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**Studies in the Ethnography of Cameroon  
in Honour of Sally Chilver**

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SALLY CHILVER

Drawing By Rachel Hemming Bray, 1995

**'MAMA FOR STORY':  
STUDIES IN THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF CAMEROON  
IN HONOUR OF SALLY CHILVER**

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**INTRODUCTION TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE**

**IAN FOWLER and DAVID ZEITLYN**

THE work of Sally Chilver has played a highly significant role over several generations of research in the Cameroonian Grassfields in the intersecting fields of anthropology and history. It exemplifies the convergence of ethnography and history in the field of Cameroonian studies. This collection of essays celebrates that work—each contribution touches on different aspects of the relationship of history and anthropology. History is illuminated by, and in much of Africa cannot be practised without, appreciation of the methods of anthropological fieldwork. Conversely, ethnography is enriched and enabled by the depth and awareness of change that follows the adoption of a historical perspective. Through her work Sally Chilver has brought the complexity of the Cameroonian Grassfields, its history, material culture and ethnography to the attention of Africanist scholars.

This special issue of *JASO* is the culmination of a broader project that celebrates the work of Sally Chilver. All the contributors to this issue of the journal and to its sister publications (Fowler and Zeitlyn 1995, 1996) feel personally in her debt, and welcomed this opportunity to contribute to the project. Certainly, many of us associated with Sally Chilver have long given thought to ways in which her important contributions to Cameroon studies might be satisfactorily acknowledged. The idea of a Festschrift was widely shared. At the last meeting of the Grassfields Working Group held in Oxford (organized by Sally Chilver) a number of us, notably Shirley Ardener and Professors Miriam Goheen, Eugenia Shanklin, Claude Tardits, Charles-

Henry Pradelles and Jean-Pierre Warnier, took the opportunity to conspire. The broader project of which this special issue of *JASO* forms a part is the welcome outcome of that happy conspiracy.

The papers presented here deal with the ethnographic complexity which any historical synthesis must confront. *JASO* is a fitting place for their publication since this reflects the long-standing relationship between Edwin Ardener (the founder of *JASO*), Shirley Ardener and Sally Chilver. As if to further emphasise this, the first two volumes of the new Cameroon Studies Series consist of Edwin Ardener's collected papers on Cameroon and our volume for Sally. In addition to these personal and intellectual connections there is the Oxford connection, which continues to this day. Sally Chilver's links with Oxford encompass both formal and informal academic sectors. On the one hand institutional ties: as Somerville undergraduate, and later Director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at Oxford and Principal of Lady Margaret Hall; on the other a more informal role as an Africanist historian and ethnographer enriching the Oxford academic scene at the same time as she nurtured young Cameroonists and Cameroonian students and scholars.

Issues to do with representations of identity have always been a strong undercurrent in anthropology. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the eruption of 'ethnic' conflict in Europe identity has become the object of more focused attention. It has been said that Africa exists in its very own temporal space but in this instance there is an approximate simultaneity in the chronology of events, interpretation and action. Here, too, the qualities and meaning of identity in cultural practice and political representation are deeply questioned in the context of the post-colonial African state. There are significant convergences and parallels, in both the events of Europe and Africa and the knowledge that is created in the interpretation of them, that remain to be explored.

Sally Chilver's life and academic endeavour significantly encompass all of these things. It is for this reason that we have included a biographical sketch as the introductory paper to this collection of essays. In so doing we mark, at least implicitly, the mutually constitutive qualities of actor, action and context. It is indisputable that as anthropologists and historians we may come to play significant roles in the production of the kinds of knowledge that tie in to the emergence of broad social and political groupings in the context of the colony and the post-colony. It is, perhaps, also inevitable that such knowledge may be incorporated into the armoury of the contemporary struggle for definition of locality and its articulation with the agents and offices of the post-colonial state. If identity is constantly reworked it is none the less fixed in narratives of the past. Since the early colonial period classification has been both a process of self-classification as well as classification by administrative officers and, latterly, by academics both expatriate and indigenous. In these two key and related areas Sally Chilver has played, and continues to play a major and dove-tailing role in the production of knowledge for and of the Grassfields.

In a broader context Sally Chilver's contribution to the Africanist worldview and the knowledge contained and generated by it is also highly significant. At a time when it was, perhaps, less than fashionable, Sally—to quote from Shirley Ardener's preface to *African Crossroads*—first went out to the field as 'an apprentice historian in stout boots' in the company of the anthropologist Phyllis Kaberry. This personal and academic alliance flouted the established academic bias in anthropology that eschewed the knowledge of missionary, administrator and trader in favour of the monopoly of the professional ethnographer. Happily, for those of us who have followed into the field, Chilver's work with Kaberry did more than simply help to neutralise the effects of this disciplinary bias against history (see Warnier's contribution in Fowler and Zeitlyn 1996).

The nature of the histories Sally Chilver has pursued are equally significant. Her methodological approach is that of thick description applied at a series of levels from paramount to descent-group head. The salient pay-offs from this approach are, we believe, clearly demonstrated in the paired papers presented here that focus on historical issues. In the first instance Zeitlyn offers a recension of Eldridge Mohammadou's far broader regional depiction of the history of Central Cameroon. The rebuttal of Mohammadou's case is presented in the form of a letter from Sally Chilver to Verkijika Fanson, a senior Cameroonian academic. We have also included a paper by Jean Hurault that deals with the history of the chiefdom of Sonk-olong. This represents a different, more geographically focused approach to the history of this region that draws in findings from settlement patterns, field archaeology and satellite photographs in addition to local history and oral tradition.

It is certainly the case that Chilver has retained her focus on historical issues in her archivist reworking of her own fieldnotes and those of Kaberry, and in on-going correspondence with Cameroonian colleagues. Yet she has become far more of an anthropologist than she might perhaps care to admit. A recently published paper on thaumaturgical belief in Nso' (Chilver 1990) is a case in point. Not only has it been widely quoted in literature on the Grassfields but, more importantly, it has significantly advanced our knowledge of African religious belief in a region for which such knowledge has till now been sorely lacking.

The papers by Baeke, Gufler, Pradelles and Koloss reflect the ethnographic vein of her work. Viviane Baeke, a student of Luc de Heusch, presents an elaborate account of Wuli cosmology in the spirit of Chilver's 1990 paper, but reflecting also a greater concern for the structural implications of the beliefs and practices she describes. The density of documentation and analysis provided by Baeke is still all too rare among studies of the Grassfields region.

Charles-Henry Pradelles pays homage to Sally Chilver in a paper which links his recent work among the Péré with Chilver's ethnographic and historical research in Bali-Nyonga. The Péré represent one part of a confederated raiding band that arrived in the Grassfields in the first quarter of the

nineteenth century under the Chamba leader Gawolbe. Pradelles has traced a ritual thread that links the present-day Péré of the Tignère region of Adamawa Province and the Péré of Bali-Nyonga.

Hermann Gufler is a Catholic missionary, parish priest of Sabongari at the far north of the North-West province. His paper provides an example of how one missionary, inspired in part by his continuing correspondence with Sally Chilver, has built on the knowledge left by another. In this case Gufler, in collaboration with a local Yamba informant, has returned to one of the classic studies of the area: Paul Gebauer's monograph on spider divination. Through a series of conversations with Pa Monday of Gom as well as with other diviners, Gufler is able to update and re-analyse Gebauer's account of the system of *ngam* divination, a system which is not confined to the Yamba, but is found throughout the southern half of Cameroon.

Much thought has gone into the transliteration of the indigenous terms in the articles that follow. Because the native languages of the researchers include English, German, and French there is variation in the transliteration conventions used. We have not attempted to impose a uniform system on the authors. It is increasingly common to use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to provide consistent representation, and this has been used in some of the articles below. It is hoped that readers will not find the inconsistency between papers obtrusive. One additional point on transcription is worth making: we have followed the convention of using upper-case B for the implosive-b in FulBe, as the Fulani are now called in the anglophone tradition.

In presenting this ensemble of papers we seek to illustrate not only the complexity of Cameroonian society, but also the extent to which Sally Chilver has helped to influence and shape our understanding of the history and anthropology of the area.

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## **ACCIDENTAL COLLISIONS: A PERSONAL MEMOIR**

**SALLY CHILVER**

Transcribed and edited by  
Mitzi Goheen and Eugenia Shanklin

### *Early Life*

I was born in Turkey, at an inconvenient moment—the day before the First World War broke out (3 August 1914); we had to get out and were whisked off to Alexandria. From there my mother made her way to England, to Cornwall, where her parents had retired. We must have seemed an extraordinary party, including Louisa, a Greek nurse, and David, an Armenian manservant belonging to my father, whose life could have been in danger had he stayed; neither Louisa nor David had a word of English. The lonely David apparently did nothing but moon up and down the cliffs so it was naturally suspected that he was summoning German submarines.

My mother's name was Millicent Gilchrist; had she not been born in the Levant, she could probably have become a renowned pianist. She was the daughter of a Scottish entrepreneur, Gavin Gilchrist. He and his family had wandered out from Clydeside and dealt in port services in the wake of the British Navy and merchant marine, branching out into other businesses along the sea routes. A few ended up in Australia.

My mother married quite late, and mine was a difficult birth for her; soon after, she and my father were parted by the war for about four years. That may account for my being an only child.

We stayed in Cornwall until the war was over. My first memories are from there, the very hard winter of 1917, when the local canal iced over, and of my grandfather's death, which was puzzling to me.

After the war, my father fetched us all back to Turkey and we stayed there in a huge Gilchrist house, called Ranfurly, for three years. Then we became refugees once again during the Graeco-Turkish war; we found ourselves in Athens, escaping on a crowded Romanian boat, being deloused in an American Red Cross camp, kindly treated and fed till we found a hotel.

My father, Philip Perceval Graves, was then a foreign correspondent for *The Times*. During the war he had got involved with T. E. Lawrence in the Arab Bureau and Revolt. He was an Arabic and Turkish speaker, and was travelling around the Middle East, Balkans and Mediterranean when I was a child.

My father's people say they started off as colonists in Ireland, no doubt Protestant exploiters, but some later became Home Rulers and identified with Irish causes. The name is English and quite common. There is much family mythification—anyway, the younger sons went into clerical and professional occupations and their names are found in the records of Trinity College, Dublin, by the eighteenth century. One of them founded a historical society and another, my great-grandfather, was a don at TCD, a mathematician, historian and Irish bishop. His brother, though, was professor of law at the 'Godless College', University College, London, as well as an algebraist.

The Anglo-Irish clergy were parasitic on the community, of course. Some were given little parishes to look after, sinecures, so they had enough leisure to engage in studies of Gaelic and Irish folklore and to think about higher mathematics. Poor but privileged, three became Fellows of the Royal Society. One wonders how these clerics, with their very small incomes, managed to raise huge families.

My paternal great-grandfather, the Bishop, had nine surviving children; my grandfather ten, by two wives. He was a civil servant, educationist and folklorist. I haven't mentioned the women; my remarkable aunts and great-aunts, some eccentric, none idle. One of my great-aunts was nicknamed 'the Plague of Bishops' and two married naval men who became admirals. All my father's sisters married, except one. By some curious set of accidents quite a few of his family also gravitated to the Levant too.

### *Early Influences*

After the Greco-Turkish war, when I was eight, we returned from Greece to England; first to Cornwall, where my maternal grandmother lived, then to London. Things were uncertain for a while at *The Times*, with changes of ownership, but then my father's fortunes improved. In Cornwall, I can't

remember why, I had a very patient Swiss governess for a time before going to a local school. When we returned to London; I went to a good girls' day school (which my parents could then afford) but with absolutely no science except for what one picked up in Geography lessons.

From the day school in London, at the age of around thirteen, I went to a boarding school called Benenden, getting an assisted place after passing an exam. It was a single-sex school, modelled on the boys' public schools, with the senior girls maintaining order—but no chastisements, of course. We were taught Latin and I could have done the sciences, but it was too late to start me off. It was a good school, then fairly spartan.

If you put large numbers of adolescents together they can be horrible to one another. When I was thirteen I was the height I am now, so I was known as the giraffe. I had my share of teasing until I got old enough to do the teasing myself. Eventually, I found my clique; it was a threesome. We excavated a cave in a hillside, used to go and live there, seeking privacy. These were called 'buggies'—hideouts where you could smoke (though we didn't), read illicit books, or have the kind of conversation that in the pupils' common room might make you seem conceited. 'Showing off' was discouraged.

The teaching at school was certainly good; they were all women teachers except for visiting ones, and there was an excellent reference library full of encyclopaedias. The art teaching was splendid; and very broad or contentious subjects were freely discussed in class.

I got into Somerville College, Oxford, but was a bit too young to attend, so I went to art school for a year. I was told there that I had absolutely no talent: quite right too. I was interested in joining the university—to meet more boys, I expect, or anyway more people.

### *Somerville, Oxford*

Somerville was a really remarkable place: there was privacy, the company of young persons and a staff full of characters. I changed from English to History. One of my tutors was the exacting Maud Clarke: no unsupported generalities were allowed. We were to choose a special subject and periods, and I chose the end of the Roman Empire and what was known as 'St Augustine and his age', so I mixed a bit with archaeologists and later classicists. I went for some tutorials to Magdalen, to a famous man named Stevens who was known as 'Tom Brown'. He used to say 'Come at 9.30; you can make breakfast and clean out the bird cage'. Then, after the essay, he would tell me what he had been working on, or whatever issue occurred to him that day. I was also taught by Goronwy Edwards, a famous medievalist; I suppose that was when I got a taste for thinking about taxation and tolls. It was then that I met Richard Chilver, who helped me with the Greek

sources for my special period and even compiled a crib of a difficult author for me.

Somerville was an experience for most people because of the teaching and the conversation, and because of the other things you could find in undergraduate societies. There was a medieval history society, and various people from all over England came and talked to it. Or you could go and draw at the Ruskin School of Art, or ride, which I enjoyed, or argue at literary and political clubs. I belonged to the Irish Society, which was constantly in a state of whiskified disarray. It was at the time of the Irish Blue Shirts on Franco's side, and the Spanish Civil War was going on, so the meetings were divided and contentious.

I skimmed my work except for the bits I liked most; politics were to the fore and I was temporarily converted to Marxism by a fellow historian, so I joined all the hands-off groups, accompanied hunger marches and so on—a fairly typical left-wing groupie of the early thirties.

We visited a very intellectual group of striking miners in Wales, were lectured to by radical trades unionists, and went to various rallies. There was much conscience-searching. I recall being accused of being an 'incurable Social Democrat', at heart a bourgeois.

### *1935: Travel and Scribbling*

I went down from Somerville in 1935 and then went on holiday with my mother. We were in Germany having a look at the Nazis; she thought I'd better go and look up my German step-relatives before the war she predicted broke out. We were in Berchtesgaden when my mother was bitten by some poisonous insect; she got rapid general septicaemia and died in a matter of days.

After that, I looked after my father for a few months; then I went off in the winter of 1935 on a tour to the Middle East and Bulgaria, just as people go to Nepal nowadays. My father arranged a few odd writing jobs for me, and I met him in Cairo where he was covering a conference. From there I went to Beersheba in a tiny plane and then to Jerusalem, where I had an aunt in broadcasting. At that time, there were some fascinating people about in Jerusalem like Tommy Hodgkin, then in the Palestine Service and later a radical African historian, and George Antonius (who wrote *The Arab Awakening*), also a member of the Colonial Service.

So I pottered about, looking at lots of places, keeping my father informed and sending the odd report on casualties in the troubles. Then I went up to Lebanon, where I fell in with some interesting francophone Arab intellectuals; on to Damascus, via Druze country (the country of the Assassins), and back by bus. At the Sea of Galilee I was laid low by some

stomach bug (a bout of amoebic dysentery) but was picked up and conveyed back to Jerusalem.

Back in Cairo was a very charming female first cousin who was a leader of the bright young things there. So I met her friends, including a young Hussar officer, Sean Hackett, who became head of British forces in Germany. He had joined the army, he said, because it gives one leisure for other pursuits, in his case the study of the Crusaders' castles. It was very odd to meet him again, many years later, as Principal of King's College London.

Then I met up again with my father. From Turkey, I went with him to Bulgaria. Somewhere in Bulgaria we were going along in a train when suddenly we stopped in the middle of a field. There were always coups and things going on, so we had no idea what was to happen, but a ladder was put against the door of our carriage and in came a man with six fingers on each hand. He announced, 'His Majesty is awaiting you at the bottom of the ladder'. The king was a butterfly collector, as my father was, so we were literally kidnapped off the train, which the king had been driving—a hobby of his.

We stayed for a few days at the king's dacha in the Rylo mountains and went butterfly collecting with him. When I came back to London I did some more freelancing and looked after my father for over a year. Then he re-met a widowed cousin whom he eventually married. So everybody was happy—and it meant that I could get married too, which I did in 1937. Kitty, my stepmother, was the nicest of persons. She brought her small son, George, whom my father adopted as his own: that made him very pleased. They eventually retired to Ireland, via Hampshire, after George had finished at Eton and gone to Trinity College Dublin.

My father resumed his Irish identity, was elected to the Irish Academy and took an interest in Cork University. Kitty, incapable of being idle, turned the house into a hotel and now George and Christiane, his French wife, manage it.

My father died in the early fifties. He was a funny chap, you could never tell what his politics were going to be. He objected to the gerrymandering that went on in Ulster politics in the twenties and wrote about it in *The Times*. That earned him quite a few enemies. Persecution of any kind enraged him. When he went to India to report on constitutional changes, it was Ambedkar, leader of the so-called Scheduled Castes, who earned his greatest admiration.

He has a niche in history because he discovered that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a fraud, a plagiarized version of a pamphlet on another topic. You remember that antisemitic document that was widely circulated? When he died, his longest obit was in the *Jewish Chronicle*. There was a nice piece in *History Today* by the historian Christopher Sykes, all about this curious episode. He is buried at Bantry. The funeral was a great show with a mile-long procession on foot following the horse-drawn hearse.

At that time, I was writing reviews for odd journals and even thinking I was going to be a poet. It never occurred to me that academia was where I wanted to be—people didn't have to do Ph.Ds in those days. Once I got interested in French revolutionary thinkers and considered a thesis on Louis Blanc—thank God I didn't do it. Scribbling had started at Oxford. In those days there was a women's college magazine, which my friends thought was too chiffony, so we started up a short-lived rival, mildly feminist, called *Lysistrata*. We wrote to Virginia Woolf to ask her if she would like to write an introduction to the first number. She wrote back agreeing and then asked me to see her. After that I became an occasional visitor. I was asked to the house when a representative of 'the young' was needed and encouraged to air opinions.

She was rather beautiful and grand, sometimes scathing, very witty, but also very patient with 'the young' as she called us. Her husband was absolutely saintly. I started writing my first book, *A History of Socialism*, after Leonard Woolf said 'We need a general book, not a history of the Labour Party.' That book went through one or two editions: it is on the scrapheap now. I sat in the British Museum Reading Room writing it for a long time. I've lost my copy. I think I'd be rather ashamed of it now.

### 1937: Marriage

Richard and I had a very formal wedding at St Mark's, North Audley Street; it was between Richard's home and mine. I was dolled up all proper, with bridesmaids. Both are dead now. Many diplomats and other people came to please my father. And of course the press turned up.

Afterwards, Richard and I went back to a New Forest cottage in which we had already been spending weekends together, but none of this, of course, was known to my father. I remember that as we were leaving, Father—trying to think of something to say—leant over the car and told Richard to be sure he had 'sufficient petroleum'.

Richard and I remained married until he died in 1985. He was in the Civil Service, a career civil servant, but could have been a cabinet maker or potter had he so chosen. He had been a classical scholar and in the Service, he went quite high up, second from the top of a ministry; he was rather uncompromising and said what he thought to ministers, but some liked him. The Chilvers came originally from East Anglia, real English. Richard inherited some very heavy mahogany furniture and a water-colour of a family parsonage set among cows. His father was a solicitor. That, perhaps, gives the background. After that, I was busy setting up a flat and I kept on working at journalistic oddments.

*The Second World War*

Shortly after the war broke out in 1939 I was asked to present myself to the civil service establishment officers and allocated to a civil service job. I went first into the new Ministry of Economic Warfare; my bit, called Neutral Trade Intelligence, handled what were called Navicerts (to do with the blockade of Germany), which involved reading up on the economies of neutral countries so that they got what was necessary but not a surplus of, say, iron and steel, or even boots, to pass on to Germany. Information also came from anti-Nazi volunteers, railwaymen and telephone operators for instance, who must have taken great risks.

Then, having been noticed by an old friend of Father's who was finding people for a new secretariat section in the War Cabinet Office, I was transferred. That was where I worked on supplies to and from the overseas territories of Belgium and France.

That was the first time I learned about the French Cameroons—the need for things like the various kinds of cotton prints which supposedly encouraged 'the natives' to produce cash crops, for machetes and spare parts. I sent to the Naval Intelligence people for books about all these places: the Belgian Congo, Madagascar, French West and Equatorial Africa. I was, at the same time, working with the Free French forces and civilians concerned about their colonies. At the end of the war and after the liberation of Europe, I went back to journalism for a bit, this time employed by Daily News Ltd., until I was willingly lured back into the Civil Service as a temporary officer in the Colonial Office.

*Colonial Office, 1947*

The Colonial Office was a rather intellectual establishment in the old-fashioned way that Oxbridge is supposed to be in detective stories. My superiors were a scholarly lot and keen that younger administrators should know what they were talking about. Shop was talked, books lent, exercises set; there was an excellent library. So I was prepared for academic life to some extent. I became, in time, secretary of the Colonial Social Science Research Council, an advisory body which supervised research plans. This meant that one met many academic characters, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Daryll Forde, Raymond Firth, Audrey Richards, and Margery Perham, and had to follow their arguments. The Colonial Office, seeing that I was genuinely interested in what they were saying, told me I could go to evening classes and lectures at the London School of Economics. Here I was put in the charge of Lucy Mair. So I went to the LSE, in the evenings, heard lectures by Edmund Leach and the fatherly Isaac Schapera, attended seminars and wrote papers. There were other people about, too. Maurice

Freedman was there, and I became great friends with Audrey Richards and Lucy Mair. They couldn't stand each other, those two; it was a well-known aversion.

Part of the research effort of the Colonial Office was connected with the great effort to establish local universities and provide them with teaching materials. I wasn't much involved in the politics of the decolonization process, but the Council was feeding research into it and setting up local research institutes. So you might say it was rather like both writing a Doomsday book and preparing university-educated elites. I wrote a memory piece about it for an LSE seminar which was published with others in *Anthropological Forum* in 1977. A good part of the job was getting the funds for the research institutes and individual projects through the Treasury. The research people engaged included ex-service men like Jack Goody, Paul Baxter and Mike Smith, as well as more recent graduates. A fair number of Americans were recruited too.

I first met the Australian Phyllis Kaberry in 1951 while I was at the Colonial Office, when she had completed the first draft of her *Women of the Grassfields*. One of my tasks was to get field reports into a publishable state; so I rang her up to ask her to come over and vet layout changes I had made and agree on illustrations. At much the same time I made friends with an American Fulbright Fellow, a fiery spirit named Ruth Landes, who had worked on the Ojibwa and in Brazil and was studying race relations in the UK. She introduced me to the classic American anthropological literature of the time. Both she and Phyllis were in and out of our house. Between them they improved my education. I was also sent on conference and business trips to Uganda, Kenya and to Nigeria, and, at the invitation of the Carnegie Dominions and Colonies Fund, to the USA to learn what was going on in American universities—in African studies in particular. There were also arrangements with French and Belgian official bodies for exchanges of information on research. Well, I was getting tired of being a reporter of other people's work and beginning to feel ashamed of dealing with the needs of institutions or regions without first-hand experience.

By 1957 I had been invited to come to Oxford to the Institute of Colonial Studies, which became Commonwealth Studies. The Colonial Service, then being indigenized, were trained here and at other universities. The task was to organize courses and research seminars for them. It was both a winding down and a winding up, in which the civil services of the newly independent countries were to be offered transitional opportunities for training and, later, attachments for special study. At the same time a merger with Queen Elizabeth House, which was to become the University's centre for all manner of development studies, was carried through.

Phyllis had already been planning to return to the Grassfields, Nso' in particular, and suggested I should join her during the long vacation, which was now possible. I had it in mind to make a documentary study of the archives of the three divisions and to try and observe local reactions to the



very rapid changes in the style of imperial rule taking place—on paper, at all events.

### Cameroon

The first time I went out was for a mere two months in 1958. On that first field trip Phyllis was getting back into Nso' and had gone out earlier. I went by air to Kano, Lagos, hedge-hopping to Tiko airfield. A kind friend at UAC (United Africa Company) had arranged a lift to Bamenda for me.

The quickest route was through the French side; and somewhere near Babadju, we skidded off the road and were rescued by a French junior officer in a kepi, with much whistle-blowing and shouting. He, with his comfortable wife, gave us tea. This trivial incident remains in my mind because I was struck by the difference of style—the Frenchman more authoritarian, more demonstrative and more at home, in a more modest house, right next to a school, than his British counterpart. His wife was making a pastry. It was an unpretentious domestic scene.

In 1958, and later, there was a certain feeling that great transformations were at hand—all children would go to school, hospitals would be free, a lot of cargo would appear, etc. This applied mainly, of course, to young educated males, but it provoked a sort of reaction too that the past would be forgotten, and we were asked to record it. At one point we found a barricade across the road, surrounded by men who insisted that we turn off to visit Bamessing to 'take history'.

There were other effervescences, such as *anlu*,<sup>1</sup> directed as much against some of the new elite as the retreating colonial power, while old quarrels were revived and argued in the courts. We were classified as historians. In schools, the desire for local history, written down, arose at the same time as the call for independence—I mean the notion of the history of small groups, which had already been encouraged by the Colonial Education Department—going to a village on the spot and not doing it from the documents. So far as I was concerned, 'oral history', to start with, was less important than trying to understand resistances and accommodations to German and British imperial rule and the interpretations put on them by both parties.

In Bamenda, after I had explained my project to the District Officer, I was given complete *carte blanche* to look over the files, other than those in current use, and even encouraged to take away as many as could be fitted into Phyllis's Land Rover. We went to Nso' loaded to the brim with files. In Nso' I soon found myself locally involved—with Phyllis's induction as

1. The so-called women's revolt; see e.g. Ardener 1975.

*Yaa woo kov* (titular Queen Mother) and the preparations for it, with streams of visitors and the activities of the newly formed Nso' History Society. The *Ndzëëndzëv* dispute was on, too.<sup>2</sup> I was another pair of ears for the contestants. We stayed in the Basel Mission Rest House, to which many people came, quite a few with letters to be written. Fon Sembum III himself came secretly after nightfall, often depressed and worried (and often rightly), with his exhausted attendants, who curled up and slept on the floor. In addition to the office files I was working on, we set to work on the Nso' tax records and the arrangements behind them, which, so far as I was concerned, led me into a more detailed inquiry into how accommodations were made to colonial demands as well as providing a social geography of Nso'. When I got back, I tried a first draft on an Oxford seminar, and then Phyllis and I pared it down for publication in *Africa*.

Next time (1960), I went out for longer, to finish the colonial administration job, start on the Bali chiefdom, and visit areas in divisions other than the southernmost Bamenda Division. By this time Edwin and Shirley Ardener were creating the Archives at Buea, so it was possible to start work there, and fill in gaps. Buea was beautiful and damp—I recall opening a cupboard to discover that the pretty print dresses I had brought out were covered with mould.

This time Phyllis collected me, and we drove up via Kumba and the Mamfe road, crossing the iron bridge built by the British during the First World War, with hippos and crocs below, and inching round the hairpin bends on the Widekum-Bali stretch. Again, there was no difficulty in getting access to files, this time to the more detailed Native Authority files. I got through a vast number by reading them into a tape recorder whenever possible. From Bamenda we made a joint visit to Bafut and Bafreng, then Phyllis dropped me off at Mankon and went off to Nso' and Bamunka. Later, I was picked up again, went to Nso' and from there visited Ndu, Mbot, Ntem, and the Nkambe archives, and we went for a stay in Bum, an astonishing place. By this time I was collecting material everywhere on pre- and early-colonial regional trade and gift-exchange. Finally I was dropped off at Bali-Nyonga where Phyllis later joined me, and there made a start, with great help from Mfon Galega II. It's a cosmopolitan place, where everybody, almost, claimed to originate from somewhere else, and where there were some nonagenarians who had known the explorer Zintgraff. It was in that year too that we went to Belo to stay with the hospitable Schneiders and visited Laikom, where Gil Schneider arranged for us to be shown the royal statue that later became known as the Afo-a-Kom. By this time, of course, we had given up the idea of monographic studies—of Nso' and Bali, say—for a more regional survey approach, though as yet without much in the way of linguistic clues to guide us.

2. This was a dispute about the occupancy of the position of *Ndzëëndzëv*, the purported Nso' 'kingmaker'.

By the end of 1961 I had completed the Oxford task and moved back to London, where Kenneth Robinson kindly gave me an attachment as Research Fellow to the London Institute of Commonwealth Studies. This was ideal for preparation for the next trip with Phyllis. I learnt some linguistics at SOAS, read and re-read the German and French materials, what missionary material I could lay hands on, and tooth-combed Phyllis's and my notes. By this time too we were in touch with Claude Tardits and exchanging information.

We were back in 1963 for a longer period, in a now independent and federal Cameroon, revisiting some areas and making a foray into the Wum Division, including Kom. We went out by ship, with a Land Rover and a full kit. By this time, of course, we had come to know the ministers then in power and were given all necessary help, even being helpfully met at the docks by Mr Lafon (Faay Lii Wong) of Nso' and Mr Daiga of Bali. Mr Jua's help in Kom was essential and we were exceedingly lucky in our interpreter, E. K. Fombang, who had excellent English, as you can see from the vocabulary I collected from him. His father, a son of Foyn Yu, was enormously bright and wise and enjoyed teasing us. His son saw to it that we made no mistakes in etiquette. We visited Mme, Funggom and Bunaki, and I had a useful stint in the Wum archives. There had been various other strokes of luck. In London I had met two students to whom I owed introductions to Ku (Meta') and Bali-Gham, and on my return to Bali-Nyonga I found myself assigned to the care of the stately Do Paul Tita Sikod, a member of the customary court, in whose quarter I lived, and when he was busy I had other excellent helpers. I was allowed to join a local society and so became familiar to people. The language of Bali, Munggaka, is comparatively easy. I had a smattering of it, and when I attempted to say anything this was fun for everybody. 'You are speaking Church Bali,' they said.

I am making this survey job sound like a success story—there were hold-ups, failures and car troubles. Whole areas remained unvisited—Esu was being covered by the Ardeners, but more time should have been spent in Funggom and Wum. I wish Igor Kopytoff could have stayed in Wum longer and unravelled it further before getting ill. We got very little in Babungo—except charter-myths over and over again but now we have Ian Fowler's thesis. Practically nothing was done on the Yamba, but now Father Gufler is there, so look out for his work in *Anthropos* (1995, 1996).<sup>3</sup> And also, there were distractions from what we were supposed to be at—a reconstructive survey of political systems and their adaptations under colonial rule. There were the farmer-grazier conflicts; the creeping changes in land tenure; the helter-skelter attempt at the introduction of Local Government, British style (a chapter since forgotten); the persistence of old quarrels now recorded in the local press; the seductions of ministerial office—let alone *anlu*. Since the survey was done—with few resources—

3. See also the article by Gufler below, pp. 43–67.

there have, of course, been major monographic studies and specialized papers. You have to think of *Traditional Bamenda* as something on the lines of the International Africa Institute Ethnographic Surveys, what Audrey Richards gaily called 'hoovering over the top'. One would rewrite it from start to finish now.

Mostly I walked everywhere. Phyllis used to drop me and basic kit in the Land Rover and then come back and pick me up and move me somewhere else, like a cat with kittens.

We came back by boat to Liverpool. I was as thin as a rake, having acquired an interesting parasite. At the Tropical Diseases Hospital, I luckily fell into the hands of an Indian registrar who had written a thesis on it; he was delighted to meet it again. I found it very hard to adjust for a while. I started trying to make a first draft of the survey, surrounded by notebooks, earlier summaries, tapes and cups of tea; Phyllis was to edit, revise and add to it, and I compiled a report for the Bali History Committee, corresponded with its members and sent them bits to comment on.

### *Post-Cameroon*

Quite early on in 1964, to my surprise, I was invited to meet the Council of Bedford College (London University). They asked me for a c.v. and after that asked me formally if I would accept the post of principal. I don't know in the least who suggested me. It had just become a mixed college—the statutes had been changed—in so far as the student body was concerned, after having been a pioneer in women's higher education in this country, starting in 1849, giving its own diplomas. It took a long time for women to be admitted to degrees—that honour goes to Trinity College, Dublin. But the faculty had always been mixed at Bedford College.

Why did I accept the offer? Well, it was an honour, and I had no professional qualifications as either an ethno- or a grapho-historian—had not undergone any of the *rites de passage* in the proper way. My career, such as it was, had been more administrative than academic. I kept running away from the desk but I earned my living as an administrator. This was an administrative job and I was lucky in having very good staff to work with, as well as some very remarkable academic colleagues. The London colleges are of various shapes and sizes. This was a complete little campus with over 2,000 students. So there was everything to do from finding rugby pitches to places for electron microscopes, and a good deal of scope.

We had some excitements in 1968. They say 'revolutions start in the Department of Philosophy.' But it didn't last very long, as demands for student representation were easily met. When you are in this sort of job, you are a sitting duck to be put on government committees in addition to university ones, and some were very interesting indeed. One—a Royal

Commission—took me to Turkey, Israel and Malta, another to Moscow. There was also an enjoyable stint as a trustee of the British Museum.

After seven years I moved, in 1971, to Oxford to be Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, then still a wholly women's college—a very different scene and in a way more alarming. The University's system of government has been described as an ordered anarchy—a rather ritualized one in some ways. It works because of an invisible administration, ease of personal contact, and a good deal of devotion to duty. Before long, there were mounting pressures for colleges to 'go mixed', the men's colleges leading the way. Given the structure of the University, 'going mixed' meant co-residence and the introduction of men Fellows in women's colleges and vice versa in men's. There were other means of 'going mixed' which were never seriously considered, since collegiate identities were far too strong. And once the determination of some of the men's colleges to admit women and make at least a few elections of women to Fellowships was clear and presented on liberal grounds, some of the women's colleges began, one by one, to follow suit. 'Going mixed' was seen as the progressive, politically correct thing. It was a strong, if confused current, welcome to most undergraduates as emancipatory.

Once Lady Margaret Hall had voted for co-residence a new face was needed, and anyway I was 65, time to retire. Towards the end of my time, in 1979, we had our centenary, a great show with fireworks and music. By this time I had bought this little house to escape to with my files. So now I was backwards and forwards to London. But Phyllis had died in 1977 after a series of depressing illnesses from about 1973 on—it was a stroke. Mike Rowlands was her executor. Boxes of her Cameroon papers arrived—she had left them to the LSE, or rather to the British Library of Political and Economic Science within it. David Price, then a postgraduate student at the Institute of Social Anthropology, was installed in the attic and showed marvellous talents as an archivist. The papers—fieldnotes and correspondence—are now at the LSE and usable, but the tapes, alas, have perished.

Her death was a blow. I have, off and on, been transcribing and indexing some of her notes, and mine, for her benefit: sometimes combining them into topical sets to work on jointly as well as for use in the network of exchanges she had begun, both with Cameroon students and others. I temporarily inherited this informal network; but now it has greatly expanded following the CNRS conference on history and ethnology in Cameroon organized by Claude Tardits in 1973, Warnier's initiative in 1978 and the new approaches from Leiden and the USA, but also because of initiatives from inside Cameroon itself and its diaspora.

After Richard's death in 1985 I sold the London flat and moved my working books and papers to Oxford. I'm still sorting them here. I don't see myself writing my own Grassfield pieces. If I were thirty years younger now, what would I have done? I would have liked then to work more on Nso' or rather on Mbiame, Nkar, Nsë and the Noni chiefdoms, especially Nkor, a trade-centre, and then on to the northern and north-western sur-

rounding areas, and at the same time on the interesting disturbances, rebellions and alignments created by the entry of the missions. We were only too aware that we were 'hoovering over the top', doing a kind of handing-over job for others to take up. Still, there would have been masses of other projects to consider. There are still huge holes in that Grassfields map with its accidental frontiers—Dumbo, Misaje, Mbembe, Esimbi, northern Fungom, the Mashi-Furu-Nser area up to the Katsena, for example, and the northern escarpment area and immediate 'overside'. Very stout boots are needed still, I gather. But I'll interject here that apart from the Banyang, the 'overside' area north of the Cross is, I think, a virtual blank in the literature as yet, apart from administrative reports. So there is still room for new studies. Yes, even in get-at-able parts of the Ndop Plain, as well as revisits to places for which there are older studies—for example, Nsei, studied by Agathe Schmidt in the thirties. The wealth of cosmological material to be found 'off the road' is surely shown by Viviane Baeke's work on the Wuli of Mfumte,<sup>4</sup> and for some unexpected findings see Bertrand Masquelier's remarkable work on a Metchum valley polity.

But this is not to deny for an instant the need for problem-oriented work or re-studies at intervals in areas about which a good deal is already known, or, say, of comparative studies of marriage or mortuary rituals, with some time depth.

I am conscious of being stuck in the early sixties. But Cameroonian colleagues remain interested, indeed almost fixated on that period, one in which the options before them were essentially dictated from outside.

I think if we were starting again I would be less surprised than I was at first by the varying interpretations of institutions and events we received, sometimes from the same person, and the difference between what is supposed to happen and what actually does happen on a particular occasion. One soon recognizes the clichés, including one's own.

I don't think I shall be writing anything new on local history. All the main points I would wish to illustrate about oral history have been made by David Henige and illustrated in Ranger and Hobsbawm's collection and in Jan Vansina's revised book. Of course, I remain interested in who is 'making the history' now. One should be reading the plays, novels and novelettes, too, to pick up the current clichés of the neo-traditional revival, and the local newspapers. The feedback loops are more complicated than ever.

4. See also her article below in this issue, pp. 21–41.

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## WULI WITCHCRAFT

VIVIANE BAEKE

### *Introduction*

THE Mfumte form a cultural, linguistic and administrative entity consisting of thirteen villages. Their territory is bordered in the north by the river Donga, the natural border with Nigeria, with the territories of the Mbembe in the northwest, the Limbum in the southwest, and the Yamba and Mambila in the southeast.

The Wuli constitute the population of one of these thirteen villages. They number nearly 4,000 and live on either side of the wooded banks of the Mamfe river, a tributary of the Donga. Today, despite their large numbers, they form a single village community (Lus on the regional geographical maps) subdivided into ten areas or hamlets, each comprising from three to ten units of resident lineages. The lineages and lineage segments are patrilineal and patrilocal. The Wuli practise an almost exclusive village endogamy and more than fifty per cent of marriages occur within the same village or hamlet. The elders maintain that they ignored the institution of chiefship before the German colonization and that all important decisions concerning the village were taken in councils held by the 'fathers', that is to say, the most important members of *ku* or *ro* initiation societies. Three chiefs have served as head of the village this century. This new institution created its own emblems, regalia, status, rights and duties, inspired by neighbouring traditional chiefships, principally that of Limbum. Today the chief of the village serves as the official intermediary between the Wuli and the modern administrative structure of Cameroon.



*Witchcraft and Anti-Witchcraft*

A Wuli myth relates the confrontation which took place between the two demiurges *Nui Ndu*, the spirit of water, and *Nui Manka*, the evil spirit. The object of this cosmic battle was mastery of the universe and more precisely the creation of living beings. The water spirit won by pouring streams of water over the fire which had been started by the evil spirit. After these events, the first three men came out of a water hole to people the earth. This victory of the water spirit over the spirit of witchcraft is considered a precarious one by the Wuli, one which is constantly being challenged. Since these primeval times, the water spirits have multiplied; they are responsible for women's fecundity and hence for the multiplication of human beings. *Nui Manka* is still pursuing its evil task by giving evil powers to human beings while they are still in their mother's womb: it remodels embryos by giving them extra sets of internal organs or by abnormally shaping their organs. These physiological abnormalities then become the seat of diverse supernatural evil abilities.

To fight the witches' activities, the water spirits help human beings by granting their own powers to certain ritual objects manipulated by the members of the *ro* initiation societies. These ritual objects may be small figures of fired clay or wood, masks of wood and woven fibres, calabash megaphones or iron bells, according to which initiation society they belong to (there are seven in Lus). A few important initiates, the 'fathers', are the guardians of these objects, which they keep in sanctuaries throughout the village; the other initiates are only users, not keepers. During the manufacture of these objects, a chicken must be sacrificed, transferring its ritual potency: the blood running over the objects allows their penetration by the water spirits. After this ritual of investiture, the initiates carefully store the objects away from the sight of women, children and non-initiates.

The aim of the rites performed by the initiates with the help of these objects is to protect a person and his family from any future evil act or, if the person is already ill, to persuade the witch who cast the spell to stop his destructive action. In both cases, the healer-initiates use mostly dissuasion by means of powerful words uttered in public, reinforced by the use of charms associated with ritual objects, which threaten the witches with one of the illnesses that the *rovo* can cause. The imprudent witch who continues to 'drink' the blood of his victim after this public announcement will invariably die, as a result of either the *ro* charms or the action of the other witches.

A fairly precise nosological code guides the seers in their diagnoses. Only certain illness can be caused by the witches, generally the most dangerous or those from which one dies most quickly (for example, smallpox, dysentery, tuberculosis, high fever, generalized oedema or weakness). As for the seven initiation societies, they can each bestow a specific illness (ascite or 'swollen belly', elephantiasis, abscess, swollen limbs or extremities, painful joints, palpitations, loss of manual dexterity, etc.). However,

in some cases the witches can also cause the illness that is specific to an initiatory association.

The Wuli distinguish several categories among the supernatural powers which the *Nui Manka* spirit has bestowed on certain men and women. These powers range from the witchcraft which destroys human lives, the most dangerous, to the power to seize one's neighbours' potential game, destroy their harvest or devour their domestic animals. They all have the reputation of being dangerous; all are illicit, although not all are disowned by society with the same strength and some even have an ambiguous ethical position.

Each type of evil power has its seat within a different physiological abnormality of the internal body organs which allows the subject to 'metamorphose' (*byitə*) into a supernatural being who generally assumes an animal form. The name of the host animal is also used to designate each particular occult power with the exception of the most dangerous of all, which is known by a specific name: *ɾe*.

### *Man-eating Witchcraft*

Of all evil powers the *ɾe* occupies a particular position, being the only one to attack human beings and also the only one capable of spreading illness and death among them. It designates an evil force destructive of human lives and is violently disowned by society. I use the term witchcraft for this power only. Those who possess this power, the true *bire* witches (e.g. *nwire*), must be fought by any means.

The exercise of this power, exclusively nocturnal, allows the witch to metamorphose into an owl (*wu*), leopard (*bwɛ*) or dog (*mvə*) in order to come to his victim's bedside and transmit an illness. This evil will inevitably bring the sick person to death if the witch maintains control. The witch chooses a victim in a complex process in which personal enmities and rivalry between the victim and the aggressor do not play a direct role. In fact, witches are perpetually on the look-out for words uttered in public during family reunions, ritual assemblies, feasts and discussions. On these occasions, one can sometime hear slander or gossip about a breach of custom or some transgressions that someone has committed. In general, these conversations reveal a conflict between two persons, a person and a group or two groups: a woman and her mother-in-law, the parents of a woman and the lineage of her husband, who have not paid bridewealth in full, a man and the whole of his agnate's wives, the latter against one of them, etc. These 'powerful' words (*bɛ fansə*) often expressed in anger, are dangerous because they are uttered in public, revealing a weakness in the social structure which the witch can then exploit. His future victims can only be the members of the household of the person who has just been put

on the spot by a public statement. If a man is openly accused of not having paid all of the bridewealth to his father-in-law, witches may attack him or, more often, his children. Therefore, witches do not obey their own vindictive urges, but follow the path of other peoples' enmities, disagreements and jealousies. The expression used by a person being accused of witchcraft is 'Your speech draws the attention of the witches on to me.' This means that witches will attack a person because of dangerous statements made by another. The witch needs a link in the form of verbal aggression in order to attack. If such dangerous speech occurs the accused will ask the accuser to perform a ritual of reconciliation during which the latter withdraws the statement, thereby showing that they do not want witchcraft to enter the house of the person whose faults were revealed in public. When witchcraft is invoked during a meeting called to determine the origin of an illness, those who utter imprudent words are severely criticized, as are the witches who turn this verbal aggression into physical aggression. Criticism must also be made with discretion, so that no witch can hear it.

