are part of a different sort of institutional framework. On the one hand, a global theatre arises through technological developments in communications; a new infrastructure integrates formerly discrete spaces. But this infrastructural fact alone does not account for the distinctively *modern* disposition. Infrastructural globalization, by itself, does not necessarily entail a corresponding local interest in, or awareness of, wider matters. Thus the post-war 'internationalization of capital' did not induce a commensurate subjective awareness on the part of those affected by it; this was, rather, something that political activists had to achieve. What is missing, in other words, is a theory of the local *take-up* of global phenomena, both intra-locally and inter-locally, that is, one which can account for differences in the social/cultural reception of global information both *within* and *between* places.

Globalization suggests a universal openness to the world, even though only some phenomena are actually globally circulated. If some ideas and practices are globally exposed, they are not uniformly influential across the globe. At some point the question arises of the differential sensitivity of local spaces to global influences. This is a question likely to arise sooner rather than later for anthropologists, whose subjects may be globally encompassed but who are not self-evidently 'modern' in Giddens's sense. What Giddens provides is a theory of globalization that implicates all modern local contexts, but unevenly so. This is because the linkage between global and local is grounded in a theorized connection between infrastructural and personal features of modernity, the world and the self. Hence Giddens's full theory of globalization is directed to those 'late modern' social contexts in which a self with a particular, reflexive disposition to social institutions and global influences is to be found.

Reflexivities

'Modernity' and 'reflexivity' are terms that are rarely far apart in Giddens's recent work. The latter term, moreover, is a key constituent of the former. But reflexivity is used recurrently by Giddens in two distinct, if related, senses that

should be explicitly distinguished if the limits of modernity are to be appreciated. Reflexivity applies both to the self and to institutions in Giddens's modernity. This metaphor, etymologically suggestive of a 'turning back' of something (a lightbeam, for example), is familiar from discussions of the difference between humans and animals (Man's 'reflexive capacity') and from schools of psychoanalysis that stress the reflexive presence of Man to himself. Thus, in the reflected image of the Lacanian mirror-stage of development, what comes back is an image of oneself: the mirror presents us to ourselves as visually whole as though we were another—or as we are for another. This sense of reflexivity would seem to underpin Giddens's approach to the self. The modern self is *reflexively* organized because it can take itself as an object, indeed 'creates' itself in terms of the representations and objectifications of it.

But institutions also 'reflect'. This is the process by which knowledge gained from the study of society is turned back on to that society. Here is, in essence, a model of information flow: from the world to the academic (and perhaps governmental) institutions that study and monitor it, and then back to that world either through its pointed application or through the demand arising from the appetite of late modern selves for self-knowledge and self-understanding. Thus throughout Giddens talks about reflexivity in two different, if related, ways, viz. *interpersonal reflexivity* and *institutional reflexivity* (though he fails to make the distinction between them sufficiently clear). The latter process of institutional reflexivity is, as it were, psychologically 'anchored' by the former, and by the model of the self on which it is based. It is important to stress this distinction, for this is where the limits of the theory's usefulness for anthropologists become apparent.

Relevance to Anthropology

If the increasingly global character of information flows makes the whole world in a sense 'modern', the fact remains that the distribution of the reflexive modern selves Giddens describes is ethnographically uneven. Aside from cultural diversity itself, different rates of literacy, education and communicational integration mean that the conditions for this sort of reflexivity to operate exist to a much lesser degree in many anthropological field locations.

The counterpoint of 'late modernity' for Giddens is 'tradition' (or the 'traditional order', the 'pre-modern' etc.). This is a stable general category only for the sociologist, and one that anthropologists would not on the whole entertain. Many anthropologists might claim that there is hardly a 'traditional society' left now, and indeed Giddens, with his stress on the global reach of information flows, would probably not argue for the present-day existence of the 'traditional' society, which he would instead locate back in time. But following on from the distinction

made above, 'traditional' (i.e. non-'late modern') selves would seem to exist for him as traditional selves *in a global order*—that is, in a hybrid situation. To understand why the potential of universal access to globally circulating knowledge of 'abstract systems' translates into an actual situation of limited, circumscribed and specifically directed movements, means looking at how class and other structures act to shape them. Only when we consider specifically situated individuals and the constraints to which they are subject, do we go beyond the abstract notion of access to a global network and get a sense of the limited availability of knowledge to them.

A further criticism would be that this general model, in its linkage of the global level and the self, actually leaves out crucial levels of social and institutional mediation of such processes, those levels that make for the effective articulation in the first place. This becomes apparent as soon as we think of academic institutions in Britain. What is surely most remarkable about much of the academic world is how sealed-off it manages to be. The whole justification for the ESRC shake-up of British social science now taking place is that the knowledge produced is *not* returning to society where it could be used. Anthropology would seem to be a conspicuous example of such detachment, notwithstanding the trend within the discipline towards applied work. To account for the absence of exactly the sort of information movement that Giddens's picture of late modernity would lead us to expect requires an understanding of academic institutions *per se*, the prevailing general ethos of 'academic freedom' and the dispositions toward *application* of particular disciplines. The situation of anthropology is a special one because of the traditional 'split-focus' of the discipline between the sphere of its subjects and the sphere of its sponsors, which are often one and the same in sociology.

Unstable Localities

The main argument of Giddens's new book is that *all* local contexts are 'open' to global influences. One obvious form of articulation between these two levels is that arising from the internationalization of capital. Commodities produced for global markets are consumed locally and are often distinctively customized in the process (see e.g. Friedman 1990). But globalization more generally has to do with the new lines of social determination that transcend spatial localities—what has been characterized as the 'deterritorialization' (Appadurai 1991: 192) of social spaces. This has already received a good deal of attention from anthropologists and some have proposed not just that 'the field' be reconstituted to include wider, non-local influences but that it be re-imagined altogether as a multi-located entity (Marcus 1986: 171-3; Marcus and Fischer 1986: 91-2) or 'ethnoscape' (Appadurai 1990, 1991). But it is to a different, if related, feature of contemporary localities

that Giddens's work—especially the notion of institutional reflexivity—draws attention. This is the status of localities with respect to those professionally devoted to observing them, or conversely put, the place of the academy in the world. Academic 'objectivity' is brought into question. This refers *not* to objectivity as a *quality of observation*, whereby a positioned subject generates knowledge that can be validated by other subjects. Rather, the facet of objectivity referred to is that which involves the assumed distance between object and academic observer. For it is this object-distance that is undermined by the new linkages globalization represents. The quarantined space of the academy that social scientists once believed themselves to inhabit, and which at the same time conferred on their objects a certain insulation from that inquiry, is now brought into serious doubt. For Giddens offers a theory of globalism according to which detached observation and its textual products in effect occupy *the same space* as that which was originally observed.

This is a phenomenon with which anthropologists are now becoming increasingly familiar. There are many examples of how texts written for the discipline have been made present to, or even appropriated by, their ethnographic subjects. These cannot, however, be accounted for simply in terms of the reflexive orientations of modern selves. Instead, a broader view that can account for the historical conditions of anthropological practice itself is required. The sort of societies studied, the sort of societies that studied them, the institutional placements of anthropologists, the social, institutional and political claims to the knowledge they produce—all these factors must be taken into account.

There are perhaps four categories of feedback of anthropological knowledge worth distinguishing. The first is where earlier ethnographies provide a record of local life and native custom. In the absence of other written sources, such ethnographic accounts can become historical documents and put to subsequent use, to settle land-claims, for example. Larcom (1982) provides the example of how the 1934 ethnography *Malekula: A Vanishing People in the New Hebrides*, by the Cambridge-educated anthropologist A. B. Deacon, was used in precisely this way in a Vanuatu courtroom in the 1980s. Another, more recent, example is the controversy over whether the work of Walter Arndt supports or undermines an Aboriginal land-claim in present-day Australia (see Brunton 1992; Keen 1992). But this use of ethnography as a record of how things were—traditional ways—would also extend to those anthropological works used in native school curricula. An example of this might be Norman Whitten's (1976) *Sacha Runa*, used for Quichua native curricula in Ecuadorian schools (in Spanish, but about to be translated into Quichua).

The value of the second category lies in the ideological message provided, rather than in any specific data on 'tradition' they contain. Examples of such authoritative interpretations readily come to mind for Japan. First, there is the conspicuous status in Japan itself of Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946). According to recent surveys, one-third of Japanese people would seem to have actually read it (Befu and Manabe 1990: 126); many will have read

it (or excerpts from it) at school. Another, more recent example would be the appropriation by the Japanese government of Chie Nakane's *Japanese Society* (1973) as an official sociology of Japan to be distributed as gifts by Japanese embassies abroad (Mouer and Sugimoto 1983: 287).

These are instances of the state deployment of anthropological knowledge, but such scholarly objectifications of 'society' or 'culture' may also be taken up against the state by different constituencies within national societies. Examples range from such Pacific countries as New Zealand and Hawaii to Latin American countries, where indigenous peoples find themselves minorities in larger settler states. The Maoris, in particular, would seem to have actively developed their cultural identity by making use of earlier European accounts of their history and religion (see Hanson 1989). Moreover, the contributors to a recent volume on cultural identity in the Pacific present evidence of how Western objectifications of ethnicity and culture have been ubiquitously implanted in the region (Linnekin and Poyer 1990). Thus Australian 'aboriginality' is an ethnic construct of White settlers (Tonkinson 1990), as is Indianness in the Latin American context (Maybury-Lewis 1991). But these inherited, imposed categorizations are taken up by those subjected to them and used against mainstream national society and the nation state.

A similar process has occurred with other categories bearing different ranges of inclusiveness. Thus it has been argued that the Western regional classification of the Pacific area into Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia—something that anthropology has helped to institutionalize—might be in the process of becoming domesticated as a local system to be used in the establishment of pan-national regional identities for political mobilization; something manifested, for example, in a Vanuatuan prime minister's rhetorical reference to 'Melanesian socialism' (see Howard 1990: 277; Linnekin 1990: 166-7). But perhaps the most conspicuous construct recently taken on by indigenous peoples, whether in the Pacific (Linnekin and Poyer 1990: 12) or in Latin America (Diskin 1991: 157), is that of the 'Fourth World'.¹

Yet another category comprises those texts that, on account of the controversy they raise, find their way back to the ethnographic site itself. Thus Nancy Scheper-Hughes's account, in *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* (1979), of depopulated County Kerry villages caused a local furore and something of a national debate when it was picked up by Irish journalists; even eventually making its way back to the villagers themselves.² This led another anthropologist of Ireland to ask whether 'people as a community [have] any claim to "cultural privacy"' and even to suggest that in future researchers should send drafts of their

1. Christian (1989: 90) provides an example of a similar process from a non-'tribal' context. His ethnography of a Spanish village was used to promote Cantabrian regionalism in post-Franco Spain.