This impersonal process by which the witch chooses his victim is the most frequently mentioned kind of bewitchment. But there are other mechanisms through which the witch is forced to attack certain victims. Witches have a duty to avenge the members of their lineages for acts of witchcraft committed by their affines. A woman beaten by her husband because of supposed adultery is afraid of being attacked by the witches of her husband's lineage; she is convinced that if she dies, one of her brothers will avenge her by killing one of her husband's sisters by witchcraft. In this particular case, the evil action is invoked before any sign of witchcraft (illness) has manifested itself. The strong statement which, in previous cases, was only slander, gossip or the public revelation of error, now becomes a threat of witchcraft.

In all cases, *rɛ* witches always begin by 'drinking the blood' of their victims, who are then infected with a debilitating illness which ultimately kills them. This intermediary step acts like an alarm system. The diviners are consulted, a meeting is called and different groups or persons in conflict explain their case. The meeting generally ends with a healing ritual, performed by an initiate of a *ro* association, which aims to frighten the witches and to persuade them to release their hold over the victim.

There is another category of bewitchment which, unlike the two already mentioned, is not the consequence of any strong statement or particular social conflict. The *rɛ* witches who take part in certain cannibalistic feasts with other witches have to bring a victim, one of their children or a close agnate, as compensation for future nocturnal meals. This act of witchcraft within the descent group generally has the immediate effects of a sudden illness leading to death. Unlike vengeful evil acts towards allies, the possibility of killing one's own children or agnates by witchcraft is only mentioned in public to deny it. For the witch, it is the price paid for power. A network of reciprocity among consanguines is

therefore opened in the world of the night, one which is simultaneously parallel and antinomical to the network of reciprocity of institutions, filiation and alliances which govern the social relations which take place during the day.

The realisation that one has been bewitched occurs while dreaming. Certain nightmares, accompanied upon waking by the first pathological signs of an illness, are indicators that the body of the dreamer has fallen prey to a witch. The *bire* act completely anonymously. No one ever admits to possessing this power and precise accusations are rare. The seers merely mention the number of witches, their sex, and the lineage the evil attacks come from. Precise accusations were formerly more frequent but still did not lead to proceedings. Men and women who had been personally accused by a member of their own lineage could decide to submit to an ordeal to maintain the unity of the family group, though they could not be forced to do so. Also, whether the accused was found innocent or guilty, the accuser had to give some goats to his lineage as an indemnity, either for unjust accusation or for having caused the death of a member of the kin group through the ordeal. The ordeal consisted of taking a poison extracted from the bark of a tree, *Erythrophleum guineense*. Nowadays, a ritual called *keke* takes place when a diviner has revealed that a patient is bewitched: all the persons present declare over the medicine of initiatory *ro* societies—as elsewhere over the Bible—that they have not bewitched the patient. If the witch has ‘sworn’ and still maintains his hold over the victim, then the charm will kill him.

Apart from the ordeal, which has now disappeared, the only certain way to detect the *re* witchcraft power of a deceased person is to perform an autopsy to reveal any physiological abnormality bearing the power. This abnormality, called *gelengu*, designates the auricle of the heart when it is shaped like a cockscorn. Such an abnormality allows a person to change into an owl, leopard or dog, an action described by the verb *byita*.

The notion of person is important to understanding the mechanism of bewitchment. The human being comprises a body (*mani*), a ‘breath’ or ‘principle of movement, mobility’ (*zi*) and a ‘principle of life’ or ‘heart’ (*mbɔ*, heart in the sense of centre). The breath, as the principle of life, resides with the heart (*mbɔkyi*, with the sense of the organ). The ‘breath’ leaves the body through the mouth during sleep; it wanders like a cloud in the bush. On waking, it returns to the body through the eyes, which then open. At the time of death, it leaves the body for good, wandering here and there before vanishing. The ‘breath’ can only cease to function, lose its strength or, more frequently, be torn off or stolen by the witches who destroy human lives, which they do by taking some hair from the victim, who is often already ill, during the night. Loss of consciousness and delirium are signs that the ‘breath’ has been stolen, and death will follow unless it is restored quickly. However, to steal a person’s ‘breath’ is the final phase of a bewitchment. A witch begins by causing an illness, which is called ‘sucking the blood’. At this stage, the victim is ‘taken’ but is not

yet in mortal danger. Although weakened by illness, the bewitched remain conscious and retain their psychological integrity, or 'breath'. The 'breath' plays only a passive role in the mechanism of bewitchment in so far as witches attack their victims during sleep, when the breath has left the body.

Remarkably, as well as their life principle and their breath, the *re* witches possess the faculty of secreting, of giving form and movement to an entity called *manka*, which they 'send', 'create' or 'give birth to' (*bo manka*) either when they themselves are dying or at the time of death of other people. In this last case, the *manka* is the product of the witch's evil power and of certain characteristic traits of the deceased, such as their physical appearance and memory. This entity is invisible to all except witches and diviner-magicians,<sup>1</sup> and is a kind of white ghost taking on the form and traits of the deceased; this ghost will wander inside the deceased's courtyard and will haunt the immediate relatives night and day until the end of the funerary rites are finished. Then the *manka* will rejoin and associate with the deceased's *zi* breath and wander forever in the bush, except in some particular cases which we will discuss below. This ghost to whom the witches give life, but in the likeness of the deceased, does not to my knowledge correspond to any concept linked to the human person.<sup>2</sup>

The *manka* is a complex entity which only manifests itself to humans for a short while during funerals and reveals itself by creating a draught and a strong smell of palm oil. Although harmless in itself, it none the less frightens everybody, because, born from the will of the witches, it is a cog of the witchcraft mechanism. They are, in a way, the invisible support of the ever-present powerful words which the dead uttered during their life, because, as we have seen, these powerful words are the basis of the mechanism of witchcraft and mark the victims of future evil actions. The *manka* is, rather than a spirit-double, the memory of the dead, which the Wuli always perceive as a menace. The witches also use the statements of the dead as well as those of the living. Moreover, as they get older, the elders multiply their injunctions, intimidations (they publicly threaten people with misfortune which will occur after their own death) and prohibi-

1. Called *mantacho*, these diviners have the same powers as the witches but only use them in a socially approved manner to heal or mend the misfortune caused by the *re* witches.

2. There is nevertheless the interesting case of Bangwa, a Bamileke chiefship. On the one hand, a kind of exclusively male witchcraft, *sue*, allows its beholder to appear 'as a white shape similar to our half-visible ghosts'. On the other hand, the double—or more precisely the undercover—of the *ngankan* healers, in contrast to that of other people, changes upon their death into *ghangami*. The Bangwa think of this feared entity 'as a white silhouette similar to that which accompanies the witches who belong to the house of *sue*'. It must be ritually chased out of the village after the burial ceremony because it can bring a kind of shame. The *ngankan*, although outside witchcraft, are respected but fearsome magicians who are capable of changing into wild animals.

tions (for example, a grandson must not marry a woman from a certain lineage). The presence of the deceased's ghost at their funeral is a reminder that witches have no intention of forgetting his statements. The transgression of oaths made by the deceased, of rules and prohibitions which he decreed when he was alive, are all open to the witches' evil actions, just as are the statements of the living. But whereas the statements of the living, young or old, men or women, are all 'heard', only the threats from important elders are truly 'registered' after their death. It is often said that the ghosts of persons long dead often come and join that of the newly deceased during a funeral; also, as long as there remains a single person who can remember someone long dead, the witches can summon the *manka* of that dead person during a funeral. However, according to some people, a *manka*'s period of activity does not exceed five years. When a child dies, since they did not live long enough to utter many powerful words, the ghosts of the long dead come to haunt the funeral to recall their own dangerous and strong statements. It is also said that the *manka* haunt the funeral more if the family of the deceased has been unjust, wrong or ungrateful towards them. The dead, through the intermediary of their *manka* manipulated by the witches, are dangerous for the living.

The corpse decomposes in the tomb but nevertheless remains for a time the seat of the memory of the dead, in particular the powerful words they uttered. Curiously, if the witches remember because they have 'heard', the dead remember because they continue to 'see' what their next of kin are doing. Memory moves from the auditory to the visual. The Wuli have no ancestor cult and the dead are only solicited to be asked to forget about the living or, more precisely, to 'close their eyes' (*kʏiləm*) on the actions of the living. Certain rituals take place for this reason only, on the recent tombs of important deceased: to 'close their eyes' on past statements or oaths. If the deceased 'close their eyes', forget, they, the witches, will also forget. If the deceased are obstinate and 'keep their eyes open', their agnates will ask a stranger to the village to open the tomb and remove the skull from the skeleton of this troublesome dead and then go into the bush and lay it on the ground among the roots of a big tree.

*Manka* ghosts have a final noteworthy characteristic. After the funeral, the ghost of the deceased joins the *zi* in the bush, but if the deceased was a 'father' in a *ro* initiation association, that is to say a guardian of a sanctuary and keeper of *ro* objects (see above), then the *manka* is captured by the water spirits who inhabit these objects and joins the *manka* of previous keepers. One of the rules of the *ro* associations is that a son succeeds his father. There is no ancestor cult but there is a lineage of *manka* which ensures the efficiency of anti-witchcraft associations. The *manka* entity, subjugated by the water spirits, is granted the power to cause illness by entering the ritual sphere of *ro*. We see here a division of labour: the *manka* cause illness, the water spirits cure them (see also Baeke 1985).

Further elaboration of the Wuli notion of the person may be helpful in our understanding of the mechanism of bewitchment. The term *mbɔ*,

which defines the 'breath' and, by extension, the heart in which it resides, designates at the same time the kernel of the palm nut. It is there that the *rɛ* witches hide the 'breath' of their victim by placing within it a lock of their hair that the witch has stolen. But it is also said that when a witch has stolen the 'heart' of a person (i.e. the 'breath'), the 'skin' (*ngo*) may also be seized. This term designates the external envelope of the body, its physical appearance as well as certain personality traits (the voice, etc.). The 'breath' is therefore both the strength and internal energy of a person and some external characteristics; the heart is its seat, the growing hair the visible external metonymical sign.

When the *mbɔ* or 'breath' of a person is captured and 'devoured' by a witch, this person, deprived of this essential part, dies. However, it is also said that the whole person is 'eaten' by the witches, heart, flesh and bones. The autopsy of a presumed witch reveals precise details concerning which parts of the body of his victims he ate; if the heart of the deceased contains a blood clot in the shape of a frog this indicates that they have 'consumed' a child.

To sum up, we can say that the 'breath' or *mbɔ* is defined in different ways depending on the context or the point of view. When it is at one with the body, it is a constituent element of the person and resides in the heart. When the two entities of body and 'breath' are separated, the latter is the whole person in the invisible world of the witches, whereas in the world of the non-witches it is materialized in a lock of hair enclosed in the kernel of a palm nut which is hidden in the bush or in the village.

The body of the victim is the object of symbolic action where metonymy and food metaphors mingle. When a person is ill, it is said that a witch is 'drinking their blood'. When the patient has lost consciousness, is delirious or is at death's door, it is said that the witch 'stole their heart' by taking a lock of hair in a supernatural way, which is a metonymical indication of their 'breath'. Finally, the victim dies, 'eaten' by the witch.

Metonymy and food metaphor are connected in a ritual called *bɛfɔ*, during which a magician-diviner (*ɲwimantafɔ*) captures and destroys the evil part of a *rɛ* witch who is responsible for a recent death. This ritual is often organized when the victim is a child. The magician-diviner attracts the witch into a trap, whose main element is a lock of hair from the dead child. This is placed in a half-calabash partially buried in the ground. When the magician-diviner 'sees' the witch in the calabash, he 'destroys' the witch with his machete by breaking the trap-calabash and burying it in the ground. It is said that, after a few months, the witch will inevitably die of an illness specific to this ritual, *mfɔ*, or inflammation and suppuration of organs situated on either side of the depression situated under the lower ribs (infection of the lining of the lungs).

While the phenomenon of bewitchment is relatively well described by the Wuli themselves the mechanism of its action is relatively unknown. The Wuli make no precise link between the different components of a person described earlier and the transformation which takes place when be-

witchment occurs. The only precise information is as follows: witches possess the *gelengu* (an auricle of the heart in the shape of a cockscomb), and this malformation allows them to transform themselves into an owl, leopard or dog and go to the victim's bedside.

What is the origin, the exact nature of the evil entity which changes into an animal? The Wuli think that it is none other than the person himself, who, while invisible, puts on the 'skin' of an animal to commit evil. When they describe this metamorphosis the Wuli mention neither the components of a person, the body, the vital principal and breath, or the *manka*. The witch is both here and there, and that is all. During the ritual performed in order to kill a witch, the invisible entity which is trapped is the witch in person. The only details we have on this matter come from the description of the ritual associated with the death of a leopard. A leopard-hunt is generally only undertaken when one is seen on the outskirts of a village, thus demonstrating that it has been invested by a witch (the last leopard seen in the region of Lus was killed in 1979). As soon as the animal has succumbed to the hunters' spears, its heart is quickly brought back to the village, where the hunter's father cooks and eats it the same evening. The speed of the operation ensures that the witch who had borrowed the 'skin' of the feline and whose 'heart' had therefore mingled with that of the animal does not have the time to retrieve their own 'heart' and escape this death by proxy. This suggests that it is the 'breath', residing in the heart, which leaves the body during the evil wanderings of a witch. We have seen that the evil power of witches is linked to a physiological abnormality of the heart. To be a witch would therefore mean having the ability to separate the 'breath' from the body without harming oneself—unlike non-witches, who would lose consciousness, fall in a coma and find themselves at death's door.

### *Other Evil Powers*

As well as *re*, there are other minor evil powers which give their owners supernatural access to belongings, harvests, game, wine, cattle, etc. The first thing to note about these powers is that, unlike *re* witchcraft, they are active by day as well as by night.

Apart from the *fo* power, which we will discuss first, they are not generally the subject of Wuli gossip. They are only considered harmful if their possessors target the territory, harvests or belongings of a village. If they exercise their talents outside Wuli territory, society's attitude towards these supernatural activities goes from reprobation to indifference, and even approbation, because the Wuli think that these powers can bring abundance to the village when they are exercised outside their territory.



To distinguish the possessors of these powers from the *re* witches, who destroy human life, I shall call them 'witch-thieves'.

For each of these minor forms of witchcraft we can establish a precise link between the animal whose 'skin' the witch has borrowed, the physiological abnormality which is the origin of his power, and the nature of the power. These three concepts, indissolubly linked, bear the same name, usually that of the animal, the object of the 'metamorphosis' or 'transfer'.

The ensemble of hosts used by witch-thieves constitute a bestiary representing some of the regional fauna, either carnivores who decimate the livestock or hunt the same game animals as man, or grain- or fruit-eaters who take man's food reserves.

Nevertheless, there is great disparity behind this appearance of unity. There are significant differences between the various forms of minor witchcraft, on both the level of the attitude of the social group towards them and the level of the activities which are attributed to them. The mechanisms through which these witch-thieves steal are different whichever category they belong to.

One person may possess just one of these powers, or several of them or even all of them. Autopsies, which are performed on all the dead—men, women and children—reveal the powers the deceased possessed; each supernatural agency has its power from the physiological 'double' residing in a specific part of the internal organs. We will now examine the different types of these minor forms of witchcraft.

### The *fɔ* minor witchcraft: harvests versus fertility

There are three kinds of associated powers under this generic term: *fɔ* itself, *sɔŋbwɔ* and *solɔŋba*. They are generally indissociable and allow their possessors to steal harvests of corn, sorghum, vegetables or root crops, as well as crops which are picked in the bush.

The term *fɔ*, which here designates a kind of bird (unidentified), also means work in the fields and sections of the bush that will soon be cultivated. *Sɔŋbwɔ* is the name of another (unidentified) bird and means 'who steals in the bush (*mbwɔ*) by supernatural means (*so*)'. These two kinds of minor witchcraft operate at different seasons: *fɔ*, when the women work in the fields, and *sɔŋbwɔ*, when the harvest is collected from the fields. The first kind of minor witchcraft is therefore associated with cultivated plants and agriculture, the other with plants which grow in the bush and are not cultivated. The 'bush' here designates cultivated fields (*nso*), potential fields (*fɔ*) and the forest or savannah which surrounds them (*ko*). This territory is the agricultural domain of women, but a part of the bush, the palm forest *koti*, which forms a dense belt around the village, is the exclusive domain of the men. Despite the clear conceptual distinction between these different zones, it is evident that in practice they overlap, at least partially. We will return to this division of space in the conclusion.

*Solenbe* is the name of an imaginary animal and means 'to steal carrots (*ɲbə*) in a supernatural way (*sole*)'. The carrots are planted in the clearings of the palm forests which are part of the male domain.

The *fɔ* witch-thieves are said to exercise their power as a group according to strict rules, the most important being that they must never use the products of their theft themselves but must exchange them with their partners. Moreover, their acts have metonymic force: the witch-thief need only spirit away a 'part' for the 'whole' to be destroyed, perish or fade, making it 'reappear' elsewhere. In concrete terms, all the witch has to do is set his heart on a field of sorghum for the plants to stop growing or perish, whereas the field to which the loot is destined (and which cannot be his) will see its harvest become more abundant.

In general, the 'division of labour' between the sexes disappears when it comes to the sphere of the witches' supernatural activities. Although gathering palm nuts and hunting are male activities, the minor witchcraft which steals palm wine or game can be exercised by both men and women. Similarly, agriculture is essentially a female activity, but men and women can perform the *fɔ* witchcraft which destroys harvests.

This last kind of minor witchcraft is, however, the only one to be analysed in different ways by the Wuli, depending on whether it is exercised by a man or a woman, even though the supernatural actions performed are the same. The female *fɔ* power resides in the uterus, the male *fɔ* power near the liver; *fɔ* women always possess the three powers (*fɔ*, *sɔɲbwɔ* and *solɔɲbɔ*), whereas the men only ever possess the first two. *Solenbe* is therefore a kind of minor witchcraft which is inaccessible to men. It is also the only one not to be associated with a real animal. The Wuli describe *solɔɲbɔ* as a long, two-legged imaginary being who digs out the small *ɲbə* carrots (*phlectrenthus esculentus*, previously *coleus dazo*, commonly called 'Hausa potato') at night.

As in *rɛ* witchcraft, autopsy is the only way to discover if someone possessed these powers. In men, they are revealed as two organs (or extra numbers of organic abnormalities?), *fɔ* and *sɔɲbwɔ*, residing in a bag on the right-hand side of the abdomen, near the liver. In women, *fɔ* is composed of three extra organs coiled inside a transparent receptacle, in the left-hand side of the uterus. *Fɔ* and *sɔɲbwɔ* are described as small, elongated white, soft reticules with a mouth and teeth, whereas *solɔɲbɔ* resembles a small snake with a fairly large head and two short legs. These imaginary beings, strange additional organs, are the internal replicas of external animal shapes, real or imaginary, which their possessor can use.

This is how the Wuli imagine the activities of the *fɔ* witches: men and women metamorphose into *fɔ* or *sɔɲbwɔ* birds, then take flight taking either their game-bag or their basket. They necessarily act as a group. When the expedition is finished they gather among the branches of a *sɔ* tree, a gathering place for *fɔ* and *sɔɲbwɔ* birds (*Bombacaceae ceiba pentandia* or Kapok tree). Here they share the loot, along the principle that no witch uses what he has stolen for his own means.

The male and female *fɔ* witches run the same risk as the *rɛ* witches. They are vulnerable to the medicines of the initiation societies or their maledictions. But the women who possess *fɔ* witchcraft run an even greater risk, because it is extremely dangerous for them to use the *fɔ* power when they are pregnant. If a mother-to-be joins a *fɔ* or *sɔŋbwɔ* expedition, she has to stop at a *sɔ* tree before joining the other thieves. She places her foetus there on a bed of branches and covers it with leaves to hide it from her accomplices, who would otherwise beat it to death. The mother then rejoins her companions; she will surreptitiously take back her child on her return from the expedition. Nevertheless, the mother and her future child remain exposed until the end of the pregnancy, especially at the time of birth, to the evil actions of the *fɔ*, *sɔŋbwɔ* and *solɔŋbɔ* organs. These cohabit with the embryo in the uterus. The open mouths of these frightening entities can draw in or 'drink' the blood of the child and the water of the placenta, thus provoking a miscarriage. Above all, they can hinder the normal progress of the birth. Each element of this trio has a specific role. When the baby tries to come out, *fɔ* intercepts him and swallows the child's head in its bag-mouth. *Sɔŋbwɔ* attacks the placenta, which it presses and swallows to stop it coming out. If the placenta does not come out after the child, this is explained as the actions of *solɔŋbɔ* biting into the umbilical cord and pulling the placenta back into the uterus. These actions can lead to the death of the mother and child or of the mother only. The placenta which does not come out is greatly feared. Old women who are said to have ritual and therapeutic knowledge and who intervene in cases of difficult birth are called *bi fi mayi*, 'those who loosen the placenta'.

For all these reasons, the Wuli never cut the umbilical cord straight after the birth but only after the placenta has come out. When the child is born at term and alive but, several hours later, the placenta is still inside the mother, the women assisting her will carefully cut the cord and immediately tie two *dʒɛ* (*Solenaceae solanum aculeastrum* var. *albifolium*) bush fruits to the extremity of the cord which leads to the placenta, so that *solɔŋbɔ*, who is hiding at the back of the uterus, cannot pull it in.

If a woman does not take part in any *fɔ* activity during her pregnancy, these three physiological entities will keep 'their mouths shut' (*finsɔ wuwu*) and the birth will take place without incident. Although transgressing certain prohibitions or seeing certain secret *ro* objects can also be the cause of miscarriages or difficult births, *fɔ* is generally thought to be the cause of obstetric difficulties.

Among the men and women who possess *fɔ*, only pregnant women are at risk of the entities which are the origin of their power turning against them. The domain of witchcraft appears to contain a specific moral injunction to preserve the fertility of women. Unlike *fɔ* men, women are the only ones to possess *solɔŋbɔ*, the entity which allows them to change into the imaginary animal bearing the same name and to steal *ŋbɔ* carrots. The Wuli do not talk a lot about this last kind of minor witchcraft, but the

women insist that this practice is the only one to provoke 'fever', a metaphor for the onset of menstruation.

It thus seems that while the practice of *fɔ* and *sɔŋbwɔ* hinders the development of pregnancy, the transformation into *soləŋbɔ* prevents conception or the first stage of the fertility cycle or provokes spontaneous abortions.

But why does this contraceptive witchcraft consist exclusively of stealing *ŋbɔ*, which are small roots of no great importance as food? In fact, the cultivation of this plant is regulated by ritual. Each year, the women work in the small fields where *ŋbɔ* are grown only during the annual ten-day feast called *yɛfempwɔ*. This takes place at the end of June or in early July and marks the break between the end of the maize season and the ritual inauguration of the sorghum season. One of the main events of this festival takes place on the third day, the celebration of all the weddings of the year. Two days and two nights of rejoicing follow, during which the young brides sleep in the hut of their mothers-in-law. On the sixth day, the women go to raise the mounds in the fields intended to receive the *ŋbɔ* roots. That same evening, the newly married couples spend their first night together. The cycle defined by the beginning of sowing and the end of the harvest of the carrots is about nine months. The cultivation of the carrots is therefore closely linked to the first sexual relations of young couples and their fertility. Moreover, the preparation of the root fields is a prerequisite of the preparation of the sorghum fields.

For the Wuli, the fertility of women and that of the earth are closely linked. Here we see a plant, the *ŋbɔ*, playing the role of catalyst in the future fertility of the sorghum fields, just as the wedding night, which is 'worked' at the same time as the carrots, will be the catalyst of the fecundity of the couples. That being the case, we can understand why to use witchcraft to steal these roots, which symbolize the fecundity of the couples, is an act which endangers witch-thieves during childbirth.

If we compare the destructive acts of the three entities under the generic term *fɔ* (two birds and a small imaginary animal which steals food) on the one hand, with the evil activities of their counterparts lodged in the uterus (two white bags and a small snake which prevent a woman from giving birth) on the other, we notice that on a symbolic level the first are a replica of the second.

We have seen that the *fɔ* bird attacks cultivated plants in the fields, *sɔŋbwɔ* destroys edible wild plants in the bush, and *soləŋbɔ* plunders the fields of carrots. These small fields are situated in the palm forest close to the village, which is the domain of the men; they therefore have an intermediary position between the female bush fields, away from the village, and the uncultivated forest. This area of palm trees surrounding the village is a liminal zone between the village and the distant bush where the women work their fields. It is also intermediate between the uncultivated wild bush where *sɔŋbwɔ* acts and the fields where *fɔ* acts, because it is the domain of the oil-palm tree, which, according to the Wuli, is neither cultivated nor

wild. As we have seen, during the great annual festival the small fields of *ɲbā* carrots also play a mediatory role between the maize season and the sorghum season, between the fertility of the plants in the fields and the fecundity of couples in the village: premarital, clandestine or 'bush' love is said or wished to be sterile. *Soləɲbā* witchcraft attacks a plant which has little value as food but which plays a key symbolic role.

To return to the action of the three physiological organs lodged in the uterus of witch-thieves. *Fɔ* attacks the child, *soɲbwɔ* the placenta and *soləɲbā* the umbilical cord. The cord is obviously an intermediary between the child and the placenta. The placenta is buried under a tree, generally a banana or plantain plant, in the 'village bush', which is a section of the palm forest surrounding the village and forms the natural border between the residences of two lineages, whereas a dead child is buried behind the house. The umbilical cord is the object of a ritual when the baby first comes out: it is either thrown onto the roof of the house or buried in the same place in the village bush as the placenta. This hesitation is due to the intermediary symbolic position between person and placenta, between village and bush.

The fields of *ɲbā* occupy an intermediate position in the organization of the space of the village territory, which is a counterpart to the symbolic position of the umbilical cord in the midst of the child-placenta duality: the child is linked to the village, whereas the placenta is linked to the bush. The spatial structure, the system of agricultural production and the universe of evil correspond perfectly.

Because of its mediating role within the structure of the village, where the opposition between bush and village plays an important role, the *ɲbā* plant is at the heart of the symbolic framework which links the fertility of plants to the fertility of women; this is reflected in the coincidence between the act of putting *ɲbā* carrots in the ground and the first sexual relations of young married couples (the wedding night of the annual feast). Because fertility is exclusive to women, they are the only ones to have the doubtful privilege of triggering the menstrual flow in their bodies by destroying these tubers in a supernatural way and thereby drying the internal source of their fecundity.

*Fɔ* witchcraft is the enemy of the emergence of life and can therefore be considered the 'younger sibling' of the formidable *rɛ* witchcraft, which brings death.

#### Other kinds of minor witchcraft

Let us look now at other kinds of minor witchcraft. Foremost among these is *ka* which consists primarily of stealing wine and palm nuts. This power is linked to the existence of 'pockets' situated on both sides of the heart. *Ka* is the name of a species of fruit-eating bird with a very long beak (unidentified), which is indeed very keen on palm nuts.

There are also a series of powers which enable one to change into an animal: *nkwi* the eagle, chicken thief; *manyapwe* the hippopotamus, who destroys the plantations on the river banks; *maliko* the python, who steals poultry and hunts small game; *ngu* the water snake, who likes fish and sometimes destroys rope bridges; and *mbwu* the leopard, not a killer of men this time but a hunter of game and domesticated animals. The power to change into one or other of these animals resides at the back of the rib cage, in certain veins or arteries with a particular shape. If an autopsy shows that these veins contain black blood, the deceased is a witch-thief who has doubtless used their powers.

*Ka* power and the other powers listed above differ in the supernatural technique used. *Ka* is the only one which acts in the universe of metonymy: if a *ka* bird-witch 'spirits away' a few nuts from an oil-palm tree belonging to a particular family, most of the production of wine and oil from this family's palm trees will dry up, whereas other palm forests will suddenly produce abundantly. By taking some, the *ka* witch steals everything, as do *fɔ* witches.

By contrast, witch-thieves who belong to the second category—the hippopotamus, eagle, snakes and leopard—behave like their non-evil animal counterparts. When a *maliko* witch-thief (the python) attacks a single animal, the remainder of the herd are unharmed. Similarly, when a *manyapwe* witch-thief (the hippopotamus) destroys a few rows of vegetables growing by the side of the river, the whole plot is not destroyed.

Just as in *fɔ* witchcraft, *ka* is a group practice and the *ka* witch-thief must exchange stolen products with part of the loot of fellow witches. Infringement of these rules can lead the accomplices to turn against that witch. None the less, the Wuli make a clear distinction between the activity of *fɔ* bird-witches and that of *ka* bird-witches, even though they both attack foodstuffs of great importance: wine and palm oil are, with maize and sorghum, the most important products in daily and ritual cooking. Moreover, it is said that *fɔ* witches, and especially female witches, are too often tempted by the harvest of their close neighbours—whereas the *ka* witches are more discerning and, rather than destroying Wuli palm trees, they take palm nuts and male inflorescences which produce wine from the forests of other villages and bring them to the palm groves of the Wuli. When a *ka* bird passes in the sky, it is saluted with joy, unlike *fɔ* birds.

The actions of witch-thieves who borrow the 'skin' of the leopard, python, water snake or eagle are also regarded as part good, part bad. The leopard, like the python, can take a goat but it can also consciously kill certain wild herbivores who destroy crops, thereby protecting the crops. The eagle, chicken thief, can choose, just as the *ka* bird can, to attack another village; it is sometime said that two village groups attack each other via the proxy of witch-eagles. The destructive actions of hippopotami are lessened by recalling that they often play gently with children.

Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity between actions approved by society and those which are reprehensible when performed within the village or

the lineage, the nature of these powers remains illicit, secretive and dangerous. Everybody knows that any witch-thief who attacks the belongings of the inhabitants of his own village will in his turn be attacked by the *ro* initiatory societies.

It is therefore surprising to find that these minor kinds of witchcraft are the responsibility of two ritual associations. All lineages have their own *ka* and *kemvre* societies which exist in order to increase the supernatural powers of the lineage's witch-thieves by enabling them to use the ritual objects which facilitate the exercise of their power. The *ka* association activates the power bearing the same name, the *kemvre* association the powers associated with the leopard, snakes, eagle and hippopotamus. The paradox is that although they favour illegal powers, these two societies have a legal and official status. The symbols of *ka* are a bird sculpted out of wood and an engraved terracotta pot used for palm-wine. The symbols of *kemvre* (literally 'the materials of the calabash'), which are linked to all the animals whose 'skins' (fur or feathers) can be used, are three bands of woven cotton material inside a calabash. Each material represents one or several different animals. The colour of the first band of material is off-white and corresponds to the eagle and the hippopotamus; the second, black or red, is associated with the python and water snake; and the third symbolizes the leopard and is striped in white, black and red. Now that European materials are widely available, these bands of traditional cotton materials are often replaced with scraps of modern materials. There is, in each lineage, only one keeper of the calabash containing these ritual materials. Within a local descent group of around forty married men, I have counted some fifteen members of *kemvre*.

Membership of these two associations generally goes from father to son. If a man delays the initiation rituals after the death of his father, the public gossip will be such that he will eventually be attacked by the witches of his lineage. In the *kemvre* association, they will infect him with scabies (*mbe*); in *ka*, it will be a weeping eye infection. These two illnesses are those which the 'medicines' associated with these associations can inflict on the witch-thieves of other lineages who may attempt to 'borrow' the powers of these objects. The charm associated with *kemvre* is a wild rash-inducing plant (*Urticaceae Laportea ovalifolia*) and scabies here symbolizes the illegal usage of 'skins'. The *ka* medicine includes porcupine spines, which are compared to the spines present in bunches of palm nuts and which can harm the bird who tries to eat them, thus provoking an eye infection.

According to the Wuli, these societies play a positive role because if one of them ceased its activities in a lineage, then the witch-thieves of the family group would turn against the negligent initiates. The symbol objects of *ka* and *kemvre* must be exhibited during the funeral of their members. A sacrifice of chickens and the sharing of palm-wine are required at initiations, as in the initiation into other cultural associations. It is said that the water spirits and the *manka* ghost spirits of previous members cohabit in

the ritual objects we have described above, just as they live in the ritual object of *ro* associations who fight all forms of witchcraft.

The existence and activities of these societies represent an assurance that the witch-thieves of a lineage will not turn against their agnates, *nduma* (the mother's agnates) or *vedze* (sisters' and daughters' children) but will direct their powers to the outside, far away, preferably outside the village. In counterpart, the efficiency of the powers of the witch-thieves are increased by these symbols of the lineage, whose powers are reinforced by the presence of water spirits and ghosts. In this context, can we still talk of witchcraft? What is surprising is not that there is a code of ethics within the world of witchcraft—there are other examples of this—but that this code should be the result of a transaction between the invisible world and the world of social institutions. From this point of view, by 'taking part' in witchcraft, the *ka* and *kemvre* associations have an attitude which is completely different from that of the *ro* initiatory associations, which fight all forms of witchcraft without exception. Wuli repeatedly told me that the only difference between the *ka* sculpted wooden bird and the *kemvre* bands of cloth was that women can see the first one without danger. In a world where witchcraft is as much masculine as it is feminine but where only men can be members of the initiation societies, this tells us a lot about the respective functions of these two kinds of association. One of them, *ro*, is organized on the level of the whole village and fights all forms of witchcraft when it is turned against a villager; only men can see its ritual objects. The other type of association, grouping *ka* and *kemvre*, which are lineage organizations, can be seen by all, because its aim is to enable witches of both sexes to use their evil talents for the good of the lineage.

Witch-thieves must exercise their talents according to a code defined by these associations. This is not to touch the belongings of the lineage and to use their powers as far away as possible, beyond the village boundaries. The main aim of this charter is to counter the evil aspects of these powers and to lead them into positive consequences for the village. If witch-thieves are foolish enough to harm their own village communities they will, as happens to *re* witches, be attacked by the protective charms of the *ro* secret societies, who fight all aspects of evil power.

### *Conclusion: Witchcraft, Sorghum and Oil-Palm*

The preceding sections have emphasised the clearly negative status of *re* witchcraft and also *fo* witchcraft, whereas the status of most of the other minor witchcraft is ambiguous. Whether evil or beneficial, approved or disapproved, they are nevertheless all of an illicit character, and those who



exercise such powers are exposed to many dangers. I will now discuss this strange morality.

Although Wuli exploit to the full the ambiguous powers of witchcraft within the social structure, neither *rɛ* witchcraft, which destroys human lives, nor the minor *fɔ* witchcraft,<sup>3</sup> which can annihilate the fecundity of women, are linked to any association whether legal, lineage or other. They are both too destructive. *Fɔ* is indeed, after *rɛ*, the form of witchcraft which is most disapproved of by the Wuli. This contrasts with the status of *ka* witchcraft, despite its resemblances to *fɔ* already noted.

We have seen that Wuli distinguish between the activity of *fɔ* witch-birds and that of *ka* witch-birds. The first destroys crops and causes difficulties in childbirth, whereas the second creates richness and abundance by bringing to the village wine and palm nuts from other villages. Why do the Wuli suppose that *ka* witches generally resist the temptation to take flowers and fruits from nearby palm trees, whereas *fɔ* witches, especially female *fɔ* ones, succumb to the urge to take crops or bush fruits from their close neighbours? We have seen that these two kinds of minor witchcraft differ only in the nature of their loot: on the one hand, products from the fields (the *fɔ* bird itself), from edible bush plants (the *sɔŋbwɔ* bird) and from *ŋbɔ* carrots fields within the oil-palm forests (the *solɔŋbɔ* imaginary animal), and on the other, the wine and palm oil which come from the oil-palm forest (the *ka* bird).<sup>4</sup> To question why the contrast between their respective ethical status is to ask what is the difference between the oil-palms and the plants cultivated in the fields or the wild fruits and vegetables collected from the bush within the economic, social and symbolic structure of the Wuli?

To answer this question, let us start with the symbolic status of the oil-palm tree. Unlike the produce from the fields, it is not a cultivated plant, as is shown by the regulation of land ownership. When a plot of land passes from one lineage to another, great care is taken to define what is being transmitted: it may be just the right to cultivate it or it may be extended to the right to gather from non-cultivated wild plants. In the first case, the palm trees cannot be exploited by the person who has received the land, since they still belong to the previous lineage. Palm trees are never planted and grow without any help from men. The Wuli say that they 'follow men', an allusion to the speed with which they spontaneously multiply around any new residential area. The original agricultural myth confirms this status:

3. We have seen that the term *fɔ* is often used by the Wuli as a generic term designating the associated powers *fɔ*, *sɔŋbwɔ* and *solɔŋbɔ*.

4. Even if the observation of the behaviour of these different species of birds showed that one is more destructive than another or that some flew for longer distances than others, this would still not explain the *fɔ/ka* antinomy sufficiently.

Once upon a time, men did not work the land. One day, while making palm oil, a man was taken away by the lightning of the sky. He came back with the seeds of plants to cultivate.

This tale stresses the fact that the exploitation of palm trees came before agriculture and is confirmed by an episode from the Wuli origin myth which tells us that the water spirits gave to the messenger dog of the first men the fire to cook their food in the form of burning *gansu*, the fibrous remains of the manufacture of palm oil. A variant of the myth, from the Mfumte village of Nchi, tells of a dog who, attracted by the fire over which a water spirit is roasting some palm-nut kernels, stole a firebrand and brought it back to men. Both these variants associate domestic fire with the palm tree and also show us that this non-cultivated plant is none the less part of culture. For instance, apart from its importance as a foodstuff, the oil palm plays an important role in rituals. Palm-oil, which is a basic ingredient of daily cooking, is a sign of fecundity and is used by women in birth rituals, whereas palm-wine (which is spat on objects or people) is linked to the rituals of male initiation associations and generally seals the return to an order which had been disturbed.

The ritual importance of oil palms, with their symbolic status half-way between nature and culture, is enough to justify the existence of an initiation association whose role is to protect this precious tree from the *ka* witch-birds. These witches are restricted by a kinship pact which allows them to 'steal far away'. They are free to exercise their talents against those with whom they have no alliance or kinship relations. They also bring back what they steal to their own village and thereby benefit their own community. Their power only destroys strangers.

It would be useful to compare the action of the *ka* bird with that of the *nkwi* eagle who is linked to the *kemvre* lineage association. It must be remembered that witch-eagles steal chickens and that, in order to respect the pact which binds them to their lineage, they must steal, like the *ka* bird, outside their village. They go further than the *ka* bird, directing their actions toward villages which are in conflict with the Wuli, but using the same supernatural method.<sup>5</sup> We must add that chickens have the same importance as palm-wine in the initiation or reparation rituals. The sacrifice or gift of a chicken together with a calabash of wine are the essential ingredients of any ritual of this type. Moreover, although goats are sometimes required as payment, only the chicken is used in sacrifice: its blood links people to the water spirits. It would therefore seem logical that precautions are taken against the witches who steal chickens by giving them the means to 'steal far away' from the other villages.

5. Nowadays the witch-eagle is rarely evoked in this context, but this might be a consequence of the longstanding prohibition forbidding war between villages.

Apart from chickens and palm-wine, only wild plants which have no value as a foodstuff are used as medicine in the protection and reparation rituals. These rituals are directed exclusively by males. On the other hand, plants that are eaten, whether picked wild or cultivated by women, are never used in any ritual. They are used strictly as food. The *fɔ* women, who steal sorghum and other edible plants, have their own code of practice within the world of witchcraft protecting them from the consequences of their witchcraft. Although *fɔ* is a minor power similar to *ka* witchcraft, it is nearer to the nocturnal *rɛ* witchcraft. Nothing seems to assuage the destructive desires of these two forms of witchcraft, the one attacking the principal food of men and the other their 'breath'. The *rɛ* witches who 'drink the blood' of their victims and then 'eat' them pay for their pleasure by being forced to give their own children to their evil partners. They are true anti-social beings. The *fɔ* she-witch also sees her powers turn against herself and her future progeny, but only when she contravenes the ethical code of the witches. The first pays the price of witchcraft when obeying its evil code, the second when disobeying. The *rɛ* witch 'eats' victims and then gives children to be eaten; the *fɔ* she-witch 'eats' the food of her family or allies, and then herself and her child 'are eaten'.

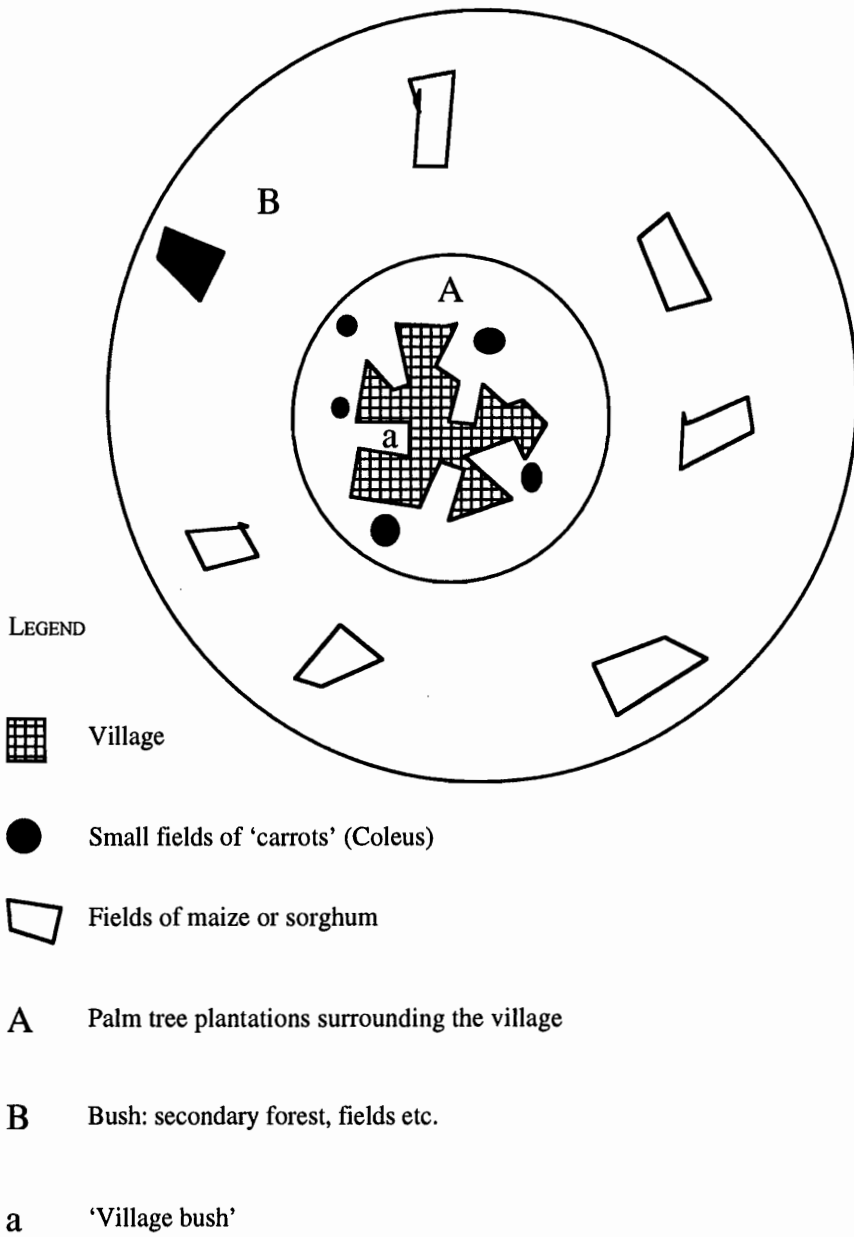
The destructive activities of the *rɛ* and *fɔ* witchcraft follow the circuits of kinship and alliance: they are linked to the internal conflicts of the village. By contrast, the witch-animals grouped under the lineage inscribe their actions within the circuit of external relations between villages.

Thus the constellation of Wuli witchcraft beliefs constitutes an inverted image of the usual communication networks. But in this mirror we can also see human attempts to understand misfortune.

#### REFERENCE

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FIG. 1. Plan of the village of Lus



## YAMBA SPIDER DIVINATION

HERMANN GUFLER

### *Introduction*

THE Yamba are a people living in the north-eastern corner of the Cameroon Grassfields. Administratively they are part of the Nwa Subdivision of the Donga Mantung Division of the North-West Province of the Republic of Cameroon. Nwa Subdivision was set up in 1963 with headquarters in Nwa. It comprises three areas of almost equal size: the Mfumte area in the North (473 square kilometres), the Yamba area in the centre (491 square kilometres), and the Mbaw area in the South (490 square kilometres) (Yaoundé 1973: 8). According to the last National General Census conducted in April 1987, Nwa Subdivision has a population of 52,896. This was not broken down by ethnicity but the 1970 census gave the Yamba population as 20,555 (*ibid.*).

The Yamba area consists of extremely broken country. Most of the villages are situated in deep valleys or shallow depressions, but some are perched on hilltops. The hills are covered with grass, which makes the whole area an excellent grazing country for Fulani cattle. The extremely difficult terrain, poor roads, lack of employment, and also the serious problem of cattle destroying the farms have led a great number of people to leave the area. It is estimated that over thirty per cent of the Yamba are living outside their native area. The people remaining in the villages practise subsistence farming, the main crops being maize, cocoa, yams, plantains, bananas, groundnuts and *egusi*. Guinea corn, which used to be one of their staple crops, has lost its importance and is cultivated only on a

small scale in the eastern part of Yamba. The deep valleys to the west and north are dotted with palm trees which provide enough oil for domestic consumption and for sale to the higher Yamba villages to the south and to the Wimbun markets at Ntaamru' and Ndu.

The Yamba area (including Mfumte) was formerly known as the Kaka area and its people as the Kaka people. The name seems to have been given to them by the Fulani slave-raiders from Banyo. Migeod writes (1925: 134):

As to the name Kaka, the Lom (Rom) people are said to be Kaka because they are settled in the Kaka country. When the Germans first came to Banyo, Tonga (the chief of Rom) said they asked, 'Who are the people who live on those hills? And the Fulbe said, 'Kaka', meaning the nasty fighting people.

And E. H. Gorges, in his assessment report on the Kaka-Ntem area, states: 'The very name Kaka was originally merely a Fulani nickname derived from the frightened utterance of a captured native—Ka! Ka! (No! No!)' (1932: para. 29).

This nickname was adopted by the Germans and the British. The Baptist missionaries, who have been working in the area since the early 1930s, preferred to call it the Mbem area<sup>1</sup> because the name Kaka was repugnant to the people, having been imposed on them by their former enemies and by outsiders. In 1960, the educated élite of the Yamba decided to change the name for the people, their language, and the area to Yamba. The word is used to call the attention of others when somebody wants to speak and can be translated as 'I say' or 'listen to me!' (Jikong 1979: 20; Scruggs 1980: 3).

The Yamba people are a closely related group, living in seventeen independent villages. All attempts by the British administration to make the chief of Mbem, the largest village, the paramount chief of all the Yamba met with fierce resistance. Each village has its own chief, but there are many indications that the present system of chiefship is a recent innovation. All the Yamba chiefdoms claim a Tikar origin, and to have migrated from the east, most often from the Tikar town Kimi (Bankim). However, there is strong evidence that the Yamba are a mixed population of Tikar, Mambila and local origin (Nkwi and Warnier 1982: 16, 154).

The Yamba are patrilocal and patrilineal.<sup>2</sup> They have been largely isolated from the rest of the world because of the inaccessibility of their

1. Mbem, one of the largest Yamba villages, was chosen by the Baptist missionaries as their base.

2. Gebauer (1964: 20) is mistaken when he states that the Yamba are 'matrilineal and matrilocal' (cf. Chilver and Kaberry 1968: 29), misled, perhaps, by the long period of uxori-local bride-service which precedes the establishment of an independent household.

land and by inter-village hostilities (Jikong 1979: 17; see also Buinda Mori 1987). The villages are divided into hamlets (or 'quarters') which often lie far apart and which have their own 'chiefs'. The hamlets are made up of exogamous units (*boate'*). The lineage heads and the heads and members of secret societies form a sort of gerontocracy and exert social control over their people mainly through these secret societies, the most important of which is *ɲwantàp*.

The language of the Yamba presents certain analytic difficulties. T. R. Scruggs, who has made a study of this subject (1979, 1980, 1981), writes (1980: 6):

The high degree of independence and separateness of each village, coupled with the different times of arrival of different groups, has led to a large number of different dialects...The degree of similarity and mutual intelligibility varies according to the distance between villages and possibly the time of settlement.

Roger Moss, a Cambridge student acting as a Plebiscite Supervisory Officer in the 1961 plebiscite,<sup>3</sup> gave Chilver and Kaberry a brief vocabulary of 'Mbem' (Yamba) which seemed to place the Yamba language fairly clearly in the Mbam-Nkam group of the Grassfields group of Bantu languages on lexical grounds (Chilver, personal communication; Nkwi and Warnier 1982: 18).

In this article, I will mainly follow the Bom dialect when using Yamba terms, since my principal informant, although a native of Gom village, was brought up in Bom and speaks the dialect of that village. Although the interviews were conducted in Pidgin English, my informant often used Yamba terms.

*Ngam* is the general name for any kind of divination, but it can also mean 'spider' and the set of leaf-cards used in divination, while *ɲgam fye ɲgam* is the diviner. To indicate the different types of divination one has to distinguish between *ɲgam se* ('divination ground'), which is spider divination, and *ɲgam bo* ('divination hand'), which is hand divination.

Paul Gebauer, a Baptist missionary who worked among the Yamba in the second half of the 1930s, observed that 'the social life of this group seemed largely controlled by a system of divination which engaged the West African earth spider' (1964: Preface). His observations led him to make a study which resulted in the monograph *Spider Divination in the Cameroons* (1964). In this, having revisited Western Yamba many years later, he wrote that 'the *ɲgam* system of divination, like its spider, has gone

3. In the plebiscite of February 1961, the Southern Cameroons and the Northern Cameroons, both under British trusteeship, were asked to choose between achieving independence by joining the Federation of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon. This is discussed further in a series of articles published in *Paideuma*, Vol. XLI (1995).

underground ... the clientele of old is no more. The present generation tries to solve its anxieties in new and various ways.'

Having worked for seven years in the same area and among the same people, I cannot confirm Gebauer's statement. Far from having 'gone underground', spider divination and other divination practices are very much alive. In the following pages I want to take issue with several statements made by Gebauer in *Spider Divination in the Cameroons* and to record my own findings about Yamba spider divination. In 1989, I had the good fortune of getting to know a widely acclaimed diviner, Pa Monday Kongnjo of Gom, aged about 70. He became a good friend and when he saw that I was interested in spider divination, he was not only willing but eager to teach me this type of divination, the only one he practises. Over the last three years, we have spent many evenings together. He made me a replica of his set of leaf-cards, used in spider divination, and explained the meaning of the symbols. I have also had the opportunity of observing the actual divination and the process of interpretation many times, not only when he divined on his own behalf but also when clients came to him.

My other informants were Pa Garba of Ngang, a quarter of Rom village, Pa Benjamin Dung of Nkot, Pa Taabi, a Mambila man from Lip just across the Cameroon-Nigeria border who lives and divines in Yamba area, and Nsangong of Mfe. All of them are practising diviners, yet none is a 'professional' diviner making a living from divination. Pa Taabi comes closest to professionalism in this sense, but he is not only a diviner practising several types of divination but also an *ngà ncêp* (a healer and medicine man).

### *Gebauer's Spider Divination in the Cameroons Revisited*

Gebauer has done remarkable work, especially on the arts of Cameroon (see Bascom *et al.* 1953; Gebauer 1979). His photo collection, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is also of great interest and importance. His monograph *Spider Divination in the Cameroons* 'is the definitive work on the meaning of cards' (Zeitlyn 1987: 27). However, some of his claims cannot be confirmed and need revision. Also, as Zeitlyn has pointed out, the book 'is sadly uninformative when it comes to details of the process of interpretation' (*ibid.*). My criticism goes deeper. First, Gebauer fails to make a clear distinction between *ngam bo* (hand divination) and *ngam se* (spider divination).

He writes (1964: 38, my emphasis):

The diviner has *the choice* of operating *the set of cards by himself*, the most common practice, *or of using a spider* to manipulate the cards, a method used in cases of great importance only.



However, *ngam bo* and *ngam se* are two completely separate methods of divination and are never combined. There are many diviners who know only one of the two methods. Each method has its own distinct set of leaf-cards. The *ngam bo* set is never used in the *ngam se* method nor the other way round. All my informants were emphatic on this point. Thus Plates XIV and XV ('spider in action')<sup>4</sup> and the cover photo of Gebauer's book are misleading. They show *ngam bo* leaf-cards in the spider enclosure, a practice which is never employed. Although the book is entitled *Spider Divination in the Cameroons* the cards illustrated in the book are all *ngam bo* cards. Indeed, *ngam se* cards do not feature in the book at all.

Let us consider some of the differences between *ngam bo* and *ngam se* leaf-cards. The cards of *ngam se* are larger in size than those of *ngam bo*. The cards in a *ngam se* set are much fewer in number. The sets in my possession and the ones I have examined number between seventy and one hundred. A *ngam bo* set has two hundred or more cards. Different kinds of leaves are used in making the cards of the two sets. The leaf used to make *ngam se* cards has a rough, coarse texture; the midrib runs right through the middle of the card. The leaf used to make *ngam bo* cards is as large as a man's hand and feels silky and smooth to the touch; several cards can be cut out of one leaf. Also, *ngam bo* and *ngam se* sets are stored in different fashions. *Ngam bo* cards are stored in a bamboo container, as shown by Gebauer (1964: 37), whereas *ngam se* cards are stored pressed between a pair of tongs made of a bent-over piece of bamboo. The bamboo container in which the *ngam bo* set is kept contains other things used in this type of divination, viz. the tail of a squirrel, porcupine quills and some red feathers (*ngu*), while the *ngam se* set lacks any such paraphernalia. *Ngam se* cards are made in pairs. Each positive or 'good' card corresponds to a negative or 'bad' card. There are no 'empty' cards. *Ngam bo* cards are in pairs or in sets of four. The pairs are positive and negative, as in *ngam se*. The sets of four are male-positive, male-negative, female-positive, female-negative. Neither set has single or neutral cards. *Ngam bo* sets have a number of 'empty' cards.

Secondly, it is true that 'diviners do not attempt to file the cards into categories of interest or groups having similar symbolized meanings (Gebauer 1964: 36). But according to my informants, it is not correct that diviners observe 'one single rule, that tops must join tops, and bottoms join bottoms'. In both divination methods, *ngam bo* and *ngam se*, the positive cards are put together in a pile and the negative ones piled in the same way. The two piles are then placed one on top of the other, thus forming a single stack.

I have, however, met one diviner who does not follow this rule. He is Pa Benjamin Dung of Nkot, a village in western Yamba. But he does not

4. The plates showing the 'Spider in action' (Gebauer 1964: 44), including the photo on the front cover, are 'records of experimentation' (cf. footnote on page 141).

use the Yamba system of *ngam se*. He learnt divination from a diviner in Mbat, a village in the Mfumte area. His set of leaf-cards is strikingly similar to the one pictured in Plate XVI ('The Manang Diviner') in Gebauer's book (ibid.:47).<sup>5</sup> Manang is another village in the Mfumte area, quite near to Mbat. Pa Benjamin told me that he just empties the whole bamboo box containing the cards on top of the spider hole without arranging them in any way. The spider will do the arranging itself, he said.

The third major point where Gebauer is incorrect concerns the sticks which are pinned into the ground around the spider hole when divining. He writes (ibid.: 43, my emphasis):

To speed up the method of divination, the diviner *may* place inside the enclosure short pieces of grass, or he may draw lines from the centre of the enclosed ground to the edge of the enclosure.

As will be shown later, these sticks, which represent different persons, groups of persons or places, are an essential part of Yamba spider divination. Without them, spider divination is impossible.

Gebauer documented a number of other divination types practised by the 'Kaka' (ibid.: 30), viz. sortilege, casting of millet seeds, augury, haruspication and autopsy. It is difficult to say whether all these types were practised by the Yamba. When talking about 'Kaka', Gebauer includes among the Yamba villages also villages like Kwaja and Manang which are clearly not Yamba but Mfumte villages. The confusion is understandable when one realizes that almost up to the 1940s, the Yamba and Mfumte areas were collectively known by the common name of 'Kaka'. When I tried to find out whether augury or haruspication was practised in Yamba I usually got blank stares. Plate IV (ibid.: 32), subtitled 'Augury by observation of bird images', shows bird effigies used in the annual *cam* dance. These effigies are of two kinds, those whose body is made of a calabash called *mbon cam* and those carved in wood called *bùbak*. They hang suspended from a rope which surrounds the enclosure where the dancers smear their bodies with a white chalky substance before the dance. The dancers dangle these effigies from their hands on a short string when dancing. That they were used as a type of divination (augury) could not be confirmed.

I suspect that augury and haruspication are practised among the Mfumte but I have had no opportunity to find out. Autopsy, which used to be carried out on every dead person before burial except small children, has been outlawed and is no longer practised.

The divination practices I found among the Yamba are the two mentioned above, namely *ngam se* and *ngam bo*. Both are widely used, *ngam bo*

5. Gebauer failed to recognize this as a *ngam se* set (albeit a non-Yamba one). This led him to the mistaken 'first impression' that the set was 'a crude imitation of the real thing seen fleetingly by the imitator' (!) (1964: 139).

being more common in upper Yamba than in the valleys to the west or north. *ngam se* is believed to be the most reliable and most trustworthy of all the divination types. It does not lie, they say. *Majara* is also very common. Segments of the wild garden-egg (*Solanum* sp.) are used in this divination practice. I was told that hunters perform *majara* divination to find out where they should go to find animals. In Ngang, a quarter of Rom village, I met an old diviner, Pa Usumanu. His own divination device consisted of a large number of calabash discs, bones, pebbles, claws, beads, small horns, etc. kept in a calabash. When divining, he placed a cowhide on the ground. He then poured the contents of the calabash into a calabash bowl and, swaying the bowl to and fro several times, he emptied part of the devices on the skin in a forward motion. The pieces that fall furthest away towards a pile containing red feathers (*ngū*), porcupine quills, the fang of a leopard, the foot of a hawk, a large crystal, the claw of a crab and the jawbone of a snake are read and interpreted. Pa Usumanu was kind enough to give me a demonstration after I had given him a few coins with which he tapped on the calabash to 'wake up *ngam*'. Another type which I did not observe but was told was practised is the throwing of small seeds on the surface of water or palm-wine in a cup.

Besides these general types of divination, there are others which are specific to a rite or activity. For example, before a community hunt, the lineage head will perform a rite ('sharpening of spears') at the family hunting shrine called *dzòk si* (literally 'the place of the face', i.e. where the 'face' of the hunter is 'cleansed'). At the end of the rite, the lineage head will call each hunter separately; he will find out through a sort of divination whether somebody has a 'mistake'—for example, having broken a taboo or other transgression. The lineage head will take two elephant-grass stalks and chip off a piece from each stalk. If both of the chips fall face down or face up everything is fine. If, however, one of the chips falls face up and the other face down the big man has to 'cleanse' the hunter, otherwise there is a danger that an accident will happen during the hunt.

Other divinatory practices are specific to rites such as that performed at the end of the ritual performed to 'appease' an ancestor of living memory or for the 'annulment' of a prohibition or instruction given by an ancestor before death, to find out whether the rite had been successful and had achieved its aim.

The commonest reasons for divination are sickness and death. In an area where medical facilities are few and far apart, so that patients have to be carried on stretchers or on people's backs for many hours up and down steep hills, where hospital bills, especially if they involve an operation, are astronomical relative to the means of ordinary people and can throw them into debt for many years, it is understandable that a father or lineage head will first consult *ngam* before any action is taken. Should the patient die despite having been taken to the hospital, all the trouble and expense will have been for nothing. My heart missed a beat when Pa Benjamin of Nkot told me that he always divines first to decide whether to take a sick mem-

ber of his family to the hospital or not. If *ngam* reveals that the patient will die even if taken to hospital nobody will move a finger. But the underlying reasons are deeper. In the people's view, sickness can be caused by a number of things: witchcraft, the anger of one's in-laws, the breaking of a taboo or one's oath, 'supernatural pollution' caused by the transgression of a prohibition by the patient or a near relative, transgression of the law of a secret society (especially *ɲwantàp*), etc. In any of these cases, the cause of the sickness must first be detected before treatment; even 'white man medicine' can be successful. Divination reveals the ultimate cause of the sickness which in turn determines the action to be taken, very often a cleansing ritual called 'sprinkling of cool water' (*təm nzəp*) by the head of the *ɲwantàp* society.

Other reasons for consulting *ngam* are accidents, crop failure or failure in business, theft, barrenness, witchcraft, selection of a new chief, going on a journey, and many other circumstances.

### *Yamba Spider Divination*

I will now turn to Yamba spider divination (*ngam se*) proper. As I have already mentioned, *ngam se* is commonly believed to be the most reliable of all the divination practices. 'It does not tell a lie.' My present task will be mainly descriptive. The spider myth will serve as a starting-point.

### The spider myth

Christopher Moss has recorded the spider myth in a manuscript entitled 'Mbem: Six Months in the Cameroons', written in the early 1960s. Since it is very difficult to get hold of a copy of this manuscript I give here a slightly different version of the myth, as told to me by Pa Monday.

Once upon a time people went hunting. Then game was in abundance. One young man went to his *tətsə* [MF] to beg for a spear so that he could join the hunt. His *tətsə* gave him a spear saying, 'Yes, my *monje* go and shoot me an animal.' The young man took the spear and joined the hunt. As he went, a big antelope suddenly jumped out of the bush in front of him. He threw the spear and hit the animal. The antelope ran off with the spear stuck in its side. The young man and other hunters followed it. They followed it a great distance until they came to a hill where the antelope disappeared. They searched everywhere but could not find it. They were at their wits' end. They had followed the animal's footprints and the traces of blood. The hunters gave up and returned to their village.

Next morning, the young man went to his *tətsə* to report the loss of his spear. He told him how he had shot an antelope and how the antelope had run off

with his spear. Everybody agreed that he had shot the antelope. They all had gone in search of it but could not find it. The young man's *tetsə* went to consult the spider. (In those times, the spider, when called, would come out of its hole and speak to people in their own language.) He called the spider. It came out and having listened to the man's report, said that the young man should put it on his head and cover it with his cap. It would show him the place where the spear was. The young man did as the spider advised. So off they went! They came to the hill where the antelope had disappeared. There was a huge sod of grass standing there. The spider told him to remove it. He moved it and there saw the opening of a hole like a tunnel, which went far into the ground. The spider said, 'Do you see the blood?' He saw it. He jumped down into the hole and went into the tunnel. After some time they reached a 'kitchen'.<sup>6</sup> The spider said, 'Look, there is your spear!' He saw it. It was leaning against one of the corner poles supporting the roof of the 'kitchen'. The tip of the spear was still bloodstained. The 'father' of the antelope had moved the spear from the animal. He had treated the wound with medicine and sealed it. He had also given the antelope some medicine to drink. The animal was healed there and then.

When the young hunter arrived at the 'kitchen', he saw people sitting there. They were surprised and asked him, 'Where do you come from?' 'I come from up there', he said. 'What business brings you here?', they asked. 'I have come to look for my spear. I shot an antelope and it ran off with my spear.' 'Who has shown you the way?', they asked. 'I know the way', he replied. 'Who has shown you the way?', they asked again. 'I know the way', he repeated. Then they asked, 'Have you seen your spear?' He said, 'Yes.' 'Where is it?' 'That's the one,' he said, pointing to the spear. The old man got up, took the spear and gave it to him. 'Take it and go!' The young man took the spear and left. He went back the way he came. He went and went, and suddenly found himself back at the very 'kitchen'. The old man asked, 'How? Have you come again?' The hunter replied, 'I went the same way I came. I'm sure it was the correct way. But when I looked up I saw that I was right back here.' The old man said, 'Go!' Off he went again. He went and went—only to find himself back at the 'kitchen' again. They said, 'Is it you again?' He said, 'Yes, sir! I thought I followed the same way I came but instead of getting to the exit I'm back here again.' 'Did you not say you knew the way? How come you cannot find the exit?', they asked. At this the old man got up and moved the cap from the young man's head. Down fell the spider! 'Oh!', exclaimed the old man, 'You, this thing, did I not tell you to show some 'sense' to the people up there? I did not tell you to come and show them to me! Why did you show this man to me? You will no longer be able to speak to the people by word of mouth. When they ask you, you may show them only in a "hidden way".' The old man took some earth and threw it on the spi-

6. A 'kitchen' is an open shed with a loft found near compounds or in the farms or palm bushes where Yamba people produce palm oil, shelter from rain or rest from farm work. The sacra of secret societies are kept in the lofts and family meetings are often held there. Thus Pa Monday uses the word 'kitchen' and the 'people of his lineage' synonymously.

der's back. From that moment on the spider was no longer able to speak to people in their language. Now, when people come to consult the spider, it can only communicate with them through a set of leaf-cards.

The old man told the hunter to go. He left and was soon at the exit. He climbed out of the hole and replaced the sod of grass. Then he went home.

I asked Pa Monday who these people at the 'kitchen' deep down in the ground were. He replied, 'Are they not gods? They are gods. They are there now. Who can see them?'

One thing which the myth seems to bring out clearly is that the spider is not an envoy or messenger of the ancestors but acts on its own, having an independent intelligence. *Ngam* has been given the task of showing 'sense' to people, of revealing hidden things to them. More discussion on what or who the spider is believed to be will follow later on.

### Learning spider divination

As already mentioned, my main informant was Pa Monday Kongnjo of Sang quarter in Gom village. He learned spider divination from an old diviner in his village, Damu Monkpu, when he was a young man and not yet married. When his sister Dzefarum, who was married to the chief of Nkwi, another quarter of Gom, fell seriously ill, he went to consult the diviner Monkpu on her behalf. The verdict of the divination and the recommended line of treatment to follow in order that his sister would recover (which she did) so impressed Pa Monday that he decided to learn spider divination himself.

According to Pa Monday, anybody can learn spider divination (except women because 'woman he know he own na whatti? Woman no fit savvy palaver for that one!'). Unlike in Mambila spider divination (Zeitlyn 1987: 3) there is no formal initiation and no 'cooking and eating of a chicken by the teacher and pupil in the presence of at least one witness'. The important thing is to get to know the names and meanings of the leaf-cards thoroughly and to learn the interpretation process, which can only be done through repeated observation of actual divinations. During the time of apprenticeship the pupil is also taught how to make his own set of divination cards. There is no need for the pupils to have special gifts, like the gift of 'two eyes' (clairvoyance), nor does he have to experience spirit possession (Gebauer 1964: 29). Pa Monday clearly demythologizes Gebauer's assertions:

Any man who learns it can do it. He must learn it, go into it deeply till he knows it well. Then he can do it. Because my own [method of divination] has nothing to do with witchcraft. It is a thing [which is done] in broad daylight. It is like going to school. If you study well, will you not succeed? It is the same with my own divination.

Like any apprentice learning a profession, the pupil of divination has to make payments to his master. These payments include money, fowls, small pots of cooked game and 'plenty mimbo' (a lot of palm-wine). In Nkot I was told that the pupil has to kill a squirrel and bring it to his master as part of his payment, otherwise he will not be successful in his divination. Pa Monday dismisses this, saying he was not asked to do so and that he is still a very successful diviner. When the master is satisfied that the pupil knows the cards well and can master the intricate and at first confusing process of interpretation, he will ask for a final payment, which in the case of Pa Monday was £3. From then onwards he may start divining on his own and try to establish his own name as a diviner. There is no society of diviners, according to my informants, nor do diviners enter 'the secret society of *mbir*', a society whose existence in Yamba I have so far been unable to identify (cf. Gebauer 1964: 29).

To be a successful diviner, one must be well versed in, and have deep insight into, the social order of Yamba society, their cosmology and beliefs, their fears and hopes. For me, the study of the symbols of the cards served like a door to the understanding of Yamba society. When Junod (1913) says that the divination devices of the Thonga are 'a résumé of their whole social order, of all their institutions', this also holds true for the Yamba divination set.

In my opinion, too much emphasis is often laid on the need and ability of the diviner to gain a good insight into the client's family background, his relationship with his in-laws, his occupation and health, etc. I do not deny that this can be helpful, but it is certainly not a *sine qua non*. To stress the necessity of gaining a good insight into the client's life and suspicions is to reduce the Yamba spider diviner to a shrewd psychologist who is trying to confirm these very suspicions. The spider diviner is first and foremost, if not exclusively an interpreter (Nicod 1950: 153). It is not he who gives the verdict. He only interprets what the spider has shown him through the leaf-cards. Pa Monday could get quite vexed if a client objected to something or other he said. On one occasion he snapped: 'Is it me who is telling you this? Is it not rather *ngam* which is telling you these things? I only tell you the things I see!' (observed divination, 16 July 1991). For the Yamba spider diviner, divination is an intellectual activity which the knowing observer can follow. The scrupulous study of the configuration of the leaf-cards scattered by the spider shows the concern of the diviner to be faithful to what he sees. At the back of his mind looms the fear that if he is not truthful the spider will punish him. 'It will take its hand and lock my eyes so that I will not be able to see anything good again', Pa Monday told me. There is nothing that would point to a direct or special relation between the diviner and some occult force or the source of truth, the spider. Yamba spider divination clearly belongs to the 'artificial' or, as it is also called, 'mechanical' type of divination (Zeitlyn 1987: 23).

### The spider

The spider used in *ngam se* divination has been identified by Gebauer as the West African earth spider (*Heteroscoda crassipes*) of the *Mygalide* family (1964: 42). Spider divination using the land crab as recorded by Zeitlyn (1987: 6) for the Mambila is not practised by the Yamba as far as my information goes. Pa Monday told me that he had heard about this practice but had never tried it. Spiders are quite common and are often found near compounds, along footpaths or in the farms. Once in Nkot I was walking along the path from the Government School up to the Catholic Mission with Pa Monday. Always alert and on the look-out for the most important 'device' of his divination practice, he pointed out to me two spider holes just next to the footpath which he promptly engaged on the same evening.

The practice of digging out a spider and bringing it nearer home is known but not often done. The diviner knows the spider holes in the vicinity of his compound and will use those if a client comes to him. When he is called to a different quarter or village, the people who called him will show him a spider hole. Women working in the farms, wine tappers and men going to the bush to cut palm nuts invariably see spider holes and will make a mental note of them in case they are needed. The practice of training spiders (Gebauer 1964: 140) could not be confirmed.

Gebauer (*ibid.*: 42) states that a person who wilfully or accidentally killed a spider was formerly put to death. This could not be confirmed. Pa Monday and Pa Benjamin told me that only a mentally deranged person would kill a spider wilfully and if somebody kills one accidentally, like a woman hoeing in the farm, nothing happens. There is much less mystery, 'sacredness' and awe surrounding the spider than Gebauer would have us believe.

There is a difference of opinion about which of the inhabited spider holes are eligible for spider divination. Nsangong of Mfe and Pa Taabi said that one should not engage a spider the entrance of whose hole points westwards. Elias Taabi and Pa Adamu of Ngang agree, explaining that such holes are inhabited by female spiders, which are unreliable. Pa Monday again dismisses such claims in his blunt way as nonsense.

### The *ngam se* divination set

Much has already been said about the *ngam se* leaf-cards (see above), but it is necessary to add some more information. The sets in my possession and those I have had a chance to examine or trace in my notebook show a number of differences between them. No one set was exactly like any other, except for those of a master and his former pupils. In general, one can say that the differences increase with the distance between villages. For example, the number of cards in a set varies. Pa Monday's set has eighty, Pa Garba's seventy-four and Pa Taabi's one hundred cards. Also



the size and shape of the cards in the different sets are not the same. Pa Garba's set, the most irregular as regards size and shape, shows some interesting features. In some cases the card is the symbol, unlike most of the cards, which are marked by incisions. For instance, the card 'marriage shovel' is shaped in the form of a shovel which was used in the payment of bridewealth. The card symbolizing 'death drum' is also shaped in the form of the drum used at funeral celebrations. Some are composite cards. The card symbolizing 'a bag of salt' has a piece of leaf sewn on top of another with a thread taken from the salt bag. The card symbolizing 'man's bag' has a small piece of leaf sewn on the upper left-hand side with a thin string of raffia fibre, the material which is used to weave such bags. The card symbolizing 'letter' has been cut out of an old tax-ticket.

Another difference lies in the actual symbols. The majority of the cards can, with a bit of experience, be recognized in all the sets, although the design of the symbols may vary to a greater or lesser degree. But there are some symbols which are so completely different that they cannot be recognized without one being told what they represent. Another difference lies in the fact that some symbols found in one set are absent in another. Space does not allow me to make a detailed comparison between the different sets.

All the sets I examined were incomplete. This may be surprising. Before examining a diviner's set of cards I asked him whether it was true that the cards were made in positive-negative pairs—in other words, whether each card 'get e own brother'? They all agreed that this was so. When I laid out the cards in pairs on a mat or table, I invariably found that some of the pairs were incomplete. When I pointed this out to the diviners they readily admitted that it was true but that they had not been aware of it.<sup>7</sup> All made a mental note of the missing cards and said that they were going to replace them. When I asked how cards could go missing, I was told that it sometimes happens that the spider pulls a card right down into its hole so that it cannot be seen. But more often it is due to termites which may eat some of the cards while they are lying in the enclosure during the night. On the other hand, Pa Monday seemed not too worried about the missing cards (although he did replace them) and told me that it really does not matter. The spider can communicate its verdict even when the set is incomplete. But he admitted that it was not the correct thing to do. If the diviner notices that his set is incomplete, he should replace the missing cards.

Another point of interest is that Pa Monday divines with a set of cards not made in the usual way, i.e. cut out of the leaves of a certain forest tree (unidentified), but cut out of plastic material or imitation leather used in

7. If one takes the trouble to arrange the *ngam bo* cards illustrated in Gebauer (1964) in pairs and sets of four, one will notice that the 'Makai set' is also incomplete.

upholstery or for the lining of the inside of a car. He told me that he was fed up with always having to replace cards eaten by termites.

### Setting the sticks (*titu*')

When the diviner wants to divine on his own behalf or for a client, he will go to the spider hole and clean its surroundings, removing all dirt and every bit of grass growing there. If the hole is on a slope he will cut away the ground above and place it below the hole, thus making a level surface around the hole, taking great care not to disturb the entrance to the hole which during the day is closed with a tight spider's web (*mba'*). Before proceeding to the hole, the client will already have put his problem to the diviner. After preparing the site the diviner's next task will be to decide which sticks (*titu*') to pin into the ground around the hole. He will do this in consultation with the client. Drawing on his wide experience, the beliefs of the people, and, in the case of sickness or death, the possible causes (see above), he will suggest the likely culprits to the client. The sticks are about ten cm in length and are marked in such a way that they can easily be recognized. For example, a straight single twig, a forked twig, a twig with a leaf on it or a small leaf is placed on the ground and a twig pinned through it, etc. The sticks form a circle or semi-circle around the spider hole, spaced about ten to fifteen cm apart and about the same distance from the hole. Each stick stands for a person, group of persons or place as the case may be. Here are two examples which I have observed:

Case 1: One day Pa Monday left Sabongari and went up to Nwa, a trek of five hours. There he fell suddenly ill. He collapsed on the road and unluckily fell on a stone, cracking two of his ribs. After recovering he wanted to find out who was responsible for having 'bewitched' him, i.e. having brought this sudden illness on him. The following sticks were placed in the ground:

- the people of Sabongari: had he done anything to them so that they were angry and had 'bewitched' him?
- the people of Nwa (same reason)?
- his 'kitchen', i.e. his own family people at Gom?
- his *muyu* (in-laws) in Gom?
- Pa Monday himself (was it his own fault?)
- his wife and children staying in Small Kimi (were they in danger too?).

In all, six sticks were placed round the spider hole.

Case 2: Two of Pa Monday's dogs, which he had bought in Sabongari and was trying to sell in Nkot, ran away frightened by a mighty thunderclap when lightning struck nearby. Where have the dogs gone to? There were three possibilities:

- Nkot. Are they still in Nkot?

- Gom. Have they gone to Gom, where Pa Monday had been staying with them for more than a week?

- Sabongari. Have they run back to their place of origin?

These two examples should make it clear that the placing of sticks is an essential part of Yamba spider divination.

In serious cases, sticks may be 'charged'. When a child dies or a person falls seriously ill and the father wants to find out who the guilty party is, he may cut the sticks and then touch them to the head of the dead child or of the sick person before pinning them around the spider hole. No satisfactory explanation for this practice could be elicited. In the case of theft, the suspected or accused parties may be asked to pin their own stick by themselves. The most likely reason for this is that the accused persons are present at the divination and witness the outcome themselves.

### Putting the case to the spider

Next, the diviner will put the case to the spider. Kneeling down in front of the spider hole, with his head about a foot away from it, he will address the spider: '*ta-ŋwi, ta-ŋwi, cèp mɛ wa, cèp mɛ wa...*' (Papa God, papa God, tell me, tell me...). The spider is addressed as God. Usually the simple form '*ŋwi, ŋwi*,' (God, God) is used. When I asked Pa Monday whether it was not more correct to call the spider a 'messenger of God' rather than addressing it as God, he was hesitant:

If you don't call it [the spider] 'God, God, God'—what else [can it be]? God exists! Are they not both one? Yes, call it God. If God and it exist, He tells it, 'go and talk like this'—who can know that?

This statement of Pa Monday is interesting because according to Chilver, one comes across this uncertainty about the meaning of *ŋwi* elsewhere (personal communication; cf. Emonts 1927: 154). It is, one might say, not so much uncertainty but a question of immanence rather than transcendence. This suggestion is further strengthened by the following statement of Pa Monday:

There is a law, a serious law, which says: you must never watch the spider when it is busy selecting and pushing around the leaf-cards. If your eyes see it you are gone! You will die. You will die just like that without being sick. You must never go and watch the spider at work. Never, never!

God is invisible and must remain invisible. If the spider, at the moment of divination, is 'God for the time being', then one can understand the strong 'law' not to watch it at work. Here, it would seem, lies the basis and ultimate reason for the unshakeable conviction of the Yamba diviner that the

spider speaks the truth. God is the source of all truth, and the spider, at the moment of divination, is 'God for the time being'.

I found another interesting way of addressing the spider in Mfe. Having made the necessary preparations at the spider hole, the diviner speaks into the hole as follows:

*ŋwi, nā bə̀boŋ, tsok yu nā bə̀boŋ. a ŋga ŋgwèn yi kpū tsok fa mū. ŋwi nā bup, yi ka vè. ŋga yi ka a kpū tsok fa mū. a ŋga nzak tsok fa mū.*

Good God, tell me good things. If the person is going to die, tell me. Evil god, let him not come! If the person is not going to die, tell me. If there is a case, tell me (interview with Nsangong, 17 October 1992).

A distinction is made between the good God and the evil god. The evil god is told to stay away from the divination and not to interfere. Only the good God can show good things, i.e. the truth.

Having addressed the spider, the diviner now proceeds to explain the case to it. As an example I take Pa Monday's own case when he fell sick in Nwa:

I come with my own case. I fell seriously ill in Nwa. I almost died. I stand here at your door. This single stick is myself. Whether I have stolen somebody's possession and that is the reason why this 'war' has attacked me—catch my head [i.e. my stick] and tell me the reason so that I may know. This forked stick stands for my family in Ngwen [a sub-quarter of Sang in Gom]. If they are the cause of my sickness come tell me whether they have bewitched me. This stick pierced through a small cocoyam leaf on the ground stands for my in-laws in Nkwi, N. and N. I have married their daughter. If they have held a meeting to bewitch me, 'hold' their stick and tell me the reason, etc. (observed divination, 16 July 1991).

There were still three more sticks, viz. the people of Nwa, the people of Sabongari, and his wife and children, which were explained in the same way. But the above should suffice to give an idea of how the case is explained to the spider. Pa Monday's closing remarks were: 'My death which I (almost) died in Nwa, that is the case I put before you.'

Note the repeated request by the diviner that *ŋgam* should tell him the 'reason' (*fa njo*). More will be said on this point when I discuss the process of interpretation.

Having put the case to the spider, the diviner blows into the hole once or twice. He then places the pack of leaf-cards in an upright stack over the spider's hole, arranged in the manner described above, i.e. the positive cards at the bottom and the negative cards on top or the other way round. It does not matter which part is up and which part down. The spider will make its own selection. Pa Taabi leans the cards on the entrance of the hole like a set of fallen domino pieces but making sure that the hole is covered.

A pot or basin which has no bottom is placed over the whole set-up and the hole on top is covered with a large cocoyam leaf. If there is no pot at hand, twigs or bamboo splinters are bent over the whole device and covered with cocoyam leaves. No palm-wine is sprayed over the enclosure and no insects or leaves are placed under the cards or in the enclosure. Neither client nor diviner have to observe any taboos before divining.

Having made all the necessary preparations, the diviner and client will withdraw or go back to the house. In most cases spider divination is set up for the night, since the spider is a nocturnal animal, but it is also done during the day. The covered enclosure simulates night and makes the spider come out. But I have been present several times when the spider has failed to come out during the day. Several divinations can be done during a single night.

### Principles and processes of interpretation

Now comes the most important and most difficult part of spider divination: the interpretation. In the morning or when the diviner, after inspection, sees that the spider has come and disturbed the cards, he will move the pot carefully and look at the result in silence for some time, studying the configuration of the cards in relation to the sticks. Then he begins the interpretation, which can be divided into two parts, the 'verdict' and the 'reasons'.

First, through its verdict the spider points out the guilty party. Negative cards (it must be remembered that they were grouped together) pointing at or touching a stick means that *ngam* has 'caught' this person or group of persons. Positive cards pointing at or touching a stick means that the person or group of persons represented by the stick are 'free'. A stick standing empty, i.e. with no cards pointing at or touching it, means that a person or group of persons have had no dealings with the case and are not implicated.

There are a number of other possibilities also, however:

(1) Red earth has been placed on top of a card by the spider. This is an ominous sign, for it augurs death and there is no escape from it. Every diviner and non-diviner alike was quick to point this out to me. Pa Monday told me that when the spider wants to tell the diviner that a sick person on whose behalf the divination is made will die, 'it goes to the bottom of its hole, digs red ground there, then comes up and puts it on the card. Start crying!'

(2) If the spider pulls a leaf-card partly into the hole, it is another bad omen, also auguring death.

(3) If the spider, on entering its hole, places a leaf-card on top of the hole, thus covering the entrance, it means that it is still hiding something. The spider has not revealed everything.

(4) A leaf-card is the wrong way up. This means that the client must 'judge the case' or there will be death. 'Judging the case' usually means that the client or his people will have to call a meeting of all members of the lineage or his in-laws. They will be asked to discuss the result of the divination and will come up with some 'mistake' or transgression of the patient or one of his immediate family members. Following the 'reasons' given by the divination (see below), they will decide on what action to take to remedy the situation, which usually consists of performing one of the many rituals of the Yamba. This, in a rather simplified way, is the interpretation of the verdict.

Having read the verdict, the diviner goes on to give the 'reasons' (*njo*). Here the meaning of the cards comes into play. The diviner separates the leaf-cards according to which stick they are pointing to or touching. He neatly joins them in his hand as they lie on the ground. Then he turns the pack and begins with the top card which originally was the bottom-most card. Taking one card at a time, he will name it and give his comments. All cards receive attention, but some more than others, according to the case in question.

When I observed the reading of the cards for the first time, it reminded me of a panel game in which the candidates were given a list of unconnected words and asked to make up a coherent story on the spot. By interpreting each card, the diviner will give the reason why a death, sickness or misfortune occurred and what must be done to remedy the situation, e.g. that the sick person will recover or further misfortune be averted.

An example may illustrate how the diviner proceeds. One day, Pa Monday suggested that I should ask *ngam* to tell me which of four villages would allow me to open a Catholic church in their midst. We chose the village of Bom, Sih, Ntong and Kwaja. The verdict was that Bom and Ntong would refuse, Sih people were divided and Kwaja would be in favour. I must confess that I was rather surprised at the result. Pa Monday had no way of knowing that the chief of Kwaja had approached me several times with the request to open a Catholic mission in his village. A Catholic church had been opened in Sih in 1954 but was closed soon after. So it was quite possible that there were some people in favour and others against. As regards Bom and Ntong, I could not say anything because I had had no chance to find out.

Having told me the verdict, Pa Monday now took the cards pointing to the stick representing Bom (all negative) and began to read them to me. When he had read one he placed it in my hand.

*kur nə bup* 'evil meeting'

As for Bom, they will hold a meeting and discuss your request to build your church there. They will never agree.

<i>dək nə bup</i> 'evil war'; literally 'evil war shield'	They will fight against you—this card symbolizes war, evil war. Even if you want to force the issue, they will fight against you. They will refuse to give you a plot.
<i>mbàm nə bup</i> 'evil money'	Some people will say they would agree to give you a plot, if at all, they would charge you a huge amount of money. But other people will refuse even that.
<i>rəm ɲwambam nə bup</i> 'evil male witch'	A man who is a proper witch will say that whatever happens he will bewitch you. You will have to enter the grave.
<i>bàm nə bup</i> 'evil bag'	Your bag which you hang from your shoulder will be 'open' since you have died [i.e. people are free to search your bag].
<i>ncùm nə bup</i> 'evil death drum'	They have already brought out the drum to beat for your death rite. They will take cloth and wrap you in it. Look! Don't you see the cloth? [There was spider's web around the card]. This is <i>mba'</i> [spider's web], the spider's own cloth. They will wrap you in it.
<i>mvəp nə bup</i> 'evil fowl'	They will eat this fowl on your behalf [i.e. they will feast your death].
<i>fù tsək rəm nə bup</i> 'evil leaf of witches, meat is wrapped in leaves'	They will eat the 'leaf' [i.e. the meat provided for the death celebration] saying that they are celebrating your death.
<i>ɲwantàp nə bup</i> 'evil <i>ɲwantàp</i> ' (most important of the secret societies of men; the sacra of this society)	They will celebrate your death, death caused by <i>ɲwantàp</i> .

This is the end of this line. And now to Kwaja. Do you see? All these cards concern Kwaja. Let me show you what they say. Kwaja agrees that you build a church there.

<i>ncu nə bəboŋ</i> 'good door'	When you build them a church, they will open the door by themselves.
<i>kur nə bəboŋ</i> 'good meeting'	They have already held a meeting, at which they expressed their wish that you should come and build a church.
<i>kur rəm nə bəboŋ</i> 'good meeting of witches'	The witches too held a meeting, all of them joined. They said that they would not bewitch you. They will let you bring the church. All witches agreed to that.
<i>rəm ɲwaŋwe nə bəboŋ</i> 'good witch woman'	A very strong and evil witch woman says that she too likes you to bring that church.

<i>ɲfɛssi nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good burial ground' [ancestors of living memory]	Let the ancestors not wake up. Let them agree to have this church in the village. Let nobody refuse, whether <i>ɲfɛssi</i> or whoever.
<i>mba nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good leopard' [witchcraft transformation]	The church is a good church where 'leopard' will not be able to catch people. Look! This card shows a 'good leopard'.
<i>dək luŋgoŋ nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good talk of long time ago'	Since a long time ago, people have been talking about you, that you are a leader of Christians and talk well.
<i>mvə̀p nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good fowl'	When you come, they will be happy and kill a fowl and roast it for you to eat.
<i>to nzəp nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good crossing of stream'	The stream(s) which you will have to cross going to Kwaja will pose no problems. It will be a good trek.
<i>vəm zəm nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good pregnancy'	All pregnant women will agree to enter the church.
<i>mbàm nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good money'	As they have agreed to have the church, some money will be donated, as is the custom of the church as regards offering.
<i>bàm nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good bag'	The bag which you hang from your shoulder is a good bag.
<i>gì nɔ bə̀boŋ</i> 'good journey'	Your journey to Kwaja will be without trouble. It will be a good journey.