2. See Ellen (1984: 135) for a comparable account of the impact in Mexico in the 1960s of the Spanish translation of Oscar Lewis's *The Children of Sanchez* (orig. 1961).

studies to the community studied for ethnographic checking, with disputed points and the local people's alternative interpretations published as an appendix to the resulting book (Kane 1982: 3; for a similar suggestion, see Parkin 1982: xiii-xiv).

Another example of such ethnographic involution occurred when Ella Wiswell revisited Suye Mura, the rural Japanese municipality where she and her husband, John Embree, had carried out fieldwork some fifty years earlier, and which had been made famous by Embree's monograph *Suye Mura: A Japanese Village* (1939). Wiswell found that the young villagers were less concerned to reminisce with her about how things had been, than to use her visit to promote their municipality as a tourist destination—'Japan's anthropological village'. To this end, the local tourism committee decided to put on show the chair in which Embree had sat when writing up his notes (Wiswell 1988; see Tobin 1992: 28-9).

The key factor in this logistical revolution is the state institutionalization of societies—both of those societies anthropologists have traditionally studied and those from which they come. Home states sponsor anthropology and to a significant extent expect to apply its results. This may range from development projects to far less acceptable instances of the application of home state power overseas, such as when anthropologists were used in US counter-insurgency operations in Thailand (Wakin 1992), or indeed in the study of Japanese Americans in the US in the 1940s (Starn 1986). Other states mediate and control access to the 'fields' within their borders and may even demand a copy of the results. As considerations of international relations entail strategies of image management, states may well increasingly assert control over such international movements of knowledge as ethnography. In the post-colonial state system in which ethnography is carried out today, international relations necessarily becomes an increasingly important dimension of anthropology.

All these examples testify to the closure of a gap—an insulated space—in which anthropologists could once publish in peace. At a time of great concern among anthropologists for popularizing their findings and applying their research, these examples serve to remind us of the inadvertent applications that have always existed potentially, but that have been made more likely by the closure of interlocal gaps that globalization represents.

It is not only such older anthropological monographs as Deacon's that will be put to political purposes in newly independent states. The same purpose awaits present-day ethnography, with the difference that this political purpose is now contemporaneous with the ethnographic research process itself rather than subsequent to it. For indigenous peoples have their own research agendas, and if outside scholars figure in these, it is as technical facilitators of what is essentially a *self*-documentation. As some of the examples above show, anthropology is ceasing to be something *done* to people by professional outsiders and becoming a *local* practice professionally mediated. If this is a new departure, due to the traditional subject of anthropology now being also its sponsor (putting to one side *internal* distinctions), in another sense it is a continuation of the project of documenting human diversity before it disappears. It is in this connection that

globalization as enhanced international *contact* has long been decried as destructive—to the ‘optimal diversity’ of culture, in Lévi-Strauss’ words (1985: xiv)—and the practice of anthropology justified. This traditional sentiment with regard to disciplinary purpose has been expressed with even greater force by those who see a greater potential today for anthropologists to promote forms of self-documentation on the part of those they study (e.g. Bernard and Salinas Pedraza 1989). New technology can make oral languages literate and preserve the culture by preserving the language that bears it, thereby contributing to its transmission to subsequent generations. But if anthropologists thus act as instruments of the cultural survival of their subjects, they also in this way enable their subjects to document themselves.

The critique within anthropology of both method and basic categories, however, has had a profound effect. Today less and less anthropology is characterized by a ‘salvage’ orientation to other cultures (Clifford 1986: 112–13). The trend towards research on less distant societies is one factor here. As societies closer to home—and even at home—come within the anthropological purview, the documentary imperative recedes. Change may still be conspicuous, thereby generating endangered traditions, but the relationship of change to culture is redefined. The problematic shifts from the unit of ‘culture’ (or ‘society’), and its comparison with other ‘cultures’ or ‘societies’, to the diversity it contains (or even conceals). This diversity is twofold: the contemporary distribution of perspectives according to social position; and the distribution of perspectives over time, according to which culture is a historically variable construct. Hence the calls to replace ‘culture’ as the disciplinary unit in favour of a ‘culture-history’ (Fox 1991). This new theoretical perspective, moreover, affects even those traditionally ‘other’ cultures themselves. Despite the trend towards an instrumental, salvage-oriented anthropology noted above, if ‘culture’ is looked at in the Amazon or Polynesia today, it is more likely to be seen as subsumed by history rather than the other way around. Any salvaging of what was will tend to be secondary to the consideration of what it has been overlaid with.

Many anthropologists hitherto have laboured under a specific burden of documentation. The social and cultural diversity they professionally encountered was deemed historically perishable, hence the importance of documenting while it still existed. This was a world whose diversity was conceived in terms of the fixity of an ‘ethnographic atlas’. Far fewer anthropologists are now subject to responsibilities of this order; for many, historical change itself is just as worthy of documentation. Yet this new theoretical appreciation of ethnographic subjects as historically dynamic or ‘emergent’ does not necessarily reprieve such anthropological works from subsequent application by others. The unification of formerly discrete local spaces means that anthropological practice cannot be insulated from politics, nor knowledge from power. Yet this new, critical orientation to culture causes problems precisely because of the politicization indicated above. If ‘culture’ is treated as a culture claim, and what is deemed timeless is historically located and even depicted as ‘invented’, then this must undermine the interests of

those, such as indigenous organizations or local tourism interests (see e.g. MacCannell 1984), who are politically or economically dependent on the wider acceptance of such claims.

'Culture' has never been so politicized—serving as it does today as a major principle of group entitlement in many national polities—at the same time as it has never been so criticized by those professionally charged to study it. If an earlier cultural relativism succeeded in making 'culture' as hard as 'nature'—that is, as a given in the world—then the contemporary orthodoxy of social constructionism makes it malleable (as indeed it does with 'nature' too) and therefore potentially contestable. This trend within the discipline is likely to diminish the usefulness of anthropologists for cultural politicians and ethnic nationalists of indigenous organizations. But, of course, the members of indigenous organizations are not the only cultural politicians involved; their very use of culture, after all, is a response to cultural politicians of a different magnitude—those of the encompassing nation state who have appropriated their traditional land in the name of a national culture. Thus, what the new 'closure' that is globalization entails is a radical intensification of the issues of academic responsibility.

For anthropologists, the chief consequence of this new situation should not be the disablement of inquiry but its reconstitution. Lévi-Strauss has recently stressed (in Eribon and Lévi-Strauss 1991: 154) that the historical link between anthropology as a discipline and the colonialism that destroyed traditional cultures imposes a particular obligation on anthropologists to help those they have traditionally studied to 're-establish links with their past'. Here I have tried to address this issue of responsibility by specifying the nature of the global context in which anthropological practice takes place today. By virtue of the intellectual support such theories of globalization provide, the question of responsibility must now be posed much more acutely. As the place of study we call the 'field' potentially becomes more and more observation-reactive, so should the anthropologist respond with a greater sensitivity to those captured in ethnographic observations. Thus the end of the anthropological object means, in one sense, the end of the distinctive split-focus of the discipline, whereby subjects and readers existed in different worlds—and this situation demands a new orientation on the part of its practitioners. So if Giddens's account of reflexive modern selves seems culture-bound and not usefully applicable to the broader range of cultural contexts, his description of the emerging ecology of professional social observations does implicate anthropologists and their practice more directly. We must learn, in other words, that henceforth we move in new ethnographic localities, and that we in turn share our own locality—the academy—with others.

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DISPERSED ALLIANCE AND TERMINOLOGICAL CHANGE IN SOUTH ASIA

ROBERT PARKIN

In a previous publication (Parkin 1990), I suggested a new way in which the conventional division of kinship systems in India between north and south might be viewed. At first sight this division seems radical, opposing as it does the prescription of the south with the non-prescription of the north. I argued that previous attempts to minimize the difference by such figures as Barnett, Carter and above all Dumont were unsatisfactory, principally because they viewed the system synchronically and neglected the diachronic dimension. Synchronously, the two systems could only be brought together by invoking extra-kinship factors—especially caste and certain ritual observances connected with it—or by comparing like with unlike, for example northern address terminologies with southern reference terminologies in Dumont's attempt (1966) to prove that the former were as classificatory as the latter. I advocated instead a diachronic approach that sought to find in the past the correlations lacking in the present. The argument was cast in the form of a chain of possible transformations and took advantage of the fact that the logically possible number of terminological patterns is quite limited.

This essay was originally delivered as a paper at the conference 'Kinship in Asia: Typology and Transformation', held in Moscow from 6 to 10 April 1992, organized by Dr Tamara Dragadze and Professor Michael Kriukov. An expanded version is to appear in due course as part of the published proceedings of the conference. The kinship abbreviations used are standard.

Using just material from north and south India, this might have seemed simply an abstract academic exercise of limited or no ethnographic relevance. What saved it as a potentially useful hypothesis was the existence of a number of apparently intermediate systems in central India, at various stages of transition from, or dissolution of, prescriptive systems. They occur principally among groups who for present purposes can be called tribals and with whom I have been concerned for a number of years. What I want to do here is to develop the theoretical arguments a little and to show that other parts of south Asia have similar systems locally, whether actually or in embryo. Although in my definitions of prescriptive systems I generally follow Needham (e.g. 1973) in seeing kinship terminology, rather than declared rules and preferences or behavioural trends, as denotative of prescriptive systems, I shall also be discussing affinal alliance and its relation with terminology in these groups.

I begin, however, with the typical north Indian terminology and its possible theoretical significance. What strikes one particularly about it is how, using separate terms, north Indian isolates kin types that would be united together under a single term in south India. Thus the typical Dravidian equation $MB = FZH = EF$ is split into three terms in standard Hindi, the equation $FB = MZH$ into two (I ignore relative age here). A glance at Vatuk's account (1969) is enough to show that the Hindi terminology is classificatory in that virtually all terms are applied to collateral equivalents too. However, it is not classificatory in the sense that lineal kin are regularly merged with parallel kin, nor is it prescriptive even residually. In the +1 and -1 levels, the primary or nearest cognatic kin types all receive separate terms, as do affines, except that there is no distinction between husband's kin and wife's kin. In ego's level, husband's and wife's kin have individualizing terms, but the cognatic part of the terminology is generational or 'Hawaiian'. Although the +1/-1 isolating pattern and the 'Hawaiian' pattern of ego's level differ radically in opposing the utmost distinction of terms to their utmost conflation, they are similar in that they allow no distinct internal groupings of cognatic kin to emerge. Broadly, there are two kinds of such groupings, following once again Needham's labels: the lineal, including the prescriptive, which distinguish cross kin from lineal and parallel kin; and the cognatic, which distinguish lineal from cross and parallel, i.e. from all collateral kin, as well as cognates from affines. Despite their differences, the north Indian and Hawaiian patterns are alike in that both are both non-prescriptive and non-cognatic—they present no differential internal patterning. What precisely is their significance?