There were still more positive cards pointing to the stick representing Kwaja, but the above should be enough for the reader to get an idea how the diviner reads the cards, making his explanation suit the case in question. Divining about a journey to be undertaken would follow a similar pattern but it would be quite different in cases of sickness, death and misfortune.

The literal meaning of a card is often stretched and can take on a figurative meaning. Once in Nkót, when Pa Monday's dogs ran away, he divined their whereabouts—whether they were still in Nkót, gone to Gom, or returned to Sabongari. The outcome of the divination was that they were not in Nkót (the stick was 'empty'), had not gone to Sabongari (negative cards were pointing to that stick) but were in Gom (positive cards were pointing to Gom). When Pa Monday went through the pile of cards pointing to the stick representing Gom, he suddenly started. There was one negative card among them, *vəm zəm nɔ bup* 'evil pregnancy'. But in this case Pa Monday referred to it as 'broken last' (burst anus), meaning that something or someone had died. Two days later, I learned that one of the dogs, which had had a long piece of chain dragging from its neck, had strangled itself on the way to Gom. When the dog was crossing a deep gully across which two logs served as a bridge, the chain got stuck between the logs and threw the dog off-balance; suspended in mid-air, with the chain tightening around its neck, it died. Pa Monday told me later on when I met him again that when he saw this particular card he was sure that one of the



dogs had died, although he did not tell me at the time. But I had taken note of it.

At the end of the divination, the diviner will recapitulate his findings in a few words. He will point out the verdict and then give a summary of the 'reasons', especially the line of action to be taken to remedy the situation or to avoid further calamity.

Summing up, we can say that in spider divination the diviner has at his disposal several means to help him in his interpretation: the sticks which already narrow down the possibilities; the direction of the cards (pointing to or touching a stick); and the polarity of the cards (negative-positive). These help him to give the verdict, whereas the meaning of the cards, the symbols, help him to indicate the 'reasons' (*njo*) and the line of action to take.

### Cross-checking veracity

The practice of truth-testing questions put to the spider or administering an ordeal, as recorded by Zeitlyn (1987:10) for the Mambila, is not practised in Yamba spider divination. So, what options are open to the diviner or client if he is not satisfied with or doubtful about the outcome of the divination? Here the opinions of my informants differ. Pa Taabi and Nsangong of Mfe say that one can put the same case to the same spider again, in other words repeat the same divination at the same hole. They maintain that the result will be basically the same, but more details or different aspects may be revealed. Pa Monday strongly disagrees. If one puts the same case to the same spider a second time, it will be annoyed and refuse to come out.

If you ask the spider twice it will not come out...since it has told you everything already and you know it. If you repeat the same thing although it has already told you, it will refuse to come out. It will say that it has told you everything, and now you ask the same thing again—you want it to come out to tell you what again? It will refuse to come out (interview, 15 July 1991).

The reason given sounds convincing. Does this mean that Pa Monday has no other way of double-checking the outcome of a divination? Not at all! If he is not satisfied he will transfer the case to another hole and put the same case there. He left me in no doubt, too, that the result will always be the same because *ngam* never lies.

I had the opportunity of observing a repeated divination. It was the case about Pa Monday's sudden illness in Nwa. I did not witness the first divination, but he told me the outcome before he put the same case to a spider in Sabongari when I was present. The result was indeed basically the same. The spider again 'caught' his own people in Gom. They had 'bewitched' him because he refused to take over from the present lineage

head who was old and blind and could no longer perform all his duties. In Sabongari, Pa Monday discovered an additional reason: he owed some money to one of his relatives!

### *Some further points of interest*

#### Divining *còŋ*

When the client has done everything he was advised to do by the divination he may come to the diviner and ask him to divine *còŋ*. This means that the diviner should find out whether everything is now 'peace' or whether there is still something which the client has to do. The outcome of a divination is referred to as *còŋ* (peace) when all the negative cards are covered by positive cards so that the negative cards cannot be seen.

#### Divination and witchcraft

According to Pa Monday, witchcraft can interfere with spider divination, not in the sense that it would confuse the spider so that its verdict is unreliable, but by harming the spider or chasing it away. *ŋgam se* can detect witches. When *ŋgam se* proves somebody to be a witch the diviner must reveal it. This practice brought Pa Monday a lot of enmity and opposition, especially from his own lineage. But he says that there is no way out:

Divination is able to prove somebody to be a witch. For man it is not possible to do so. When divination reveals that a certain person is a witch...my 'big father' asked me, 'when *ŋgam* catches a witch are you going to reveal it amongst people?' I say, I cannot refuse because my own [divination] is these leaf-cards. Nobody can see *ŋgam* down underground. When it catches a person, saying, 'You are a witch', if I don't reveal it, *ŋgam* will say to me, 'I have told you that you should tell people thus, *why* do you hide it, telling a lie instead? What for?' It will take its hand like this and lock my eyes and I will no longer be able to see anything good again. All my 'kitchen' [people of the lineage] say, 'No, if *ŋgam* catches a witch and you reveal it, it is not good'. They tell me not to reveal it. I tell them that I cannot do otherwise. If I fail to reveal it, 'my talk will not stand up'. If they forbid me to do so, I won't see anybody coming to me with a request to divine for him, because this one inside the ground tells the truth. It does not lie.

This clearly shows that the diviner is in an awkward predicament. Either he hides what *ŋgam* has revealed to him and so is untruthful to *ŋgam* and to the client and will be punished, or he reveals what he sees to be the

truth, thus incurring the wrath of his family and the people accused of being witches.

### An exception to the rule

The normal practice in making *ngam se* is that the diviner uses all the cards in his set, but I have witnessed one exception to this rule. When I was with Pa Monday in Nkot, he was faced with the problem of having to make two divinations at the same time but having only one set of cards. The two cases in question were the case of the runaway dogs described above and the illness of the daughter of Fo-Ndu, the chief of Ndu quarter of Nkot. Pa Monday divided his set of cards into two sections of forty cards each (i.e. twenty pairs each). He picked out those pairs which were relevant to each case. He used one section at one spider hole and another section at a different spider hole. He could do so, as he later told me, because the two cases were quite different in nature. Had there been two cases of illness, for example, he could not have done it.

### Remuneration

Finally, a word about remuneration. None of my informants, as already mentioned, divined for a living, except Pa Taabi. They were either farmers or petty traders. Many of the diviners I know are lineage heads. I asked Pa Monday how much a person had to pay him for a divination.

A woman pays 250 frs CFA.<sup>8</sup> A man may be asked to pay 300 or 500 according to the nature of the case. If somebody brings you a calabash of palm-wine, you do not ask for money. If a man comes to you to divine about his temporary impotence and the divination is successful in pointing out the cause and the *ngà ncəp* [medicine man] he has to consult to regain his potency, he will be asked to pay 1000 frs.

### Conclusion

In this article, I have tried as far as possible to be faithful to the convictions and practices of the Yamba spider diviner; it is our responsibility as analysts to do so (Zeitlyn 1987: 21). One thing which struck me more

8. The exchange rate with the French franc when the research was undertaken was 50 CFA to the franc.

than anything else while working with diviners is the absolute sincerity with which they practise divination. Their faith in the truthfulness of *ngam se* is unshakeable: '*ngam de talk true, e no de talk lie!*', runs like a constant refrain through all my tapes and fieldnotes. I have tried to show that the basis for this conviction is their belief that the spider at the time of divination is God, that the spider (equated with God) is the source of the truthfulness of divination. The diviner as interpreter must faithfully convey this truth to the client. No Yamba would accept that 'any diviner worthy of his "fowl" gives an answer acceptable to his client' (Marwick 1965: 92, quoting Monica Wilson).

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## KEFUH MYIN: A THERAPEUTIC MEDICINE IN OKU

HANS-JOACHIM KOLOSS

### *The Logic of Medicines in the Oku World-view*

IN a world-view typical of traditional African societies such as Oku, serious illness and death may be attributed to transcendental powers rather than natural causes. The task of the diviner is to establish the ultimate (or 'occult') cause and to determine the necessary action to be taken. The illness may result from the anger of a spirit or ancestor, or from attacks by witches. Depending on the diagnosis, either particular sacrifices may be necessary, or action may be needed to detect witches and destroy them with powerful medicines. In any case, peace must be restored before treatment begins or action taken.<sup>1</sup>

In Oku, God and the ancestors endow the world with *keyus*, but only so long as their laws are obeyed. *Keyus* may be translated as 'life-power', but also as 'soul' and 'breath'. Not only living beings but also important things, such as the sun, earth, rain and iron, have and need their own *keyus*. It is noteworthy that even medicines, family groups and political communities have *keyus*. *Keyus*, however, is granted to men only when they respect

1. This work is based on ethnological research carried out in Oku and other Grassfield kingdoms during six visits between 1975 and 1981, covering a total period of more than eighteen months.

the law. The Oku ideal is a social group (family, village quarter, secret society or 'tribe') that is united 'in one speech and meaning' (*kesugnen kemock*), 'in one breath' (*kejni kemock*) and, above all, in one *keyus*.<sup>2</sup> Tranquil sleep is characterized by peace and harmony, since witches and evil spirits are held to attack at night. Prayers explicitly ask for good, undisturbed sleep in addition to general blessings.

The ancestors (*kwesaise*) will punish those who disturb the peace of a family. Such punishment is manifest in illness or catastrophes and can be overcome only by expiatory sacrifices, which must be performed by the family head in his compound in the presence of all concerned. Palm-wine is drunk and a chicken sacrificed and eaten. The ancestors will also receive a share. The point is not primarily to eat but to unite a family in dispute. This involves confessions of bad feelings and expressions of regret. The ceremony is called *ntangle*, which strictly means arbitration and the resolution of disputes, without reference to the accompanying sacrifice.

What is most important here is the notion of unity expressed in commensality. In Oku it is an offence to the ancestors to share a meal with an enemy. The logic of this works both ways: the ancestors are appeased by the sacrifice offered at *ntangle*, and this commensality implies that the ancestors are no longer angry with the living.

The Oku concept of *keyus* is fully consistent with the *ntangle* rite. During *ntangle*, ancestors are said to gather at the bottom of the large wine pots (*eking myin*) so their *keyus* enters the wine and mixes with the *keyus* of those who drink it. This reinvigorates the drinkers with *keyus* and links them directly with their ancestors. Some Oku informants elaborated on this by claiming that the ancestors received the *keyus* of the living and were themselves strengthened thereby. Most simply said that the ancestors were pleased to see peace restored and to see that they had not been forgotten.

God and the ancestors, however, do not only reveal themselves to the living directly through blessings and punishments, they also have influence indirectly through the medicines they originally gave to men for their general well-being, and above all for protection against all hostile influences, especially witchcraft. Nearly all extended families in Oku possess a masquerading society whose medicine gives protection against all enemies. For such medicine to be effective, it must be produced secretly and never in the presence of women. New members of the masquerading society and those seeking higher ranks within it need special protective medicines against all the dangers they will encounter. They must also pay their dues in the form of palm-wine and chickens. The rules of the masquerade societies and also their medicines and masks were protected by this 'bad' medicine.<sup>3</sup>

2. For a detailed interpretation of the Oku world-view and a further account of *keyus*, see Koloss 1986 and 1987.

3. For a comparison between Ejagham (Cross River) and Oku medicine, see Koloss 1984 and 1985. For a more psychological perspective on Oku medicine see Krauss 1990. The reputation of Oku as a centre of strong and powerful medicines is such that it is known as

A basic distinction is made in Oku between 'good' and 'bad' medicine. 'Bad' medicines include those that are used to deter witches which can cause death. Many of the masquerading or other 'secret' societies have such 'bad' medicines to protect their sacra buried in the 'medicine corner' of the masquerade society's house. Anyone who looks at forbidden things will suffer the consequences, as will any member who reveals the secrets they have sworn to protect. The main medicine of some societies, such as the military society, is itself a 'bad' medicine. The most neutral gloss for this type of medicine is 'dangerous' or 'deadly'. The societies serve to channel the use of these 'bad' medicines to socially acceptable directions.

God and the ancestors also created 'good' medicines for the welfare of humanity, which masquerade societies possess. Apart from those of the secret societies, these can be produced and used in public. 'Good' medicines are not dangerous. Like 'bad' medicines, they are made in the course of rituals and on the part of ritual associations. Their production is far from merely following a recipe.<sup>4</sup> In all cases palm-wine and food must accompany the taking of the medicine proper. The wine must be served from a pot which is addressed in the prayers, since as we have already seen, the ancestors are held to gather in the bottom of wine pots. The efficacy of medicines stems from their transmission from the ancestors (and ultimately God). Medicines are inherited or created after a dream in which an ancestor asked for the medicine to be made.

The most important of all the Oku 'good' medicines is *kefuh myin* (the medicine of the gods), which is also called *kefuh wan* (medicine for a child) because its main use is to ensure the well-being of children. The importance of the *kefuh myin* palm-wine pots (normally stored in the house of the family head) is also expressed through the use of the term 'house gods' or more literally 'handmade gods' (*Emyin me bomin ne ngoh*), although strictly this appellation is restricted to the seventeen differentiated spirits or lesser gods for whom sacrifices are made by the *Ebfon* (king).

*Feyin* is the term for the High God in Oku, who created men and the whole world. In the plural (*emyin*) it can designate not only God and the seventeen lesser spirits or gods but also the ancestors. By extension it can be applied to all those who do good. This is the justification for the description of the *Ebfon* as *Feyin Ebkwoh* (literally, 'God of Oku'). The study of prayers from different rituals may clarify the relations between the different aspects of Oku cosmology.

The general term for sacrifice in Oku is *echise myin* (literally, 'to give a good sleep to the gods'). *Echise myin* and *ntangle* are sharply differentiated, the former being only for gods or spirits, the latter exclusively for the ancestors. *Echise myin* consists solely of wine and *fufu* (the maize porridge

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the 'small India of Cameroon', and people travel long distances to be treated there. [Editor's note: India has a reputation in Cameroon as a source of powerful medicine.]

4. Recipes do exist and are kept secret. No attempt was made to study the recipes themselves.



staple), whereas *ntangle* involves animal sacrifice (fowls, or goats for royal ancestors). *Echise myin* is performed regularly once a year, usually in the dry season. *Kefuh myin*, the ritual that I will concentrate upon in the remainder of this article, may be interpreted as a part of *echise myin*, since it concerns the gods in a more general sense. On the other hand, *ntangle* is only performed (in theory) when the ancestors need to be appeased. In reality, however, many people perform *ntangle* without a particular issue in mind save for remembering the ancestors.

*Kefuh myin* is found throughout Oku, and I now turn to a detailed description of it. *Kefuh myin* is primarily concerned with the health and well-being of children, although it is sometimes performed in order to help overcome the problems of an adult.

All adult men may own *kefuh myin*, acquiring it through initiation from someone who already owns it and who is paid for teaching the neophyte how to perform it. Although it is exclusively men who carry out *kefuh myin*, women play a more prominent role in it than in other Oku medicines. Indeed, it is said that women were the original owners of *kefuh myin*, and it is often inherited matrilineally (from a mother to her daughters). Adult men often have *kefuh myin* for all their wives. It may be seen as a ritual counterbalance to the practice of patrilocal residence (at this stage of marriage) and serves as a unifying medium between the family of the husband and those of his wives.

*Kefuh myin* is normally acquired through inheritance, and most family groups in Oku possess it. However, some types of 'special' births require *kefuh myin* to be performed, and this may lead to *kefuh myin* being acquired. Twins or breech births are the commonest examples. It is believed that such children are likely to become diviners or healers in adulthood. Diviners also recommend *kefuh myin* for weak and sickly looking children.

### *The Performance of a Typical Kefuh Myin*

The sequence of actions in a typical *kefuh myin* ritual is as follows. First the officiant meets some of the other family members in the house where the *kefuh myin* equipment is stored. Principal among these objects are *eking myin*, *ebseck myin*, and the *bass myin*, which are further described below. Water is used to wash the palm-wine pot (*eking myin*), the gourd for the ancestors' wine (*ebeseck myin*) and the broken calabash (*bass myin*). Each is then placed on three special leaves. Medicine leaves are then prepared, being ground on a grinding-stone. The 'good' medicine is prepared before the 'bad' medicine. Some *egusi* (pounded pumpkin seeds) is mixed with oil and placed in a special container. After this the 'eyes' of the palm-wine pot are repainted and two vertical white lines are drawn on the side of the pot opposite the 'eye'. Then the gourd for the ancestors' wine

and the broken calabash are rubbed with bad medicine. Following this, two small snail-shells and a small stone that comes from the sacred lake of Oku are rubbed with bad medicine and placed inside the pot (they are used for a type of divination later in the ritual). Some vines are twisted round the neck of the pot.

Good medicine is then mixed with some pounded cocoyam, after which a variety of medicinal plants and two 'life plants' (*Dracaena* sp.) are put into the broken calabash. The officiant pours a little wine on the floor at the doorway and greets the ancestors. He then pours the wine into the wine pot. This is the occasion for a long prayer which explains the reasons for performing the ritual and asks the ancestors for their help. Then gum from the African plum tree (*elei*) is burnt in front of the wine pot. The smoke from this gum is said to drive away insects, dangerous spirits and bad dreams. This is followed by another prayer to the ancestors which accompanies 'the cleaning of *emkan*'. Two *emkan*<sup>5</sup> sticks are shaved into the palm-wine as a blessing. The remains of the sticks are then thrown on the ground, their fall being interpreted as an oracle.

Meanwhile the snail-shells floating in the palm-wine have been watched, and their orientation relative to one another interpreted. The best sign is if the tips of the shells are close together. Bad signs are the shells crossing over one another, or floating in different parts of the pot. This is taken to mean that the ancestors are not yet happy, that there are problems that are yet to be settled. The worse sign of all, however, occurs when one of the snail-shells is seen to sink and rise again three times. This is interpreted as warning of a death to come.

The gourd of the ancestors' wine is now filled and closed with a 'life plant'. Once the ancestors have had their share of the wine, the men present start to drink the wine. As each person is served, but before he drinks, a little wine is poured back into the pot in order to allow some of the *keyus* of the person to mix with the *keyus* of the other participants and with that of the ancestors. Next they make *njimte* (a ritual dish of pounded cocoyams and 'good' medicine). Small pieces are thrown into the four corners of the room as shares for the ancestors and a piece into the fire as a 'gift' for the 'bad' spirits. The men present then eat the remainder. After that the broken calabash is filled with water, and some of it is sprinkled around the room and on those present to bless them.

After the part of the ritual reserved to men is over, the women and children are called into the room. They form a line, each touching the person in front, with the principal woman being treated in front holding the hand of the officiant. He then rubs the wine pot, the broken calabash and the ancestors' calabash with more 'bad' medicine. A chicken (called 'the chicken for the child') is brought, given some *njimte* and rubbed with 'good' medicine. Some feathers are removed and stuck to the wine pot, the bro-

5. The *emkan* tree is found in the forest region of West Cameroon. It is used in several rituals in Oku and throughout the Grassfields.

ken calabash and the ancestors' calabash. The chicken is then given to the mother of the ill child. This chicken must never be killed. If it dies it must be replaced. It and its descendants become the property of the child for whom the *kefuh myin* has been performed. Finally the closing acts are performed: the room and all those present are blessed with water sprinkled from the broken calabash. The women and children are given some *njimte* and good medicine. Bad medicine is rubbed on the sternum of the sick child. The same vine that was already twisted round the wine pot is twisted round the neck of each participant. These are left in place for a few days as a sign of having been blessed in *kefuh myin*. Finally the rattle is shaken near to the ears of the children present.

As described, the *kefuh myin* ritual takes from two to three hours. It is frequently performed in the dry season in memory of the ancestors without any precipitating cause such as illness or birth. Either of these will occasion a *kefuh myin* performance which has an additional section, called *ngeo myin* ('the stream of the gods'). This is performed outside the house where the *kefuh myin* ritual has occurred. The officiant sprinkles some of the liquid from the broken calabash on to the ground. He then takes some of the wet soil on the point of a spear and holds it twice to the mouth of the sick child. All present then go to the 'stream', where a basket of medicinal plants is prepared. The *emkan* sticks are shaved over this basket as previously over the wine pot. The ancestors are summoned (often silently) to attend to the ritual as this is done. A ritual doorway (*ebchundah*) is then constructed. A spear and a stalk of elephant grass are stuck into the ground and the tops bound together so that they form a doorway. Two holes are then dug under this doorway and filled with medicinal plants. Between the holes the officiant places two iron implements, a hoe and a knife as used by women for farming.

Iron is held to contain a very large amount of *keyus* because its production is so difficult and dangerous. An implement will also contain some of the *keyus* of all those who have used it, so objects such as old hoes are held to be extremely powerful and are often kept for ritual use. They have a particular role to play when people are to be protected from danger or freed from bad influences. It is believed that during the ritual the ancestors will gather in the implements, just as they do within the wine pot and that the iron implements act like magnets to extract all malign influence from those who pass through the *ebchundah*.

As they pass through the *ebchundah* the participants stand on the hoe and are then washed with some water from the baskets that were prepared for this part of the ritual and with liquid from the broken calabash. Once everyone has been through the doorway, the medicinal plants are removed from the basket and the mother of the sick child puts a plant into each of the holes while holding her hands behind her back. The hole is then covered over with soil in the hope that one of the plants may sprout.

Cowry shells are thrown and the pattern interpreted as an oracle of the success of the ritual. A chicken is then placed between the two holes and

killed with the mother's help. Some of the feathers are stuck into the ground round the holes. Everyone present has some camwood rubbed on their forehead, and they then re-enter the house to lick some good medicine and drink the remaining palm-wine while the chicken is being roasted. Once it has been eaten and the wine finished, the ritual objects are returned to store. The leading officiant is given a chicken and a good quantity of palm oil.

### *Objects Used in Kefuh Myin*

Apart from the wine pot described above, the other objects used in *kefuh myin* are as follows:

(1) *Eking myin* (the wine pots of the gods). Wine pots (such as *eking myin*) are the most important objects in all 'medicine' rites, *kefuh myin* among them. These pots hold the palm-wine which links the participants with the ancestors who are held to gather within the pot (see above). Two circles, described as the 'eyes of God' (*eshea feyin*), are drawn on the *eking myin*, one on the outside, one at the base of the pot. These circles are drawn with a white concoction which is itself a 'good' medicine, and is licked by the participants in the course of the ritual. The interior of the circles is filled in with a different medicine, black in colour, which is described as a 'bad' medicine which must not be eaten. It can be directed by the ancestors against anyone who violates the restrictions that surround the *kefuh myin* rite; for example, it can affect the owners of *kefuh myin* should they omit to perform an annual sacrifice for *kefuh myin*. The participants are rubbed with this 'bad' medicine which will act to extract anything bad from them (this is similar to the treatment of children with a minor illness). When not in use, the *kefuh myin* wine pots are stored in the house of the family head; they are used only for ritual purposes. They are not made in Oku but are purchased from the neighbouring chiefdom of Babessi. If *kefuh myin* has to be performed urgently for a child, a large calabash can be used if the parents do not already own *kefuh myin* and are purchasing it for their sick child.

The masquerade societies and other associations have similar wine pots, which are slightly larger than those used for *kefuh myin*. They are called *eking mkum* (pot of the juju) and they are also distinguished from those of *kefuh myin* by using red as well as black and white to mark the 'eyes' of the pots. The black 'bad' medicine is the same as that used to protect the musical instruments and the headpiece of the masquerades from the gaze of non-initiates.

(2) *Ebseck myin* (calabash for the gods). This is a small, long-necked calabash which holds the palm-wine sacrificed for God and for the ancestors. It is sealed with a 'life-plant' (*Dracaena* sp.).

(3) *Keghen myin* (half-calabash for the gods) or *bass myin* (broken calabash for the gods). This is the blessing calabash which has great prominence in ritual practice throughout the Grassfields. It contains the plants and liquid of the *kefuh myin* medicine which is splashed over participants to bless them.

(4) *Ebsie myin* is a small pot holding a small amount of *egusi* (pounded pumpkin seeds).

(5) *Keal myin* is a dish from which the participants eat *njimte*, a ritual dish made nowadays from pounded cocoyams but formerly from guinea corn and *egusi*.

(6) *Ebom myin* is the cup from which palm-wine is drunk.

(7) *Kecheake myin* is a rattle shaken near the ears of children at the end of the ritual. It is said to improve their hearing.

### *Case-Studies: Some Kefuh Myin Rituals*

Having described the general pattern of a *kefuh myin* rite, let us now consider some examples that I observed during fieldwork undertaken between 1977 and 1981. These help to illustrate how the general form of the rite is adapted to the particular circumstances that lead to particular *kefuh myin* performances. The prayers that follow were spoken in an ordinary conversational style, as if addressing a living person present in the room. There is no distinct genre of speech in prayer.

#### Case 1: Oku-Keyon, 1 December 1977

Fai Bafon had died on 20 July 1976 but there had never been a *kefuh myin* ceremony for him 'to loosen his hands from the medicine'.<sup>6</sup> One of his daughters had become ill, and a diviner diagnosed that her illness was the result of the failure to perform this ritual. The ritual was carried out in the usual way, but in addition the palm-wine pot and the walls of the room were wiped with a chicken to 'drive out the bad spirit of the dead father'. The chicken was later killed and eaten. When the *njimte* was thrown into the four corners of the room, the dead parents were asked to bring all their siblings to bless their sick daughter. The prayer continued. 'The living can do nothing at the moment, only the ancestors can help. The good gods should

6. When the owner of a medicine dies, this ritual must be performed so that the successor can safely use the medicine. The ritual asks the spirit of the deceased to approve and bless the successor.

eat with their mouths, the bad gods with their noses.' This is a common metaphor in this context.

#### Case 2: Oku-Elack, 29 December 1977

The family of Fai Keming carried out a 'normal' *kefuh myin* without any illness as precipitating cause.<sup>7</sup> Fai Keming made the following invocations in the course of the ritual. While pouring wine at the threshold, he prayed:

'Oh gods of this area or the ancestors of this compound, take this wine and put it into this pot. Give us blessings and give us one *keyus* so that we will work together. And give sound sleep to everyone. Stop us from having bad dreams.'

When the wine was being poured into the wine pot, he prayed:

'Oh, Chiekoh [his dead mother], call the fathers of this place so that you are the one who is pouring it into the pot. Chiekoh, it is now dry season, give one *keyus* to the family. Tangte, we will harvest coffee and we hope to get much money from the Cooperative through your help. Call Nyamsai and Chiekoh and all of you should come under this wine pot and also Keming who founded this pot [i.e. the first owner of this *kefuh myin* medicine], which was later forgotten by the people. I say it is now dry season and time for harvesting coffee. I say that you should send us blessings and also to the whole world. Send good *keyus* to all of us, because this is the time that people renew the wine pot.'

Finally, when the *emkan* sticks were being shaved over the medicines, he prayed:

'This is *emkan*. When it mixes in this pot with the wine, our prayers and our *keyus* will mix. Now it is dry season. It is time for money. We wish every boy and girl to get money so they can buy salt and oil and protect their lives. We do not hate strangers. But send away bad people. Bring us good people who can show us good ways, whether people with medicines or other people. Send away the bad and bring us the good. How is it that other groups have progress but we do not see any development? We are always praying and begging that good luck should come to us.'

#### Case 3: Oku-Ngashie, 5 December 1978

Fai Mankoh performed both *kefuh myin* and another ritual called *ngeo myin* for a new-born child. Two of the prayers he uttered are as follows:

7. This *kefuh myin* ceremony was filmed (Koloss 1988) and has formed the basis of the documentaation of the main elements of the ritual.

'Gods, we are here with children before you. Take away all evil from them and bring them just good things and health. Let them grow up in the way the modern world demands. The world now belongs to the white man. Take away evil and show us the way of the whites.'

As the *njimte* was being thrown into the corners of the room, he prayed:

'We call on you, mother of these children, to join us today in making *kefuh myin* for these children. Take this *njimte* [cocoyam] and give it to the other elders so that they may join us too. Let the bad gods take this with their noses and run away with evil far from us. Let the good gods take this food with their mouths and bring us the good.'

#### Case 4: Oku-Elack, 20 November 1981

Fai Keming performed *kefuh myin* because of the illnesses of one of his daughters and of her daughter. A diviner diagnosed the anger of the ancestors, who felt forgotten because no *kefuh myin* had been performed for a long time. While pouring the wine into the wine pot, Fai Keming addressed them as follows:

'Call all the former medicine men. Take this wine and put it with one *keyus* into the pot. Although I am pouring the wine, it is your doing. If I have forgotten any leaf, put it in for me. I beg you to give these people good dreams and good health. Also the dead fathers of this place should call the gods of this place [i.e. some of the seventeen Oku divinities] to bless these people with their *keyus* and give them good dreams and a sound sleep.'

#### Case 5: Oku-Ngashie, 22 November 1981

Pa Kegham from Oku-Mboh performed *kefuh myin* after a diviner diagnosed that it would help the treatment of a young boy. While the *emkan* sticks were being scraped over the wine pot, Pa Kegham prayed:

'Oh Tambong [an ancestor] this is *emkan*. Call Kinkoh [the father of Tambong]. All of you should meet and clean this *emkan* for us and put its shavings into the medicine for the child. God should send his blessings. Oh mothers of this child and Tango [another ancestor], everything is in your hands, you should join together and send blessings. We know you can see what has happened. So send away bad dreams and give a good sleep to this child. *Emkan*, let Tango call all the mothers of this child and everyone will talk with one mouth.'

My presence along with my interpreter was noted, and my interpreter was explicitly mentioned in the prayers:

'Oh, this boy here, you have been made a *nchinda* [i.e. he had become a member of *kwifon*, the most important secret society in Oku as in many Grassfield societies]. These are your blessings. As you are travelling with this white man, may God bless you in all your doings. If the white man gives you anything, let it be of use to you and your family. The world has changed. I hope it is your own good luck (which Oku gave you) and bless too, this white man.'

### *Conclusions: God is First*

Oku believe in functionalism! Peace and social harmony attract the blessings of the ancestors and the supreme God *Feyin*, who is the ultimate recipient of all prayers and the ultimate source of all *keyus*, the life-power. Traditional healers and diviners have a large repertoire of rituals and medicines available to them and great knowledge and experience, but they say that all of these things depend, in the last resort, on *Feyin*, the source of all life. As they say, *mbiy lu Feyin* ('God is first').

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Edited by **R. H. Barnes, Daniel de Coppet and R. J. Parkin**

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## THE INITIATION OF THE *DUGI* AMONG THE PÉRÉ

CHARLES-HENRY PRADELLES DE LATOUR

THE initiation ceremony of Péré medicine men (*dugi*) is of particular relevance to this collection of papers since, as I will demonstrate, an element of it is remembered by Péré in the Grassfields of Cameroon who left their original home in the north, at the beginning of the century, in the train of their close allies, the Chamba, to settle finally with Bali-Nyonga, in the western Grassfields. This paper describes the ceremony as a small contribution to the ethnography of the Bali-Nyonga as studied by Sally Chilver.

The Péré of the north, who at present number some twenty thousand, occupy a remote plain in Adamawa Province. This plain is closed off to the north by the Faro game reserve, to the west by the Nigerian border, and to the south and east by the high plateau of Tignère. While a certain number of Péré are gathered into settlements such as Koncha, Mayo-Baléo, Gadjiwan and Almé, the great majority still live in scattered hamlets, the sites of which are changed approximately once a decade. A hamlet generally comprises a man, his wives, children, and married sons, and some of his uterine nephews. At his death, his sons inherit the huts while his nephews inherit the other goods such as granaries, cattle and access to hunting and fishing sites. Thus, while the hamlet is patrilocal, the kinship system is

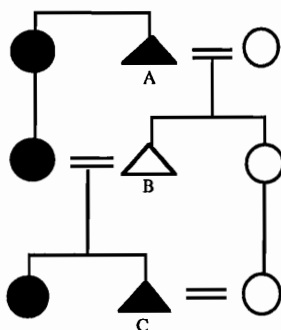
I thank Gabriel Gbadamosi for helping me translate this paper from French into English and for discussing it with me.

firmly matrilineal, with the Péré recognizing about twenty matrilineal clans.

*Dugi* are medicine men who inherit a ritual store (*dugo*) in which is hidden sacred musical instruments representing a clan's magical force (*gérem*). Some *dugi* inherit only iron bells which are hidden in a *dugo*, a pot placed just outside their compound. Others inherit, in addition to the bells, trumpets made of linked calabashes. In this case, the *dugo* may be a small hut built nearby in the bush. The iron bells are used in curing illnesses, particularly barrenness in women. The trumpets have a prominent place in initiation ceremonies and are also used against sorcerers and played at a *dugi*'s funeral. Although the different *dugi* are ranked, all must undergo the same initiation ritual in order to use the power of the *gérem*.

In some parts of the plain less influenced by Islam, like the canton of Almé, the heads of certain hamlets are *dugi*. In these instances possession and transmission of the *gérem* settled in the *dugo* reinforce the traditional marriage alliances between clans. This can be seen from the fact that although the *gérem* is the permanent property of a matrilineal clan, its *dugo* is always inherited patrilineally, from father to son. For a *gérem* to remain the property of its matrilineal clan, a *dugi* must marry a patrilineal cross-cousin (a woman of the matrilineal clan of his father). In this way a *gérem* is possessed every second generation by a member of the matrilineal clan, and two clans are linked by repeated matrimonial alliances (see Fig. 1).

FIG. 1. Clan of the *Gérem*



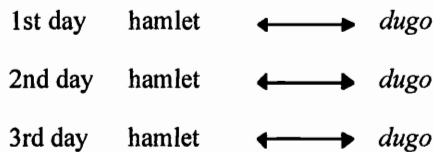
If A transmits the *gérem* (belonging to his clan, shown in black) to his son B, and if B marries his father's sister's daughter, his son C, the next heritor in the *gérem*, will belong to the same clan as his father's father, A. The *dugi*, who are thus obliged to repeat preferential marriage alliances, embody the traditional social order of the Péré; the *gérem* is not only a magical power but also a social law.

It is in this double aspect that the *gérem* presides over the initiation of all young boys. This important ceremony, which I have described

elsewhere (1988), takes place over three days. On the first day, young boys of five or six years old are frightened by the terrifying roar of the unseen *gérem*, 'the animal which is going to swallow them', represented by their elder siblings, who blow on the trumpets taken from the *dugo*. Pursued by the roaring of the *gérem*, which they cannot see, the boys are taken to the hamlet of the *dugi*, who directs the initiation. On arrival, the boys are ritually purified beside the *dugo* (a small hut) and then taken inside a hut in the hamlet, outside of which the *gérem*, seeming to attack, becomes more and more menacing as the night wears on. On the second day, the most important period of the ritual, the novices lie face down on the ground in rows, holding over their eyes 'the leaf of death' which prevents them from seeing the different scenes being played over them by their elder siblings and the *dugi* in order to terrify them. One by one, they mime the devouring *gérem*, the monkeys who scratch and whip the novices with branches, and finally the devastating tornado which soaks and floods them. The boys, holding 'the leaf of death' over their eyes, are blind to the action and may be considered to be at the blind spot of the event, thus in both these senses enacting a symbolic death of the gaze. After this, the *dugi* reveal to them the musical instruments representing the *gérem* and make them swear never to speak of this to the women. The young initiates, thus set apart from their mothers by this exclusive knowledge, learn ritually on the third day to sieve millet beer and play the drums, thereby being reintegrated into social life.

The three phases of this rite of passage are centred on two locations: the hamlet where the children pass all three nights, and the *dugo* around which the initiation unfolds (see Fig. 2).

FIG. 2



The boys are initiated in the very place where the mystery of the *gérem* is located, but they nevertheless remain symbolically of the hamlet.

An adolescent who chooses to follow his father and become a *dugi* must undergo a supplementary initiation, which I have never seen but which has been described to me independently by four experienced *dugi*. As with the ceremony described above, a senior *dugi* decides when to celebrate the initiation ritual, usually when enough novices have let their decision be known. At the last ceremony, in 1985, twenty young *dugi* were initiated. The host *dugi* invites his colleagues to come three days in ad-

vance to clear a 'threshing floor' (*koo*) in the bush near his *dugo* and to prepare the millet beer which will be drunk by the participants.

On the day, the *dugi* novices gather in the *koo*. Crouched on the ground, bare from the waist up and with their heads lowered, they are made to submit to their elder *dugi*. At nightfall they are led out of the *koo* to stand in the open space in front of the hamlet. The principal *dugi* takes the iron bells from the pot, puts them on the ground and pours beer over them, saying: *Fuum mani ai, zoba* ('Here is your beer, drink it'). He then puts on them the mash left over from the distillation of the beer, saying: 'You ask, but why don't you give me the mash left over from the beer? Here it is.' The *dugi* then sits down in the middle of the open space in front of a full calabash of millet beer. One by one, the novices come to offer him 25 Fr CFA and crouch in front of him. For each of them, the *dugi* cuts a piece of creeper (*Cissus quadrangulis*) called *gaamb sembale* ('male medicine') over the calabash with an iron bell. It is said that 'the gérem cuts the medicine', and it is a favourable sign if the small pieces of the *gaamb sembale* dropped into the beer rise quickly again to the surface. The *dugi* then drops into the beer a sprig of grass called *mageré*, which he stirs around with an iron bell in order to see whether or not it comes to rest in front of the novice before him. He repeats the process as often as is necessary for the *mageré* to stop in the required position, and, as in the conduct of therapeutic cures which use exactly the same procedure, the *dugi* may occasionally ask questions of the novice to shed light on some difficult areas of his life. When this has been successfully concluded, the *dugi* takes the calabash and places it on the head of the novice, saying: 'Let your body be strong.' The *dugi* then makes him drink some of the beer and rubs his right hand with the *gaamb sembale*, saying: 'If a person is sick you will take the *gérem* to work on them. When you are a *dugi* you will rub on the medicine as I have just done with you, so that the sickness goes.' After this procedure is complete, there is a short break. The novices then again offer, each in turn, 25 Fr CFA to the officiating *dugi* and he repeats for each of them exactly the same ritual, only this time with the *gaamb kaanlé*, 'female medicine', which is made from the bulbs of wild hyacinth (*Pancratium hirtum*). Both parts of the ceremony continue into the night.

At first light, each novice picks up a stone, places it on his head and puts it beside the *dugo* in a heap. The stones are used by the elder *dugi* to check on the number of initiates and to see whether they have all paid their dues. The *dugi*, armed with whips made out of grass rope, thrash the bare torsos of the novices who must not flinch in spite of the weals raised on their skin. After this test of courage, the novices cross the *dugo*, entering from the east, 'where things begin', and going out to the west, 'where life ends'.<sup>1</sup> The initiates continue on into the bush accompanied by their elders, and in order to participate in the last part of the ritual each of the ini-

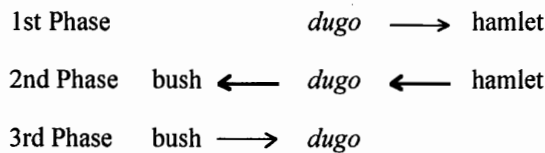
1. The Péré bury their dead with feet pointing to the west.

tiates gathers three pieces of wood: *kiinbo* (*Savadora persica*), *kitari* (*Unes piliformis*) and *samvorum* (*Brenadia salicina*).

On their return to the *dugo*, initiates and *dugi* hold each other by the shoulder in a long line, while the officiating *dugi*, at the head of the line, sacrifices a young chicken and then ties it, with his own three pieces of wood, by a long string to the supporting post on the right of the entrance to the *dugo*. It is in this way, using wood, chicken and string, that the *dugi* makes the *som*, also known as *saang waalé*, 'the strong taboo'. The *som* is supposed to make the intestines of wrong-doers come out through their anus, as occurs to the chicken when the *dugi* wraps the string tightly around its body. When the *som* is thus attached to the *dugo*, all the participants in turn rub on it pieces of *gaamb sembale* (male medicine), saying: *mani a kuma lo, fun mani voma* ('You, you stay here, let your body be strong'). Thereafter each of the initiates makes his own *som*, which he takes home with him and places in his front yard or in a *dugo*, if he already has one. Finally, to close the ceremony, the initiates weave a small bracelet of grass called *tung* (*Andetia simplex*) as a sign of their initiation, which they will wear on their wrist until it falls to pieces.

Inasmuch as the initiation of young boys is a rite of separation, that of young *dugi* is one of assimilation. Even though the two rituals are not comparable in purpose, their respective relationships to the hamlet and the *dugo* are significantly reversed. If the first rite revolves around the hamlet, to which the young initiates return to sleep every night (see Fig. 2), the second rite revolves around the *dugo* outside the hamlet (see Fig. 3).

FIG. 3



These relocations during the three phases of this second rite, makes it clear that the novices set out from the *dugo* and return there at the end. In understanding the significance of this in the initiation of a *dugi*, it should again be noted that during the central part of this rite the novices pass through the *dugo*, which thereby acts as a kind of gateway between the village and the bush. This demonstrates the *dugi* as belonging to two worlds. As can be seen with the *dugo* and the *gérem*, by their double mode of transmission (patrilineal and matrilineal), they are social, belonging to the hamlet, whereas by virtue of the access they give the *dugi* to the power of the bush, they are wild, powerful and not at all a part of the social structure. They, like the *som* or charm, are magical. Magic is always in this sense, ambivalent, being both of the social order and outside it.

After eleven months of fieldwork among the northern Péré, I passed through Bali-Nyonga in order to meet the leader of the southern Péré. He was very easy to find and very approachable, dressed in European clothes with a large umbrella tucked under his arm. I greeted him in the language of the Péré, but he no longer knew it, so we spoke in pidgin for the rest of the interview. His name was Dinga. His father had also lived in Bali-Nyonga, but his father's father had lived in Bali-Kumbat, some fifty kilometres to the east. Considering himself to be the direct heir of his father and grandfather, Dinga had become patrilineal and had completely forgotten the matrilineal clan system of the north. Neither his mother nor grandmother were Péré. For this reason he did not know the name of any of the matrilineal clans. A little taken aback at the beginning of this interview, I asked him if he knew anything about the *gérem*. His face lit up and he answered yes. 'So,' I enquired, 'you have some trumpets made out of calabashes?' 'No,' he said, with surprise. 'But you have iron bells?' 'No, not at all,' he continued to insist. 'In that case, what *is* the *gérem* for you?' To this he answered very indirectly, and it was only because I already knew about the *gérem* that he consented to tell me. It still took me some time to understand that for him the *gérem* is a charm which is made by sacrificing a chicken, around which are attached three small pieces of wood. 'But that's the *som*!' I exclaimed. 'No, it's the *gérem*,' he replied. Clearly, he no longer knew anything about the initiation of the *dugi*, but the most secret element of that ceremony had stayed in the memory of the southern Péré.

So why is it that the *gérem* has become the *som* for the migrant Péré? The Chamba, who are what is known as 'joking partners' of the Péré of the north, also use trumpets made of calabashes as sacred instruments. The Chamba of the south still use them in the celebration of the *voma*, which takes place at the beginning of their new year. It can perhaps be suggested that, given their even closer relationship with the Péré in the south, these trumpets could no longer constitute a token of separation for the Péré between themselves and others. The sacred, or magical, property of their word *gérem*, linked to these trumpets, has been transferred to the *som* of the *dugi*, or 'strong taboo', where it can again constitute the distinct, and secret, social identity of the southern Péré.

On this journey south, I was surprised to see how quickly a tradition could be forgotten—excepting certain elements, within only three generations. What we study is very fragile.

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## **HISTORY OF THE MAMBILA CHIEFDOM OF MBOR (SONKOLONG)**

**JEAN HURALT**

### *Introduction*

At a time still impossible to date precisely, but possibly several centuries before the conquest of the Adamawa plateau by the Fulani (FulBe), the Mvwop lived on the southern border of the Mambila plateau, at an average altitude of 1700m. Some groups began to found colonies on the Tikar plain, 1000m lower (average altitude 750m), possibly being attracted by resources unknown on the plateau, viz. palm oil and fish.

At the foot of the escarpment they found some groups of Mambila and other small populations of diverse origins. These combined to drive out the Tikar who occupied almost all of the plain. The association of these elements gave rise to three chiefdoms, Somié (Ndeba), Sonkolong (Mbor) and Atta (Ta).<sup>1</sup> In the text which follows I concentrate on Sonkolong but include its links with Atta. The two chiefdoms are said to have been founded by two brothers and to have kept strong links. In 1899 they were attacked simultaneously and suffered similar disasters.

1. The names Songkolong, Atta and Somié were given by the FulBe but are now in common use.



*Methodology*

I have adopted a global approach to these disorganised populations, now defunct, using the methodologies of geography, ethno-history and demography. The collection of oral tradition can be significantly improved by a preliminary study of the topography and environmental conditions. I therefore think it necessary to undertake a detailed survey of the landscape of the villages under study with the help of competent guides. Specific traditions may associated with particular features of the landscape (such as springs, ravines or outcrops), and while notables would not mention them in general conversation, they are, nevertheless, important pointers in the search for the past. In principle, a thorough knowledge of the topography creates a common understanding between the investigator and the notables, reducing the risks of omissions and mistakes.

In the absence of archaeological research data, oral traditions must be analysed together with archive documents (where they exist) as well as the results of direct observation. In this case, traces of fortifications and occasionally buildings have helped the historical reconstruction. The data for this paper was collected between 1981 and 1985 during research on the geography and demography of the western Adamawa highlands. The main objective of my research on the Tikar plain was to determine the effects of the slave raids from the Fulani kingdom of Banyo which probably began as early as 1830–40.

*Topography*

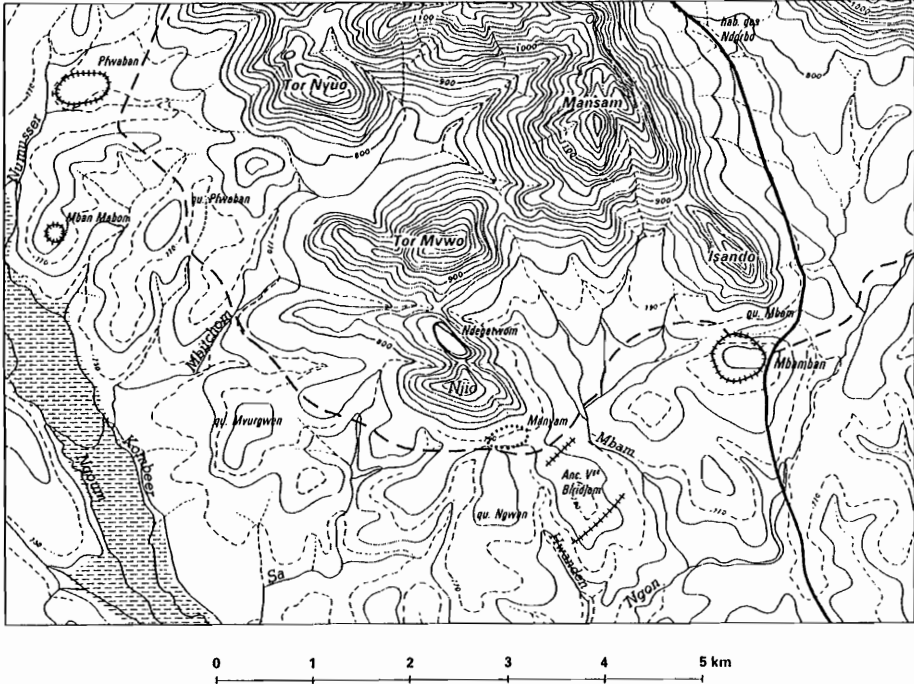
The territory of Sonkolong is dominated by the granite mountain range which surrounds it and whose summits, Njio, Tor Mvwo, Mansam and Tor Nyuo, rise above the plain by some two hundred metres (see Map. 1).

This site offers three advantages: proximity to the rocky heights, which can be used as refuges; year-round availability of drinking water; and the superior quality of the soil at the foot of the mountains.<sup>2</sup> This accounts for the sites of the ancient villages of the Ndobu, Kpatschula and Pfwā (Ndégétwom) as well as the successive sites of the Sonkolong chiefdom, Mbamban, Manyam and Mvurgwen. A very old trade route linking the Nso' country to the present Banyo region goes along the southern slope of the mountainous massif. This path was used by the Fulani of Banyo in their raids against the Nso'. From the height of Njio mountain the Mambila, entrenched at Ndégétwom, were able to see the raiding parties

2. At the end of the dry season the secondary streams are dry, except where they are fed by springs situated at the foot of the mountains. The good quality of the soil is a result of the alluvia brought down from the slopes.

well before they themselves were attacked. This path was later turned into a road during the period of German rule.

MAP 1. The site of Sonkolong



This map (scale 1: 80,000) is based on the 1: 50,000 map of Banyo (sheet 1d) resurveyed by J. Hurault (1981–5)

### *The Succession of Chiefs*

There are two lists of the chiefs of Sonkolong. The first is that of the principal notable of Sonkolong, Mgbwé Ndégétwom, who was born around 1915 and has been my main informant. The second list came from Garba-Bani, who settled in the village of Yaji. He had been a soldier in the German army and was about 100 years old when I interviewed him on 18 January 1983. His chief-list was agreed by the chief of Sonkolong, who made a typescript of it on 7 July 1982. However, it seemed to me that despite his great age, this informant was not entirely reliable. He had not been brought up in Sonkolong (arriving there around 1920) and then had to leave around 1930 after being accused of committing murder by witchcraft.

Moreover, he had the reputation of fabricating stories or at least not always giving the same version of his recollections. I have therefore chosen the list given by Mgbe Ndégétwom Séo, which was agreed during a meeting of the notables convened on 2 February 1985. I have indicated its main differences with Garba Bani's list. The latter, nevertheless, contains certain useful elements, particularly an estimate of the length of reigns.

	NAME	SON OF <sup>3</sup>	NOTES
A	Gwalé	?	
B	Yabon	?	Took the chieftdom to Ndégétwom from Mbamban
C	Wé (Kélamé)	?	
D	Yé	A	Agreed to become tributary to Banyo. Committed suicide by hanging himself.
E	Kéa	A	
F	Nju (Ndijolomo)	E	Is said to have had a very short reign.
G	Wakatsha	?	Name mentioned in Garba Bani's list. The notables have heard this name but cannot place it.
H	Londam	D	Chief at the time of the attack by troops from Banyo. Is said to have been captured and executed in Banyo.
I	Yaji (Yilayor)	E	Opposed to Londam, took refuge in Banyo. Was then imposed as chief. Contracted leprosy and had to leave the chieftdom. Died in Banyo.
J	Kémé	C	Removed by the Germans because he had sold some of the people in the village. Imprisoned in Banyo. Is said to have retired to Pfwá.
K	Gwa	I	Took the chieftdom to Manyan. Was chief when the British arrived in 1915.
L	Kèr	I	Stayed in Manyan, where he is buried.
M	Bawuro	I	Took the chieftdom back to Mbamban where he is buried.
N	Gwa (Hamidu)	L	Reigning since 1961.

Garba-Bani's typed list, dated 7 July 1982, is as follows:

- (1) Goualeu son of the prophet Goualeu (came down with wings)
- (2) Yaboon son of Goualeu
- (3) Kea son of Yabon
- (4) Yie son of Yabon
- (5) Ndijolomo son of Yie
- (6) Wakatcha son of Yie
- (7) Lodam son of Yie
- (8) Yialayor son of Yie (twelve-year reign)

3. The filiation of the chiefs before Yaji is not absolutely certain.

- (9) Keme son of Wakatcha (four-year reign)
- (10) Goualeu son of Yialayor (seventeen-year reign)
- (11) Mgbekeme son of Wakatcha (two-and-a-half-year reign)
- (12) Kea son of Yia (fifteen-year reign)
- (13) Baourou son of Yia (thirty-seven-year reign)
- (14) Gouah Hamidou son of Kea, acceded in 1961.

The same note tells us that Mgbekeme used to make human sacrifices and that he sold his subjects as slaves. There seems to be some confusion between Kémé and Mgbekeme, who may be one-and-the-same person. Indeed we know, through precise traditions, that Kémé was removed and imprisoned for involvement in slave trading towards the end of the German period. If we accept Garba-Gani's chronology, this would have taken place after 1930; but this is not feasible, since at that time the Tikar plain was under French administration.

The lengths of the reigns cannot be accepted as stated. It is an established fact that Gwa was nominated during the German period, therefore before 1915. Also, the total duration of reigns numbered above as 10, 12 and 13 comes to 69 years—yet there are only 46 years between 1915 and 1961.

### *Phases in the History of Sonkolong*

#### First phase: the chiefdom in Mbamban

This first phase may have lasted several centuries but only a few events are recalled. The Mvwop Mambila encountered the Pfwa Mambila on the perimeter of the Ndégétwom massif. They also found other smaller groups who had been pushed back by the Tikar and who paid tribute to them, the Kpatshula, the Ndetom and the Ndobu. Their ethnic origins are uncertain and their languages have been lost save for a few words. These archaic populations were probably the ancient occupiers of the plain. They had to unite with the Mvwop Mambila to drive out the Mbiridjom and Mbirikpa Tikar. The latter left for what is now the region of Sabongari, twenty kilometres to the north-west. The Mbiridjom rebuilt their village thirty kilometres to the south, where their descendants still lived in the 1980s.

A new organization, founded on a kind of symbiosis, was formed around the Mvwop Mambila. The autochthones retained their chiefs in the guise of notables of the new chiefdom endowed with religious functions.<sup>4</sup> The Pfwa desired autonomy and left Ndégétwom for the old Mbirikpa site, five kilometres to the north-west, where they created the fortified village of

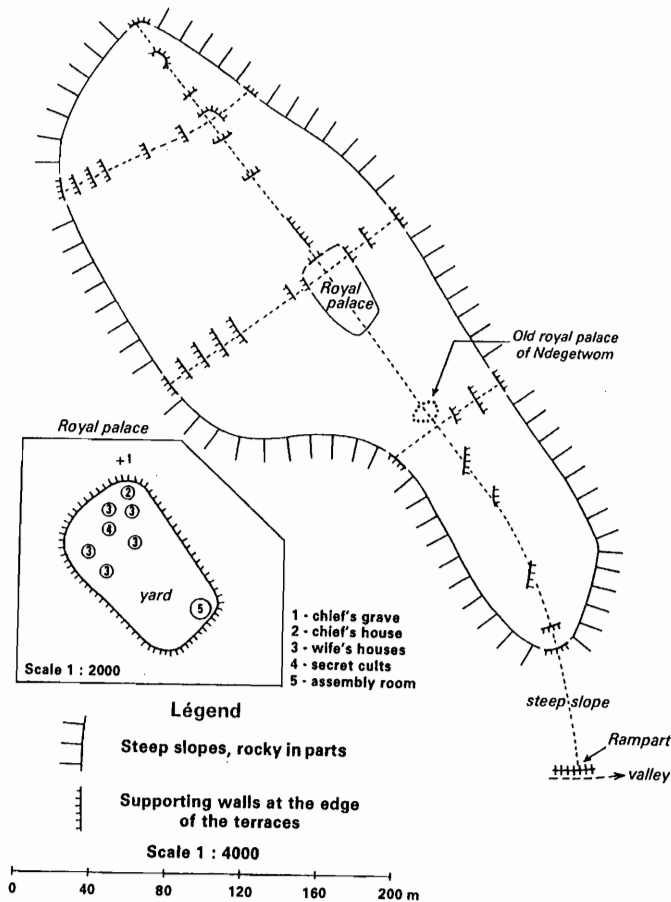
4. This is why the Kpatshula start the *sua* rites each year.

Pfwabang, the trench of the Pfwā. But some of them remained behind and their chief, Mgbwe Ndégétwom, became the main notable.

### Second phase: Ndégétwom and the fight against the FulBe

When the FulBe began their raids on the Tikar plain, chief Yabon left the Mbamban site and assembled the population at Ndégétwom. He was the founder of the chiefdom and is buried there (see Fig. 1), as is his successor Wé (Kélamé?), of whom we know nothing else. It seems that it was during the reign of Yé, son of Yabon, that Sonkolong became tributary to Banyo, in circumstances which are not remembered.

FIG. 1. The site of Ndégétwom



Each year, messengers from Banyo came to demand slaves. The numbers demanded were represented by small sticks attached to strings: long ones for adults, short for children, white for males and black for females. We cannot be precise as to the scale of these annual demands. The Mam-bila of Sonkolong tried to fulfil these demands by raiding the Tikar or the Bamum but they were forced to give up some of their own children and the village faced depopulation.

On 30 January 1983 the notable Mgbwé Ndégétwom Séo related the death of chief Yé as follows:

One day he assembled the notables in the central courtyard of the chief and told them that he was of no use anymore but had to choose children in the village to give to the Lamido of Banyo. It was better that he should die. He hung himself from a tree, followed by his first wife. The notables wanted to follow him. All of them, men and women, more than twenty people, hung themselves from the trees bordering the courtyard of the chiefdom.

This act of collective despair does not seem to have moderated the demands from Banyo. Chief Kea, brother and successor to Ye, had still to deliver slaves.

After him came Nju (Njolomo), who is said to have reigned for only one month. His successor is said to have been Wakatsha, about whom nothing is known.

Then came the reign of Londam, son of Yé. He had been in conflict with Yaji, son of Kéa, who took refuge at the court of the Lamido of Banyo. It is said that he preferred to give as slaves his rival's close relatives. He was not liked by the people.

The population of Sonkolong may have reached two thousand at that time. That of Atta was of similar importance (see below).

### The attack on Ndégétwom

In 1899, roughly two years before the arrival of the Germans, the envoys of the Lamido demanded an unusually large number of slaves (one hundred, it was said). Chief Londam refused. We do not know exactly what happened in Atta but the two chiefdoms were too closely linked to take opposite positions. The Lamido Umaru sent a punitive expedition, but it was during the rainy season and he did not succeed in gathering enough men. His troops attacked Ndégétwom but was pushed back and had to retreat.

The following dry season, Umaru sent a large expedition to attack Sonkolong and Atta in turn. After several assaults his forces managed to get over the defensive wall of Ndégétwom. When they saw that the attackers had penetrated the village, many inhabitants, including young men and women, hung themselves. In retaliation for their losses the soldiers of

the Lamido killed many people. It is said that they tied old men to bundles of roofing straw and burned them alive. When they assembled the prisoners, many refused to leave and were killed on the spot, men and women alike.<sup>5</sup>

Chief Londam, whom the population hated, had left the village after the first unsuccessful FulBe attack and had taken refuge at Kwa, a small village dependent on Atta. There are several versions of his death. In one, the troops of Banyo, having occupied Sonkolong, turned to Atta and forced the chief to hand over Londam, who was then either killed immediately or taken to Banyo and strangled in the prison of the chiefdom. However, in the second version, which is corroborated by the typescript of 7 July 1982, Londam escaped the search by the assailants. Yaji, who was imposed as chief of Sonkolong by the Lamido Umaru, forced the chief of Atta to give Londam over to him. He then sent him to Banyo, where he was executed.

The village of Atta was attacked a few days after Sonkolong, its defensive positions overcome and the survivors raided. The inhabitants of Atta have no precise tradition recalling the course of the conflict. The Banyo troops left the country without leaving any detachments behind but simply gathering prisoners from both villages and going back home.

Djao, an ex-servant of the Lamido born around 1884, whom I interviewed in the 1970s, had seen the expedition return. According to the accounts of the participants, they did not bring back more than three hundred prisoners, some having escaped during the journey. He remembers that he heard someone say, 'we have not brought back many slaves, but we have killed many'. Horedjo Abdoullaye, who was born around 1902 and is presently the oldest notable of the Banyo chiefdom, reckoned in his youth that the numbers were between two hundred and three hundred. According to data which dates from after the first census, no more than four hundred people from both villages would have escaped death or capture. Some of the survivors went back to the plateau, to the territory of the original Mvwop, which was by then almost uninhabited. Others hid in the forest. Yaji, who had been nominated chief of Sonkolong by the Lamido Umaru, regrouped a small core of the population in Ndégétwom. It appears therefore that some eighty per cent of a population of four thousand had been destroyed in order to bring back two hundred and fifty slaves, which, at that time, was regarded as perfectly normal.

### Sonkolong in the German period

The German authorities confirmed Yaji as chief of Sonkolong, and the population which had escaped the raids was able to regroup around him.

5. These accounts are fully confirmed by the traditions of the Banyo chiefdom. Suicide was a common response of raided populations, either by hanging or by refusing to be taken into slavery and being killed on the spot.

However, they suspected that he had given the Lamido the idea for his devastating raid while he had been a refugee in Banyo. He contracted leprosy and had to leave the village to search for a cure in Banyo, where he died. His successor was Kémé, son of Wé, who took the chieftdom to Mvurgwen, to the south-east of the Tor Mvwo mountain. As conditions now seemed safe, there was no more need to stay in such a constricted site as Ndégétwom. As mentioned above, Kémé was dismissed by the German authorities following accusations of slave-dealing and was imprisoned in Banyo. After his release he went to Pfwá, where he died. He was replaced by Gwa, son of Yaji.

As soon as they were established in Banyo, the Germans began to transform the trade route which linked Nso' to the Vuté country into a road, setting up a network of staging posts. One of these was situated at a place called Manyam, near the river Mbam, and was maintained by the inhabitants of Sonkolong. This is why Gwa established the chieftdom at Manyam.

#### Sonkolong since 1915

We know little of the two chiefs called Gwa and Ker, who both lived in Manyam, where they are buried in individual tombs protected by shelters of corrugated metal. However, in 1921 a census was conducted by the administrator F. Lozet, the oldest document we can refer to for the French period. The 1953 census, conducted with the greatest of care by the administrator J. Sablayrolles, is the last document which records an homogenous Mambila population. It shows that half a century after the massacre of 1899, the population of Atta and Sonkolong, with its low birth rate, had reached a level roughly equivalent to a quarter of the numbers estimated for the end of the nineteenth century.

The archival documents<sup>6</sup> give the following figures for Sonkolong:

Date	Adults (male)	Adults (female)	Children	Total
1921	80	63	57	200
1927	58	59	84	201
1930	60	61	82	203
1934	48	47	66	161
1953	132	125	281	538

In 1955, with the help of Mr Joseph Dountio of the Centre Géographique National of Yaoundé, I conducted a demographic study of Atta. This study showed that the birth rate was very high, reaching an average of 8 children per woman who had reached menopause (Hurault 1969, 1970).

6. Governmental archives, Yaoundé, APA 11.901, Census of the Banyo subdivision by F. Lozet and files within APA 11.782B (references communicated by David Zeitlyn).



After 1953, the French administration put a lot of effort into introducing the cultivation of Robusta coffee to the Tikar plain. These plantations became fully productive around 1958–60 and entirely transformed the economy of the Mambila villages in the plain, which up to then had depended on subsistence agriculture. Roads were also built, bringing in an influx of migrants of many different ethnicities. The population increased greatly, as can be seen in the 1983–84 census conducted by the newly created Bankim sub-prefecture:

Sonkolong	2314
Atta	3810
Somié	1650

At the present day the Mambila are in a minority in these villages and are mixed with Tikar, Yamba and Hausa. More detailed research would be needed to determine the exact number of Mambila, but it appears that their number has doubled since 1953.

#### *Appendix: Fortified Sites Linked to the History of Sonkolong and Atta*

The fortified sites of Sonkolong and Atta have been the object of field-work, topographical surveys and aerial photography. For reasons of space, only one of these surveys will be presented here.

Apart from the site of Ndégétwom, where the remains of buildings have been observed,<sup>7</sup> I have evaluated population densities for old villages of the Banyo highlands (which are low by comparison with the compact habitats of the 'Kirdi' of north Cameroon before they came down to the plains). For Banyo I have allowed:

areas of habitat without granaries:	4.0 persons per 100 square metres
habitat with granaries:	2.0 persons per 100 square metres

The first figure can be applied to the fortified camps of the Vuté where the villagers took refuge during short raids only. The second can be applied to the fortified villages, where the population lived permanently with all its grain reserves.

7. Cultivation, together with the action of termites, has the effect that defensive ditches are quickly filled in as soon as the forest is cleared. Walls are less affected. The height of what remains is the most significant indication of the time at which a site was abandoned. Over the whole of the Tikar plain, the fortified sites—which according to specific traditions were used against the FulBe—still retain some of their walls (reaching a minimum height of between 0.80m and 1 metre), although the state of the ditches is variable.

For the Mambila of the plain we can accept that the main part of the crop was stored in the fields (mostly consisting of root crops, which were left in the ground). Assuming that half the cereal harvest was stored within the village, I have allowed an average density of 3.0 persons per 100 square metres. This evaluation process is, of course, merely a first approach to the problem and was only applied to the smallest of the fortified sites. For the more important villages, I have taken into account the space which was clearly reserved for defensive, social and religious use as well as communication routes. The fortified area of Mbamban, where Sonkolong was first established, had a circumference of 1,200 metres and a surface area of 19 hectares. My calculations suggest a population of 4,300 people.

### Ndégetwom

At the end of the twentieth century, the population of Sonkolong had entirely regrouped at Ndégetwom, at the summit of a semi-rocky ridge detached from the Tor Mvwo granite massif. Most of its perimeter is protected by very steep slopes and the site is only accessible via the southern pass, which links it to the Tor Njio mountain. This pass had been barred by a ditch and a wall.

Before the arrival of the Mbor Mambila, Ndégetwom had been occupied by the Mambila Pfwá. A small number of them still live in Sonkolong and still recall the site of their chiefdom.

Nowadays the site of Ndégetwom and the surrounding mountains are covered by a dense forest with an undergrowth of urticaceous plants which make clearing the sites difficult. The survey I undertook on 1 February 1985 with a compass and measuring line was restricted therefore to the line of the ridge and three perpendicular tracks. I found evidence of careful terracing—the work of individuals, since the levels of the terraces do not line up with one another. They are delimited by dry stone walls which frequently reach a height of 5 to 6 metres and even 10 to 12 metres where the slopes are very steep. The areas inside are well levelled.

The royal palace was sited at the summit, on a levelled area in the shape of a trapezoid surrounded by the supporting wall of the adjacent terraces. This site is 45m long and 22–26m wide. It is probable that it spread towards the north to another terrace because the communal tomb of the chief is outside. Moreover, we know that there were forty huts for women, barely fifteen of which could have fitted on the main terrace. The eroded walls of the chief's house (diameter 4m) could be seen in the area which had been cleared properly, together with five huts for women, a hut for secret cults and the hut used for the gatherings of notables (diameter 5m). There also was a small space used for ceremonies, where chief Yé and his notables had hanged themselves. The layout is cramped, showing the need to use every available space.

We can attempt an evaluation of the population density by using the women's huts only. They had a diameter of 3.50 to 3.80 metres, which seems to have been a common size at that time over all of western Adamawa and can be found among the Vuté of Banyo as well as the Mambila of the plateau. The average distance between the centres of the huts was 5 to 6m. On this basis, the habitat areas could number 3.0 huts per 100 square metres, corresponding to six people at the rate of two people per hut (one adult and one child). According to local traditions there were no gardens. Grain was stored in the roofs of the huts but most of the crops were stored in the fields. If we accept that fifteen per cent of the surface area could have been taken up by supporting walls, pathways, cult areas, and probably some areas in dispute, the population could have reached 5.1 persons per hectare of overall surface, i.e. 2,000 people for a total surface area of 3.92 hectares. I estimate that there was a population of around 4,200 within the fortified site of Mbamban. It is therefore possible that the population decreased slightly following the first raids by the Banyo troops or because of epidemics.

### The fortified sites of Atta

It seems that at the time of the struggles against the FulBe, all the Sonkolong population gathered at Ndégétwom. At the same time the Atta population was distributed over three defensive sites (see Map 1) with a total surface area of 8.5 hectares. One of these, at the summit of the Tor Gar mountain was very narrow, the other two less so. By referring to the settlement patterns of the extreme north of Cameroon (among the 'Kirdi') we can find a likely figure for the population density. If we accept that the areas without buildings could have occupied fifteen per cent of this site, the population could have been  $7.2 \times 300 = 2,160$ . This size of population would have been similar to that of Sonkolong.

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## ELDRIDGE MOHAMMADOU ON TIKAR ORIGINS

DAVID ZEITLYN

### *Introduction*

ELDRIDGE MOHAMMADOU has recently published (1990) a detailed overview of the history of the groups in Southern Adamawa. This is the first survey to be published since the International African Institute survey volumes of the 1950s, and the work is a testimony to Mohammadou's considerable field-work throughout the area. Although specialists may differ with Mohammadou with regard to the details, both he and his publishers, ILCAA,<sup>1</sup> should be praised for making this synthesis available. It challenges the workers in the field to improve their data and to take account of the wider context, both historical and geographical. This contrasts with the specific focus of anthropologists concerned with single groups. So, for example, Mohammadou challenges Tardits' account of Bamun history (1980) by putting it in the general context of the history of pre-colonial Cameroon. This allows him to take into account their interaction with neighbouring populations in a wide historical perspective. Mohammadou does not subscribe to any crude version of diffusionism nor to the narrow views of a local socio-political auto-genesis or the systematic belief of spontaneous generation. In another publication, he concludes: 'This short-sightedness in historical perspective seems to us to be directly inherited from the inadequacies of the African historiography of the colonial era whose domi-

1. Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (Tokyo).

nating tendency favoured ethnic and partitioned histories of Africa. It is high time that the present generations rediscover the great underlying and fundamental unity of the history of Africa in general and that of the history of Cameroon in particular' (1986: 271).<sup>2</sup>

The origin of the Tikar, which has recently been discussed by Fowler and Zeitlyn (1996), is a case in point: the issue of Tikar origins has been a leitmotif of studies in the Grassfields, and although resolved in general terms for the Grassfield groups themselves (Chilver and Kaberry 1971; Jeffreys 1964; Price 1979), the identity of the Tikar remains something of a historical puzzle. There are, in fact, two questions of origin. Unfortunately, a failure to distinguish between them has led to the persistence of the problem in the literature. How we should explain the Grassfield politics that claim a Tikar origin is a separate question from the origin of the Tikar people living on the Tikar Plain, who speak the Tikar language.

Hence, it seems fitting to present Sally Chilver with a summary of Eldridge Mohammadou's work on Tikar origins, as a tribute both to Sally herself—who has so often produced epitomes of work otherwise inaccessible and distributed copies to her colleagues along the 'Kingston Road Samizdat network'—and to Eldridge Mohammadou. Mohammadou is explicitly concerned with wider regional issues. The summary below is my own synopsis (or epitome) of Mohammadou's summary of his argument (Mohammadou 1990: 287–99).

### *Eldridge Mohammadou's Survey of Tikar History*

The main question at issue is the origin of the founders of the dynasties and the palace institutions of the different Tikar-speaking groups. How much credit is to be given to claims of Mbum origin? To answer this, a variety of evidence must be considered, including oral tradition and historical linguistics. The nomenclatures used by different groups, both for themselves and, for example, for the Mbum, provide another source of evidence.

The main hypothesis is that the Tikar kingdoms of the middle Mbam arose from invasions of Bâré-Chamba in the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are two subsidiary hypotheses. First, the sequence of the formation of the Tikar kingdoms and their overthrow dates from a more recent period than has been previously supposed. Second, following from this, the ethnonym connot-

2. Readers should also note that Mohammadou's regional perspective has led to an interesting difference in opinion about the explanations for the 'demographic crisis' of central Cameroon, which appears to have been severely depopulated in the nineteenth century. Whereas Hurault (e.g. 1969) identifies the FulBe as the main agents of this change, Mohammadou sees them as latecomers following in the tracks of the Bâré-Chamba.

ing the political and cultural 'Tikar' only dates from this period. The connection with the Mbum is then a secondary re-interpretation.

### Historical summary

The Bâré-Chamba preceded the FulBe and were pushed south by them in their turn. Passing by the towns of Tibati and Banyo, they then pushed south in the corridor formed by the Mbum and Kim rivers to the south-west of Tibati. This resulted in the first generation of Tikar kingdoms. They then moved west, founding Nditam on the way to Fumban, Nso', Bafut and Baleng. Subsequent waves of Bâré-Chamba invaders attacked these first-generation kingdoms and also founded second-wave kingdoms such as Ngambe, Bêñ-Bêñ, Kong, Ina and Wé. Chronologies for some of these chiefdoms (based on chief lists) give foundation dates as follows: Bankim 1760–80; Nditam 1767–81; Ngambé 1788–1809; Kong 1795.

### Nomenclature

There are four series of names:

- (1) Tikár(i), Tíkr, Tikálí, Tigár, Tigâ, Tigé, Tigê, ngír (Tí-ngír)—used by some of the Tikar kingdoms and by Mbum of Tibati from whom the FulBe borrowed the term 'Tikar', e.g. Ngambe and Nditam.
- (2) Tímù, Tímù, Tùmù, Tùùm, Twùmwù—used on the Tikar Plain around Bankim and among the neighbours of the Tikar on the plain: the Mambila and Kwanja.
- (3) ɬòòŋ, ɬwòŋ, ɣtòòŋ, ɣtwòŋ—used in the small kingdoms between the River Mbum and River Kim, such as Ina, Wé and ɣjbɛŋ-ɣjbɛŋ.
- (4) ɣdom, Ndómé, Ndómɛ́, Ndòbɛ́, Ndòb', Ndobw', Ndobe, Ndòbò, Ndòbà, Ndòb, Ndòp—used by Vuté both in the north around Banyo/Tibati and in the south around Yoko, as well as in the Grassfields themselves.

There are two base roots for these names: Tí for the first two, Ndób or Ndó' for the second two. Ndób/Ndó is the oldest.<sup>3</sup> The base root is dó or dò. It should be noted that the /b/ affix is the plural in the surrounding Mambiloid languages (it occurs as both an prefix and suffix in different Mambila dialects). In particular, when repeated on either side of a proper name it denotes a group. Hence, in Mambila bò ʒwe bò are the Kwe people (the Kwanja). Therefore, we can explain Vuté or Vútɛ́ as deriving from bɛ́Tíbɛ́ or vɛ́Tíbɛ́ (bɛ́ - Tí - bɛ́)—that is, the Tí.

Turning next to Tí, the second root. Tùmù is taken to derive from Tímò, which can be glossed as 'the Tù person', or 'the Tí'. It should be

3. For example, Koelle 1963: 20 gives the Tikar for person as *ndób/budób*.

noted that both Tùmù and Ndób are used in Bankim, while Tigê and Ndòmé occur on the left bank of the Mbam at Ngambe, Kong and the Bâré-Chamba term for 'chief'. Hence, Ti-gâ is the Chief of the Ti. The Ti (and their chief) conquered the Ndòb/Ndom to create the Bankim kingdom. The conquering chief then installed his followers on the right bank of the Mbam River. These were known as the Ti of the Chief, i.e. Ti-ga or Tikar.

One of the goals of the following historical reconstruction is to explain the relationship between the Bâré-Chamba chiefs (gá) and the population called Tí.

### Historical reconstruction

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, central Cameroon from Mbum and Djérem in the north (Tibati) to the Mbam and Sanaga rivers in the south (from Bafia to Bélabo) was occupied by a Bantu-speaking population called Tí or bàTí. At this point the Vuté were on the Tignère Plateau. The Ndombi (ancestors of the Tikar) were in the zone between Vuté and the Ti (to their south)—that is, on the edge of Adamawa from Ngoundal to Tibati as well as the Banyo Plateau. Although different ethnonyms are used, it should be stressed that the Ndombi and the Mbum of the high plateau of Ngaoundere formed a cultural continuum.

The descent of the Vuté to the south pushed the Ndombi further south still, in part on to the Yoko Plateau and into the Middle Mbum as well as on to the Tikar Plain. This southwards pressure forced a corresponding movement of the Tí to their south. The southwards movement of the Vuté separated the Ndombi from the Mbum. The Vuté took the Tí town of Tibati, and while retaining their own language they adopted the denomination of the autochthones, Bàtí or Bute/Vuté. This occurred in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was at this time that the first raids of the Bâré-Chamba left the Upper High Benue.<sup>4</sup> One branch went west and founded the Jukun kingdoms and the Chamba chiefdom of Donga, etc. Another branch came down on to the Tignère plateau to Tibati, where it split into three parts. From Tibati subsequent raids left in different directions: to the west, in the direction of the Mbum headquarters and the Banyo Plateau; to the south-west, in the corridor formed by the Middle Mbum and the Kim, to the Tikar country; to the south, towards Yoko and the Sanaga; to the east, between Djérem and Lom, towards Pangar and Bétaré-Oya.

These raids are now scarcely remembered in comparison to the FulBe raids of the nineteenth century. The raiders proceeded in a succession of leaps, pushing refugees before them, marrying and settling where they had conquered, thereby changing their ethnic identity. But they are characterized by their use of horses, poisoned arrows and being accompanied by a large group of smiths. Also, the extreme nature of the raids marked a

4. This is well before the beginning of the Sokoto Jihad.

change in the patterns of warfare in the region. These raids, like those of the FulBe who followed them, were marked by burning, pillaging, and the massacre of both old people and those they could not enslave.

In fifty years this changed the whole of central Cameroon. The autochthones fled south, depopulating the central zone to the benefit of the central forest and the Grassfields. Hence the Chamba raids caused the last savannah Bantus to cross the Sanaga river, as well as resulting in the arrival of Ndobe (Tikar) people in the Grassfields.

Sociologically speaking, what happened was that the predominant segmentary, acephalous societies were replaced by different chiefdoms with different degrees of centralization which facilitated the formation of five dynasties. Some of the Ti clustered into small groups on the right bank of the Sanaga and retained the name Bati. Tibati itself, a chiefdom formed of a mixture of Vuté and Ti before the Chamba conquered it, was ripe for Chamba expansion. Some of these Tibati chiefs (Ti-gâ) fled the Chamba towards the Tikar Plain, where they found small chiefdoms of the Ndombi, which they conquered, forming their own chiefdoms on that foundation, e.g. Bamkim. Conquered by invaders, these autochthonous chiefdoms gave rise to the 'Mbum origin' story.

What of the Mbum themselves? Since the FulBe conquest, the Mbum have been found near Tibati (the frontiers follow the River Méré and its tributary the River Mawor). Consider the possibility that the Mbum were on the Adamawa Plateau before the Vuté and were already in the Tibati area beside the Ti when the Vuté arrived. In that case, they would only have been pushed a few kilometres further east when the Vuté took their place. The central Mbum group were the Wari, centred on Àsòm or Sòm (now called Mballassom). Granted this, the origins of what are now called the Mbum can be explained with a double hypothesis. First, Mbum migrations to the Ndómbi occurred before the Chamba invasion. These must have reached the Mbam/Kimi confluence and founded 'Tikar chiefdoms' among the indigenous Ndómbi before the middle of the eighteenth century in the course of which they adopted the Ndómbi language.

This is the locally held version of events. There are no external forces motivating the migrations, nor the export of the 'Tikar model' to the Grassfields. However, the suggested chronology poses problems for this version of events, suggesting that the Mbum migration coincides with the arrival of the Bâré-Chamba. Also, this would be an exception to the Mbum tradition that all their expansion was peaceful, that they did not wage war until the FulBe arrived. But the Tikar tradition says that Kimi was founded when Tumu asked the Tikar to cross to the left bank of the Mbam to protect them from the warring Kwanja. This leads to the second hypothesis, which, counter to the former version of events, concerns the manner in which the 'Tikar model' was diffused towards the Grassfields. The diffusion from a single source of small groups led by minor princes is implausible, their success in conquering unlikely. What you have is segmentary lineages adopting a migratory ideology and a style of fighting from some immi-



grants. But this is likely to have occurred over a long period of time and not from a single source. However, the Bâré-Chamba invasions of the second half of the eighteenth century can explain all these phenomena.

Bankim was the oldest and strongest dynasty founded by the first invaders from the north, midway between the Adamawa Plateau and the Grassfields. Before becoming a major trade route linking these poles, the Mbam-Kim corridor was the main route for successive invasions of Bâré-Chamba. It was these which in a half century exported the 'Tikar model' to the Grassfields, including the Bamun and the Bamiléké.

The motive for this expansion is to be found in the militarism of the Bâré-Chamba. They had military superiority in the form of horses, bows and poisoned arrows. They were accompanied by an important group of blacksmiths and thus could renew their arsenal as they went. However, as they assimilated elements of the groups they had conquered, their expansionist dynamism gradually diminished. Hence the Chamba invaders who formed the Bali kingdoms in the Bamenda region around 1830 are the last of a long series.

Thus Mbum migration is rejected as a key to explaining Tikar history. Simple chiefdoms were installed among the Ndómbi by Mbum elements before 1750. Only after this, in the period of the Chamba raids, did the Tikar dynasties of the Middle Mbam emerge.

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## LETTER TO V. G. FANSO

SALLY CHILVER

*In November 1992, Sally Chilver wrote to the historian Dr (now Professor) V. G. Fanso of Yaoundé University discussing Eldridge Mohammadou's theories. In this letter, she drew his attention to the series of publications of the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, which is available free to serious researchers.<sup>1</sup> The following pages reproduce the main body of that letter since it not only includes a serious critique of Mohammadou's position, but also well conveys the importance of Sally's continuing correspondence with scholars from all round the world, many of whom find her letters the best (and sometimes only) way of keeping up with developments in Cameroon studies.*

I thought I ought to draw your attention to the Tikar part of [Mohammadou 1990] in case you have not got it, and attach an epitome of his argument.

Well, I don't go along with it, but Eldridge Mohammadou's work is never to be sneezed at. He puts all his cards on the table, his sources are always clear, he never neglects archival or early ethnographic sources (in four languages), and he provides plenty of texts. When he advances a hypothesis, he makes a clear distinction between types of evidence. His book

1. Available from The Publication Service, African Languages and Ethnography, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Nishigara 4, Kita-ku, Tokyo, Japan.

on Garoua, published by Bordeaux University/CNRS, is an important contribution and deserved the prize it received. He always makes one rethink one's own inferences, both on larger issues and on significant detail.

Now both Ian Fowler and I, from different standpoints, have been looking around for evidence that a raid or series of raids preceded, with quite a long time-lapse, the invasions of the Ba'ni associated with Gawolbe. There is some apparent convergence of traditions:

(a) the flight of an early Bamum ruler to Nkogham and his burial there (recorded by Tardits);

(b) the flight, on similar lines, from Kovvifēm to Taavisa' of Fon Nso';

(c) Babungo traditions of the invasion of the 'Montē', associated with the arrival of the refugee Ntuur master-smelter who helps start the improved furnace type (recorded by Fowler 1990);

(d) the insistence of the smaller Ndop chiefdoms that the first raiding long preceded the arrival of Bali-Kumbad;

(e) Western accounts of the passage past Bafut of raiders towards the Katsina Ala valley, sometimes called Muti or Mudi (Hawkesworth and others; Garbosa; Geary); and

(f) Tiv accounts of early disturbances in this area caused by mounted raiders (the Bohannans and R. G. Armstrong).

The past evidence has been examined by Richard Fardon (1988), from whose work we can tentatively pick up a possible set of precursors, the Péré. These are identifiable with Garbosa's Pyere; the Peli of the Bali chiefdoms (who still keep their own flags, e.g. Ga Konntan of Bali-Gham, Ga Sabum/Ga Muti of Bali-Kumbad), also known as Konntan; and the Potopo or Kotofo, the ruling stratum of the Kutin in the southern part of the Koncha lamidoship.

It is a pity that more work has not been done in the Furu-Mashi-Nser area, though. Having said that, we must also be aware, in comparing later and earlier accounts of apparently the same events, that oral tradition rearranges the past in terms of the present, that event time may be either telescoped or extended, that common story-telling conventions influence oral history, that names and ethnonyms suffer many kinds of corruption and displacement. Moreover, we now have to consider what Jack Goody calls the interface between literacy and orality and be on the look-out for the feedback from early European conjectures and Islamic historiography re-emerging at a later date with an aura of authenticity. Material now collected (say post-1970) will now also be influenced by unquoted pamphlet literature which has passed into gossip, e.g. Rabiato Njoya's pamphlet. These feedbacks can often be spotted and call for the same arts from the ethnohistorian as from, say, the student of Shakespeare's history plays; they are surface problems. There are the deeper ones which affect both informant and recorder, the 'cultural concepts' which affect the production of history anywhere and the polemical or didactic uses it can be put to, such as the definition of particular social identities. Seldom mentioned is the

common abhorrence for a vacuum in the record, oral or written. This tends to get filled up in various ways, for example, by plausible hypotheses (the evolutionist paradigm, the Hamitic hypothesis) or by plausible fictions which may become politically or artistically important, e.g. the fake Osianic corpus for Europe's Celts. I am probably as guilty as others.

Eldridge Mohammadou advances his hypotheses clearly and modestly. They are directed to the solution of the 'Tikar problem', which Kaberry and I (1971) tried to convert into a non-problem for the benefit of the Grassfields Bantu linguists by suggesting that the dissemination of institutions from point to point, rather than the migration of peoples, could account for a lot. Mohammadou explicitly rejects our hypothesis. If we accept his, we have to fit in the processes of state formation in Bamum, Nso' and Bafut, to take the three biggest, into some 60–70 years; well, not impossible, but a tight fit. The chronology, upon which much hangs, is based on the assumption that the reported septennial king killings of Mbum were regular and real and adopted by the Tikar, or some.

The present Kimi rulers' claim to be Mbum is, he agrees (with Hagège and others), to be mistaken, and thus if Kimi had a Mbum dynasty it must have been prior to 1750. Nevertheless he retains a septennial chronology for the Kimi king-list after the presumed arrival of the new Tikar dynasty, which, he explains, may come from the general direction of Mbum but is 'really' Bare-Chamba, and neither Tumu (the autochthones) nor Mbum. Since much of the argument hangs on this chronology, one is bound to say it is a slender thread.

It then follows that if the Bamum and Nso' dynasties (and those of Bafut, Baleng, etc.) are 'really' Bare-Chamba ('Tikar'), they are of very recent origin—elder cousins of Bali-Nyonga and Bali-Kumbad, as it were—and that we can dismiss antecedent sites and legends: the 'miraculous princes' established themselves by force of arms. It may well be that Mohammadou has dealt with some of the cracks in the argument in earlier publications (e.g. 1986) which I don't have.

But I find it more disturbing that we are told, in the style of Champaud (1965), of Tikar-Ndobo 'waves of migration' that, after the settlement of Bankim/Kimi, roll over the land, first after 1760 or so and then again after a second Bare-Chamba arrival, and rapidly form chiefdoms out of the earlier 'segmentary and acephalous' polities of the Grassfields. All this happens without leaving any linguistic traces (except in the Bali chiefdoms, of course, where, with the help of the Fon's secretary, A. W. Daiga, vocabularies of Wute, Mbum (Nyamnyam), Tikali (Tumu), and distinct 'Mbam-Nkam' languages close to Mungbaka could be collected as late as 1960). And would one not expect some more loan-words, supposing such a lightning linguistic conversion of the conquerors by the conquered?

So there are, to my mind, too many interlinked hypotheses for comfort.

Now for plausibilities: that the pre-Fulani raids galvanized a process of compaction, resisting and greater centralization (as Warnier in Nkwi and

Warnier 1982 had already suggested) in the Grassfields is entirely plausible. So is the proposition that the Bare-Chamba arrived in two main groups and that the, or a, or some of the earlier lot encamped, or settled among or near the Tumu-speaking 'Tikar' groups. The rough dates he suggests for the arrival of the earlier contingents is not implausible per se; though one would like more cogent reasons than either his (or mine). Nor can one quarrel with the proposition that the insecurity and fear inspired by raids occasioned movements of groups to safer areas. One recalls, for example, the story collected by P. F. Lacroix from the Banyo Lamido that the raids he ascribed to 'Dingdings' (Dingyi? i.e. Chamba) softened up the opposition to Mwömbwö of Bamum, enabling him to incorporate and enserf many of the 'Pa Ghet' chiefdoms or send them fleeing across the Nun.