Most of those authorities who accept the possibility of terminological evolution would also accept that prescriptive terminologies give way to cognatic ones rather than vice versa, but it is not easy to envisage the process happening in one step—e.g. for FB to switch suddenly from the terminological companionship of father to that of MB . No doubt the dissolution of lineal-parallel equations is an early step in the process, but there are still MZH and FZH to take into account, not to mention affines. One possible outcome is that they too all come to receive separate terms, as has largely happened in north India. Alternatively, the cognatic

categories at least may be conflated under one term, as with Hawaiian or generational terminologies. Here, what seems to happen is that the lineal-parallel terms take over the remaining cognates (i.e. cross kin), and the cross-parallel terms become simply affinal. In both cases, the prescriptive terminology becomes non-prescriptive and arrives at a neutral halfway house from which a cognatic pattern might emerge subsequently.

A further possible halfway house is ‘Crow–Omaha’, which, like Hawaiian, copes with the extra kin types that result from the break-up of prescription by remerging or realigning categories, but does so vertically rather than horizontally. The characteristic of these terminologies is such that they can be described as lineal but non-prescriptive. They are hardly relevant for south Asia, as Szemerényi has shown in great detail (1978). None the less, vertical terminological equations can certainly be found in south Asian terminologies. They are rarely of classic Crow–Omaha type, apart from some Himalayan examples: particularly common in terminologies from tribal areas, in both middle India and the Himalayas, are equations involving affines, i.e. between EP and EeG, and between their reciprocals, CE and yGE. Such equations occasionally find their way into north Indian terminologies, but vertical equations of any sort are much less common in what I would call more conservative south India, except for ones between PosGD and ZD where ZD marriage is a regular option. We may suggest provisionally that if the Crow–Omaha idea is broadened out into a generalized notion of vertical equations, it may more easily retain its significance as a possible phase in diachronic change: the label is problematic, but the phenomena it purports to describe are genuine enough. My claim essentially at this point is thus to suggest that north Indian, Hawaiian and Crow–Omaha terminologies are all transitional in terms of global patterns of terminological change, however solid they might appear to be to the peoples whose views of kinship they actually govern.

However, my basic reason for discussing Crow–Omaha in relation to south Asia is to introduce the notion of dispersed alliance with which it is often associated. This will be very relevant to my account, even though the terminological reflexes that can be identified for it in middle India are quite different from Crow–Omaha. A distinction must be introduced immediately between the various ways in which alliances may be dispersed. It is well known that in societies with positive marriage rules, groups of same-sex siblings are often broken up so that each is married off to a different alliance unit, perhaps only the eldest normally or jurally marrying according to the rule. Instead, same-sex sibling groups may even be kept together in each generation, and the dispersal comes from banning the renewal of such alliances for a number of generations, so that new alliance partners must be sought in the intervening period.

It is mainly the latter that is at issue in central India, something that makes these tribal systems resemble in a general way Crow–Omaha alliance systems without Crow–Omaha terminologies. As I have done before, I choose McDougal’s data (1963, 1964) on the Juang of Orissa as the fullest and clearest account of such a system. I shall have to be very brief and concentrate on essentials. Although

the Juang have patrilineal clans or *bok* and lineages or *kutumali*, the units in affinal alliance are what McDougal calls ‘local descent groups’—effectively, agnatically defined villages intermediate in size between the two. There is a clear distinction among local descent groups between *kutumb* or agnatic ones and *bondhu* or those of potential and actual affines, but it is a relative distinction, i.e. there is no dual organization. There is also a vertical dichotomy between *bhaiguli* or sets of alternate generations in such a way that the set formed of +2, -2 and ego’s generations is opposed to the set of +1 and -1. Put together, this creates a fourfold structure not dissimilar to the Kariera four-section model, except that there are no named sections and the system is again relative. The system none the less has both ritual and alliance significance: in particular in the present context, one’s spouse should be a *bondhu* relative of one’s generation moiety. However, it is not enough to say this, since a number of categories within the marriageable quadrant are banned as spouses to ego, including cross cousins, and the relative age of alter and of certain link relatives is also important. The primary preferred category for a male ego is a *saliray*, basically eGEyZ, and for a female ego an *inibou*, basically eGEyB. Added to this is a rule or preference dispersing alliances among several villages-cum-local descent groups. This is done not by splitting up the sibling group but by allowing repeated marriages between any two local descent groups within any one generation and prohibiting them in the following three. Hence the formula eGEyG: all but the first of the sibling group marry, in a classificatory sense, the yG of the E of their own eG, as the two diagrams in Fig. 1 make clear.

We can set aside the question of relative age here in uncovering the significance of such a preference and can generalize it as one for GEG. The Juang terminology is recognizably symmetric prescriptive in the +1 and -1 levels but has separate terms for the direct affines, i.e. EP and CE (see McDougal 1964: 329). Ego’s level is generational, with terms for G-cum-PGC being opposed to various terms for affines. The Juang exclusion of cross cousins in marriage is therefore reflected in the terminology—they are classificatory siblings and, like real siblings and parallel cousins, they are banned. This ban is also reflected in the rule of delay of three generations in repeating alliances, since this rules out egos repeating the marriages of their parents. The WB of one generation becomes, of course, the MB of the next, but his son does not succeed to his position: MBS is never WB, and MB never WF, hence the regular terminological separation of direct affines and cross kin. There is, of course, a similarity between cross cousins and GEG as preferred marriage partners in that each represents a situation in which groups of siblings intermarry. The difference is that while genealogical paths to cross cousins can readily be traced through previous generations, paths to GEG categories must be traced back four, given the rule of delay in repeating alliances—supposing the system to work regularly, GEG categories combine with the three-generation rule to produce fourth cousins such as FFFFZSSSD as marriage partners. This may not be too difficult for the analyst, but it is something the Juang’s shallow genealogical memory does not allow them to conceive readily. From their point of view, one marries *salirays* and *inibous*, not ‘cross cousins’ or

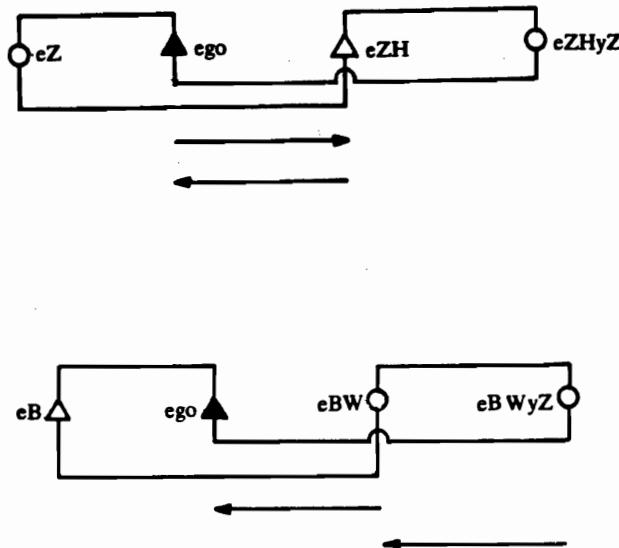


FIG. 1. Models of Affinal Alliance with eGEyG Categories

even siblings' spouses' siblings, both of which are essentially *our* analytical terms and categories.

I leave aside here the thorny question of whether systems like that of the Juang are to be regarded as truly prescriptive. The terminologies, though recognizably prescriptive in part, are compromises, and the status of the generational delay and of GEG preferences as rules is unclear for most groups, though Yamada (1970: 385) on the Munda is rather less unequivocal on this point. None the less, the Juang system is clearly transitional, a symmetric prescriptive system in process of decay, preserving original features in the +1 and -1 cognatic terminology, but losing these in ego's level and with separate affinal terms in all three medial levels.

There are many similar examples from middle India, as I have shown in previous work (Parkin 1990, 1992). This areal contiguity is to be expected, but there is also evidence from other regions, both north and south. A recent book by Martin Gaenszle (1991) shows the presence of all the essential elements among the Mewahang Rai of east Nepal. Here, there is no marriage to first or second cousins, and alliances between specific groups can only be renewed after the lapse of three generations. Gaenszle gives the genealogical category involved as FFMGDD. However, to the people themselves this probably has less meaning than the specification GEG, for which the term is *yoksini*, the term for the preferred marriage category. As a preference, it accounted for only a minority of all marriages, one third together with WyZ, i.e. junior sororate. More than half of all marriages are with a classificatory sister, which here clearly includes all sorts of cousins. Again, there are separate terms for EP, and G shares terms with PGC

in a terminology that is evidently a shade less prescriptive than the Juang one overall. No doubt similar Himalayan examples would be uncovered if one ransacked the ethnography with that in mind.

The similarities of these alliance systems with dispersal through the well-known four-*got* rule of the Jat and other groups of north India, which forbids marriage if any of the four grandparental *got* or patrilineal descent lines of the prospective bride and groom coincide, is obvious. Despite the delay in the renewal of alliances this imposes, there is often a desire or tendency to repeat alliances between the same groups within the same generation, as with the Juang or Munda (see Tiemann 1970). Unlike the Munda, however, there is no hint of a rule or preference, and the terminologies are normally entirely non-prescriptive north Indian. Here, therefore, we have dispersed alliance systems statistically or preferentially but not jurally similar to the Juang one, but with no vestiges of terminological prescription. If we return to central India (Bihar) we find the immediately prior stage in at least two tribal societies—Malto and Malpahariya—that apparently have Juang-type alliance systems but prescriptive terminologies in an advanced state of decay towards north Indian. Broadly speaking, the prescriptive pattern concerns parallel kin types in +1 only, perhaps the last part of the terminology to break up.¹ Cross kin and affines, even in this level, have individual terms in the manner of north Indian, though there is some redundancy, as can be seen from Table 1. Despite many uncertainties as to how they operate in detail, these two systems are especially significant for the overall hypothesis being put forward here.

The evolutionary paradigm I am suggesting for south Asia therefore looks like this. The first stage would, hypothetically, be tetradic society (Allen 1986), i.e. a Dravidian system with thorough alternate generation equations (I leave aside complications of relative age and gender distinctions here). Such alternate generation equations certainly survive in middle India and sporadically in the south. The second stage is the Dravidian system we are all familiar with, from Morgan onwards, where these equations have largely disappeared. The third stage is the Juang-type system, which retains some prescriptive features terminologically and has a system of dispersed alliance with a preference for GEG categories rather than cross cousins, but with the expectation of renewal in the long term—i.e., in the fourth generation. The fourth stage, obviously intermediate, is represented by the Malto and Malpahariya—similar to the Juang, as far as we know, in alliance, but with the terminology poised between the last vestiges of prescription and individualizing north Indian. The fifth stage is the Jat system, terminologically

1. In the typical three-line or asymmetric prescriptive terminology, while cross equations such as MB = FZH divide, parallel ones such as FB = MZH logically can and actually often do remain untouched. The +1 level is often the least resistant to change in a prescriptive terminology.

Malpahariya

<i>jetha</i>	FeB, MeZH; but also FeZH	<i>mama</i>	MB
<i>kaka</i>	FyB, MyZH	<i>mami</i>	MBW
<i>jethi</i>	MeZ, FeBW; but also FeZ	<i>pisi</i>	FyZ
<i>kaki</i>	FyBW	<i>pisa</i>	FyZH
<i>mosi</i>	MyZ		
<i>mosa</i>	MyZH		

Malto

<i>piro</i>	FeB, MeZH; but also FeZH in some dialects
<i>dada</i>	FyB, MyZH; but also FyZH and FeZH in some dialects
<i>peni</i>	MeZ, FeBW
<i>kale</i>	MyZ, FyBW; but also FyZ in some dialects
<i>moma</i>	MB
<i>momi</i>	MBW
<i>chacho</i>	FeZ; also FyZ in some dialects
<i>pinso bnarha</i>	FeZH in some dialects

TABLE 1. Malpahariya and Malto +1 Kin Terms
(Cognates and Affines of Cognates)

north Indian, with the four-*got* rule ensuring dispersal, but with at least a statistical tendency towards eventual renewal. The sixth and final stage is standard north Indian terminologically with no particular tendency to renew alliances at any stage. One might be able to identify further, intermediate stages at greater levels of detail, but the above seem basic, apart, perhaps, from the clearly unstable fourth.

Least familiar will probably be stages three and four, i.e. the Juang and the Malto/Malpahariya. What they have in common is that data on the terminology is backed up by data on the alliance system. Otherwise, separate terms for affines and for cross kin might signal just the development of individualizing terms for one or the other without specific alliance implications. This is clearly the case for Kodanda Rao's (1973) data on Andhra Pradesh fishing communities, where genealogical MB, for instance, is distinguished from other *mama* by the prefix *mena-*.² This example is useful, incidentally, in reminding us that the development of terminological distinctions between cognates and affines is often provided for not through realigning terms, as with Crow–Omaha and Hawaiian, but through such innovations as the above, and sometimes by borrowing, in order to provide

2. *Mama* is an especially common term in India for the MB/FZH/EF nexus—here, it just means EF when used alone.

the extra term needed. The question then arises, which category retains the original term, and which is forced to innovate or borrow? Mostly, it seems—as here, and also normally among the Munda—it is the newly isolated affinal category that retains the original term. This may seem odd at first sight, but for ego there is continuity in the sense that the same terms continue to express the most radical contrasts in kinship from his or her point of view—i.e. between cognate and affine, where before it had been between lineal-cum-parallel and cross-cum-affine.

Finally, let us turn briefly to Sri Lanka, where Juang-type systems can occasionally be found, to judge from material published by Stirrat (1977). Sri Lanka is, of course, generally associated terminologically with the south Indian area. Stirrat worked in a village to which he gave the name ‘Wellagoda’, on the coast some fifty miles north-west of Colombo, where a deviant terminology is to be found, intermittently penetrating also inland from a stretch of coast sixty to seventy miles long north of Colombo. It is also reported in pockets of Colombo itself, and Negombo, another urban area. Stirrat’s group were Sinhalese-speaking, Catholic Karavas, mostly fishermen, but some Tamil Paravars also seem to be affected. Again, the deviant terminology is basically symmetric prescriptive, but with separate affinal terms for EF, EM, DH and SW. In ego’s level the term *massina*, meaning cross cousin in many parts of Sri Lanka, here covers the affinal specifications that a prescriptive system would put with it, namely ZH, WB, BWB, though also included are the parallel equivalents WZH, ZHZH and WBWB. The terms for EF and EM are clearly derivable from those for +1 cross kin, but Stirrat’s informants had no hesitation in distinguishing them from one another. DH and SW are clearly distinct even lexically and cannot be derived from those for osGC. In fact, in -1 all collaterals share terms with own children, just as in ego’s level all cousins are classificatory siblings.

These terminological peculiarities find a parallel in the affinal alliance system. Alliance units are *pavula*, elementary families. There is said to be no prescriptive category, and indeed both first and second cousins are banned except by Church dispensation. Possibly the Church is responsible for the ban itself, but Stirrat does not tell us. There is no FBC marriage, and strong patrilineal ties replace the bilaterality of descent elsewhere on the island. Marriages of groups of siblings, whether of brother and sister to brother and sister, or of two brothers to two sisters, are also banned, though not, says Stirrat, by the Church. The two sets of restrictions are clearly distinguished indigenously, the first being *le naeaekaema* or blood relationships, the second being *vivaha naeaekaema* or marriage relationships. Stirrat also says, presumably of the first sort of rule, though he is not entirely clear: ‘the result is that marriages should not be repeated within a span of three generations’ (*ibid.*: 282). Alliances are thus dispersed, as with the Juang: indeed, the above rules mean that they are dispersed in both senses, i.e. through the splitting up of sibling groups as well as through the generational delay.

Stirrat sees no obvious reason for the change in terminology: ‘Even the marriage regulations could co-exist with the Dravidian terminology with

genealogical proscriptions overlying a system of categorical prescription' (*ibid.*: 283). There being other examples on the island, no correlation can be made between this system and either caste or religion. Following Bloch (1971), Stirrat rests his explanation on the different meanings, the different moral or ideological values, that different groups of social actors give to their kin terms, and he goes on to associate the deviant terminology with the individualism that is encouraged by urban environments and by the particular form of fishing by which the villagers of Wellagoda live. This view derives support from the fact that when some of them moved inland to farm they reverted to the old terminology, which other fishermen, who work more collectively, still continue to use. These can only be local explanations at best: the Juang are not noticeably more individualistic than Tamils, after all. The immediate cause of the deviant terminology must none the less be that, as with the Juang, if egos no longer marry their cross cousins, there will be no continuity of alliances even categorically, and fathers-in-law will no longer be mothers' brothers. Cross cousins become classificatory siblings to bring them within the orbit of marriage prohibitions; and since brother and sister no longer swap children in marriage, the children of the one will no longer be the CE of the other.

Stirrat's example may seem aberrant for the Dravidian part of the south Asian area, but it is still recognizable within that area. Much depends on what one considers the norm. Certainly nothing in the Dravidian area (speaking terminologically) has the regularity and coherence between terminology and alliance of Allen's tetradic model (Allen 1986). Alternate generation equations are mostly though not entirely absent; the symmetry of the terminology is not matched by those affinal alliance systems that have unilateral preferences; and eZD marriage, which Good (1980) regards as standard rather than exceptional in south India, violates the strict separation of generations that tetradic theory envisages. In addition, evidence is emerging that in south India too the phenomenon of separate affinal terms is by no means absent from terminologies that are otherwise symmetric prescriptive. This is true, as Rudner (1990) has recently shown, even of Dumont's own fieldwork data on south India (1957). What was lacking was any particular alliance attributes of these terminological characteristics, but perhaps we have here another intermediate stage, i.e. the first glimmerings of a shift from standard Dravidian to the Juang-type system.

In this sense, the Juang and the villagers of Wellagoda represent just another deviant path. If the tetradic model is accepted as a possible evolutionary starting-point rather than just a typological base line, then not only middle India but south India and Sri Lanka offer plenty of evidence of moves away from it. One can argue that their north Indian cousins, so radically different when seen through direct comparison, only differ in an evolutionary sense in the *extent* of remove, something that intermediate systems like those of the Juang, Malapahariya and Jat enable us to see more clearly.

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OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

**ABSTRACTS OF THESES IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1991**

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JONATHAN E. ARENSEN, Aspects of Language and Society among the Murle of Sudan. D. Phil.

This thesis takes a fresh look at Murle society by using the Murle language as the focus of the discussion. I assert that there is a close correlation between any given language and the people who speak it. Therefore an in-depth analysis of a language and how it is used will reveal insights into the society which are not readily available by other means.

The thesis begins by discussing the origins and ethnicity of the Murle people; relying heavily on linguistic data for its evidence. It then focuses on how basic lexical terms are tied to experience. Taking these lexical terms as a starting-point, it shows how language can be expanded and used metaphorically. This reveals much about how the Murle people perceive, organize and categorize their world. A study of Murle grammar and discourse follows, and these show further aspects of categorization and Murle thought.

Having laid a background of what can be learned through language, the thesis proceeds to the analysis of Murle tales. The various features of Murle language previously described are thus seen in a natural context and the meanings of these tales and their relationship to Murle society are explained. The thesis then moves into the study of Murle religion. The terminology used in this sphere is both abstract and dense with meaning. Using techniques found earlier in the thesis, various aspects of Murle religion are discussed. Having gained an understanding of the parameters of these religious terms, there follows a discussion on the translation of the Bible into the Murle language, showing both the possibilities and difficulties of taking indigenous Murle language and religious terminology and using these in such a translation.

Overall the thesis proposes that the use of in-depth language analysis in an anthropological discussion gives an important added dimension to the study of a given people. This approach expands the understanding of Murle society and helps to show it in a fresh way—hopefully more as the Murle people themselves see it.

JOAN F. BURKE, *The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Lower Zaïre: A Social and Historical Study.* D. Phil.

The subject of this thesis is the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Lower Zaïre, and the social reconstruction of the Catholic sisterhood by African members. The historical section, based on published and archival sources, traces the early history of the congregation from the arrival of the sisters in the Congo Free State in 1894. It describes the early work of the sisters with women and young girls, and the first three attempts of Africans to become Catholic sisters in Lower Congo. The study indicates some of the factors which promoted the development of a Congolese Church in the colony rather than one that replicated the Church in the Belgian *métropole*. The missionary policy stressed the Africanization of Church personnel, especially its ministers. The political ‘policy of authenticity’, promulgated by President Mobutu in the early 1970s, reinforced these tendencies and encouraged the indigenization of the Church.

The ethnographic section, based on eight years of first-hand field observation, examines the transformation of the Catholic sisterhood by examining first the self-perceptions of the Kongo sisters (Ki-kongo speakers from Lower Zaïre), and then patterns and social processes in different community settings. The ethnographer shows how the Zaïrean members of the congregation reconstructed the sisterhood by drawing on experience and models derived from: (1) Catholic mission practices, (2) expatriate sisters, (3) their Kongo villages, (4) post-colonial influences emanating from the urban political centre.

The researcher argues that studies of this kind need to take as their starting-point the self-perceptions of the people themselves and carefully record coexisting contradictory models and internal conflicts. These tensions indicate domains of

continuing negotiation and adjustment within the group to their developing identities. A methodology that respects persons as the active subjects of their own history has broad implications for studies of minority peoples and colonial regimes, as well as for 'mission ethnographies'.

SIAN EIRA JAY, Shamans, Priests and the Cosmology of the Ngaju Dayak of Central Kalimantan. D. Phil.