It is easy to pick holes in other people's work and cavalier to do so when the writer has covered so much ground one has not tackled oneself and has made a prodigious study of the literature and archives. One should try to offer a better alternative. One would certainly have to concern oneself with onomastic questions viewed historically and in the light of the history of 'Tikar' ethnogenesis. But if one is concerned with 'real history' and not 'mentalities' one would also have to concern oneself with questions he barely touches: the linguistic evidence and its interpretation, such evidence as we have from archaeology, palaeobotany and biogeography, climatic records, even equine veterinary science. A life work, too late for me to start!

In so far as the Chamba themselves are concerned, it would be hard to go beyond what Fardon (1988, 1991) has written, except on the Donga and Nigerian border side, but perhaps too late for that. Much of the 'Tikali' evidence will have vanished under the barrage lake for good, apart from the snippets rescued by Hurault. But to return to a point Fardon makes about the transformation of the Batta, Chamba, Wute, Péré and some Mbum and Tumu-Tikar into predators, a south-north look at the Arabic literature might reveal some clues. Can we explain the trajectories solely in terms of an expanding slaving frontier, leaving burnt-out areas behind, or, in the second push, solely in terms of Fulani pressure? Should we neglect Frobenius' reports, and those of the Chronicles of Bornu recording a series of eighteenth-century droughts and famines—there are some Mandara ones too. Can the palaeoclimatologists help?

Finally, one wonders why it is assumed as axiomatic that the peoples of the Grassfields were incapable of inventing and developing chiefdoms for themselves and were relatively primitive? Two decades after the last Bare-Chamba raids, Barth's trader informants (appendix to Vol. 2, 1857) give a different picture of 'Mbafu'.

I've said nothing in detail about Eldridge Mohammadou's handling of the Ti which he equates with the Bantu speakers of the Mbam and Sanaga areas. If he is right, they must be distinct from Koelle's Pati, the Kpati who turn up in Takum, the Bati of Bali-Kumbad, the Ti-Gawolbe of Bali-Nyonga and their 'brothers' who wandered to Banssoa. Given that Nyong-

pasi was supposedly a Chamba on his mother's side, his father Pati (the Chamba proper have a complicated double unilineal descent system), the plot thickens and one might say that there is a 'Pati problem'. So my priority for archaeological research might now be that part of south-west Bamum called Kupaŕë, though one can't be dead certain that it was the Kuti or Tsën of Bali tradition, said to be the base to which elements of Gawolbe's army returned. There is more than one Kuti.

There are two odd omissions from Eldridge Mohammadou's bibliography. One is Thorbecke's four-volume geographical survey of the trans-Mbam Tikar-Wute area (1914-24), and the other is the original, fuller, edition of Barth's travels (five vols.). He only quotes M. P. (Frau) Thorbecke's book, which is odd, given the other early material he has dug out. Also missing is Hurault's brief report in Africa (1988).

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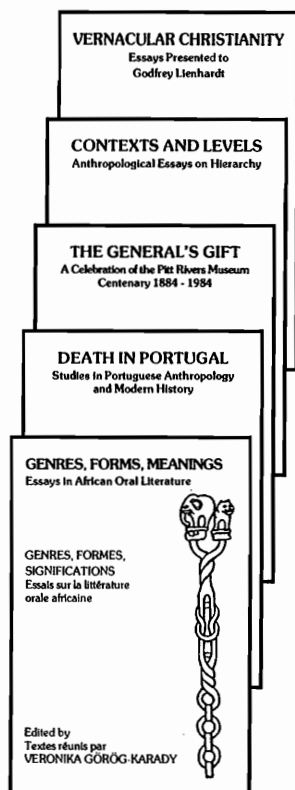
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## BOOK REVIEWS

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BEN FINNEY, *Voyage of Rediscovery: A Cultural Odyssey through Polynesia*, Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press 1994. xviii, 400 pp., Figures, Appendixes, Bibliography, Index. \$30.00.

The polemical object of this book is Andrew Sharp's claim that Polynesians were technically incapable of purposeful voyaging beyond three hundred miles of open sea and that they had therefore populated Oceania through accidental landings by drifting boats. Computer studies have been made to test the plausibility of Sharp's drift hypothesis, but other means were also needed. By the 1960s Polynesian voyaging canoes had disappeared and their navigation practices were largely forgotten. Finney and others decided to reconstruct their canoes and means of navigation. They first built a double-hulled Hawaiian sailing canoe in the 1960s, which they tested in Santa Barbara and Hawaii for its ability to sail against the wind. Having successfully completed those tests Finney eventually moved to the University of Hawaii, where he found new companions, with whom he formed the Polynesian Voyaging Society. Finney and others in the society set about designing and constructing a larger double-hulled canoe intended for open-sea sailing. The resulting design was a compromise between speculative reconstruction and the need to use modern materials. In 1976, a mixed crew sailed this boat from Hawaii to Tahiti. Since no traditional Polynesian navigators were available, they invited Mau Piailug, a master from Satawal in the Caroline Islands, to guide the boat without the use of modern instruments over the crossing of more than 2,200 nautical miles of open sea. The voyage involved making up the five hundred miles by which Tahiti lies farther to the east than Hawaii against prevailing winds. Despite the fact that he was sailing in foreign seas and under part unfamiliar southern skies, on the thirtieth day Piailug accurately predicted imminent landfall in the Tuamotus. As he returned to Satawal from Tahiti, the crew made the return voyage using modern instruments. Favourable winds meant that this trip lasted only twenty-two days.

Subsequently a young Hawaiian, Nainoa Thompson, trained himself in traditional navigation techniques and in 1980 guided the canoe to Tahiti and back, without any external confirmation of position during the voyage. Using satellite tracking for comparison with Thompson's continuously up-dated dead reckoning of position, the team was able to compile evidence concerning the cause and effects of any errors. For the first time in centuries, a Polynesian navigator had guided a canoe between Hawaii and Tahiti and back, which also constituted a widely appreciated act of cultural revival. Hawaiians kept the canoe sailing in local waters as a floating classroom for teaching schoolchildren and others about the boat and its technology. Then in 1985 the vessel



set out on a 12,000 nautical mile voyage of two years' duration which was to take it to Tahiti, Rarotonga and New Zealand and back, via Samoa.

Finney and his co-authors have written this book in an uncontentious and easily accessible style, judiciously distinguishing what has been proven by these voyages from what has not. They give very useful discussions of the historical, archaeological and anthropological issues relevant to the developing debates about Polynesian navigation and settlement, as well as quite compelling accounts of the voyages and the reactions to them by the inhabitants of the islands. Although a rather different book, this account of experimental voyaging in the Pacific is a worthy companion volume to Thomas Gladwin's *East is a Big Bird* and David Lewis's *We the Navigators*, which explored traditional navigational techniques in Micronesia and prepared the way for the projects described here. What is most encouraging is that the authors have demonstrated that there are practical ways of exploring sailing skills for which there are no longer living witnesses. They and the sailors who sailed the canoe have greatly increased the probability that long-distance intentional voyaging by ancient Polynesians will be accepted as fact in modern scholarship.

R. H. BARNES

LIONEL CAPLAN, *Warrior Gentlemen: 'Gurkhas' in the Western Imagination*, Providence and Oxford: Berghahn 1995. ix, 181pp, Index, References. £26.00.

The quotation marks in the subtitle of the book are important to note: this book is about the constructed category of the 'Gurkhas' as represented in military and regimental histories, Anglo-Indian fiction, and in contemporary British imagination. Caplan tells us in his Introduction that the 'military writings, which are authored principally by British officers who have served with Gurkhas, may be said to constitute a particular mode of "orientalist" discourse, in as much as they pass as an authoritative and superior body of knowledge about "others" which these others can or do not possess about themselves, and also in the sense that they essentialize these others through generalization about their inherent natures' (p. 1). Caplan clearly shares Said and Clifford's 'disaffection with the tendency to conflate and thus essentialize European representations of non-European others [and this] underlies the present essay' (p. 2). But while Caplan points out that the subjects of his book are constituted in the very process of writing about them and can thus be understood best as a fiction, he does not subscribe to the view that nothing exists outside the text. Caplan does not take the 'the literary turn in anthropology' but 'attends to the textual strategies and devices employed by military writers, while constantly referring them to the politico-military settings in relation to which they are produced and reproduced, and in the contexts of which their meanings become more readily understood' (p. 10).

In Chapter 1, the author provides the background to the problem with an account of the nature of the encounter between Nepal and imperial Britain and the dynamics of the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814 to 1816 during which the British first 'discovered' the Gurkhas. Although Nepal lost the war, the British discovered the fighting qualities of the Nepalese army. The British gained large tracts of hill districts as a result of a treaty signed after the war and gradually recruited Nepalis into the Indian army, organising them along regimental lines. This process lasted over several decades, during which time the category of 'Gurkha' slowly came into being. Unfortunately, Caplan does not tell us explicitly what this term connotes till quite late in the book. The Gurkhas were praised as a quintessentially martial race, with qualities of bravery and stealth in jungle warfare, who made playful and cheerful soldiers, and were loyal if a bit simple-minded.

Chapter 2 deals with the 'ecology of military service', i.e. the socio-economic conditions which forced a section of the Nepali population to seek their livelihood outside the country because of the internal pressure of land and increased impoverishment. This is a fruitful and interesting discussion which points to the real reasons why Gurkhas join the army, rather than remain with an innate martiality. Caplan also discusses the growth of the remittance economy in native villages as a result of the soldiers' earnings and the altered power balances they create.

Chapter 3 is a detailed discussion of the background of the officers who led the Gurkhas and of the socio-cultural profile of the Victorian elite which joined the East India Company's army. This leads on to the central chapter of the book, which is about representing the Gurkhas. It is a striking feature about the discourse on the Gurkhas that it is produced almost exclusively by the British officers who commanded them. Based on regimental histories and interviews with retired officers, Caplan provides a picture of the distinctive identity of Gurkha regiments and their rituals and customs. The overwhelming feature of all literary representations of the Gurkhas is the high degree of essentialism, Nepalis being contrasted with the 'effeminate races of the South', masculine hillmen with feminine plainsmen, the terse, energetic language of the Gurkhas, free-spirited yeomans as opposed to humble, cringing low castes. Caplan points out that this sort of discourse is in keeping with Victorian racial theories, despite the analytical problem of applying a single term 'Gurkhas' to the peoples of the middle hills of Nepal. 'The area was settled by ethnically and linguistically diverse populations, occupying different locations in a national caste hierarchy, and distinguished internally in terms of numerous economic and cultural criteria. On the whole, most military authors disregarded this heterogeneity in their assumptions about the uniformity of Gurkha customs and traditions, and of course in their stereotypes of Gurkha character traits. Most significantly, differences were rendered insignificant by the premise of a common 'biology' which transmitted the collective martial inheritance' (pp. 119–20).

An important additional reason behind this stereotyping was the Indian mutiny of 1857. As the Bengal Army had mutinied and the Gurkhas and Sikhs had remained 'loyal', it was no coincidence that the former were labelled weak-spirited in contrast to

the martial races of the Gurkhas and the Sikhs. This is an aspect of the discussion which Caplan could have made more of. By providing a comparative framework with the other 'martial races' of India, principally the Sikhs and the Pathans (who are only mentioned in passing), the study could have revealed much more of the historical-colonial context that Caplan intends to provide. Clearly at one level the Gurkhas are like the other martial races, but at the same time they occupy a unique place in the British imagination. Caplan's book tells us more about the latter than the former.

Chapter 5 has a rare discussion of the notion of 'courage' in general and among the Gurkhas in particular. Caplan draws on Western philosophical definitions to delineate existing notions of courage in the Western imagination and by extension among the British officers. He then tries to explicate local notions of courage among the Gurkhas themselves, particularly in light of the fact that they do not valorize honour and violent action (unlike the Pathans and Middle Eastern societies, for instance) in their cultural repertoire. The result of this discussion is an interesting conclusion: bravery among the Gurkhas is recognised as a virtue only when rewarded by British honours.

The most interesting contribution which Caplan makes to the discussion is to see the Gurkhas as a mirror image of the Victorian schoolboy. Qualities of 'humour, good breeding, honesty, sportsmanship, courtesy and relaxed attitude to religious practice, taken together added up to the portrait of the Gurkha soldier as young gentleman' (p. 147). The Gurkhas were warriors as well as gentlemen, and it is this combination that makes them unique in the military history of British India.

Caplan certainly achieves his desired objective: 'through situating the depictions of these soldiers by their officer-chroniclers in the complex, changing historical and politico-military conditions of military India, semi-colonial Nepal, and post-imperial Britain...our understanding of the Gurkha Project is enhanced' (p. 158). Warrior gentlemen will be of interest to scholars of colonial and post-colonial institutions, gender and constructions of masculinities, ethnographers of Nepal and South Asia and to historians of the Raj. But its approachable length and style makes it interesting reading for all.

MUKULIKA BANERJEE

RASMUSSEN, SUSAN J., *Spirit Possession and Personhood among the Kel Ewey Tuareg*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995. xii, 179pp., Index, References. £35.00 (\$49.95).

*Spirit Possession and Personhood among the Kel Ewey Tuareg* is a welcome and vital contribution to the anthropological study of possession, also revealing the necessity of an in-depth knowledge and appreciation of ethnographic detail and the impor-

tance of focused and detailed fieldwork. The analysis begins with the complete description of one particular woman's experience of spirit possession and a discussion of her biography and local interpretations. Throughout the analysis which follows, case histories are quoted to illustrate particular arguments. While Rasmussen's writing style can be rather laboured and dense, perseverance is rewarded by an insightful discussion of possession, which is in turn used to illuminate social and cultural processes among the Tuareg of Niger. Spirit possession has long been a popular topic in the anthropology of religion, and with this publication, it gets a much-needed reappraisal and update. Rasmussen places her work firmly amongst that which is currently rethinking traditional anthropological approaches to possession. In doing so she has provided a logical framework for the examination of possession from within a particular culture.

The Tuareg are a nomadic people of North and Sahelian Africa whose society is hierarchically stratified and who used to be slave-owners. Women traditionally held considerable power, even to the extent of choosing the paramount chiefs. Increasing sedentarization, especially since the droughts of the 1980s and the restructuring of the traditional nomadic/slave-owning economy, has resulted in increased pressure on the status of women. This pressure is further compounded by Islamic practices concerning inheritance and power which conflict with traditionally more equitable ones. Tuareg society can thus be seen in terms of a series of conflicts: between nobles, blacksmiths, and former slaves; between men and women; between Muslim and non-Muslim practices; and finally between age groups. In her book, Rasmussen undertakes a detailed analysis of spirit possession from the point of view of the aesthetics, style, imagery and local discourse surrounding the ritual, which leads her to argue that possession 'metaphorically encapsulates the ironies and contradictions of being a Tuareg' (p. 7).

Following an excellent introduction, in which Rasmussen clearly outlines her aim to 'explore how far possession imagery connotes docile endurance and how far it generates critical social commentary' (p. 2), initial discussion of spirit possession ritual or *Tande n Goumaten* is approached through a case-study of the possession of one particular woman. Spirit possession afflicts women almost exclusively and can be inherited through the female line. It is described as a feeling of isolation, as being 'in the wilderness', and denotes feelings of desolation and depression, expressed through physical symptoms such as muteness. It is treated by a *Tande n Goumaten* ceremony, which involves a revealing discourse between the patient, singers, the player of the *Tande* drum and the audience. The patient begins the ritual while lying prone under a blanket. She then rises to her knees, dressed in the indigo veil, traditionally associated with men, and holding a man's sword. She dances the 'head dance', a delicate and graceful swaying of the head, then the neck and finally the whole upper body. The imagery of the swaying branches of a tree is a potent symbol in Tuareg aesthetics. Throughout, the singers and drumming combine with comments from the audience of a joking nature to bring about the final collapse of the patient from exhaustion as the spirits who were dancing leave her body.

Both male attire and bridal imagery alluding to inverted and liminal states are used as significant images during the ceremony. Possession does not afflict every woman and frequently occurs either just before or after marriage, or later, when a woman's daughters are getting married. It is then that many women who were acclaimed singers and musicians find themselves socially restrained from those very activities which brought them attention and satisfaction, at which point they become the patient. 'There is a common thread throughout the various local explanations: the secret repressed sentiments underlying the public cure' (p. 87). Marriage and illicit love are seen as involving the repression of true feelings and as thus providing the potential for possession to occur. Rasmussen dissects the ceremony in all its aspects and examines every possible trigger of social tension which can lead to possession. The whole concept of Tuareg aesthetics and its importance in interpreting the culture is related to traditional knowledge and power systems. Possession as approached through the conflicts in Tuareg society 'may be interpreted as a struggle for the control of Tuareg identity at both symbolic and political levels' (p. 91).

Brief but imperative explanations of Tuareg cosmology, society, class structure, composition and social mobility are left till near the end, along with details of kinship roles and relationships. The salient points being related to the Tuareg attempt to maintain traditional class distinctions despite the freeing of slaves and changing economic circumstances, which are increasing social mobility and blurring traditional relationships. The prosperous are no longer necessarily the nobles. Possession songs are given a thorough inspection, their melodies and rhythms being evaluated as well as their words.

This book should take its place on any reading list dealing with the topics of religion, cosmology and possession, both for its useful methodological approach and for placing its discussion of possession squarely within the cultural aesthetics and wider issues facing Tuareg society, by which it is bound.

MARIE-CLAIRE BAKKER

DANIEL DE COPPET (ed.), *Understanding Rituals*, London and New York: Routledge (EASA Series) 1992. viii, 116 pp., Indexes. £9.99.

The six papers in this volume all derive from a panel held at the first EASA conference in Coimbra in 1990. The editor, Daniel de Coppet, is perhaps most deserving of recognition for having led the way in applying the ideas of Louis Dumont on hierarchical opposition and value to the analysis of ritual. De Coppet himself, who provides only the Introduction, refers to these ideas in the context of his own suggestion that the distinction between the ritual and non-ritual 'constitutes the social dimension par excellence' and as such forms 'the necessary and sufficient condition for the comparison

of societies—that is, for the practice of anthropology itself' (p. 2). While what constitutes the non-ritual as well as the ritual varies cross-culturally and is thus socially determined, to adopt any other position would be Eurocentric—for the distinction itself is universal. Moreover, ritual is important in demonstrating a society's values, in the sense intended by Dumont.

This does not prove to be a prescription for the whole book. The one paper that actually proceeds in this fashion, and then the ideas involved are left implicit, is Jos Platenkamp's complex analysis of Tobelo ritual, in which ritual is seen as circulating objects, persons and values through the society. Two papers closely related to each other, by Charles Malamoud on Vedic and Brahmanic India and by Raymond Jamous on a Muslim group of north India, highlight the significance of cross-sex sibling links in ritual and exchange ideology and their persistence even after their respective marriages have physically separated brother and sister. Michael Cartry examines cross-references between different Gurmanceba (Burkina Faso) rituals in what is the most autobiographical paper of the collection. David Parkin not only reverses Lévi-Strauss's privileging of myth over ritual, he also sees ritual action as always performative, unlike words, despite their frequent importance in ritual. *Pace* Austin, it is less that words are performative than that certain stages in the rite become, or are made, appropriate for them. He also links the practice of bodily mutilations and divisions to a notion of agency which replaces Western individual self-determination with social control through ritual.

All these approaches see ritual as doing things, in a manner derivable, *inter alia*, from Durkheim and van Gennep. The remaining paper, while not denying this, challenges head-on the Durkheimian assumption of closed societies confirming their existence through the conformity-inducing seduction of ritual. Gerd Baumann uses his fieldwork experiences in a multi-ethnic suburb of London to show that rituals readily incorporate outsiders, who can range from the casual bystander to members of a different ethnic or religious group, and that they can also put forward demands for change as well as encourage conformity. Instead of the Durkheimian ritual community, we should be talking about the ritual 'constituency', or rather a number of such constituencies, each with a separate interest in the same rite. Baumann falls short of rejecting Durkheim's approach entirely, but he puts the burden of proof on the latter's supporters in this instance. Perhaps the suggestion may be regarded as supplementing rather than replacing conformity-based approaches. This is the most thought-provoking paper of a thought-provoking collection.

ROBERT PARKIN

CURTIS M. HINSLEY, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America*, Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution Press 1994. 319 pp., Photographs, Figures, Bibliography, Index. £13.95.

This is a paperback reissue of Hinsley's *Savages and Scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology, 1846–1910* (1981), its title now politically corrected. The original subtitle gives a better picture of the book's subject. Hinsley starts with the founding of the Smithsonian in 1840, resulting from James Smithson's bequest of \$515,000 to the United States for the establishment of an institution 'for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men' and from the four-year voyage of the United States Exploring Expedition under Charles Wilkes beginning in 1838.

From its founding the Smithsonian became involved in controversy surrounding the proper care of the collections brought back from that expedition. These controversies in turn involved differing perspectives over whether the Institution should be devoted to the democratic display of national greatness, largely through the work of amateurs, or whether it should be concerned with careful scientific study of its collections. As Hinsley remarks, 'Through much of the nineteenth century, the number of men who shared serious scientific aspirations exceeded the capacity of the society to provide opportunities for full time pursuit of those interests.' The institutional structures for professional science, and for anthropology, developed rather late, and the Smithsonian played an important, if rather chequered, role in it.

In 1846 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft agitated Lewis Henry Morgan and others into taking an interest in the anthropology of American Indians and sent a proposal to the Smithsonian for an investigation of American ethnology. The publication in 1848 of the first volume of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, devoted to Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley by Ephraim George Squire and Edwin H. Davis, initiated its support for scholarly work on American archaeology. The finished version of the book bore the heavy stamp of the Smithsonian secretary Joseph Henry, who edited out what he deemed unfounded speculation. Following the Civil War the Smithsonian's involvement with anthropology was significantly increased with the foundation of the Bureau of American Ethnology at the instigation of its first director, the one-armed leader of the first two expeditions through the Grand Canyon, Major John Wesley Powell, friend and follower of Lewis Henry Morgan. Its Annual Reports and Bulletins made public the valuable linguistic and ethnographic work of its contributors, who had no formal training in these subjects and were subsequently criticized for their inevitable amateurism by the Boasians.

The members of the Bureau became attached by a variety of means, some simply by showing up and being persistent. Many were torn between the desire to spend their time in the field doing research and the requirement to satisfy political bosses by work on the episodic and long-drawn-out project which eventually became the *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. There was continuing tension between demands that they produce surveys of use to the public and its representatives in Congress, and

their individual interests in scholarship. Powell made the case for government-supported anthropology but paid the price of seeing that support exposed to the whim of political fashion. When asked to sign a petition calling for an investigation into the responsibility of the army and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the Wounded Knee massacre, both Powell and Otis Mason refused. Mason allegedly said, 'We never express ourselves vehemently upon political matters. It isn't healthy to do so.' Powell refused because it would embroil him in controversy with the Secretary of the Interior. Powell, in fact, was then under attack from critics of the Geological Survey, from which he was soon forced to resign. In his declining years, he also ceded power and budget to the director of the Smithsonian.

Following his death in 1902, his lieutenant and chosen successor, the hapless William John McGee, was forced from the Bureau after an humiliating investigation by Smithsonian officials into the management of the Bureau under Powell and himself. Among other charges, their report accused them of careless and possibly corrupt purchases of manuscripts from Alice Fletcher and Franz Boas, who for a period kept himself afloat by selling linguistic manuscripts and notebooks to the Bureau for a total of \$4,000. Powell was replaced by a reluctant and exhausted William Henry Holmes, who served from 1902 to 1910.

Members of the Bureau struggled to create professional standards where there had been none, and many of their achievements were remarkable. They were caught between demands from politicians and Smithsonian officials to produce practical results and their own desire to pursue open-ended research. Hinsley gives useful sketches of the various, sometimes colourful, sometimes dry and dusty characters involved, and he attempts to relate his description of their activities to the changing scholarly and social issues and circumstances of their day. I have already found his section on J. Owen Dorsey useful in my own work, and the book's reissue is welcome. It provides the best ready account of an important aspect of the history of anthropology.

R. H. BARNES

MARCUS BANKS, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, London: Routledge, 1996. viii, 210 pp., Bibliography, Index.

It is not uncommon, as an anthropology undergraduate, to feel that your chosen subject bears little resemblance to everyday life, particularly when a word which you thought meant something to you (e.g. 'kinship', 'gender', 'ethnicity') is abstracted beyond all recognition by different authors in apparently conflicting ways. Partly for this reason, Marcus Banks's *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* should become an important book for students, since, as the title suggests, a genuine attempt is made to step outside the academic field in order to assess the contribution of sociological



and anthropological discourse on 'ethnicity' to the treatment of social differentiation in British and American society at large. By quoting his own, ambivalent conclusion near the start of the book, however, the author makes it clear that the reader is to expect neither a 'once-and-for-all' answer, nor, necessarily, an end to disillusionment on the subject of 'ethnicity'. Instead, we are promised 'a book about reading, a book for consulting, a starting place before going on to read the original sources and, for the potential fieldworker, before going on to try to find ethnicity in the field' (p. 9).

In an unpatronizing tone which characterizes the entire book, Banks introduces his subject by pointing out that the web of meanings which has grown up around the term 'ethnicity' over the last thirty years is simply too large and complex for the undergraduate to unravel merely through reading primary sources: a guide is needed. Chapter 2 identifies three distinct schools of thought on the subject of 'ethnicity' with great clarity, and should become a standard reference for both teachers and students of the topic. It also sets up a dichotomy between 'primordialist' and 'instrumentalist' views on ethnicity, the juxtaposition of which forms the analytical core of the book. This provided a useful paradigm for approaching the vast literature covered by the volume, although the association of particular authors, texts and opinions with one theoretical stance or the other seemed constraining at times. Aside from these key terms, however, jargon is largely forsaken, as is the positive tone of many other texts which mislead students into seeking chains of continuity between different authors where few in fact exist; 'the wheel', as Banks (p. 2) puts it, 'has been invented several times over'.

In Chapters 3 and 4, which deal with the topics of race and ethnicity in the USA and Britain, the author touches open-mindedly upon the work of political scientists, sociologists and social psychologists, with which I was largely unfamiliar. The comparison of American and British writing on the subject was therefore useful as an introduction and, in itself, as an illustration of the need to account for academic theories as products (rather than mere descriptions) of the different social situations which they address, as well as of the disciplinary conventions they represent. A view of ethnicity as an academic construct rather than necessarily a social or psychological fact pervades the structure of the book, posing an important warning for prospective fieldworkers.

Chapter 5 ('Ethnicity and nationalism') again provides a crystal-clear summary of the main relevant theories, which will be invaluable to students either as a prelude or a supplement to primary reading. While the important question 'Do majorities have ethnicity?' is addressed, however, the problem of powerful minorities is largely neglected. By omitting the boundary mechanisms of social élites from his discussion of the relationship between ethnic groups, nationalism and the state, I felt that the author missed an opportunity to sharpen his account of the tacit association of 'ethnicity' with weak minority groups or 'groups demanding something from the state' in much anthropological literature.

Whether we like it or not, ethnicity is, as Banks puts it, 'out there' as a feature of both academic and non-academic discourse, and in the penultimate chapter a critical understanding of ethnicity and nationalism, developed through a broad survey of the

academic literature, is brought to bear upon two highly revealing treatments of social divisiveness by the British media and public. What this seems to reveal is that while anthropological constructions of ethnicity have failed to provide a coherent tool for cross-cultural sociological analysis, they have indirectly lent a veneer of legitimacy to the popular resurrection of a narrow-minded primordialism which obfuscates more than it reveals about social change and conflict, and itself contributes to the erection of social boundaries.

With this in mind, Banks's conclusion could have made more of studies (e.g. by Gluckman) which have succeeded in describing and accounting for social differentiation with no recourse to an abstract autonomous theory of ethnicity, in order to make a strong case for the abandonment of the concept in anthropological discourse. However, having pointed out that ethnicity's coffin is riddled with nails, the author refrains from consigning it to the ground. As promised, this is not 'a book for reading', but a 'book about reading', long on debate and short on ethnographic detail, a balance which Banks modestly characterises as 'all bread and no jam' (p. 8). The combination of breadth with clarity (the book is only 210 pages in length), lack of dogma and extensive references means that plentiful jam is assured, at least, for newcomers to the subject.

DAVID WENGROW

PETER RIVIÈRE, *Absent-minded Imperialism: Britain and the Expansion of Empire in Nineteenth-century Brazil*, London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies 1995. 194 pp., Illustrations, Map, Bibliography, Index. £39.50.

The author, renowned for research and numerous publications on the social anthropology of the Guiana Indians, has in this, his most recent work, turned historian. Using data from church, government and missionary society archives, Brazilian and British, he investigates the 'Pirara incident', a dramatic, colourful event in nineteenth-century British Guiana diplomatic history.

In 1838 the Revd Thomas Youd founded an Anglican mission in the Makushi Indian village of Pirara in the hinterland of British Guiana (now Guyana). He intended it to be the salvation of the Rupununi Indians, but instead provoked an active phase in the Anglo-Brazilian dispute over the position of the frontier between the Essequibo River and the Rio Branco. The Brazilians from Fort São Joaquim on the Rio Branco occupied Pirara, causing Youd to withdraw, and during the ensuing international incident the British Government dispatched a military force to retake it. The journey up the Essequibo took a month, and after an occupation of six-and-a-half months the British withdrew. The incident ended with the Agreement of 1842, whereby Britain and

Brazil neutralized the disputed territory until the line of frontier was settled. In 1904 the Rupununi District, including Pirara, was recognized as British.

This study is a micro-history, with a blow-by-blow account of events and a skilful coordination of circumstances and personalities: the two military protagonists who were at Pirara, and the unfortunate Protestant missionary who, while wishing to reinstate his mission, found himself hosting his opposite number, the Carmelite Friar José dos Santos Innocentes. A British Boundary Commission headed by Robert Schomburgk was also present. These dramatic encounters took place before an anxious Makushi audience and involved elaborately courteous exchanges of visits, flamboyant display and hospitality. Meanwhile, communication difficulties and long delays in receiving information from their distant outposts beset both governments. There is an Appendix with a useful chronology of major events. Reproductions of paintings by Edward Goodall, the artist accompanying Schomburgk, depict Pirara and its course.

A history in depth, with a short time-scale, allows for a close examination of individuals, institutions and their motivations, and one of the author's most interesting discoveries is the role of individuals in the Pirara incident. Schomburgk's correspondence with the Royal Geographical Society revealed that the Brazilian Commandant at Fort São Joaquim had owned an Indian house in Pirara, in which he frequently stayed and from which he traded. An investigation into Thomas Youd's foundation at Pirara showed that neither the government nor the Church Missionary Society had authorized it. His visits to the Rupununi were meant to be exploratory only. It was the conjunction of these two circumstances in a touchy area of Anglo-Brazilian relations which acted as a catalyst in escalating a full-blown boundary dispute.

Rivière finds the motivations of the British Government to be more obscure. He notes a lack of interest in a commercial future in the Rupununi and also a lack of reference to territorial expansion and sovereignty. There was dismay at the costs which the military occupation of Pirara had incurred. He concludes that territorial gain was a secondary consideration for Britain, a means to an end only, and concern about sovereignty over Pirara was expressed 'less in terms of disputed territory and more as a worry over the protection of British citizens who, it was feared, would be enslaved if Brazilians were left in control of the territory' (p. 170). Having abolished slavery, the British were pressurizing Brazil to follow suit. Both Schomburgk and Youd reported a forcible recruitment of labour by Brazilians entering the Rupununi, and this had aroused considerable feeling. Humanitarian and anti-slavery considerations were certainly part of the motivations in the Pirara incident but there was also Christianity and the driving ideology of the evangelical movement. British missionaries travelled to remote areas to propagate the Christian gospel and bring spiritual salvation and civilization to pagans. They carried their culture and the imperial flag with them. It is indicative that when Sir Henry Light, the governor of British Guiana, recruited the reluctant Youd to accompany the military to Pirara, he trusted that 'Pirara would flourish again and become, under her Majesty's protection, "a focus of Christian light to the aborigines"' (p. 88). A President of Para saw this motivation too and had re-

marked that the British, having abolished negro slavery, were now showing themselves attentive to the salvation of souls, 'occupying territory in order to save the souls of the inhabitants' (p. 177). This powerful promotion of Christian and Victorian ideals might be compared with the promulgation of democratic institutions and human rights by the West, which similarly pervades international relations today.

I am not convinced that the Pirara incident should be labelled a case of 'absent-minded imperialism' as the book's title states and as is discussed at the end of the text. Even the attribution of 'a certain lack of attention' is perhaps unjustified, given the state of knowledge of the hinterland and its Amerindians at the time. To reach the interior Amerindians from the colonial settlements of the coast entailed long and dangerous river journeys. A systematic exploration and mapping by Robert Schomburgk, begun in 1835, was still proceeding. At Pirara in 1838 Youd had placed himself well beyond the sphere of regular British communications and administration.

Rivière notes that the 1842 Agreement (the text of which I would like to have seen reproduced) excluded a political and military presence from the disputed territory, but not a religious one. He remarks: 'It remains a mystery that Brazil as much as Britain failed to take advantage of this clause in the agreement. It is of course possible, even likely, that neither country's heart was much in the affair' (p. 136). In fact, a longer historical perspective shows that the Anglican Church retained an undiminished enthusiasm for a Rupununi mission. During the second half of the nineteenth century a series of itinerant clergy visited and toured Makushi villages, conducted church services, taught and delivered the sacraments. A permanent mission was established at Yupukari in 1908, but not before Makushi leaders had several times built a church and missionary residence in anticipation of the arrival of a priest which the Church promised but could not deliver. Uncertainty over the political status of the Rupununi was one factor, but more crucial were problems of communication and logistics and a lack of Church resources and personnel. In the Potaro valley, in the 1870s and 1880s, other untenable missions were established, and failed for similar reasons.

A significant outcome of the Pirara incident and subsequent agreement was that the Makushi were left to live their customary, independent life for over half a century. Competition for their allegiance protected them from forcible labour recruitment and gave them government-sponsored Captains and presents! They played host to touring missionaries and a variety of exploratory and scientific expeditions, and they themselves travelled down-river to work in the timber concessions and visit colonial settlements to barter their goods and services. Attending mission churches and chapels, they absorbed Christian knowledge, took it back home, and adapted it to their own beliefs. This led to a variety of enthusiastic movements, reported in contemporary literature from 1845 on and culminating in the formation of today's Hallelujah religion. Significantly, this was founded by a Makushi who accompanied two clergymen to the lower Demerara in the late 1860s or early 1870s.

There is no systematic treatment of the Makushi in this work, but much interesting and useful information on them may be gained from it. Notably, we can appreciate how the Pirara incident foreshadows the subsequent division of Makushi lands and

their loss of independence. Recognized as the rightful owners of the soil, their lands having been in possession of their ancestors down the ages, they were even denoted a sovereign nation. However, it is also clear that neither Britain nor Brazil thought that this would remain the case. The governor of British Guiana reiterated that the territory belonged to the Indians who 'glad of British protection would yield to its power'. He also remarked that the territory claimed might be useful to Great Britain (p. 145). This is one more example of circumstances in which indigenous peoples and their territories have become absorbed by powerful nation-states not through military conquest but through a gradual domination accompanied by various inducements and justified by moral imperatives. The British thought that Indian welfare could only be ensured if they were to come under British protection and become British citizens. The price paid was loss of independence and much of the indigenous culture, the colonization of ancestral lands and the annexation of its resources.

This book, which puts the years of the Pirara incident on the historical map, is a valuable contribution to the history of the Guiana hinterland and to an understanding of the urge to imperial expansion there. It is also a very useful and interesting study for students of the Rupununi Indians, since the events described show the beginning of a series of social and cultural processes that are still unfolding. It makes excellent reading.

AUDREY COLSON

JOAN MARK, *The King of the World in the Land of the Pygmies*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1995. xvi, 276 pp., Index, Map, Illustrations. £28.50.

This is the story of an American who went to Africa, fell in love and never mentally returned home. A Boston Brahman, Patrick Lowell Putnam (1904–1953) attended classes in anthropology at Harvard and participated in its expeditions to Africa. That determined his lifecourse. Shortly afterwards, he went back to the edge of the Zairean rainforest, home to bands of pygmies, in order to establish a camp there. He built an infirmary, a hotel and a rearing station for local exotic animals, especially the okapi. Playing host to wealthy tourists and visiting journalists in search of sensationalist copy, he had the pygmies whom he befriended and whose language he learnt stage spectacles of their lifestyle. He also made money by selling animals to Western zoos, masks to Western museums, and—when the market was right—local commodities to Western traders. When none of that provided enough, he begged from his patrician father. By the 1950s his health was so poor that it affected his behaviour and he spent his last year as a half-crazed tyrant destroying what he had created.

Such a good story can be read in many different ways. First, it is the psychological report of a neglected child whose adult version surrounds himself with people he

loves and who in turn love him. Secondly, it is a postcolonial critique of those who helped the indigenes and simultaneously helped themselves. Thirdly, it is the tale (of Haggardian excess or Conradian darkness) of a self-exiled failure who had to go to an outpost of Empire in order to establish a petty kingdom of his own. Fourthly, it is the story of an incurable, diseased romantic whose first wife dies on him, whose second wife divorces him, and who dies on his third wife—all the time having local wives as well. Finally, it is an example of the popularization of anthropology. Putnam knew pygmy ways extremely well but never wrote anything of consequence. Instead, he assisted anthropologists (above all Colin Turnbull) and helped to feed the Western fascination with tropical hunter-gatherers physically distinct from Europeans.

It is a many-stranded tale of its times and Mark tells it well. Her book aids our understanding of the complexities and contradictions of the colonial encounter and serves to place the production of anthropological knowledge in its cross-cultural contexts. For these reasons anthropologists may benefit from its reading.

JEREMY MACCLANCY

JUNE HELM, *Prophecy and Power among the Dogrib Indians* (Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians), Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1994. 172 pp., Appendix, Reference, Index. £28.50.

ARMIN W. GEERTZ, *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*, Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press 1994. xxi, 490 pp., Photos, Charts, Maps, Appendixes, Bibliography, Index. \$40.00.

The Dogrib are Athapaskan-speaking peoples of the Mackenzie District of the Northwest Territories in Canada. The present work is not a study of Dogrib culture, but an account of five personalities involved in 'the Dogrib prophet movement' of the late 1960s and early 1970s, plus the author's principal informant and assistant. The first part of the book, 'Three Styles in the Practice of Prophecy', offers no explanation of the movement as such but instead describes the way three prophets presented themselves and the responses of the people around them, exploring the quite various ways the prophets came to prophecy and the rather different reactions they caused. As she comments, 'the ethnography of the Dogrib prophet movement makes rather tame telling'. There were no millenarian dreams, and their prophecy was entirely in line with Catholic expectations. The several chapters of the second part of the book explore the implications of the term *ink'on*, sometimes translated by the Dogrib as 'luck' or 'magic', by means of anecdotal narratives by her assistant Vital Thomas, whose autobiography forms the final chapter. There is a brief appendix on Dogrib leadership.

Geertz's book is empirically more substantial and intellectually more ambitious. Analytically it is eclectic, drawing inspiration from the post-modernists to the likes of Victor Turner, Roy Wagner and Max Weber. Prophecy can be a large topic, as it is in this book, and Geertz makes too many analytic points about it to permit narrowing his message down to a single interpretation. Nevertheless, perhaps the main theme of the book is that despite claims to precognition, Hopi prophecy is not really precognitive. Prophecies frequently appear decades after the facts referred to in them and in any case incorporate contemporary events into a traditional framework of discourse having to do with the Hopi emergence myth. This framework is common to all Hopi and is independent of the political content given to it at any particular moment. As a form prophecy is collective, and Geertz even argues that there are prophecies but no prophets. This position is somewhat paradoxical, since the book analyses a series of prophecies made by specific men for, apparently, specific political reasons in the period from 1830 to 1989.

Hopi prophecy centres on the prediction of the end of the world in the emergence myth and is often associated with destructive acts intended to bring about the end of the world or steps taken to ameliorate its consequences, depending upon the viewpoint of the individual prophet. Prophecy is political and propelled by the dynamics of Hopi factionalism. Geertz incorporates a good deal of Hopi political history into his account, down to and including Hopi political use of flying saucer cults and the question of interaction with Indian hobbyists, 'hippies', New Agers and other American and European well-wishers and imitators. One late chapter is devoted to such 'cultural madness'. As the preface makes explicit, this book too is intended to play a political role as a corrective to the attitudes of those listed above and as a critique of Hopi traditionalists and their White supporters. It contains a formidable scholarly apparatus, as well as materials drawn from a wide variety of media. There are many histrionic people in this book, and Geertz evidences histrionic touches too, perhaps inevitably when so many before him have been tempted to assume the guise of the salvation-providing White Brother of Hopi myth. The reader comes away, if not entirely convinced of every individual argument, then at least with a sense of having been very thoroughly introduced to the complexities of contemporary Hopi life.

R. H. BARNES

R. H. JOHANNES, *Words of the Lagoon: Fishing and Marine Lore in the Palau District of Micronesia*, Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press 1992. xi, 245 pp., Map, Tables, Figures, Photographs, Appendixes, Bibliography, Index. \$15.00.

Originally published in 1981, this is the paperback edition of a book by a marine biologist about fishing technology and knowledge on Palau. Johannes claims that the

elder fishermen of Palau have an extensive understanding of the behaviour of very many species of tropical fish that vastly exceeds what is known to marine biology. His aim is 'to discover what Westerners can learn about tropical marine ecosystems and their resources by investigating the knowledge and actions of native fishermen and by observing their impact on these resources'. Having gone to Palau with an ecological hypothesis, he soon found that political, cultural and economic factors made his biological explanations inadequate. 'I gained more new (to marine science) information during sixteen months of fieldwork using this approach than I had during the previous fifteen years using more conventional research techniques'.

The book is written in an easily accessible style, while presenting much of interest to laymen, biologists and anthropologists. It was pleasing, for example, to find that Palau fishing kites use the same spider-web lure to entrap needlefish as did those which once were found in the Solor Strait in eastern Indonesia. Never having seen one, I was most grateful to find that Johannes had included a photograph of such a lure. Johannes begins with a description of Palau fishing methods, both ancient and recently introduced. He next discusses yearly, monthly and daily rhythms of fish and fishermen, with much attention to spawning behaviour and a good discussion of the adjustment of the local lunar calendar to the star calendar. He then takes up traditional conservation methods, the question of improving reef and lagoon fishing and (with P. W. Black) fishing in the South West Islands. Subsequent chapters cover island currents, fishhooks, and fish species. A final chapter assesses claims concerning the unexpected habits of various varieties of fish, such as the cornet fish, which sticks its snout between the jaws of the moray eel in order to eviscerate the eel (true), and the octopus, which allegedly gives live birth in trees (biologically impossible, though often witnessed by Palauans). An Appendix is devoted to reproductive rhythms, spawning locations, good fishing days and seasonal migrations of fish. A second covers the lunar rhythms of crustaceans, and a third describes the use and construction of a variety of fishhooks. There is a glossary of Palauan words and another of Toba words. From an anthropological point of view the book is an invaluable contribution to the study of local technical knowledge and is of considerable comparative interest. It is attractively decorated with drawings of fish made by an anonymous Palauan and first published in 1929.

R. H. BARNES



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## WHY DID ODYSSEUS BECOME A HORSE?

N. J. ALLEN

WHY is a culture the way it is? Because that is how far it has evolved along some world-wide scale(s); because of such and such outside influences or local inventions; because it works; because that is how the human mind has here expressed itself; because it benefits those with power. All the standard isms can help in answering the general question, but they are not exhaustive: there is another approach, seldom aligned with the others, but of long standing, and sometimes of use when others are not.

If one asks why a *language* is the way it is, everyone knows that the answer lies partly in the prehistoric proto-language from which it derives. One cannot automatically transpose from language to culture, but the two have often been transmitted alongside each other, and were so all the more, I suppose, when the world had fewer people in it and more space around them. So one can often ask of a cultural feature whether it goes back to a reconstructible feature of the proto-culture associated with the proto-language. We all know this in a shadowy way, and do not need a Dumézil to remind us; but the scope and limits of 'language-family-based cultural comparativism' still need exploration.