The introductory chapter of the thesis outlines the aims of the study and gives a brief synopsis of the contributions that have already been made by scholars who have worked with the Ngaju Dayak. It also gives a very brief account of how the fieldwork was conducted. The second chapter goes on to outline in greater detail the geographical and cultural region involved and to discuss the literature covering this region, and to discuss the recent developments in religious attitudes which have a bearing on the study. The third chapter outlines the social organization of the Ngaju Dayak, being divided up into settlement, kinship, and status and rank.

Chapter four describes the creation myth of the Ngaju and analyses its symbolism, and relates it to the current religious practices of the Kaharingan Ngaju. It is based upon the official account of the mythology published by the Ngaju. This book, the *Panaturan*, has not been discussed before.

Chapter five analyses the concepts of 'soul' and spirit among the Ngaju, the various sections discussing different aspects of the concept and describing the implications that these concepts have for religious belief and practice. It also takes account of Christian and Hindu ideas that have influenced the modern Ngaju's understanding of these concepts.

Following an introduction and précis of the literature, chapter six discusses the priests and the ceremonies at which they officiate, and describes how they become priests. This is followed by a description of uncontrolled possession, the role of shamans and their relationship with their familiar spirits, and their curing ceremonies. The final sections describe the career of the shaman, and the ceremony whereby they assume the role.

WILFRED VAN EYEN, Urban Culture and the Rise of the 'Basilimu': A Social History of Kigali and Butare in Rwanda, 1966-1976. D. Phil.

This thesis, based upon fieldwork undertaken between 1972 and 1976 in Rwanda's two major towns, explores certain informal, political, socio-economic and ideological aspects of a new identity among the educated layers of the population known as the *basilimu*. As a category they hardly fitted in the conventional frameworks of urban-rural, ethnic, or class distinctions, yet they were central to the local urban culture and played a crucial role nationwide during an important period in the country's history.

Part one, outlining the context, emphasizes Rwanda's uniqueness—a land of scattered settlement and negligible urbanization, but nevertheless Africa's most densely populated country. Reference is made to relevant historical themes, and the *basilimu*'s sudden political significance during the upheavals preceding the 1973 military coup is analysed.

Part two describes the urban beer trade: the economic and socio-cultural spearhead of the *basilimu*'s breakthrough into a foreign-dominated urban world, and the first republic's main channel for 'informal' politics—the very success of which betrayed Rwanda's economic predicament and the widening gap between *basilimu* and peasantry.

As shown in part three, increased belief in sorcery since the 'time of politics' was an important ideological element in the *basilimu*'s efforts to bridge this gap through a 'return' to peasant traditions in the face of adversity. Yet these very traditions, in denying the ancestral spirits any role in countering modern sorcery, had become largely symbolic of peasant impotence, deepening the victim's ideological and personal crisis, and leaving only initiation into the Kubandwa cult as a potential rescue.

Part four deals with certain socio-cultural, economic and urbanizational reforms under the second republic which, by further fostering *basilimu* identity and the creation of a genuine class among the *basilimu* in town, enlisted support from the educated for a policy of national cohesion focused once again upon the peasantry. The impact of these changes upon beliefs in sorcery was unknown, yet even though economic disparities grew and Kigali's expansion was actively promoted, they certainly increased the regime's stability.

BOOK REVIEWS

JAMES F. WEINER, *The Heart of the Pearl Shell: The Mythological Dimension of Foi Sociality* (Studies in Melanesian Anthropology; eds. Gilbert H. Herdt, Fitzjohn Porter Poole, Donald F. Tuzin), Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1988. xviii, 305 pp., References, Index, Plates. \$40.00.

JADRAN MIMICA, *Intimations of Infinity: The Cultural Meaning of the Iqwaye Counting System and Number* (Explorations in Anthropology; ser. ed. John Gledhill), Oxford etc.: Berg 1988. ix, 177 pp., References, Index, Figures, Maps, Tables. £27.50.

The Foi are to be found in the area to the east of Lake Kutubu in Papua New Guinea. Weiner's account of them deliberately places myth in the foreground, 'with the aim not of negating Lévi-Strauss's work, but rather of augmenting it' (p. 155). While accepting the validity of the sorts of oppositions that routinely appear in structuralist analyses, Weiner follows the revisionist paths already set out by Dan Sperber, Paul Ricoeur and Roy Wagner. From Sperber he takes the view of symbolic images as cognitive, not semiological, i.e. that they constitute knowledge, not coded meanings; from Ricoeur, the emphasis on metaphor or tropes as distinct from structure; and from Wagner, the relation between metaphor and structure, and the idea of obviation, whereby each successive image in a myth does much more than merely continue the story—it sets up and then resolves contradictions in previously occurring images of like kind. Nor is obviation limited to myth: it is also shown informing the entire marriage sequence, including the exchanges that follow from it in later generations, and death rites. It is 'the successive substitutions of tropes by other tropes [that] results in the obviation sequences—large-scale metaphors—that myths represent' (p. 15). However, an ultimate resolution may be lacking, for mythical metaphors are elusive and need not reveal everything: 'It is up to the listener, Foi and anthropologist alike, to assimilate myth's intricate plots into a transcendent insight into the most important secret of all—the mystery of human sociality' (p. 14).

Thus Weiner is not seeking to replace structure with metaphor so much as arguing for an equal place for both in analysis, for they are mutually dependent: 'one cannot invoke metaphorical relationships without reference to the signs that are their ultimate building blocks, and one cannot discuss signs without considering the tropic equations that restrict and limit their associations' (pp. 154-5). But the base line has changed: whereas structuralism takes difference for granted, and tries to show the commonality of different oppositions, Weiner takes 'the structural interrelatedness of cultural meanings' (p. 12) for granted instead, continually striving to see how metaphor subverts conventional signs to produce meaning through the constant interplay of analogy and difference, how it replaces the arbitrariness of the relationship between sign and signified with a positive identity between its own terms: indeed, for the Foi, analogy occupies the position that

difference has in the West. Of course, that identity is itself cultural and therefore arbitrary at the ultimate level of analysis. So what is meant by 'nonarbitrary and determinate' (p. 124) to characterize the relationship between the terms of a metaphor? Within the boundaries of the culture, presumably, it is to stress identity, however contingent and temporary, as opposed to the representational character of a semiological system.

Such identities involve contradictions, for each metaphor involves simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity. A key contradiction for the Foi is the fact that men can only control procreation through social action, and not directly, as do women: this they achieve through bridewealth exchanges, which are themselves ultimately dependent on a 'head-man's' (*sic*) confidential trading contracts. Similarly, menstrual blood is a force for the creation of life when controlled by women, but in the hands of men it becomes a destructive agent of sorcery. Perhaps this much-criticized Lévi-Straussian association of male with culture and female with nature is the Foi's rather than Weiner's, though he does go on to attribute the dichotomy between the ritual construction of maleness and the precultural existence ('naturalness') of femaleness to New Guinea generally. A further contradiction is that cross cousins are simultaneously consanguines (one parent of each are siblings to each other) and affines (their fathers are brothers-in-law). Affinal exchange involves the differentiation of wife-takers from wife-givers (direct exchange is rare, but not particularly devalued), and thus of male from female goods (this is also true of inter-tribal trade). This distinction, and the inter-group exchanges it makes possible, are seen as analogous to the daily inter-person exchanges of food between husband and wife, and to the need to keep female domains separate from male for the sake of individual health, for men both need women and are threatened by them: 'A single idiom reflects all these domains: that of the perceived necessity to transform female productivity into male continuity' (p. 95). But such distinctions are essential to social life, for without them social action would be impossible (another very Lévi-Straussian point). One is reminded here of Hocart's dictum to the effect that one cannot perform any ritual for oneself, with its implication of a differentiation of statuses in the provision of ritual services. We also see how kinship generally is constructed rather than given: the bifurcation of agnatic descent groups depends on the activities of important 'head-men' rather than on progressive segmentation; closeness of relationship is a matter of co-residence and the acceptance of responsibility for bridewealth contributions and sharing rather than genealogical connection; and agnation is itself compromised by the recognition of matrilateral links. In all three cases, the contingencies of social action are seen as more important than the usual objective criteria of the structuralists.

There is a constant emphasis throughout on the reflexivity of culture, and on the existence of 'differentially constituted domains within a single culture' (p. 1). Weiner is keen to eschew the search for any single key value, in relation to which any others are mere extensions, figures of speech, transformations etc. He thus implicitly distances himself from, say, Dumont's latter-day work on differentiation,

in which any distinction automatically introduces hierarchy, and also requires the identification of one fundamental value that is 'the mother of all others' (Dumont's words). There is no reduction of culture to 'objective' facts, in the manner of the typical functionalist analysis (which can now be seen to include much Lévi-Straussian structuralism, of course, especially where myth is concerned). For Weiner, the objective is as subjective as culture, since it is equally a cultural construction. Nor, implicitly, is the Durkheim-and-Mauss position followed, of seeing the classification of the natural world as simply the result of the projection of social categories on to it. The point is not that there is no connection, but that neither nature nor society is primary: each acts to define the other, in a perpetual oscillation of cultural reflexivity.

Weiner manages to contradict himself on the matter of whether contradiction is or is not a 'necessary' part of culture. Early on (p. 16) he makes the essentially Lévi-Straussian point that it is, and that everyday social action depends on the ability to ignore it temporarily, which myth sustains. Towards the end, however, he explicitly denies this, and contradiction becomes a manipulative technique in the manufacture of meaning, 'an end in itself, a strategy of mythic and cultural revelation, rather than an analytic by-product that must be mediated by further analysis' (p. 290). This would seem to be nearer to the attitude of the Foi themselves, who recognize metaphor not merely as a mythical device but as an instrument of status and power whose use must be learnt and whose control must be acquired. This echoes the standard Marxist or Blochian position that knowledge and mystification go hand in hand to produce unequal power relationships. Myth thus aids the more perceptive in society and does not necessarily resolve paradoxes, as structuralist orthodoxy teaches. Hence Weiner argues that it is not structure but obviation, i.e. the successive replacement of metaphors by others that may compound as much as remove contradictions, that is the motivating force behind what he calls 'mythopoeia'.

Mimica's book is more complete in its rejection of Lévi-Straussian structuralism, is similarly infused with a common theme, and also views myth as a creative 'epistemic' force allowing contradiction as well as resolution—what *he* regards as 'mythopoeia' (myth for him is the framework in which this force operates). His inspiration, however, is explicitly phenomenological. His principal case is that the idea of mathematics as an abstract science of universal applicability whose epistemology is asocial is itself the product of particular trends in Western intellectual history and therefore culturally bound. But mathematicians generally come in for rather less criticism than such psychologists as Piaget and such anthropologists as the neo-Piagetian Hallpike, and also Lévi-Strauss, for whom mathematics is the ultimate acultural reality and almost gratefully embraced as such.

Mimica argues his case with reference to the counting system of another New Guinea people, the Iqwaye of Morobe Province. The first thing to note is that they do not regard their system as any sort of abstraction, but as a practical method of arranging exchanges and (in the past, at least) assembling a sufficiency of warriors

for attacks on their neighbours. Secondly, Iqwaye numeracy involves a binary scheme: although there are numbers beyond two, two and one are the key elements, which rapidly add up to the further unities of the hand, foot and whole body. The successive replacement of each duality with a further unity, through a successive series of inclusions, leads Mimica to suggest that the ultimate number for the Iqwaye is one. This is analogous to our idea of infinity, not only in that both are the ultimates of their respective number systems, but also because both are metaphysical concepts, including infinity. For the Iqwaye, 'one' is therefore the 'intimation of infinity'.

This unity is replicated in cosmogony, in which the first man, Omalyce, in fertilizing himself, also created the world—indeed, he *is* the world during this cosmogonic moment (and this is not a metamorphosis, but a 'simultaneity', p. 86). This creation involves a shift to duality, or rather to a series of dualities—up/down, sky/earth, light/dark. As the first man, Omalyce also includes woman, who is variously his back (while he is the front); or his shadow, though since the whole body remains male he encompasses her, in true Dumontian fashion. Indeed, Omalyce is 'an autogeneal being...at once his own father, mother and son' (p. 75). Iqwaye catastrophe theory involves the elimination of this duality, as everything returns to the primordial unitary darkness. Another replication concerns the status of women in relation to men in this patrilineal society. Until her marriage a woman has no identity separate from her patrilineal descent group—this is unity. But she must marry into a different descent group, to which she represents a difference—this is duality. Her actual marriage restores unity by incorporating her into her husband's descent group. Therefore marriage is cosmologically 'a conjunction of the oneness and twoness' (p. 90). Children too represent their father synecdochically, just as fingers represent the whole body in counting. Finally, the preferred form of marriage itself involves oscillations between unity and duality. The preferred marriage partner is a classificatory FM, defined sociocentrically, not genealogically, to mean that one's spouse must come from the same patrilineal group as one's actual FM. This is said to ensure that ego's son will receive the same combination of father's and mother's patronymics as ego's father, and will thus replace him. In fact, out of the duality of ego and his father a unity is produced between the two males whom ego links patrilineally: and through this alternation, ego produces in his son the man who will ensure his own birth, his own father.

Like Weiner, Mimica declines to prioritize any one source for the several occurrences of this image of successive unities and dualities, neither the social order (*pace* Durkheim and Mauss) nor the functioning of the brain (*pace* Lévi-Strauss). It is Lévi-Strauss who receives the greatest degree of criticism here for isolating the brain, and the structures its functioning promote, from the outward stimuli derived from the individual's experience. For Mimica, the search for causality simply produces an ossified analytical structure and neglects the reality of continuous cultural construction from inner and outer stimuli: a dynamic, historical process involving contradiction and change. It is clear that for him too

the body is significant not just as a homology of the cosmos through the image of Omalyce, the primordial man, but also as a source of sensations projected directly on to culture. Thus the question of right and left, and of dual symbolic classification generally, is traced, through a series of 'correlations', to a source in the unequal power of the two hands, the primary association [of] the strong and the weak' (pp. 66-7), i.e. to nature rather than to society, as for Hertz and those who have followed him: 'We can see that the human body, oriented to things around itself as objects of potential or actual manipulation, imposes itself upon them as a source of orderliness' (p. 67), a return to the sort of naturalistic explanation Hertz was particularly keen to overturn. But while Mimica would evidently not deny the existence of such universals, 'even in the sphere of universality such as binary coding, one culture's unconscious is not exactly the same as another's' (p. 138).

Thus, inevitably, we return to the old story of what is universal (or at least uniform across many cultures) and what is not. Such Iqwaye features as affinal alliance between patrilineal descent groups, the encompassment of femaleness by maleness, the asymmetry of poles in a system of dual symbolic classification, the equivalence of alternate generations, and the image of the cosmos as a human body, though hardly universal, are certainly not unique. All that Mimica has really given us, therefore, are the local recensions of these widespread themes, not an explanation for their occurrences cross-culturally, i.e. elsewhere than among the Iqwaye. A similar situation informs many of the values of the Foi, such as their affinal alliance system, or the association of bone with men and flesh with women, or the identification of MB as a potential source of illness. The difference is that Weiner, in balancing structure and metaphor, leaves the way open to achieving a better balance also between the cultural specificity of a particular group and its parallels with others.

ROBERT PARKIN

THEODORE C. BESTOR, *Neighborhood Tokyo* (Studies of East Asian Institute, Columbia University), Stanford: Stanford University Press 1989. xvi, 268 pp., Appendixes, Bibliography, Index, Tables. £35.00.

SHEILA K. JOHNSON, *The Japanese through American Eyes*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1988. x, 171 pp., Index, Illustrations. £22.50.

OKPYO MOON, *From Paddy Field to Ski Slope: The Revitalization of Tradition in Japanese Village Life*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 1989. vii, 177 pp., Glossary, Bibliography, Index, Maps, Figures. £35.00.

These three books are representative of several of the current trends in the field of Japanese anthropology. All have something to recommend them to the student of

Japan, with the book one would expect to be the most theoretical—Johnson's on the American structuring of the Oriental other—being the disappointing one of the three. In fact, Bestor's and Moon's books, while obviously Japan-based, are really the more useful books in a wider anthropological sense: Bestor tackles notions about the invention of urban tradition, while Moon challenges long-held notions about rural-urban migration and the role of tourism in a village economy. Of the three, *Neighborhood in Tokyo* is the most theoretically ambitious, while it is *From Paddy Field to Ski Slope* that makes the more interesting statements.

What is common to all three books is that their subject-matter—the other, tradition and tourism—is the stuff of current anthropological debate, though I would hesitate to add that any of the three has made the impact it should outside the area Japanese studies. There are various reasons for this, the most obvious being that anthropologists of areas outside of Japan tend to find Japanese material unexciting, often because it appears almost functionally straightforward, and functionalism is out of fashion. However, one must admit that the ethnography of Japan is often not well written, and lately it is not even well edited as publishers rush to make money out of the Japan boom. (Manchester University Press is, unfortunately, one of the worst culprits.) This should not deter readers from looking, at the very least, at the Moon and Bestor books. Johnson's book presents another problem altogether.

The Japanese through American Eyes begins promisingly enough. Johnson admits that while she is a social anthropologist, she is not a Japan specialist; her husband is. As a result she spent time in Japan and read all the English-language material current in the 1960s. She found that this material presented a 'dangerously antiquarian and exceptionalist image of the Japanese. Sometimes they were depicted as cruel warriors driven by a spartan code of ethics called *bushido*. At other times they were seen as harmony-loving worker bees, or perhaps as otherworldly aesthetes. Many books laboured hard to explain how the Japanese could actually be all three: the argument was that they were a very contradictory, not to say schizophrenic people' (p. v). She presents her book as a reaction to this viewpoint, a valid and worthwhile academic pursuit these days: the examination of the very assumptions that have fuelled the work of prior anthropologists is important work. However, this is not the point of *The Japanese through American Eyes*. There is, in fact, little if any discussion of the anthropology of Japan, à la Said's *Orientalism*. The book is actually an updated version of her 1976 'report', *American Attitudes toward Japan, 1941-1975*. In both versions, the most interesting section is the one on the research done as part of the U.S. military's wartime national character studies. On re-reading this chapter, my reaction remains that the material would have made a fascinating book in its own right.

The other chapters, on the 'legacy' of the war, Hiroshima, and the Occupation, are the same as in her earlier report, with the added chapters being about the sexual, cultural and business 'nexus'. The material for these chapters comes from novels and articles written about the Japanese by Americans. I am all for the use of popular culture in anthropological analysis, but Johnson's book suffers from the

same flaw as most of the recent attempts at an anthropology of popular culture, i.e. the lack of empirical research. Has she talked to the writers whose work she dissects? Has she talked to publishers, booksellers, critics and readers of *Shogun*? The mistaken assumption is that popular culture accurately reflects people's attitudes and beliefs, rather than being a sort of fun-house mirror in which the reflection must be carefully examined before one can draw any conclusions. Another major error in anthropological attempts to analyse popular culture is the assumption that the various media create dominant ideologies, or uphold them, so that people are manipulated. Johnson does not fall into this trap, but she shies away from exploring the complex connection between images of the other, as portrayed in popular culture, and cultural ideology. The material is all there in her book, but she doesn't go far enough.

Bestor's *Neighborhood Tokyo*, in contrast, is a successful challenge to many of the assumptions people make about modern Japan: that it is full of worker bees who live in cubicles in an impersonal city; that, if there are neighbourhoods (and by using this word Bestor is embarking on a debate with an important school of American sociology), they only exist because they are populated by rural immigrants who have transplanted their village customs to the city; and that if one is going to talk of urban traditions, one is describing dying customs once practised by blue-collar city-dwellers who are now outnumbered by white-collar workers and rural immigrants. In challenging these three diverse suppositions, Bestor is also taking on some of the classics of Japanese ethnography/sociology, such as Dore's *City Life in Japan*. That he succeeds in making a convincing case is due to the wonderful plethora of ethnographic material he presents, but little thanks to the style in which it is written: the book is structured like a Ph.D. thesis. The most exiting chapter is 'The Festival and the Local Social Order', in which Bestor examines how an invented local festival is used by the blue-collar neighbourhood dwellers to invert the hierarchy of middle- and working-class relations. Yet, again, one can imagine how non-Japan specialists might find this chapter disappointing: once again Japanese ritual is reduced to being about Durkheimian social relations alone. If more can be said about urban neighbourhoods, more can be said about Japanese ritual, but this is a minor quibble. *Neighbourhood Tokyo* is about the Japan that is all too often ignored in favour of studies about economic miracles, company structures and the education system. It is already an essential item on many people's Japan reading-lists.

From Paddy Field to Ski Slope also questions various assumptions that one encounters in the field of Japanese rural studies: that all Japanese villages are moribund, mortally wounded by migration to work in the cities, and that the main result of this, of course, is the death of the Japanese household, the *ie*. While it cannot be argued that this is not happening in some places, Moon examines the elements that have gone into revitalizing tradition in one village. In her study of Hanasaku, Moon takes on the various theories that have been used to describe rural social transformation: Smelser's modernization approach, Japanese sociologists' community theories, and U-turn migration theories. The case of Hanasaku seems

to refute all of these approaches: changes in farming techniques and the introduction of cash crops have not led to enormous amounts of individual mobility, the developing economy has not led to rampant individualism, and the village's revitalization is not due to returning immigrants.

What has kept Hanasaku going, as it were, has been the domestic tourist boom in Japan. The Japanese household, a much more resilient entity than sociologists of Japan often give it credit for, has always emphasized economic as well as kinship relationships. When it became apparent that a household could run successfully a small tourist inn for the growing numbers of skiers, the villagers who could afford to invest in inns. Moon notes that this trend occurs throughout the countryside where, in order to keep the tourists coming, such various attractions as hot milk baths, perfume baths and herbal saunas have been invented. Thus, this study of revitalization is also a challenge to some of the standard suppositions made about tourism: that development through tourism is difficult if not impossible and that tourism destroys authentic social structure at the cost of preserving 'quaint' customs. The villagers of Hanasaku may have invented a tourist attraction or two, but it has all been in aid of preserving the lineal, hierarchical household, the core of Japanese social structure. (It could be argued that the patrilineal household is a fairly recent invention, but Moon does not explore this avenue.)