The cultural feature examined here comes from classical Greece. It is widely known that there is more to the story of Odysseus than we learn in Homer. When the hero visits Hades, Tiresias prophesies that his adventures will continue after his return to Ithaca, and accounts of these later events can be found in post-Homeric sources, notably in the 'Epic Cycle' and in the summary of Greek tradition by

Apollodorus. But the tradition that Odysseus turned into a horse is mentioned in neither of these sources, and my unsystematic soundings suggest that it is not widely known even among classicists. Grimal (1982) omits it in his entry on Ulysses (Latin for Odysseus), though it appears under the obscure figure of Hals. Stanford (1963: 88) slips past it in less than a line—naturally enough, since the theme was to have no future in European literature.

Nevertheless, obscure though it is, the tradition certainly existed, references to it being assembled in the large encyclopaedias (Schmidt 1897–1909: 692; Wüst 1937: 1993) and discussed in Hartmann (1917). Three authors are cited.

(i) The little-known first-century AD mythographer Ptolemaeus Hephaestus or Khennos (*Nov. Hist.* 4, pp. 194–5 Westermann).

In Etruria they say that there is a place called the Tower of Hals, and that it is named after an Etruscan sorceress (*pharmakis*) called Hals, who became a handmaiden to Circe but later absconded from her mistress. When Odysseus came to her [Hals], she reportedly turned him into a horse by means of her magical drugs (*eis hippon meteballe tois pharmakois*), and kept him with her until he grew old and died. From this story one also has a solution to the puzzle in Homer (where he says that) ‘death will come to you [Odysseus] from the sea’ (*ex halos*—*Od.* 11.134).

Hals (‘sea’, cognate with the English word ‘salt’) is not mentioned by any other classical sources, and was no doubt invented to make sense of the prophecy by Tiresias. Similarly, the reference to old age (*gērasas*) recalls the continuation of the prophecy: Odysseus will die ‘overcome with sleek (or comfortable) old age (*gērai*)’. But Tiresias in no way hints at the metamorphosis. If the latter is to be explained, we need a different approach.

(ii) In the next century the sceptical philosopher Sextus Empiricus makes two passing references to the tradition when discussing history and truth. In one passage (*Adv. Math.* 1.264), he distinguishes between three sorts of narrative, *historia*, *muthos* and *plasma*, and exemplifies the second (‘legend’ in the Loeb translation) by citing two stories of births (of poisonous spiders and snakes from the blood of the Titans, and of Pegasus from the severed head of the Gorgon), and three stories of transformations (*metaballō* intrans.) (of the companions of Diomedes into sea birds, of Odysseus into a horse, and of Hecabe [Priam’s wife] into a dog). A few lines later (1.267), discussing contradictions, Sextus cites three versions of the death of Odysseus. One says that the hero was killed in ignorance by his son Telegonus (the version found in the epic cycle and in Apollodorus), another that he died when a sea-gull dropped on his head the spike of a poisonous fish (a fragment of Aeschylus says something similar), and yet another that he was transformed into a horse (*eis hippon metebale tēn morphēn*).

(iii) Two centuries later still, Servius was writing his learned Latin commentary on the *Aeneid* and decided to annotate the reference to Ulysses in 2.44. He mentions (following no very obvious order) the hero’s surreptitious exploration of Troy, his family, his death at the hands of Telegonus, his headgear in paintings,

and his post-Troy wanderings, which 'Homer made familiar to everyone'. Then he continues:

Concerning him another story also is told. For when he had returned to Ithaca after his wanderings, it is said that he found Pan in his home. Pan is said to have been born from Penelope and all the suitors, as the very name Pan ['All'] seems to proclaim. However, others say that he was born from Mercury [Latin for Hermes], who had changed into a he-goat before sleeping with Penelope. But Ulysses, after he saw the misshapen child, is said to have departed (again) on his wanderings. He met his death either through old age, or at the hand of his son Telegonus, being killed by the spine of a sea beast. It is said that when he was just setting off, he was changed by Minerva [= Athene] into a horse (*in equum mutatus*).

The two versions of the birth of Pan will occupy us later. The spine or sting of the sea beast (*aculeus marinae beluae*) parallels the sharp spine of the marine sting-ray (*kentron thalassias trugonos*) in Sextus, though, as is by far the commoner story, it is here wielded by Telegonus, not dropped by a bird. But I cite the passage now for its confirmation of the equine metamorphosis.

The three authors say nothing about their sources, but the differences make it unlikely that the later ones draw on the earlier. More likely, all three drew on lost written sources predating Khennos; and one can reasonably imagine that the first such source was recording an oral tradition. But why should anyone *invent* the story that, towards the end of his life, Odysseus turned into a horse? The idea is odd, and those to whom I mention it are surprised. The hero's previous life hardly suggests that this would be a fitting or natural ending, and one casts around for an explanation. Might the tradition have something to do with the Wooden Horse? Or with the hero's victimization by Poseidon, Tamer of Horses? Recent comparativism offers a more promising lead.

I have shown elsewhere that in one part of his career Odysseus closely resembles Arjuna, the central hero of the longer of the two Sanskrit epics (Allen 1996). The comparison is between the second half of Odysseus' return journey from Troy to Ithaca and the journey which Arjuna undertakes as a penance in Book 1 of the *Mahābhārata*. Shortly after his marriage to Draupadī, Arjuna leaves his young wife to visit the four quarters of India, and in each quarter he encounters females, human or non-human; then he returns to Draupadī. Odysseus encounters successively Circe, the Monsters (i.e. the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis), Calypso and Nausicaa, before returning to Penelope. The comparison is not merely an abstract one involving four plus one structural elements; in spite of numerous differences between the two epics, the encounters can be matched one for one in respect of many details. Such precise matching excludes independent invention and implies a common origin; and for many reasons, this origin or 'proto-narrative' must have been oral. But as Dumézil showed, the proto-Indo-Europeans possessed

a typology of marital unions, and the pattern of encounters in the epics, especially in the Sanskrit, conforms quite well to what one might expect of such a typology. The chances are, therefore, that the proto-narrative was once told in proto-Indo-European.

If the careers of Odysseus and Arjuna are cognate at one point in their respective epics, it by no means follows that they will be cognate at other points. Perhaps the encounters with females represent an exceptionally conservative structure within two narrative traditions that in other respects were subject to all-pervasive innovation and flux. But perhaps not. It is obviously worth looking at other parts of the two careers to see if they too might be cognate. Moreover, in doing so, one can bear in mind a point of logic. Judgements of similarity between episode *x* in one story and episode *X* in another are apt to seem methodologically suspect: there will always be differences between the two stories, and the weighing of similarities against differences will always involve subjective judgement. But suppose *x* belongs to a biography that includes episodes or characters *d, e, f, g, h*, and *X* to one including *D, E, F, G, H*, similarities *d-D* etc. already having been established. In that case similarities between *x* and *X* can be judged more charitably and less sceptically.

So, given that Odysseus becomes a horse, does Arjuna? Certainly not: neither he nor any of his brothers are ever transformed into animals. But towards the end of his career Arjuna does have an important relationship with a horse, in Book 14 of the epic. Before we come to the details, here is the context.

The *Mahābhārata* centres on the conflict between two branches of a royal dynasty. The goodies are the five Pāṇḍava brothers, of whom Arjuna is the third by age. Although it is he who wins Princess Draupadī, she is married polyandrously to all of them. The Pāṇḍavas are banished and disinherited, but Krishna helps them win a great eighteen-day battle, and the eldest, Yudhishthira, takes the throne.

Now comes Book 14, 'The Book of the Horse Sacrifice' (see Roy n.d. Vol. XII). The remaining four books are relatively brief and narrate the deaths of the main survivors from the great war. The epic ends with the deaths of the Pāṇḍavas themselves as they journey towards the Himalayas and Heaven.

The Horse Sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) is the highest of the royal rituals and establishes the cosmic supremacy of a king. It is a lengthy and elaborate undertaking, lasting more than a year and including a three-day *soma* offering. The details are given in the Vedic texts called the Brāhmaṇas, composed as we know them before 500 BC (I shall refer exclusively to the Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa). Naturally the epic, which was written down in the centuries surrounding the year 0, gives little space to ritual niceties, but it states repeatedly that the performance conformed with the scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

1. A historical study of the ritual could include the traces of it identified by Biarreau (1989: 166-241) in certain contemporary Tamil villages.

Roughly speaking, the ritual can be divided into two parts. In the first, after some preliminaries, a specially selected stallion is released near the capital and wanders at will across the face of India. During the following year it is accompanied by warriors whose job is to prevent any interference with it. Assuming none of the challengers is successful, the second part of the ritual takes place back in the capital, in the presence of a large gathering. The horse is sacrificed together with other victims, and (as we shall see) the queens take an active part in the performance.

Let us return to Book 14. A few months after the great war, Yudhishthira is still in despair over the death of his beloved grandfather and over his own sins. The sage Vyāsa proposes that the sins be annulled by performance of a Horse Sacrifice. Vast wealth will be needed, and an expedition sets off to obtain it from the Himalayas. Meanwhile, Arjuna's grandson Parikshit, who is stillborn, is resuscitated by Krishna.

When the Himalayan party returns, Arjuna is selected to accompany the horse. While the animal circumambulates India (clockwise, starting in the north), Arjuna has to defeat a number of challengers, his most interesting conflict taking place in the east, in Manipura. In Book 1 Arjuna had followed a similar route, going first to the north, where he cohabited with the serpent maiden Ulūpī, then to Manipura, where he married Princess Citrāngadā. Ulūpī's son had died in the great war, but Citrāngadā's son Babhruvāhana had remained uninvolved and was now king of Manipura. Arjuna insists that his son, having been born a warrior, is duty-bound to fight off any encroacher. Ulūpī also appears and urges her step-son to fight.

In the ensuing duel Arjuna is shot with an arrow and collapses. Shattered by his parricide, the son faints. Citrāngadā hears the news and hastens to the scene. On recovering, Babhruvāhana laments his deed, but Ulūpī summons up a magic stone which, placed on Arjuna's chest, revives him. She now explains. During the great war, Arjuna had used dishonest means to kill his grandfather and had been cursed for it. Defeat by his son would lift the curse, and that was why she had incited the duel. Arjuna issues invitations for the Horse Sacrifice and continues his mission.

The horse returns safely to the capital. Three hundred animal victims are tied to sacrificial stakes, and Draupadī is put beside the suffocated stallion. The latter is dissected and offered into the fire, whose smoke purifies the Pāṇḍavas. Largesse is distributed to all present on an enormous scale, and the concourse disperses.

The contrast between the two epic traditions is great. The Greek material bearing on the horse is so scanty that I have cited it all, while the Sanskrit is so copious that I have had to précis ruthlessly (Book 14 has some 2900 shlokas, say 6000 lines). Together with a difference in length goes a difference in narrative integration. The Greek gives no hint as to *why* Odysseus was turned into a horse: the motives of Hades are as obscure as those of Athene. In contrast, Arjuna's dealings with the horse make perfect sense. The ritual is a well-established institution; its performance at this point in the epic is well justified; the reasons

why Arjuna should accompany the animal are detailed by Vyāsa (71.14–18).<sup>2</sup> To omit the Horse Sacrifice would be to leave the triumph of the goodies incomplete.

Another difference is that Arjuna is never explicitly identified with the horse. His job is simply to follow it in his chariot and protect it from interference. Nevertheless, his association with the animal is close: a challenge to it is a challenge to himself. When the expedition sets out, crowds gather to gaze at horse and follower (*haya* and *hayasāriṇa*), shouting ‘there goes the son of Kuntī and the glorious horse’ (72.10, 12). When Babhruvāhana invites him into the city, Arjuna declines: his ritual obligation means that he cannot leave the horse even for one night (82.30–1). When the party returns, the proximity of man and horse is again emphasised (89.16).

The association is more than a matter of protection and proximity. As was noted, the second part of the ritual involves the royal wives. The ritual texts list four of them, with separate titles and characteristics, ranging from chief queen to low-caste wife. The group intervenes at a number of points (see Dumont 1927), for instance by anointing the horse before it is suffocated; but the most interesting episode occurs after the death. The chief queen lies beside the carcass, a covering is placed over them, and the queen simulates copulation.

Although the epic says rather little about the role of the queens, two points are significant. First, after the sacrifice of the various victims according to the scriptures, the priests cause Draupadī to ‘lie beside’ the horse (*upasaṃveśayan* 91.2; cf. *saṃviś*, ‘approach, cohabit with’). Secondly, although nothing is said of the other wives’ involvement in ritual, they are certainly present. After the duel, the two wives are explicitly invited (82.24); when they reach the capital, they meet Princess Subhadrā, who is already there (90.2); and after the ritual is over, the three of them are included in a list of the ladies at court (15.1.21).

In the capital, the ‘closeness’ of Arjuna and horse takes on a new dimension. When the horse is roaming ‘the whole earth’ (89.18), the symbolism evidently concerns territorial dominion. But there is more to kingship than military supremacy: a traditional king has cosmic links with a chthonic female principle and, more mundanely, he also has to produce an heir. It is therefore natural that Draupadī, as chief queen, should have a part to play in the ritual, but the interesting point is that Arjuna’s conjugal role is here taken on by the horse, albeit post mortem. Draupadī is a dutiful wife, and obviously her ritual act with the horse has nothing to do with adultery. She is miming intercourse with a substitute for Arjuna, who is himself the central and most representative of the Pāṇḍavas.<sup>3</sup>

To sum up so far, Odysseus is physically transformed into a horse, while Arjuna is symbolically associated with one; and the reason for the involvement of

2. All *Mahābhārata* references, unless otherwise noted, are to Book 14 of the Critical Edition.

3. In the *Harivaṃśa*, the ‘appendix’ to the *Mahābhārata*, during the Horse Sacrifice held by Arjuna’s great-grandson, Indra substitutes himself for the stallion, partly in order to enjoy the beautiful chief wife (118.10 ff.). I cite this Indra–horse link as ‘harmonizing’ with the Arjuna–horse link.

horses in the two biographies is that something similar was present in the proto-narrative from which they both derive. My wording is vague, but that is deliberate; for although one can imagine the proto-narrative as closer to the well-integrated Sanskrit than to the scrappy Greek, it would be premature to attempt any precise reconstruction. Instead, I turn to some of the other issues arising from the rapprochement.

One puzzle concerns the consequences of the ritual intercourse. One might expect a successful Horse Sacrifice to result in offspring, as indeed the Brāhmaṇa implies (1.9.9).<sup>4</sup> However, Draupadī's five children, one born from each husband, were all killed at the end of the great war, and neither she nor the husbands produce any more. Yet the line does not die out. For although Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna and Subhadrā, was also killed in the war, he left his wife pregnant with Parikshit; and Parikshit, as already noted, was resuscitated by Krishna. But Krishna was present at the right moment explicitly because he had been invited for the Horse Sacrifice (51.46, 65.2). Thus, although the survival of the dynasty is ensured *before* the ritual copulation, the two events are not unconnected.

A more important objection to my argument might be that in carrying out her role in the sacrifice, Draupadī is acting not, or not primarily, as the wife of Arjuna, but as the chief queen of King Yudhishtira, for whom the ceremony is being held. The relation between the two brothers is a fundamental and far-reaching problem which I hope to discuss elsewhere, but one point is very clear. To all intents and purposes, Yudhishtira has only the one wife, Draupadī, while Arjuna does indeed have four. Moreover, unlike his elder brother, he acquired them by his own acts (he won Draupadī in an archery contest, and she always loves him best). Thus it is easy to envisage Arjuna as being in some sense the 'real' royal husband of Draupadī, even if Yudhishtira is the official one. This line of thought lessens the conceptual gap between Arjuna, who is not a king, and Odysseus, who is one (he has of course no elder brother).

The rapprochement can be further strengthened by moving from Odysseus-as-horse to the father-son conflict with which Sextus and Servius associate it. The killing of Odysseus by Telegonus is well attested: in his invaluable notes to Apollodorus, Frazer (1921, Vol. II: 303) collected fifteen classical references, and the story has not infrequently been related (as by Katz 1990: 198) to other father-son duels such as Rustam-Sohrab or Cúchulainn-Conlaí, as well as to Arjuna-Babhravāhana. The picture is enriched by another Greek story (recorded by Parthenius *Erot.* 3) in which it is the father who kills the son: Odysseus kills Euryalus, his son by Euippe (from *hippos*, 'horse', which is suggestive). Altogether, there must be material for a book-length study; but having previously used the story in arguing for the Calypso-Citrāṅgadā homology (Allen 1996), I look at it here only for its bearing on the horse. The relation between the

4. All references to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* are to Book 13.

father-son duel and the equine theme varies. Sextus treats the two as alternatives, with a third added for good measure. Servius juxtaposes them, but without making it clear exactly how he sees the link. The Sanskrit situates the duel as a short episode within the year-long association of hero and horse, which of course presupposes that the duel is not fatal. But in all three cases the two themes are somehow related.

At first sight Khennos is an exception, since he does not refer to a duel. But the matter is not so simple. Hals starts off as a servant (perhaps a pupil?) of Circe, and she resembles her mistress in being a magician who uses drugs to transform humans into animals, as Circe does in the *Odyssey*. In that sense she is a doublet of Circe. But Circe, who is regularly given as the mother of Telegonus, is certainly involved in the story of the duel. In Apollodorus it is when she tells her son about his father that he sails for Ithaca; and according to an *Odyssey* scholion (to 11.134) she procures the weapon he uses. Moreover, there are independent grounds for seeing Circe as cognate with Ulūpī; and Ulūpī is several times mentioned as Babhruvāhana's 'mother' in a classificatory sense (she is of course his step-mother), and it is she who engineers the duel. Again, according to the commentary on Lycophron's *Alexandria* (line 805), it was said that after Odysseus had been killed by Telegonus, Circe resurrected him with her drugs (*pharmakois*)—compare Ulūpī's resuscitation of Arjuna. Thus, in connecting the equine metamorphosis with Circe, Khennos is indirectly connecting it with the duel.

Servius raises a lot of interesting issues on which I must be very brief.

(i) *Wanderings* Odysseus' return journey from Troy was indeed a matter of wandering (*errores*), since he was largely at the mercy of wind and wave; but a priori his subsequent departure from Ithaca could have been direct to a fixed destination. Servius' use of the word *errores* here too might perhaps recall the wandering of the sacrificial horse, even if he had omitted the last sentence of his annotation.

(ii) *Helper deity* The attribution of the transformation to Athene is natural, given her long-standing association with the hero and her previous transformations of him, e.g. into a beggar and back. But in general (Allen 1996: 18), Athene as helper deity to the hero corresponds to the god-on-earth Krishna, and Krishna's role in Book 14 is extensive. He is the first to suggest to Yudhishtira the idea of a sacrifice (2.3); then, after giving Arjuna a lengthy religious discourse and visiting his own home town of Dvārakā, he resuscitates Parikshit; and finally, he is offered the leading role in the Horse Sacrifice (70.21), though he politely declines. The Athene-Krishna relationship is potentially a vast topic.

(iii) *Totality* According to Servius' first variant, Pan was begotten by all the suitors. Though this accords ill with the Homeric portrait of the faithful Penelope, similar traditions are known from other sources, and one might wonder if they are somehow related to Draupadī's polyandry. However, I consider here only the folk etymology of the child's name: *pan* is the neuter of *pas*, 'all'. The link between Pan and totality is made in a different form at the end of the *Homeric Hymn to Pan*: the gods called the boy Pan because he delighted the hearts of all of them



(*pasin*, the dative plural). But Draupadī's five sons collectively incarnate the Vishvedevas, the 'All-gods' (*viśva*, 'all, every, whole, universal').

(iv) *Goats* According to Servius' second variant, Pan was begotten by Hermes in the form of a goat. Ignoring Hermes, I focus on the collocation goat-horse—Penelope first has a lover who takes the form of a goat, then a husband who is given the form of a horse; and the Indian ritual involves the same sequence of animals.

(a) As is regularly mentioned (e.g. Kane 1941: 1228), the Horse Sacrifice is first referred to, some centuries before the Brāhmaṇas, in two Vedic hymns (RV 1.162–3), which are in fact used in the ritual; and in exalting the horse, both hymns associate it with a he-goat. The first describes a procession: 'This goat for all the gods [note the adjective *viśvadevya*, corresponding to Vishvedeva] is led forward with the racehorse as the share for Pūshan' (O'Flaherty 1981: 89–90). The goat is the preliminary sacrificial victim, the *Voropfer* (Geldner 1951, Vol. I: 222), and when the procession circles three times leading the horse, the goat goes first, 'announcing the sacrifice to the gods'. The second hymn confirms this picture. 'The racehorse has come to the slaughter, pondering with his heart turned to the gods. The goat, his kin, is led in front; behind come the poets, the singers' (O'Flaherty 1981: 88).

(b) The Brāhmaṇa also associates the two animals, albeit less straightforwardly. To the central stake is bound 'the horse, a hornless he-goat and a gayal (?)', and around the horse are tied a whole set of he-goats (2.2.1–10). The horse himself is dedicated to Prajāpati (here treated as the supreme deity), and the 'body-encirclers' are each dedicated to some other god.

(c) The *Mahābhārata* account mentions only bulls and 'aquatic animals' (90.33) and ignores goats, as does the account of the ritual in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.13.24). Nevertheless, I suppose that the successive appearance of goat and horse in the biography of Penelope is related to the successive sacrifice of goat and horse in the Indian ritual, and that the animals appeared in that order in the proto-narrative.

This essay has explored only a selection of the post-Homeric texts and has done so only selectively; but for my final comparison I return to Homer (11.119–34). Tiresias does not mention horses, but he does mention *two* sacrifices. After killing the suitors, Odysseus is to set out with an oar over his shoulder and travel until he comes among people who know nothing of sea, salt, ships or oars. When he meets someone who mistakes the oar for a winnowing fan, he is to plant it in the earth and sacrifice a ram, bull and boar to Poseidon. Then he is to return home and sacrifice sacred hecatombs to the gods, to all of them in sequence (*pasi mal' hexeiēs*).

The two sacrifices stand in contrast. The first takes place far from home among strangers, is directed solely to Poseidon, and is relatively modest in scale—three victims, and presumably no guests. The second is at home (on the smallish

sea-girt island of Ithaca), is directed to all the gods (including Poseidon again?), one after another—*hexeiēs* implies a listing—and is on a large scale, for a *hekatombē* is 'a great public sacrifice'. Even in Homer, as the dictionaries tell us, the number and nature of the victims does not always accord with the etymology (*hekaton*, 'hundred'; *bous*, 'ox'), but the connotations of the word, especially in the plural, are clear enough.

In Book 14 Arjuna is essentially involved in two and only two sacrifices. The second we already know about: the Horse Sacrifice is celebrated in the capital on a quasi-cosmic scale, both as regards human guests and deities. For although Prajāpati is central, the Brāhmaṇa makes it clear that he does not stand alone; he had wanted to keep the ritual for himself, but the other gods demanded their share (2.1.1). 'The horse is the nobility, and the other animals are the peasantry...the horse alone belongs to Prajāpati, and the others are sacred to the gods' (2.2.15). 'Seeing that the horse is sacred to Prajāpati, why is it sprinkled for other gods too?', asks the text. It is because all the gods are concerned in the sacrifice (1.2.9). 'The horse is slaughtered for all the deities' (3.4.1). But the pantheon is not honoured simply as an anonymous collectivity. When the omenta are offered up to the gods, the sacrificer 'gratifies them deity after deity (*yathādevatām*)' (5.3.1–6). Sometimes the text gives a sequence of divine names: 'Hail to A..., Hail to B...' (1.8.2–8), or 'Such and such a goat to A..., such and such to B...' (2.2.3–9).

Arjuna's earlier sacrifice takes place during the Himalayan expedition. The capital is in the plains, and to reach its goal the party must traverse 'lakes, rivers, forests and groves' (63.6), which implies a considerable distance; moreover, their northward journey takes them away from the sea. The expedition is sizeable, but compared with the Horse Sacrifice it is modest in scale and involves no guests. Above all, it is directed not to all the gods, but primarily to Shiva, and only secondarily to his associates. The gold was originally buried by a king who obtained it by obeying instructions to go to the mountains and propitiate Shiva (8.12–31); Bhīma urges that they do likewise (62.13); and so they do (64.1–4). Offerings are also made to Shiva's friend Kubera and to other supernaturals, but the expedition is certainly oriented primarily to Shiva, to whom alone offerings are made before both legs of the journey (62.18–19; 64.18). But apart from anything else (it is another vast topic; see Allen in press), Shiva and Poseidon are both characteristically trident-bearers.

Thus the argument is that Poseidon's sacrifice : hecatomb :: Shiva's sacrifice : Horse Sacrifice.

When comparing two things, say two stories, the easiest procedure is to take one as a starting-point and present the other as diverging from it. Since the Sanskrit epic tradition is copious and coherent, and the area of Greek tradition studied here is scrappy and incoherent, one is tempted to take the Sanskrit as starting-point. Diachronically speaking, this is obviously nonsense. There is no possibility that

the *Mahābhārata* lies behind the Greek, and if detailed similarities exist it must be because both descend from a third body of narrative. The latter must have contained some linkage between proto-hero and horse, and presumably the story was indeed more similar to the Horse Sacrifice than to the unmotivated metamorphosis in the Greek.

Comparativists will not be surprised at this conclusion, which relates to a long-running debate: royal horse-sacrifice was first postulated as a proto-Indo-European institution by Schröder (1927). Schröder's brief paper is often referred to, e.g. by Dumézil (1975: 215–19) and O'Flaherty (1980: 338), but what exactly can be reconstructed remains controversial (Polomé 1994a, 1994b; Sergent 1995: 365). The rapprochement presented here provides new material for the debate, which is already quite complex.

What is perhaps more surprising is that the sources used in the rapprochement are so late by Graeco-Roman standards. I suppose the lateness is due partly to the loss of earlier writings; but if one is surprised, it is probably more because scholarship has tended to underestimate both the endurance of oral tradition and its ability to bypass the earliest texts so as to surface in later ones. But how could the bypass be demonstrated except by language-family based comparativism?

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**WYSISWYG:  
WHAT YOU SEE IS *SOMETIMES* WHAT YOU GET;  
AND SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE SKIN,  
THE BODY AND DECORATION IN MELANESIA**

**MICHAEL O'HANLON**

TAXONOMISTS sometimes classify themselves into 'lumpers' and 'splitters'.<sup>1</sup> This applies particularly to botanists, dealing as they do with the relatively plastic world of plant speciation where arguments can be made both for an inclusive approach, which lumps plants together, and for an inclusive approach that splits them into multiple classes. The nature of the present exercise forces me in the direction of 'lumping', and I identify as common Melanesian themes what in a longer presentation I might wish to split—though I do claim local Melanesian licence in refusing to make a rigorous distinction between the skin, the body or its adornments. Part of the discussion that follows was precipitated by Peter Rivière's (1994) neat formulation that 'What You See in Amazonia Is not Necessarily What You Get'. As he makes clear, in the 'highly transformational' Amazonian world

1. This article is a modified version of a paper given at a colloquium of Amazonianists and Melanesianists held at Manchester University's Satterthwaite Conference Centre in 1994. The format of the colloquium paired Amazonianists and Melanesianists, each pair addressing a topic of common interest. I was paired with Peter Rivière on the topic of the skin, adornment and clothing. Peter Rivière's paper was published earlier in *JASO* (Vol. XXV, no. 3, pp. 255-62) and this paper should be read in conjunction with his. I am grateful for comments both to my fellow participants and also to Lisette Josephides and Marc Schiltz. Jimmy Weiner deserves all our thanks for his energy in organizing the colloquium.

'it is never entirely safe to believe the evidence of your own eyes.... Behaviour is a better guide than appearances' (1994: 261). My discussion, however, will not be confined to this; in particular I shall try to mitigate essentialist tendencies inherent in 'lumping' by paying some attention to the changes associated with modernity.

In his recent book on tattooing in Polynesia, Alfred Gell (1993) has noted that while enough data on the role of skin as a symbolic form has been amassed to make it an enticing research project, anthropological theory in this area 'is still somewhat inchoate' (p. 23). Long ago, Read (1955) drew attention to the salience the skin has as an idiom among the Gahuku Gama of the New Guinea Highlands. He attributed this to a Gahuku outlook that 'does not recognize any sharp distinction between the physical and psychic constituents of man's nature' (pp. 267–8). In what is perhaps the best-known account of the symbolic role of the body and skin in Amazonia, Terry Turner (1977) stresses for the Kayapo of Brazil the extent to which the skin symbolizes the boundary between the biological, presocial aspects of the person and exogenous cultural norms: 'more simply...between the physical individual and his society' (p. 170).

What these and other pieces of literature point to is the possibility of a more general formulation of the symbolic role of the skin and of the ornaments and garments which may clothe it. I suggest that together they constitute a natural symbol, not merely for the continuity between physical and psychic selves noted for the Gahuku, nor just for the difference between biological individual and society observed by Turner but more broadly *for the possibility of difference and continuity themselves*. That is to say, the skin—as something that is at once the inside of an outside and the outside of an inside—potentially embodies both the possibility of difference (which, locally may be between 'biology' and 'culture', or 'individual' and 'society', or psychic and physical selves) and the potential for continuity between apparently disjunct realms. In short, the skin is a natural symbol for both disjunction and continuity. Whether it is used for one or the other and the differences and continuities it expresses, will vary according to culture and circumstance.

I have already referred to Turner's Kayapo work. In a similar analysis Seeger (1975) gives an account of the role of ornaments among another Brazilian people, the Suya. Ear ornaments, he notes, are inserted at an age when Suya adolescents are expected to begin to 'hear', to internalize society's demands. Men's elaborate lip discs, in contrast, are inserted about the time that young men are expected to begin to make a contribution to local political life through speech-making. In both the Kayapo and Suya cases the skin is, in part, being used to symbolize and manipulate the boundary between unbridled individual biology and social requirements. To pursue Rivière's electronic analogy, it would seem that the skin here operates as a 'close-' (as opposed to a 'remote-') control, by means of which 'society' is able to get a grip on individual biology.

In Melanesia, by contrast, much of the emphasis in accounts of adornment has been the other way around. It has been less upon how 'society' shapes 'the

individual' (concepts which have themselves been criticised as ethnocentric) than upon the perceived revelatory capacity of the decorated body in a world in which words, while potent, are also distrusted. In a much-cited article, Marilyn Strathern (1979) analyzes the way in which the condition of the skin of dancers displayed at *moka* prestations is felt to disclose whether they indeed possess the economic resources their performance lays claim to. This is also a tack I have taken myself (O'Hanlon 1989) in analyzing the equally elaborate decorated displays of the neighbouring Wahgi people. Among the Wahgi, however, the emphasis is more on the locally perceived capacity of the decorated skin to authenticate one of the many rival versions of the true state of moral relations prevailing within and between clans. A glossy, glowing, glinting, burnished appearance validates dancers' claims that their exchange debts have been fully honoured, while an ashy, flaky, dry skin testifies to concealed treachery or undisclosed anger within the dancers' ranks.

Do we then have a global contrast between Amazonia, where appearance is deceptive and often conceals further forms, and Melanesia, where the condition of the decorated skin provides the only sure guide in a duplicitous world? By no means.

First of all, as I have also tried to show for the Wahgi, the cultural emphasis that 'seeing is believing' is not necessarily borne out in practice. Wahgi expectations that the quality of a given display will at last produce an unambiguous and impartial verdict of the true state of moral relations within and between competing groups seem rarely to be met. Individuals assessing displays bring different background knowledges to the process. Nor is there any forum for arriving at shared conclusions after a display, and people may remain uncertain of their judgement until they hear it confirmed by others. Any judgements they do make may be tentative and susceptible to reversal in the face of strongly voiced opinions to the contrary. It is in this lacuna that forceful Big Men manoeuvre, asserting self-interested links between what they claim to be the quality of a display and their own activities.

Secondly, Melanesia too is rich in myths of bodily transformation. One of the most detailed analyses of skin-changing myths has been undertaken by Leroy (1985) for the Kewa people, whose mythology he describes as 'a kind of auto-anthropology, a home-grown social science' (p. x). In the archetypal Kewa skin-changing myth, a girl on the way to a dance encounters a notably ill-favoured man with poor and ashy skin whose attempts to assist her across the river she rudely rebuffs. Subsequently, at the dance itself, she finds herself attracted to an especially well-favoured youth, splendidly decorated. During the ensuing episodes, she comes to suspect that the two men, outwardly so different, are in fact one and the same. Slipping away from the next dance, she discovers the poor and ashy skin and burns it in an effort to freeze her lover in his beautiful mode. In parallel myths, the skin changer is the girl rather than the man.

What you see, then, is not necessarily what you get in Melanesia either—behind the leprous-skinned rubbish man a gorgeous dancer lurks. Leroy

goes on to point out, however, that although two skins are in play, the true skin, according to the myths, is the beautiful one. It is the ashy skin which is donned and shed. Furthermore, the skin changer discloses his or her true self on ceremonial occasions and conceals it in domestic life, which says something both about the way the Kewa view these two social spheres (people realize themselves most fully in the public sphere) *and* about the necessity of both roles (ibid.: 181ff).

A final example where what you see is not always what you get in Melanesia occurs in Simon Harrison's appropriately titled volume *The Mask of War* (1993). Harrison argues against the application of a particular tradition of Western political thought—one he traces back to Hobbes—in understanding Melanesian warfare. In the Hobbesian style of analysis, territorial political units are taken as givens; warfare is seen as naturally liable to erupt in the interstices between political units where neither law nor moral norms hold sway. However, this does not apply in the Middle Sepik, where Harrison worked—rather the reverse. In these societies the global scheme of totemic clanship binds all individuals to each other with diffuse ties of sociality. Here the problem is not that such ties falter at political boundaries but that political boundaries are difficult to draw in the first place. Warfare, Harrison argues, is one of the ways groups extract themselves from the entropic ties of sociality which threaten to dissolve them. Engaging in warfare necessitates subordinating one of the components from which the person, locally, is thought to be constituted—the internal 'Understanding' through which individuals recognize mutual claims upon each other by virtue of their common humanity—to its opposite: 'Spirit', the aggrandizing, autonomy-seeking self.

It is here that masking, in the form of warfare decoration, comes in. Harrison remarks upon the frequency with which the charcoal and ornaments worn for warfare are said to anonymize and conceal their wearers in Melanesia. Synthesizing a range of ethnographic evidence, he argues that the anonymizing, concealing qualities claimed for warfare decoration reflect the subordination of the entropic ties of sociality to group ends. Of the claims (made also by Hageners and Wahgi) that charcoal renders its wearers unrecognizable, he notes that 'what seems to be implied here is that it is specifically *groups* that are hostile, while individuals themselves are sociable...it is, in a sense, [the] clan itself that is acting' (ibid.: 114). Citing Asmat data, he notes: 'again, aggression is, as it were, something on the outer surface of the self that can be worn or shed' (ibid.: 119).

Here too, then, what you see is not quite what you get. Concealed beneath the charcoaled warrior who has temporarily suspended his capacity for affect lies a peaceable human being. While the condition of the skin in Melanesia is widely regarded as revelatory, what I think these three cases indicate is that there is a situational and political dimension to whether what you see really is what you get. For the Wahgi, what you 'see' may reflect the persuasive verbal talents of a Big Man. For the Kewa, the dull skin of the domestic hearth cloaks the public figure. Behind the Avatip warrior, high on 'Spirit', lies a heart of gold.

In many Melanesian societies the term for skin is the same as that for body, and I now want to look at a further idea that seems to crop up widely in



Melanesia. This is the notion that the body, in Alfred Gell's (1987) graphic phrase, is a 'portfolio' composed of elements or constituents from different social sources. Frequently, the hard or bony parts are felt to derive from agnatic sources, while blood and skin have maternal origins. As Bruce Knaft (1989: 205) shows, however, procreative symbolism does not correlate in any simple way with matrilineal or patrilineal regimes, and in practice local beliefs are quite complex. Thus Clark (1989), for example, describes how the patrilineal Wiru think of men as initiating foetal development and of women as producing out of female substance a succession of physical bodies which in turn receive the impress of male individuality. For the Wiru, male individuality is therefore 'on the "outside" of the body, which is why the skin, dress and decorations are important markers of male identity' (*ibid.*: 123).

Linked to the 'portfolio' concept of the body is the notion that bodily growth and appropriate development into adulthood depend both on maintaining relations with the agencies whose contributions originally gave rise to the body, and on manipulating the elements from which it is constructed. The Melanesian body, then, is not regarded as 'deep-sealed at the moment of conception' (Knaft 1989: 201) and inhabited by an autonomous owner-occupier (as it is regarded in at least one Western folk view) but as externally influenced and transacted through the course of life. Male growth may be thought to require the injection of energizing semen or the expulsion of weakening maternal blood. At the same time, maternal kin may be regarded as the ultimate owners of the body, requiring payments to buy off their claims during the course of life and compensation in the event of the injury to the body. Correspondingly, the end of life can sometimes be regarded as a process of 'de-conception' (Mosko 1985: 177), with payments—in the form of brides, food or valuables—being returned to the sources from which the deceased individual was originally composed.

Elsewhere (O'Hanlon 1992), I have suggested that the processual dimension to all this may be played out in the manufacture and manipulation of specific body adornments. This is so with the elaborate wigs in which certain Wahgi individuals are adorned at the height of their Pig Festival. In many ways, the Pig Festival is a clan's ideological claim to be the source of its own corporate well-being. It is a denial of what is otherwise acknowledged—that a clan actually depends upon the social matrix of other clans from which wives come and where maternal kin, recognized as the source of individual well-being, are located. In this sense, the Pig Festival performs something of the same role that Harrison ascribes to Avatip warfare, of 'precipitating' a political group from the claims of wider sociality. What is distinctive about Wahgi wigs is that they are made by, or with materials donated by, the maternal kin whose claims are otherwise being repudiated. I have suggested that these wigs, gradually built up as they are to encase most of the upper half of the wearer's body, constitute a second, maternally derived skin—a momentary acknowledgement, at the height of what is otherwise a celebration of autonomous clanship, of alternative sources of well-being. Clan values, however, have the last word during the Festival, for at its close, the wigs are removed and

stored beneath the clan cult house which models exclusively agnatic values in its construction.

If skin and body are thus widely regarded in Melanesia as constituted from the contributions of a surrounding social matrix, then changes to that matrix will have repercussions. The most far-reaching of these changes has, of course, stemmed from colonial contact and post-colonial state formation. I want to end by looking first at some effects of missionization in this regard, and secondly at the potential for the emergence of styles of body decoration as a kind of ethnicity. Both seem to me potentially to have Amazonian parallels.

A provocative if impressionistic analysis of the former is provided by Jeffrey Clark (1989), who relates missionary proselytization in the Wiru area of the Southern Highlands to Wiru men's perception that they are physically shrinking. Clark suggests that this relates to Wiru procreation beliefs, mentioned earlier, according to which the outer surface of the body is thought to receive the impress of male individuality. This male product is compromised both by missionary injunctions that the Wiru should cover their bodies and not adorn themselves in traditional decorations, and by the fact that Wiru men are now dependent upon money from the encompassing state.

Local understandings of the Bible may also contribute to a devaluation of both traditions of body decoration and indigenous worth. For example, Wahgi accounts of the Fall that I recorded have the serpent promising an apparently black Adam and Eve that their skin will become white if they eat the forbidden fruit (see also Kempf 1994 for an account of the effect of colonial domination on local ideas relating to skin colour). Noah is portrayed as having a pleasure-bent brother named Aramek whose existence I have been unable to confirm in the biblical reference books I have consulted. Where Noah is said to have had 'ashy' (*sewol se*) skin and to have busied himself making the Ark, Aramek 'went around performing Pig Festivals, decorating himself in Sicklebills and Princess Stephanie bird-of-paradise plumes, had "good" skin, and attracted numerous girls' (*konggar ere ka tu-mek bolo, nganz ka sem, ambel puli kes sim*). When the waters rose, Noah refused to let his hedonist brother aboard.

In contrast to Wiru, the Wahgi are as likely to present their encounter with the forces of modernity as having had a beneficial effect on bodily size as the reverse. They may say, for example, that since they have shunned sorcery and a variety of other practices (this is hyperbole), men have increased in body size and numbers. This more positive view of the encounter with modernity may correlate with the fact that objectively, Wahgi coffee production has meant that they have not been peripheralized in the way the Wiru have been.

Finally, it is worth raising the issue of what happens when indigenous practices and distinctions of body decoration are recontextualized in the framework of the state and of a wider world in which it is necessary to 'have' a culture in order to be acknowledged as a people. Today in Melanesia, people probably adorn themselves as often for national and provincial government celebrations, international cultural shows, tourist visits and church events as they do for purely

'traditional' occasions. Of course, at one level, decorative styles have long stood for differences between groups. Goldman (1983: 67), for example, records the formulaic sayings which express differences between the Huli and their Duna, Enga and Dugube neighbours substantially in terms of their appearance:

The Huli with hair bound with rope/decorated with yellow everlasting flowers/with purple everlasting flowers/arrows with decorated shafts/pan-pipes/double-stringed musical bow/jew's harp/with aprons of pigs' tails/with drum....

The Duna with their form of axe/with their aprons made of this species of string/feather worn in the hair/string cap....

The Enga with this dance style/salt/small cowrie shells/spear made from a *Lai* tree....

The Dugube with their tree oil/axe/bow/species of cane/dogs'-teeth necklace/bamboo through their nose/hair style/shouting style/killing stick....

But Huli-ness, expressed through decoration, comes to have a different meaning in the context of Papua New Guinea as a state. Timmer (1993: 121), for example, has recorded the development of an enhanced Huli consciousness of their decorative style and of their confidence in winning the intergroup dancing competitions often held on national and provincial occasions. Barker and Tietjen (1990) give us a further example of the shift in meaning promoted by such encapsulation in their account of the changing significance of Maisin women's tattooing in Oro Province (Papua New Guinea). Overtly, women's tattooing practices have altered remarkably little during the century over which they have been documented. Yet Barker and Tietjen argue that beneath this stability of surface form, the significance of tattooing has been transformed by the wider national context in which it now takes place. Where once the practice marked the transition to Maisin womanhood, it is now an external marker of being 'Maisin', of being members of a group who have recently achieved commercial success in another artistic endeavour, the production of decorated barkcloth.

In this respect it is appropriate to conclude with a comment on my book *Reading the Skin* (1989, on Wahgi adornment) made to me by Andrew Aipe, a Wahgi man. He said that he thought it was an excellent volume, adding, before I could mentally pat myself on the back for this local endorsement, that what was good about it was that it showed which decorative practices were Wahgi ones, so that in future other groups who made money from tourists by copying Wahgi decorative styles and courting practices could be taken to court and made to pay compensation.

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES

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### **GILLEN'S SCIENTIFIC CORRESPONDENCE: SELECTED LETTERS FROM F. J. GILLEN TO W. BALDWIN SPENCER**

Edited by  
HOWARD MORPHY, JOHN MULVANEY and ALISON PETCH

#### *Introduction*

F. J. Gillen was born on 28 October 1855 in South Australia. He received little formal education, becoming a public servant at the age of eleven as a postal messenger in Clare, South Australia. From 1875 to 1899 he worked throughout Central Australia, gaining promotion in the SA Telegraph Department and eventually becoming Station Master at the Alice Springs Overland Telegraph Station.

By that time, he was the most senior and experienced officer on the (Telegraph) Line and virtual administrator of Central Australia as postmaster, telegraph stationmaster, stipendiary magistrate and sub-protector of Aborigines. He championed the cause of Aborigines throughout his life, in 1891 even vainly charging a policeman with murder.

W. Baldwin Spencer was born in Manchester in 1860. He studied at the Owens College before attending the University of Oxford. During his stay in Oxford he heard E. B. Tylor's first series of lectures and helped in the transfer of the original Pitt Rivers collection to the University in 1884. In 1887 he was appointed foundation professor of biology at the University of Melbourne, a post he retained until he retired.