If one must point to faults in Moon's book, they are mostly minor. As with Bestor's study, the structure of the work is somewhat conventional, but, more annoyingly, the book is full of copy-editing lapses and printing errors. Perhaps somewhat more disappointing is that Moon does not take the opportunity to question anything more than rural-urban migration theories. The book is rich with material on tourism and tradition that raises fascinating questions about authenticity and cultural change, but she does not tackle these issues. It must be added, however, that given the fact that tourism is not often explored by anthropologists, *From Paddy Field to Ski Slope* is breaking new ground and is thus a must for all students of anthropology.

D. P. MARTINEZ

MATTHEWS MASAYUKI HAMABATA, *Crested Kimono: Power and Love in the Japanese Business Family*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1990. x, 173 pp., Bibliography, Index. \$19.75.

This book fulfils the promise of the intriguing title Hamabata has chosen for it. The place of the crested kimono only becomes clear well into the text, but the phrase makes an engaging impact, and the subtitle is an accurate description of the contents. This is a book about Japanese business families, in fact rather influential

and high-powered ones, and it is about power relations and the place of love within those families. In fact this is a subject that has not really been addressed before in the rather abundant ethnography on Japanese family life, so it also fills a gap.

The presentation Hamabata has chosen is also interesting. Filled with yet another description of the feelings of an American of Japanese descent, discovering his (or her) ambiguous status on attempting fieldwork in the ancestral land, the first few pages draw a sigh. In recent years this seems to have become a recurrent theme, even providing the major theoretical basis for the ensuing analysis. However, one has to admit that it has worked. It has worked before, and it works again, although in this case, the theoretical underpinnings are more implicit than in other major examples, perhaps even largely unconscious. This is what makes the book intriguing. It sounds quite straightforward, even naïve at times, but it has taken a long time to appear and it may well have had more planning than seems to be the case.

Through sometimes quite painful descriptions of his own experiences, sudden realizations, and awful gaffes, Hamabata leads the reader into the lives of the families with whom he became close. In a true spirit of reflexivity, he reveals the errors of his first six months, and the way his most valuable findings emerged almost by chance as he found himself among women, rather than the men he had first targeted for his research. In this way he discovered the power of these women and the way their own relationships were related to, and indeed vital for, the pursuits of the men to whom they were attached. Through tales of the personal hopes, ambitions, realizations and failures of individual members of a few specific families, Hamabata manages to present (the glue holding together) a series of structural principles underlying the operations of a circle of the most important Japanese business leaders.

In fact, he has done this in a way that again draws a sigh in the early stages, because throughout the book and in support of his presentation Hamabata refers mainly to a small number of the oldest and most standard texts in English on the subject of the Japanese family. He refers to these texts uncritically, as if to provide a kind of template for his findings, so that for quite some time his general statements are always attributed to other, earlier researchers, some of whom have in practice been quite severely criticized since they first wrote. Perhaps his aim is to vindicate these texts, although he does not say that in so many words. In any case, it was interesting that these texts appear not only perfectly applicable to such high-powered families of post-modern Japan, but actually seem to have stood the test of time during a period that is otherwise constantly being claimed as characterized by tumultuous change.

Further into the book, Hamabata does venture ideas of his own. He asks some telling questions, and seeks to find answers among the experiences he recounts. Unfortunately, he leaves several personal stories hanging in the air, and it will perhaps require a sequel later on to convince the more sceptical readers that his arguments are sound. Personally, I liked them. I liked the style of presentation

too, and I shall certainly recommend the book to my students, and any others interested in Japan. This is the kind of ethnographic account that not only brings people alive within the pages of a book, but also rather painlessly introduces an awareness of the theoretical issues underlying social analysis. It also retains an element of intrigue rather appropriate for the subject-matter and the author alike!

JOY HENDRY

JANICE BODDY, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zār Cult in Northern Sudan*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1989. 360pp, References, Index, Tables, Figures, Glossary. No price given.

This is an excellent book—perhaps even a classic. Although, by title, a study of spirit possession in an unidentified north Sudanese village (given the name Hofriyat here), Boddy's account unfolds as a vivid portrayal of personality, gender, social relations and identity within the context of a small community's encounter with external forces. Part one explores the symbolism and practice of Hofriyati childbirth, circumcision, daily chores, kin relations and visiting patterns. We are treated to a subtle explication of the symbolism of red and white, of openness and enclosures, of the vulnerability associated with body orifices, of flexible preferential marriage categories and other means that Hofriyati women use in self-identification. The descriptions of circumcision and infibulation, integral to Hofriyati womanhood, may worry Western readers, but it is a measure of Boddy's skill that she never allows her readers a facile view, or even the luxury of bland detachment. These are real people, in a real world, and she allows them ample moral space: 'For the female ethnographer, one message rings clear: though her sex may grant her greater access...it guarantees no privileged insight into what it means to be a woman in another cultural context; she and her informants may share a common biology: they do not share a common gender' (p. 56).

Parts two and three explore the 'parallel world' of *zar* spirits and the meaning accorded Hofriyati life through engagement with this—very real—spirit world. Boddy treats *zayran* as Hofriyati treat them—as 'human' personalities engaged in their own social relations, with their own histories, personality quirks and sorrows. Technically, *zayran* are red *jinn*. Technically also, all *zar* spirits are foreign, whether Arab nomads, Euro-American or Ethiopian. But all have been appropriated as significant beings within Hofriyati social contexts: 'Ideas and objects originating in the outside world are often absorbed and processed in such a way that, rather than diminishing the integrity of Hofriyati culture, they actually sustain it' (p. 48). 'Meaning' for both groups—spirit and human—is created in encounters with each other. These encounters achieve public recognition within the *zar* rituals, three-to-seven-day festivals usually funded by male kin, during which

interested women gather together, chant and drum the 'threads' specific to a litany of *zayran* (*zar* spirits seem to prefer women to men, although Boddy does describe a few men inhabited by *zayran*; also of interest are the behind-the-scenes strategies for obtaining funding for a ritual). *Zayran* 'descend'—or not, depending on the particular spirit's and woman's mood at the time—when they hear their particular thread. The woman goes into a trance, dancing, waving a sword, or marching like a soldier for about twenty minutes; through her body the spirit speaks, and often requests items that must be produced before the spirit (spirits 'descending' can be male or female) will subside. Some examples of *zayran* are Mistayr Brinso, an archaeologist who requires khaki pants and shirt, pith helmet, black shoes, socks and spectacles; Gasis Romay, a Roman Catholic priest; and Dodo, Sitt aj-Jabana (*sic*), an Ethiopian spirit who demands that coffee be prepared during her presence.

In a world in which foetus and infant deaths are shockingly commonplace, *zayran* are often identified in a woman during times of sorrow or vulnerability (about 45 per cent of Hofriyati women have acknowledged themselves to be possessed). If herbal and local remedies do not help, if a medical doctor cannot help, if a Muslim *faki* is unsuccessful, then chances are a diagnosis of possession will usually be accepted: 'When a village woman who feels unwell but has identified no organic or mystical source for her complaint accepts that she is possessed, she can begin to recover' (p. 256). Boddy anticipates readers' scepticism. In a section that cries out for further exploration, she addresses common Western reactions. The ceremonies are not simply functional outlets against male domination, as some have argued. Nor, Boddy argues, are the women exhibiting symptoms of classical psychiatric hysteria or neurosis, for outside these trance states the women usually appear healthy and stable. Possession does, however, have a therapeutic function both for the women involved and for the community as a whole: 'Possession trance provides a context in which the patient is encouraged to achieve distance from her cultural context. ... Both [the Western psychotherapeutic process and *zar* rituals] aim at replenishing the culturally specific constitution of the self by exploring and transcending former pitfalls' (p. 354). Boddy documents the life histories of a number of Hofriyati; in the process casting light on the tenuous disposition of historical memory as each woman evaluates and remembers events anew with each *zayran* encounter.

Boddy's use of history in general deftly undermines the illusions of an ethnographic present. For example, opposition to the apparently 'timeless' practice of pharaonic circumcision has been introduced (against the beliefs of Hofriyati women) by a literate Islam that Hofriyati men encounter as migrant labourers on the Arabian peninsula. Boddy also includes information gathered on her second field stay seven years later to illuminating effect. Such items as painted ostrich eggshells hung in homes as fertility objects during her first visit had disappeared by her second. The 'Canadian' *zar* spirit that appeared during her first stay had also disappeared by her second.

Boddy refers often to the work of such predecessors as Geertz, Turner, Van Gennep, Comaroff, Lewis and Crapanzano. In fact, while *Wombs and Alien Spirits*

is part of a series edited by Marcus and Clifford entitled 'New Directions in Anthropological Writing', it is very reminiscent of ethnographic classics. Occasionally, Boddy's analysis skims where readers might prefer depth, but her care for detail is exemplary throughout and she comes across strongly as someone worth listening to.

SUSANNAH KENNEDY

HARALD BEYER BROCH, *Growing up Agreeably: Bonerate Childhood Observed*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1990. xiv, 174 pp., Glossary, References, Index, Maps, Photographs. £23.75.

Broch spent a year in the village of Miang Tuu (population c. 200) on the Indonesian island of Bonerate, south of Sulawesi. Being interested in individuals and the ways in which their feelings and behaviour evolve within a given cultural role and environment, and combining psychological and social theory, he examines the effects the village setting has on children and their socializers. The village of Miang Tuu is very isolated, with no schools to provide a formal education, thus leaving the socialization of the children solely to the community members. The study takes account of the individual's social position, birth order and personal resources.

Chapters 1 and 2 outline how children are defined by the culture, describing infancy and early years. Small children are not believed to possess knowledge, being regarded as *bodoh* (stupid), and are therefore not responsible for their behaviour. Consequently, they may express emotions that adults may not. A sick adult, however, is treated like, and may behave like, a child. The first years focus upon keeping the child alive in a society where 60% of infants die before the age of three. The initial five months of life constitute infancy, a transitional stage, the newborn infant being regarded merely as a body housing a soul that may easily be disturbed or offended and depart, resulting in death. After five months the named baby has made its entrance into the village community. Infancy and the toddler years constitute a phase when the infant is placed in the care of an older child. It is generally accepted that children are individuals who will develop at their own pace; motor skills, bladder and bowel control etc., develop at different ages, though it is recognized that girls tend to develop these skills earlier than boys. Verbal skills tend to develop fairly late. There is little verbal communication between adults and infants. Adults tend to use a babbling baby language, or to rely on body contact for communication. Many households are bilingual on a daily basis, another factor that may slow down verbal development. The author noted, though, that children from wealthier families tended to be more advanced, probably

because these families could afford more help with household and agricultural tasks, enabling more time to be spent training the children.

Chapter 3 deals with childhood, examining the socialization process, which gradually provides children with an understanding of societal values. By the age of six or seven, *bodoh* behaviour is less tolerated and children are now likely to find much of the attention previously focused on them redirected towards new babies with whose care they become entrusted; they will also be expected to participate in general household tasks. At this stage there is no difference in the chores assigned to the genders; work appropriate to gender is gradually learned. Men frequently spend many months away at sea, and women have to carry out their husbands' tasks. Furthermore, men carry out female tasks while living in the all-male environment of the *perahu*. Affluent children are assigned less work, the child of a poorer villager working for rich households, doing tasks for his or her wealthier playmate. Gradually children come to know their relative social positions. A child's social status is explicitly expressed in the way they are treated, and an individual quickly learns that he must know his social position and pay respect due to those of a higher social position (including other children) by submissive behaviour.

Children are generally passive and gentle, though they are taught to fear and avoid strangers and are allowed to direct anger and cruelty towards animals. Children are protected from environmental dangers such as the sea, but are not prevented from handling knives or fire, learning of these potential dangers through experience. These attitudes, Broch suggests, represent a dichotomy between the surrounding environment, which is to be feared, and the village environment, which is trusted.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with puberty and adolescence. Puberty is examined within the frame of girls' circumcision ceremonies. The author argues that in Miang Tuu circumcision does not mark an abrupt change from child to adult status, although the ceremonies do have symbolic meaning, and their public nature has significance for the novices and other individuals, especially for village integration.

Today boys are usually circumcised in Java, at a hospital, during their first trip to sea, and generally at a later age than before. No ceremonies are conducted. The real transition from child to male adult appears to be connected to a boy's achievements at sea. A girl's 'circumcision' consists of a light scratch inside the upper thigh. The accompanying ritual ensures future fertility and demonstrates ideal female behaviour; a ritual expert instructs the girl. The ritual also strengthens the sex-related self-identity of the novices, and indeed of the boys attending the ceremony. After her 'circumcision' a girl is expected to gradually adopt the behaviour and bearing of a young woman. Youngsters are not expected to suddenly change after their circumcision, rather the ceremony merely inaugurates children into a culturally accepted notion of a period of gradual development leading to adult life and status. Puberty and adolescence are described as comprising a smooth transition to adulthood rather than a stormy one, though

Broch does not claim that potential turmoil and rebellion are absent. During initiation rituals many of the problems of personal and collective significance, often rooted in the early socialization process, are brought into focus.

Broch describes the upbringing of Bonerate children in detail and highlights some important contrasts with similar studies elsewhere. The role of the mother in a society where the father is frequently absent is carefully considered. In similar societies a woman may find child-rearing a burden, but in Miang Tuu she gains social prestige when she becomes a mother. Furthermore, she is never isolated, always having a young helper to look after her child. Broch points out that contrary to the claims made by such authors as Kagan, the mother is not necessarily the major attachment figure, the young child-minder also has this role. This does not, however, undermine the mother as the primary attachment figure, for she remains the focus of the child's world. The mother-son and mother-daughter dyads are stressed above all others, the mother-daughter dyad being the strongest and most enduring, a young married woman always preferring to live close to her mother; moreover, young men make frequent visits to their mothers.

Although the book will be useful for those interested in socialization in a cross-cultural perspective, and it does draw comparisons where necessary, it is primarily one observer's account of what it was like for children to grow up in this isolated community in the late 1970s, describing the options chosen by individuals in different situations. In some respects the information is now out of date, as since 1978 the children have started going to school, where they will undoubtedly have become exposed to socialization processes very different from those previously in operation.

SIAN E. JAY

ALLEN FELDMAN, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1991. vii, 319pp., References, Index. £38.50/£14.25.

This monograph contains some of the most dramatic, most repulsive, most gripping ethnographic material I have ever read. For unlike reductionistic accounts that attempt to 'explain' terrorism in a tired sociological vocabulary, this one deals explicitly with part of its substance—with the lived reality of prison, and with the violence done by jailers on the jailed, and by the jailed on their own bodies.

A good proportion of *Formations of Violence* consists of extracts from transcripts of Feldman's interviews with imprisoned, or once imprisoned, gunmen—both republican and loyalist. In these, sometimes very lengthy, quotes the men speak in clear, direct voices of their experiences on the street and inside. They detail the spatial organization of violence, as the different sides take over

sections of Belfast and barricade themselves in. They recount the process of arrest, interrogation and beatings, and of how they organized themselves, contesting and compromising the system established by the turnkeys. Since jailed republicans learnt Gaelic so as to communicate without being understood by their enemy, Northern Irish jails now constitute the only *expanding* Gaelic communities in the whole island.

Feldman, openly acknowledging his debt to Foucault, structures the rich material he has gathered along the lines of an anthropology of the body. Instead of detaining himself over the social factors that a more traditionally minded ethnographer might have adduced, he explores the topic by examining the corporeal representations used by members of both sides. He also details the ritualized process of police torture and the way the disarmed gunman, once imprisoned, learn to use their own bodies as political weapons: for getting messages out, in the dirty protest, and in the hunger strikes.

Formations of Violence is clearly the product of a very committed ethnographer who has conducted hundreds of interviews under very difficult conditions. He has crafted this data into a highly imaginative, suggestive ethnography that analyses social life in performative, rather than formal, terms. Unfortunately, while his own text is an impressive extension of poststructuralist modes into the study of social conflict, the vivid words of the men he quotes tend to undercut the (sometimes considerable) power of his own prose. At times their simple speech about grave facts threatens to undermine the authority of his academic rhetoric, one heavy with polysyllabic abstractions. But this, presumably, was the risk Feldman was prepared to run for the sake of a richly polyphonic text.

If it is a reviewer's compliment to ask for more, I can say I was slightly disappointed that, given his interests, he did not mention or discuss the existence (if only rhetorical) of homoeroticism and maybe even of homosexuality among the imprisoned. Also, since female prisoners were degraded by their warders in ways specific to their sex, it would have been interesting to have had their experiences compared with the male material he presents so well. An anthropology of the body should not be restricted to men.

JEREMY MACCLANCY

HASTINGS DONNAN and GRAHAM MCFARLANE (eds.), *Social Anthropology and Public Policy in Northern Ireland*, Aldershot etc.: Avebury 1989. xii, 147 pp., Index, £21.50.

This book deserves a more exciting title. It is about what is often called 'applied anthropology' or even, as in the recent renaming of the BASAPP newsletter, 'anthropology in action'; though the focus here is the United Kingdom rather than

the more extensively discussed development context. There is undoubtedly much need for such a book as more and more anthropologists—especially anthropologists who have just finished training—find themselves working in the ‘policy-oriented’ field. The introduction by Hastings Donnan and Graham McFarlane charts this increased tendency and provides an excellent discussion of the problems, frustrations and disillusionments that often result in the encounters between anthropologists and policy-makers. Rather than simply bemoan policy-makers’ supposed favouring of numbers and ‘hard’ data, however, the introduction gives a more careful analysis of the different cultural expectations of both policy-makers and anthropologists. In other words, the introduction engages in what might be called, *pace* the distinction between ‘development anthropology’ and ‘the anthropology of development’, an anthropology of public policy.

Other chapters follow up this emphasis, transforming the book from what might have been a collection of case-studies about public policy in Northern Ireland to a much more general—but properly illustrated and documented—book about the relationships between social anthropology and those on the receiving end of policy. And, as is pointed out by one of the contributors, these days that probably means most people in the world. For this reason, the study of policy and its ‘heterogeneous interpretation and implementation’ (Dilley, p. 144) should be regarded not just as a specific, rather specialized and less academically respectable type of anthropology, but should be made more integral to the discipline. The growth of interest in relationships between the global and the local in anthropology and in issues of knowledge construction and practice should put the study of policy-making and its variable appropriation much more centrally on the disciplinary map than hitherto.

Northern Ireland provides the case-study material in this book. However, debates about sectarianism, which usually dominate discussions of Northern Ireland, are not to the fore. Most of the chapters concern such issues as housing and unemployment that, although they may have a localized sectarian dimension, will certainly have many parallels with work on these issues in other parts of the United Kingdom, and indeed elsewhere. Only in the final chapter by Roy Dilley, a study of boat ownership and patronage, is the question of discrimination against Catholics a principal focus. Nevertheless, the chapters do illustrate well the local factors that may affect the reception of public policies. Eithne McLaughlin, for example, discusses local (though probably extendable) ideologies about gender in her analysis of unemployment in Derry (‘the Maiden City’), and Rosanne Cecil shows how local notions of ‘neighbourliness’ affect the provision of informal care in a community. The studies also give ample illustration of policy-makers’ failure to recognize local factors involved in the implementation and reception of policies. Leo Howe, for example, shows how the office culture of local social security benefit officers may create and perpetuate a distinction between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ claimants that actually deters most claimants from taking up benefits for which they are eligible. Likewise, a study of unemployment by John Blacking, Kieran Byrne and Kate Ingram illuminates the multiple considerations

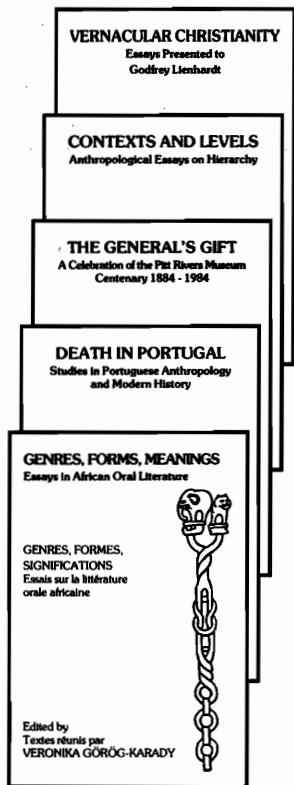
and beliefs involved in decisions about job applications made by the unemployed. (A particularly poignant example here is that of 'Edward' who, like apparently many other desperate job applicants in Northern Ireland, habitually submits six or more applications for every job in the hope, which he recognizes to be rather misconceived, that this increases his chances.) A theme that occurs in these accounts, and which is taken up further by Shaun Ogle in his analysis of tenant participation schemes, is that of 'success' and the variable expectations of what this may mean to the different participants involved.

Perhaps the main shortcoming of the book is that it does not include any direct studies of policy-makers or the policy-making process, a shortcoming that is pointed out in the introduction and several of the chapters. This is clearly an area deserving further research. In conjunction with the kinds of studies and issues raised here, it would also give us a better picture of complex interrelationships between policy-making and its reception (or rejection) and help us to theorize better these kinds of processes. Overall, however, this is a useful book that I would recommend to anybody engaged in policy-related research, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

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