Spencer and Gillen first met in 1894 when the Horn Scientific Expedition, of which Spencer was a member, terminated in Alice Springs. The expedition had been established in order that geological and mineralogical appraisals, and reviews of the flora; fauna and records of the Aboriginal inhabitants could be obtained. After the main expedition had left Alice Springs, Spencer stayed on to make further zoological collections.

The Pitt Rivers Museum Archives holds 185 letters written by Gillen to Spencer between 1894 and 1903, and one reply from Spencer written in 1904; they are a rich testimony to their close collaboration and friendship. They have not previously been published and the three editors have just completed preparation of an annotated edition of the complete series (Morphy, Mulvaney, and Petch in press). Those reproduced here are a small sample of this larger work.

Gillen's correspondence shows how they were both stimulated by their collaboration. They started their partnership while Spencer was editing the anthropological volume of the Horn Scientific Expedition's Report (a volume to which Gillen contributed a separate paper). During the summer of 1896-7 they conducted intensive fieldwork adjacent to the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, attending a series of ceremonies they called the 'Engwura'. This fieldwork represents the longest and most concentrated anthropological field research in nineteenth-century Australia.

A torrent of correspondence and notes from Gillen then followed, culminating in the publication by Macmillan of their classic, *Native Tribes of Central Australia* in 1899. When working in Alice Springs, Gillen always took advantage of his location 'in the field' to check facts, attend ceremonies and interview informants. The correspondence continued after 1899, until it was interrupted by their longest period of fieldwork together during the 1901-2 expedition, which travelled from Oodnadatta in South Australia through to Borroloola on the Gulf of Carpentaria. The fruits of this research were published as *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* in 1904.

The correspondence documents the intellectual process, the outstanding contribution made by Gillen, and the transformation of both into figures of international standing. There is considerable material in the letters which illuminates the ways in which their books were constructed and the independence and understanding shown by Gillen.

Gillen's dedication to ethnography, and the extensive details of aboriginal society with which he supplied Spencer, placed future scholars in his debt, but his work had profoundly negative implications for his family. Gillen had political aspirations (one of his brothers was a successful South Australian politician), but he turned down the only serious approach he ever received to enter politics because of his commitment to anthropology. He also turned down several well-paid jobs in order to have time to complete his research in Alice Springs. When he eventually did transfer south, he was forced to take a job he disliked in a town (Moonta) he hated.

With the publication of *Native Tribes* and *Northern Tribes*, Gillen achieved fame in intellectual circles both inside and outside Australia. Unfortunately, this fame was never matched by formal recognition of his work. He received neither honours nor awards, not even election to a full Fellowship of the Anthropological Institute, an honour given to both Spencer and Edward Stirling, the anthropologist on the Horn Expedition. Although he contributed greatly to the fame which rewarded Spencer with an FRS and a CMG, his work was never recognized by his own government. Tragically he died prematurely from a debilitating neurological disorder, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (a form of motor neurone disease), in 1912. It is to be hoped that the publication of these letters will restore the balance of the perceived relationship between the two men and their work, a balance and equality always recognized by the men themselves.

These letters were all written to a close friend and collaborator and were never intended for publication. Indeed, from what we know of Gillen's modesty and sense of inadequacy as a scholar, he would have been very much inhibited in what he said and may have been unwilling to write them at all if he could have foreseen that they would one day reach a wider audience. The reader of these letters is thus a privileged visitor into a private world, a world which shows the bonds between two anthropologists and the private personality of the writer.

The letters coincide with the period of Spencer and Gillen's main collaborative research and the years during which their first two major works were published. They cast light on their relationship with the Aboriginal people with whom they worked, the degree to which they conformed to the prejudices of their day, and the degree to which their views prefigure a later and more positive attitude. Although such an attitude is demonstrated in the letters, much of the language used by Gillen to refer to Aboriginal people appears completely inappropriate to the reader of today. Objectivity thus requires the suspension of prejudice about prejudice if the letters are to be placed in the context of their times.\*

\* *Editors' note:*

Readers should note that the publication rights for the five letters reproduced below belong to the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. The editors of *JASO* are grateful to the Museum for permission to publish these letters.

THE LETTERS<sup>1</sup>*Letter 26*

*This letter was sent after Spencer and Gillen had just finished their first period of intensive fieldwork together, at the Alice Springs Engwura. It shows the deep personal friendship between the two men and the start of the collaborative process that led to the writing of their first book, The Native Tribes of Central Australia.*

Alice Springs  
9th February 1897

My dear Spencer,

You are at the present moment speeding along between Quorn and Adelaide, and, while you would probably prefer to be returning here, I am envying you the prospect of so soon being in beautiful little Adelaide. Tomorrow you will doubtless start for boom-stricken, microbe-ridden, frowsy old Melbourne, a week later I picture you, after a night with Howitt<sup>2</sup> and Fison,<sup>3</sup> gowned and capped, walking into your lecturing room with far-away gaze and contemplative mood. The students cheer and make sotto voce observations about the Sun Chip on your nose. After bowing your acknowledgements, you announce that the subject of your discourse upon that occasion will be protoplasm. You begin—‘Protoplasm, now what is protoplasm?’ Pause. ‘Protoplasm, ladies and gentlemen, is no longer an imperfectly understood force, his connection with one of the marches of the Achilpa<sup>4</sup> has been clearly demonstrated on the sacred grounds of the Engwura.’<sup>5</sup>

1. The text of the letters below is as close a rendering of Gillen’s handwriting as possible and practicable. Obvious spelling mistakes and idiosyncrasies of punctuation and capitalization have, however, been rectified—on the grounds that it was felt that for this publication no great purpose would be served by an exact transcription of errors that would interfere with ordinary readability; and a number of paragraph breaks have been added, for the same reason. In silently editing these letters it is a minimalist approach that has been adopted: the intention has been to reproduce as far as possible the character and appearance of the original. Footnotes translating Aboriginal words have been taken from the glossary of *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (Spencer and Gillen 1899). The numbering of the letters refers to their listing in the archive of the Pitt Rivers Museum, where the holding of the entire series is arranged in chronological order.

2. A. W. Howitt (1830–1908), early Australian anthropologist, joint author (with L. Fison) of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* (1880); lived in Melbourne.

3. Lorimer Fison (1832–1907), missionary and anthropologist. *Native Tribes of Central Australia* was dedicated to Fison and Howitt.

4. Native name of the so-called wild cat (*Dasyurus geoffroyi*) that gives its name to a totem.



The ceremonies of his times have been reenacted—Protoplasm lived and flourished in the Alcheringa<sup>6</sup> and was widely known as a mighty Oknirabata<sup>7</sup> of the renowned Achilpa of Urrapitchera,<sup>8</sup> he was afflicted, I say advisedly afflicted with two organs of generation.'

Squeals from the ladies, irreverent but suppressed laughter from the men, the Professor awakes, the class is dismissed, the Prof imbibes some Callo<sup>9</sup> to relieve a peculiar sinking, and while he sips he mutters, 'D—n Gillen, d—n the Achilpa, d—n the Oknirabata and, most of all, d—n protoplasm.'

I cannot tell you how much we missed you, personally I felt like a fish out of water and could not settle down to work at my long neglected 'official duties!' for some days after you left, if I had not been more than a dozen different sorts of a cast-iron ass I could have run down and had a week with you amongst the Niggers at CW.<sup>10</sup> I could have gone on pretext of inspection but it did not occur to me until it was too late. I am sorry you did not discover glacial drift, but in my ignorance of geology I thought the striated boulder of Crown Point was sufficient to establish Byrnes<sup>11</sup> theory and that the discovery of drift at Mt Anderson would simply mean additional evidence. Thanks for sketch and notes on Undiarra.<sup>12</sup>

5. A series of ceremonies attendant upon the last of the rites concerned with initiation.

6. Name given to the far-off times in which mythical ancestors of the tribe are supposed to live; colloquially translated as 'Dreamtime'. Spencer and Gillen were the first to use 'Dreamtime' to describe the cosmogonic framework of Aboriginal religion, although in their early writings they restricted themselves largely to the use of indigenous terms such as *alcheringa* and *churinga*. They have been rather unjustly accused of inventing the concept of the Dreamtime through mistranslation of the Arrernte concept (Wolfe 1991), and undoubtedly the phrase itself proved catching. However, recent linguistic and anthropological work by David Wilkins and John Morton has tended to confirm their translations (personal communications). The success of the term reflects the fact that their analysis has been reinforced and developed rather than contradicted by subsequent researchers.

7. An old man learned in tribal customs and tradition and teaches others; literally, 'great teacher'.

8. Place-name.

9. Possibly an abbreviation of a brand name of whisky (Caledonian?). Alternatively, it may derive from Callibogus, an American mixed drink of rum, spruce beer and molasses (Craigie and Hulbert 1960: 388).

10. Telegraph code for Charlotte Waters, an Overland Telegraph Station.

11. P. M. Byrne (1856–1932), Charlotte Waters telegraph operator, amateur naturalist and friend of both Spencer and Gillen. He was the step-brother of Gillen's wife, Amelia.

12. Undiarra (or Inteera according to Strehlow) was a Southern Arrernte ceremonial site that Spencer visited in January 1897 on his return journey from Alice Springs. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: 193–201, 1912: 93–4.

I am inclined to think the wild dogs who drove in the Okirra<sup>13</sup> are another lot and not identical with the Aurunicha<sup>14</sup> men. There is no reason why there should not be more than one legend of Kangaroos being driven in, and it is not at all likely that the Niggers at the Engwura would mislead us, Cowle's<sup>15</sup> opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. By the way, did you make enquiries and did you find the hill near Henbury from which the Niggers obtain that black stuff? I will do my best to get further information about Undiarra and if I think it advisable will run out there, though from the account and information you were able to gather I don't think I could add much.

I will follow up lines of enquiry suggested by you in letter—since you left here I have done no anthropology beyond going over some of our Engwura work with the old men. The only scrap of information I have been able to gather is that when suffering rheumatic pains in the legs, women only scarify the fleshy part of the leg beneath the seat of pain, and the flow of blood from the numerous small wounds is said to give relief—you may think this worthwhile noting.

Our old wurley<sup>16</sup> is still intact and has become a happy hunting-ground for snakes. I don't think it has been visited by a Nigger of either sex since you left. Lubras<sup>17</sup> and Picaninnies<sup>18</sup> still give it a wide berth, my wife and I often stroll down there of an evening, the place has a fascination for me and I cannot help wishing that we could live our Engwura life over again though I confess it was an anxious time for me, there was always a danger of the thing bursting up and I dreaded anything of the sort happening, much more for your sake than for my own. One of your first evenings in Melbourne will, of course, be devoted to the veteran Achunpa and his pot-bellied friend,<sup>19</sup> how I do wish I could be with you. I hope you will find time to write me a full account of the meeting and what the old fellows think of our work. I shall be very anxious to get your next letter, the wife and I often discuss my dream<sup>20</sup> and when the last mail arrived without a

13. Or Okkirra. A kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*) which gives its name to a totem.

14. Term applied to individuals, both men and women, who lived in the mythical past, and to spirit individuals at the present day, who are regarded as being of a mischievous nature.

15. C. E. Cowle (1863–1922), mounted constable based at Illamurta, informant and collector for both Gillen and Spencer. Guided Spencer to Ayers Rock during the Horn Expedition. Retired in 1903 due to ill health.

16. Shelter used by Gillen and Spencer during their first fieldwork.

17. Aboriginal women.

18. Small or black children. From Spanish *pequeño*.

19. Nicknames for Howitt and Fison respectively. An achunpa is a large lizard (*Varanus giganteus*) which gives its name to a totem.

20. Gillen's dream was to undertake further anthropological fieldwork.

prize from Tattersall<sup>21</sup> she chortled, but I have given the sacred term Engwura another chance to provide the necessary five thousand, and another lovely little pound goes to Tattersall this mail, if there be a providence who presides over the luck of individuals—let us hope that he has anthropological sympathies. I haven't touched a share since you left, in fact I have sworn off that vice altogether, the calls are stiffening me, and unless there is a move in the market (upwards) very shortly I shall be stone broke. I have promised the wife that I will not touch another share of any description without her sanction and she threatens to write you if I break my word!<sup>22</sup>

I was relieved to get your wire saying things at OD<sup>23</sup> were all right for, like you, I was somewhat sceptical, it seemed too much to expect that everything would be saved, hope you will get everything safely to Melbourne. I have boxed up two large cases of shields and all sorts of weapons and sent them down to my brother<sup>24</sup> who will look after them until we go down country. Cowle wrote glowingly of his trip with you. It has evidently done him a lot of good but he feels a bit sick at the idea of returning to Illamurta, he bitterly regrets the collapse on the night of his arrival here and I don't think such a thing is likely to occur again, he says nothing about our work except that it is generally understood that I owe most of my information to MC<sup>25</sup> Willshire,<sup>26</sup> and he expresses a hope that I will 'be manly and above all petty jealousies and acknowledge this in the work'!—Like you he thinks a word of praise would make me unbearably arrogant. His trip to town<sup>27</sup> will, I am afraid, be put off owing to his having to collect Govt statistics.

21. Tattersall's sweepstake, founded by George Adams in 1878.

22. Gillen was a compulsive purchaser of mining shares and often lost a substantial proportion of his annual salary in unwise share speculations.

23. Telegraph code for Oodnadatta, the railhead from which goods to and from Alice Springs were trans-shipped.

24. Possibly Gillen's younger brother, Thomas Philip Gillen, storekeeper and mayor of Clare.

25. Mounted Constable.

26. W. H. Willshire (1852–1925). Posted to Alice Springs in 1882, Willshire was associated with a number of 'incidents' involving the injuring and killing of Aborigines. When he and his men attacked a group of sleeping Aborigines near Tempe Downs, killing two men, Gillen committed him to trial for murder, but after great public support Willshire was acquitted. He published *The Aborigines of Central Australia: With Vocabulary of the Dialect of the Alice Springs Natives* (Port Augusta 1888), *The Thrilling Tale of Real Life in the Wilds of Australia* (Adelaide 1895) and *The Land of the Dawning: Being Facts Gleaned from Cannibals in the Australian Stone Age* (1896). Willshire referred to volcanic places in his imaginative book of 1895. Cowle was thus being ironic.

27. Adelaide.

What is this we hear about you swelling around Crown Point in a pair of beaver moles?<sup>28</sup> I heard that you were so much engaged in admiring your beaver-clad legs that you could not be persuaded to take an interest in anything else. I thought you above personal vanity. Cowle tells me that I was often the topic of conversation, that you all strove to do me justice (without mercy), and he reckoned that he would not be clear of the CW Creek before he would be placed on the dissecting table and quivering under the knives of you and Pado.<sup>29</sup> I am afraid your visits to the interior and your intimate association with the Natives have had a demoralizing effect. I am simply spoiling for an argument and often wondered how you and Byrne got on at CW, you could not differ on political subjects, he would not talk anthropology.<sup>30</sup> Did you manage to raise an argument at all? Or did you simply content yourself with all-round destructive criticism? I notice your democratic leader Turner<sup>31</sup> has taken a Knighthood, I thought him above that sort of thing though I know most Victorians hanker after that tawdry *extinction*. The busted city of the boomster Knights. Some of these days a Governor of Victoria with scientific instincts will make you Sir Baldwin, holy alcheringa, what an awful thought, if this ever happens Byrne, Cowle and I will meet and for a solid week place you upon the dissecting table.<sup>32</sup> It is becoming the fashion for literary and scientific men to accept titles, if Brassey<sup>33</sup> takes an interest in anthropology it may be done within a year, again holy Alcheringa, I don't think I could stand it.

I shall be glad to see English Criticism on Vol IV.<sup>34</sup> If you have spare copies send them to me and I can return them if necessary. I have not seen the Age<sup>35</sup> criticism on the work—let me know if the negatives travelled down safely. I am sending you a few photos this mail, but nothing specially good.

28. Trousers. Beaverteen was a cotton twilled cloth with uncut pile; mole was a type of fustian with a soft surface like a moleskin. Strong cotton trousers known as moleskin were the customary dress of rural workers and miners.

29. Patrick (Pado) M. Byrne.

30. Byrne was in fact interested in anthropology. He published 'an excellent account' (Spencer and Gillen 1927: 454) of the Kurdaitcha custom (1895).

31. Sir Giles Turner (1851–1916), Victorian Premier and Commonwealth Treasurer.

32. Spencer was knighted in 1916, four years after Gillen's death.

33. First Earl Brassey (1836–1918), Governor of Victoria 1895–9.

34. The anthropology volume of the Horn Expedition Reports (Vol. IV), which included a paper by Gillen. All the volumes were edited by Spencer.

35. *The Age*, Melbourne newspaper established in 1854.

About a fortnight ago I discovered that four of the Erleara,<sup>36</sup> Blind George, Young Sambo, Tom (the King's<sup>37</sup> son) and Tom Crib, had made a raid on Gunter's<sup>38</sup> goats, this happened on race day and when I made the discovery the offenders were all away. I at once stopped down rations and as Kelly did not move on the matter I called up the old men and told them that until the offenders were brought in to me there would be no supplies of baccy etc. Yesterday they came in and without tying them up I sent them to Kelly for punishment; no one here, except myself, believed that they would go to the camp knowing as they did that they were to have a hiding.<sup>39</sup> The fact of them yielding themselves up for a hiding staggered Kelly and has given him an exaggerated opinion of my power over the darkies—Field, Besley and Squire<sup>40</sup> pooh-poohed the idea of the boys going to the camp of their own free will—you can imagine how I have been chortling to myself while preserving an outward appearance of unconcern—hold up your fingers!

The weather continues horribly dry, feed is growing scarce and our stock are beginning to look very skinny. I am going to relay the iron troughing tomorrow and erect a whip<sup>41</sup> for waterdrawing, there is no indication of rain and I am beginning to think that we are in for a drought.

The Niggers mourned your departure and are constantly making enquiries about you, your stay here must ever be to them a red-letter period<sup>42</sup> in the history of the tribe, never again will bacca be so plentiful or flour so liberally dealt out. The old King wants to know why you cannot come and live here when I go south and I tell him that the ancient Achunpa could not spare you.

I paid Wallis<sup>43</sup> your account and am enclosing receipt, also statement showing how you stand with me, hope it won't make you feel faint! When you write to England remember me most kindly to your wife and send my love to the little ones. You will soon have them with you again, don't forget to send that photo for the wife.

36. Name applied to the fully initiated men who have passed through the Engwura ceremony.

37. 'King' was an Aboriginal informant of Gillen and a tribal elder.

38. Gunter, Alice Springs hotel-keeper and owner and manager of the Stuart Arms Hotel.

39. This suggests that Kelly, the policeman, punished minor offences with a 'hiding' (the lash?). If so, it was illegal.

40. Telegraph Department staff at Alice Springs.

41. Winding pulley.

42. This phrase came originally from church festivals, which were printed in red in calendars, and it was used colloquially to refer to happy or lucky occasions.

43. Frank and Albert Wallis established one of the first stores in Alice Springs, later known as Wallis Fogarty.

Let me know how you found old Winnecke<sup>44</sup> and how he got on with the great Horn.<sup>45</sup> I was sorry to learn from the papers that the latter is in ill health for I believe he is, after all, a real good fellow wrapped up in a disagreeable crust. Don't intend writing to Stirling<sup>46</sup> until he returns, I am still a wee bit sore about the symbolic business.<sup>47</sup> Besley is still as enthusiastic as ever over the gold mines and spends the whole of his salary on them, his spare time is spent in panning off crushed rock. Woolcock<sup>48</sup> stayed with us a few days and seems a very nice young fellow, he is a student of Prof. Rennie's<sup>49</sup> about whom he talks enthusiastically. Kelly tells me the *Bulletin*<sup>50</sup> of January 9th has a paragraph stating that you and I are at Alice Springs engaged upon 'a monumental work on the Central Australian Natives'. The paragraph is couched in appreciative terms—Kelly says they predict that 'the value of the book, some years hence, will be enormous'—I'll never say another unkind word of the *Bulletin*!! Certainly they must have a copy for review. Most kind and appreciative letters from Gordon,<sup>51</sup>

44. Charles Winnecke (1857–1902), explorer, surveyor and expedition leader, member of the Horn Expedition.

45. W. A. Horn (1841–1922), mining magnate, pastoralist and politician, financed Horn Scientific Exploring Expedition. Winnecke and Horn were disputing the publication of the account of the Horn Expedition. Winnecke had decided to publish separately under the aegis of the South Australian government. Horn felt that Winnecke was wrongly presenting himself as the leader of the Expedition in his accounts.

46. Professor and Sir Edward C. Stirling CMG, FRS (1849–1919), physiologist at University of Adelaide, member of the South Australia Legislative Assembly 1884–7, director of South Australian Museum, Adelaide 1884–1912 and member of the Horn Expedition.

47. Stirling and Gillen had at first collaborated on the anthropological part of the Horn Expedition Reports, but as the Spencer–Gillen partnership began to yield anthropological results, this collaboration weakened. Gillen published a separate anthropological appendix to the report and had not contributed significantly to the Stirling section of the report (which was edited by Spencer). However, during a visit to Stirling in Adelaide, Gillen had alluded to the Arrernte totemic system and its symbolic significance, which Stirling then incorporated into his account.

48. J. G. Woolcock (1874–1957), metallurgist student of E. H. Rennie (see next footnote), presumably on his way to the Arltunga Goldfields, where Gillen had investments. The government was building a cyanide treatment plant there and he may have been involved in its establishment, as he was in charge of the South Australia government cyanide works at Mount Torrens in 1896.

49. E. H. Rennie (1852–1927), Angus Professor of Chemistry, University of Adelaide in 1885; founded South Australian School of Mines.

50. The *Bulletin*, an influential, radical weekly journal founded in 1880 and produced in Sydney; chief organ of Australian nationalism and republicanism. Nicknamed the 'Bushman's Bible', its motto was 'Temper democratic, bias offensively Australian'.

51. Sir J. H. Gordon (1850–1923), Chief Secretary in 1893 Kingston government; Attorney-General 1899–1903.

Ex Chief Sec, and others to whom I sent copies of Horn paper. Gordon writes, 'I need not say that I am sure this will form a most valuable contribution to Scientific Knowledge and will carry your name down long after those of politicians are forgotten', and still I do hanker after a political career and Gordon knows it. I quite expect that when you get fairly settled and have time to review our work that I shall be inundated with a million or two questions. If you love me, keep off that infernal table of relationship, the sight of it in its tan enclosure here, often gives me a cold shiver.

My kind regards to French,<sup>52</sup> Fison and Howitt. Tell French I'll send him some eggs shortly. Your collecting tin is slowly filling. Now old man I must scratch a few lines to my own people. Hope you feel benefited by your stay with us—it was a delight to my wife and I to have you here and we shall always look back upon the two months you spent here as amongst the brightest and most enjoyable we have spent at AG.<sup>53</sup> I do wish the visit could be repeated next year.

Yours always faithfully,

F. J. G.

#### Letter 29

*This and the next letter demonstrate the detailed data collection carried out by Gillen and the huge variety of subjects upon which they gathered information. They also show the way in which Spencer and Gillen processed their field information. Both letters were written in Alice Springs while Spencer was in Melbourne.*

Alice Springs  
June 18th 1897

My dear Spencer,

I feel almost inclined not to write you at all this mail. I have just done up and posted by registered parcel of about 110 pages of closely written notes which will, after you have got over some preliminary cursing, I think, gladden your heart—and I want you to get at them with the least possible delay. These are the matters dealt

52. Charles French (1868–1950), naturalist and friend of Spencer.

53. Telegraph code for Alice Springs.

with: marches of wild dogs, Yarumpa<sup>54</sup>—two columns—Erlia,<sup>55</sup> Unjiamba,<sup>56</sup> Ulpmirka<sup>57</sup> and their two women giving account of their origin—Iriakura,<sup>58</sup> Erlia the poor, Udnirringita<sup>59</sup>—and a lot of information about their country—Ullakupera,<sup>60</sup> Amunga quinyirquinya,<sup>61</sup> Okira, Unthippa<sup>62</sup> dancing women, Echunpa—four ceremonies all near—notes on Erathippa,<sup>63</sup> origin and history of woman who sprung up there—complete udnirringita intichiuma<sup>64</sup>—very full account [and] much new important information about Iartna<sup>65</sup> and Ariltha<sup>66</sup>—instances of change of class and totem—first account of man's origin after great salt water subsided, little lizards Amunga quinyerquinya came made men from rudimentary creatures, Ullakupera followed, later period also making men from rudimentary creatures, erroneously described in Horn volume as a species of porcupine—voluminous notes on Churinga<sup>67</sup> and Nanja<sup>68</sup>—further notes, fresh

54. The honey ant (*Camponotus inflatus*), which gives its name to a totem.

55. An emu and important totem group.

56. The flower of a species of *Hakea*, which gives its name to a totem.

57. Term applied to a boy before he has been circumcised. Also used in connection with groups of individuals of certain totems who are the descendants of ancestors, who in the mythical past were not circumcised as the other members of the totem were.

58. A favourite food, the bulb of *Cyperus rotundus*, which gives its name to a totem.

59. One of the larval insect forms called witchetty grubs. The name is derived from the term *udnirringa*, the name of the bush on which the insect feeds. It gives its name to an important totem. This is the totem to which Gillen (and later Spencer) were affiliated.

60. A little hawk, which gives its name to an important totem.

61. A small fly-eating lizard.

62. Name applied to certain women of mythical times who are supposed to have danced across the country from west to east. The *unthippa* dance at the ceremony of circumcision commemorates these women.

63. A stone representing the spot where a sacred pole was implanted and where a child went into the earth together with a number of *churinga*. Spirit children emanate from the stone.

64. Increase ceremony associated with the totem. Spencer and Gillen defined *intichiuma* as a sacred ceremony performed by the members of a local totemic group with the object of increasing the number of the totemic animal or plant (Spencer and Gillen 1899: 170–9).

65. Male circumcision ceremony (ibid.: 218–51).

66. Sub-incision ceremony (ibid.: 251–60).

67. Term implying something sacred or secret, applied both to an object and to the quality possessed by it. It is frequently used for one of the sacred stones or sticks of the Arrernte tribe which are the equivalents of the bull-roarers of other tribes. The *churinga* (modern spelling *tjurunga*) are manifestations of the sacred world of the Dreaming. Characteristically, they take



information Undiara—adoptions of present class and marriage system—knocking out teeth Alail-lynga important ceremony, details probably point back to a time when descent was maternal—boring of nose with ceremony—cutting men's hair—more evidence (I think) of maternal descent—magic—Arungquiltha,<sup>69</sup> one form of which you long ago expected I would find—menses custom—making doctors—anointing with fat to develop girls' breasts—totem association with special animals and birds—sun myth, sex and relationship to, recognized by various classes—therapeutics—custom bringing about reconciliation [of] groups opposed to each other—sexual promiscuity with restrictions only affecting certain close blood relations, customs relating to giving blood—and a mass of general information including replies to questions.

It was a happy inspiration that caused you to start me working out the wanderings of the various totems, and much of the information now going to you is the outcome of that work. If we had possessed this information before the Engwura it would have helped us to a better understanding of the various ceremonies, but even now it throws a flood of light upon them and will help you to write definitely as to their import. We know that each ceremony represented an Alcheringa myth which is carefully preserved by the old men. There is a special ceremony connected with each individual, and the knowledge of these ceremonies is a never-ending source of profit to the old men, who, as in the case of Jim, will exact Chowarilya<sup>70</sup> before showing the ceremony.

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the form of stone or wooden objects with incised designs representing ancestral beings and events. *Churinga* can also be used more inclusively to refer to words and dances and other manifestations of ancestral beings. The process of Spencer and Gillen's thinking about *churinga* comes out well in a later letter from Gillen to Spencer in which he writes: 'When first of all did the Churinga come in—that question is a poser but you will find it dealt with in my notes — it dates back, I think, before alcheringa man and I am inclined to think that originally it was meant to express the spiritual part of the alcheringa animal or man, the meaning of the term I take to be "sacred"—in the sense perhaps that the sacramental wafer is sacred to the Roman Catholic—A thing is Churinga that is everything—(Churinga spelt in capital letters please)—there can be nothing impossible where Churinga are concerned—Men sprung from Churinga, that is from something sacred in the animal or man, just as the Virgin Mary appears at Lourdes, though unless you want to bring down upon me the anathema of the Holy Church don't quote me as saying so' (Alice Springs, 30th July 1897).

68. Term applied to a natural object, such as a tree or stone, that arose to mark the spot where an ancestor of the mythical past went into the ground, leaving behind his spirit part associated with his *churinga*. The tree or stone is the *nanja* of that spirit and also of the human being in the form of whom it undergoes reincarnation. The *churinga* is the *churinga nanja* of the human being.

69. A magic evil influence. The term is applied both to the evil influence and to the material object in which it resides.

70. An offering of food made to men who have officiated at certain ceremonies. After its presentation, the ban on silence previously existing between the donor and recipient is removed.

I am simply delighted with the way you are dealing with our material, it's going to be a *great* book, make no mistake about it—I am simply saturated with native lore and so full of the subject that I am almost tempted to jump on the mail and run across to Melbourne. This Engwura has widened out and extended my influence with these people enormously, and old men are coming in from all parts to see me, getting information is comparatively easy and I think you need not fear that I shall leave much for those who tread in our footsteps to find out.

Two things baffle every attempt at solution. First, why a man speaks to his Ungaraitcha and not to his Quitia,<sup>71</sup> and second, the Umbilyirakira<sup>72</sup> ceremony of the Engwura—the term Umbilyirakira has only one meaning, and that is a child fresh born. For the life of me I cannot get at the meaning of the ceremony, but the men who fell down and covered up the Churinga bundle before the women are supposed to be tumbling down. That is, they are dying. This thing has worried me awfully and I have spent hours and hours trying to solve it. I quite expect when you have read my notes you will throw them down and say, 'Why, in the name of the flaming alcheringa, didn't this muddy-minded Hiberian find all this out before?'—but you'll get over all that, and I shan't be within reach of—Yes. Your just wrath—and you'll end by chortling over them in the good old style I know so well.

It is a most fortunate thing that you decided to put the notes roughly into form before setting down to write the magnum opus. I dare say I have sent you a lot of needless detail; I have thought it best to copy out my rough notes without any attempt at condensation because in condensing, I might leave out something which to your trained mind *would* appear important. In the Chambers Pillar myth you will require to make an alteration: Rulipita was a Purula man, and the Pillar arose when he tumbled down in the Alcheringa.<sup>73</sup> You will find with the manuscript drawings from Emily Gap<sup>74</sup> with explanatory notes, also drawings from Quiurupa<sup>75</sup> with ditto—I spent a night and half a day with the old King at Quiurupa and felt that I was heading upon historic ground. The name is applied to a stretch of country some square miles in extent, and each of the Ulpmirka Quiurupa (by the way, these notes supply information as to the origins of Ulpmirka and

71. Elder and younger 'tribal sister' respectively.

72. Newborn child.

73. '[Chamber's Pillar] has naturally attracted the attention of the natives, who account for it by saying that in the far-away times they call Alchera, there lived a very great fighting man who journeyed westwards across the country, killing all the men whom he met with his stone knife and taking all their women captive. One night, on his way back, he stopped here and, for his sins, he and the women were turned into pillars of stone ...Chamber's Pillar represents the man and the turrets of Castle Rock the women' (Spencer 1928: 55).

74. Emily Gap, or Unthurqua, is a gorge a few miles to the east of Alice Springs (Spencer and Gillen 1912: 256).

75. Place-name.

Arakurta)<sup>76</sup> ceremonies we saw were especially connected with certain spots often some miles apart.

There are some more drawings at another place in the district, which I hope to get and send to you next mail. Next week I am off on an expedition to the great Oknanakilla<sup>77</sup> place of the Yarumpa at Ilyaba, Hamilton Peak, where I hear there are some drawings never seen by white men. Some old fellows from there, who recently paid me a visit, are anxious for me to go out and see their Churinga—they are of our Nakrakia<sup>78</sup> and I intend taking Sambo and Jim, the latter I have scarcely seen since the Engwura, he has been working for the Police. By the way, Winnecke has not sent his tobacco.

Splendid letters, full of generous appreciation, from Messrs Howitt and Fison, it made my sluggish blood tingle to read these letters. Fison's enthusiasm I was prepared for, but not for Howitt's. Fison says he is convinced that you and I could travel through the tribes of Australia and do similar work which no other two men could do—Mr Howitt says the work must not be allowed to stop here, and both pay tributes of admiration to your splendid abilities and delicately remind me that I am fortunate in having such a colleague—I fully realize this; have realized it all along, so don't, pray, talk about what might have happened if I had been associated with a KCMG<sup>79</sup> instead of a 'common or garden Professor'—you were the one possible colleague—without you the work would never have been done and I have taken care, in my letters to Howitt and Fison, to point this out, and further added that if the work possesses the high scientific value they say it does, that value is entirely due to you. You are in no way responsible for my refusing the Post offered by Govt,<sup>80</sup> if you had strongly advised me to accept, I would not have taken it—I am too deeply interested in this work to leave it until I feel that there is nothing more of importance to find out, it grows upon me daily. When you were here, and for long after you left, my heart was not really in the work, I was suffering from the one great sorrow of my lifetime;<sup>81</sup> and I could not work with that enthusiasm, without which nothing much can be accomplished. I did not get fairly into swing again until I started tracking up the Achilpa—since then all

76. Arakurta is a status term applied to young men between circumcision and sub-incision.

77. A local totem centre; an area of country which is supposed to be inhabited by the spirits of ancestral individuals. The spirits of each local centre belong to one totem.

78. The term applied in the Arrernte tribe to individuals who belong to the same moiety of the tribe as ego. Thus a Panunga or Bulthara man speaks of the Panunga and Bulthara as his Nakrakia (see note 93).

79. Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George.

80. Gillen is referring to the post of Resident Stipendiary Magistrate at Port Augusta. He was offered several other posts while at Alice Springs.

81. The sudden death of his brother Peter Paul Gillen, South Australia's Commissioner of Land.

the old enthusiasm has returned. I have cultivated a patience and tenacity of purpose which makes Job's efforts commonplace.

There are, of course, many more traditions of wandering hordes, some of which I shall get later on. The possession of this information has familiarized me with the personal history (alcheringa) of series of men, all through the tribe, and it has already helped me to gain information. The old men delight in raking up their traditions when they really believe that I look upon them with sympathetic credulity—Horn states that they are entirely without traditions and yet there is not a remarkable natural feature in the country without a special tradition. Tradition—why, it is the very breath of their nostrils—that is—it was—before the white man came amongst them and trampled tradition and everything else that was good out of them.

You will, I am sure, be delighted to find that these notes enable us to divide the alcheringa roughly into four periods:

1st, the subsidence of the waters and the coming of the lizards and their man making, from rudimentary creatures without classes.

2nd, the coming of the Ullakupera, making men in same manner, introducing lartna with the knife and conferring classes.

3rd, the coming of the Achilpa and introduction of the Ariltha rite.

4th, the settling of the classes and the establishment of present system of marriage and relationship by the wise Oknirabata of various Emu groups.

In my letters to Howitt and Fison I have stated that we can now divide up the alcheringa roughly—but I have not gone into particulars. I have not had time to get you a rubbing of Udnirringita Churinga for this mail but will send one or two next mail. By post I have sent a lot of Anschutz<sup>82</sup> negatives and one half plate of a man and his wives in camp, it appears to me to be the best of two plates which I took. Let me know what you think of the prints and say if you require any of the negatives, the half plate pictures of man throwing spear and boomerang appear to me to be very good but you may think them too stiff.<sup>83</sup> I could not get a picture of Lulu's<sup>84</sup> piccaninny. The little beggar has given up crawling, and all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't induce her to take to it again. All the Anschutz negatives will be improved by intensification. I have sold the instrument for £11 and was glad to get rid of it. I never could work it properly.

I have sent you a little box per parcels post containing 5 or 6 painted Chillara<sup>85</sup>—two knouts (I thought I had given you some of these), poison stick

82. A make of camera.

83. Possibly the photograph shown in Spencer 1928: Fig. 111–12 (spear-throwing).

84. On the 1901–2 Expedition Gillen met Lulu again: 'poor old Lulu who is now a widow with six children[,] Tom her husband having died a few months ago ... I find that many have died since I left Alice Springs' (Gillen 1968: 45).

85. A broad band worn across the forehead from ear to ear and made of strands of opossum fur.

a-la [sic] irrunturinga<sup>86</sup> and two ditto of Ilpira tribe. In the same box you will find a bottle containing Amunga-quinyir-quinya lizards—I could not procure a specimen of the second lizard of that name, but it is about same size and very similar, only that it has a red tail.<sup>87</sup> The bottle also contains a small bird which is connected with a native myth, for particulars of which see Notes. Box also contains Wupira ornament<sup>88</sup> worn by men after becoming Urliara.<sup>89</sup> All the other things you require will go to you in due course. You will find amongst the Notes an account of the Sun ceremony—that great performance ran away with all my undattha<sup>90</sup>—the meaning of this word is flower—but I hope to get some on the Ilyaba Exped'n when I also hope to annex a lot of loot of which you shall have a fair share.

By this mail I have written to Winnecke for a good map of the country between Charlotte Waters and Barrow Creek. When this reaches me I will plot down, approximately, the various paths of wandering hordes—the Horn map is not sufficiently extensive. Stirling's account of the distribution of the tribes is fairly accurate, I am responsible for the errors—for Chitchica substitute Ilpira—the Ilyowera join the Arunta on their North Eastern boundary skirting the Ilpira and Kytiche on the East and running right up to the Frew River. I will as far as possible plot in the territories occupied by the various tribes but it will be only roughly approximate. If there is one thing more than another that you cannot get a nigger to explain with any degree of accuracy, it is the boundaries of his tribe. If you refer to the tables of various class systems in your possession you will find positions of tribes indicated—I cannot define the exact boundaries of any of the tribes. The Arunta are flanked on the East side by a tribe called Manie whose organization is said to be similar to the Aruntas. The term written Apmura<sup>91</sup> should be apmoa-ura.

Do you understand that Oknanakilla was only established by wandering hordes when they either deposited men or Churinga? I wired you to this effect but you do not mention it in your letter—this accounts for the association of the Udnirringita

86. Irrunturinga is the general term applied to spirit individuals. Of them, certain special forms have distinct names, such as Ulthana or Arumburinga.

87. This species is known today as *Morethia ruficauda* (see Spencer 1896, part 2: 144, pl. 10-13).

88. Worn by the men at the close of the Engwura ceremony, and consisting of a strand of fur string, tipped with a little tuft of the tail tips of the rabbit-kangaroo.

89. Name applied to the fully initiated men who have passed through the Engwura ceremony.

90. Down derived either from the involucre hairs of some plant such as a species of *Portulaca* or from birds, especially the eagle-hawk. This down is characteristically used in sacred ceremonies which, with rare exceptions, the women are not allowed to see.

91. A small wooden trough carried by the Alatumja during the performance of the Intichiuma ceremony of the witchetty grub totem.

and other totems with the Achilpa. There is a ceremony associated with every Camping place, and unless men or Churinga are left at a place that ceremony is the property of the people in whose country it was performed—for instance the Achilpa camped and made Quabara<sup>92</sup> without leaving men or Churinga, at certain places in the Udnirringita country—and the achilpa ceremonies associated with such camps belong to the Udnirringita.

At one such ceremony described in this mail's notes, you will notice how very marked is the separation of Nakrakia and Mulyanaka.<sup>93</sup> It used to bother us a great deal, as to how so many people, of different totems, came to be specially interested in Achilpa ceremonies. You have aroused my curiosity, you say my friend, the Argus,<sup>94</sup> says, 'We are set in a place where we are commanded to speak the truth.' Has there been some reference to our work in that paper, if so why on earth didn't you post it along? Papers are always acceptable and particularly when they contain references to our work.

I have written out a document for Gleeson,<sup>95</sup> empowering you to act on his behalf and he is sending it to you this mail. I took his photo yesterday but the weather was something awful and the plate turned out a fraud. He has not communicated with his people for 25 years or over and they are not aware that he has lost an eye so that the photo would not be of much value—he is deeply grateful to you for your kindness and could hardly believe that you would go to so much trouble.

Cowle wrote me a line from Adelaide in which he said Porter<sup>96</sup> was flowing freely. Let me know how the old boy gets on in Melbourne—I hope he won't run riot but I'm very much afraid. The Minister for the N.T., Holder,<sup>97</sup> is greatly pleased with his work amongst the blacks and the Chief Secy,<sup>98</sup> who is head of the Police Dept, will, I think, reward him in some way. My wife was delighted with 'A Cathedral Courtship',<sup>99</sup> she has talked so much about it—in the few moments which I have been able to spare her! that I am quite anxious to read the

92. Name applied generally to the sacred ceremonies which, at the present day, only initiated men may witness and take part in. These ceremonies are associated with the totems.

93. Mulyanaka is the term applied in the Arrernte tribe to individuals who belong to the other moiety of the tribe than ego. Thus a Panunga or Bulthara man speaks of the Purula and Kumara as Mulyanuka (see note 78).

94. A conservative Melbourne newspaper.

95. Gleeson worked at Alice Springs.

96. The type of beer.

97. Sir F. W. Holder (1850–1909), formerly South Australian Premier. From 1894, Holder was Treasurer and Minister in charge of the Northern Territories.

98. J. V. O'Loughlin (1852–1925), South Australia Chief Secretary 1896–9.

99. Book by Kate Douglas Wiggin (London: Gay and Bird 1893).

book. Bri and Jack<sup>100</sup> are backyarding their books, I remonstrated one day and Bri gravely informed me that Pufessa told Mama to put them in the back yard. On this particular occasion he and Jack were converting one of the books into a packsaddle for a motherless kid which I found on my trip to Quiurupa and which Dolly<sup>101</sup> has reared on a bottle.

Long letter from Stirling this mail, he had a high old time, but too hurried, at home. Kintore<sup>102</sup> actually enquired about me. Stirling was made honorary fellow of the Anthropol. Soc.<sup>103</sup> and thinking that they would probably confer the same honor upon me, he did not put me up for membership of the Society. I chaffed him about saying that he doubted if there was much in the way of ethnological novelties to find out about these tribes and he replies seriously, 'By the bye, lest I forget, referring to your criticisms on a supposed statement of mine in the Horn book that there was nothing more to be learned about your blacks, I cannot find that I said this. What I did say in one place was that I did not think it would *ever be possible* to find out the *real* intrinsic reason for such fundamental traits as the practice of circumcision or the repugnance to incest. This at least is what I meant—not that there is nothing more to be found out. On the contrary, I was always conscious of how much there was to learn and the Reviewer, at least in Natural Science, says I am too modest.'

He sent me a copy of the Daily Chron.<sup>104</sup> review which I had previously received from you, and he tells me it was written by Edward Clodd,<sup>105</sup> with whom he dined in London. I had just been reading Clodd's 'Story of Primitive Man' when I received Stirling's letter. He wants me to work out some queries originated by the great Darwin whose son,<sup>106</sup> a Cambridge Professor, is now continuing his father's work. I am enclosing a copy of the queries—they will require careful attention to obtain accurate results—shall I send replies to him? I have told him that my time is too fully occupied just now to go into the questions properly. He writes very nicely about our work and says he feels sure it will be

100. Brian and Jack, Gillen's sons.

101. Gillen's Arrernte housemaid, Aritcheuka.

102. A. H. T. K. F. Kintore (1850–1930): South Australian Governor from 1889. Gillen met him in 1891 when he undertook a publicised tour of Australia with Stirling, following the Overland Telegraph line.

103. Anthropological Institute in London, later to become the Royal Anthropological Institute. Gillen was never accorded more than Corresponding Member status by the Institute, although both Spencer and Stirling were Fellows.

104. The *Daily Chronicle*, an English newspaper established in 1887, leaning politically towards Gladstonian Liberalism.

105. 1840–1930; prominent folklorist.

106. Probably George Howard Darwin (1845–1912), Professor of astronomy and experimental philosophy, Cambridge University, and son of Charles Darwin.

a magnum opus<sup>107</sup>—but his expressions appear to me to be studied and there is—I fancy—an undercurrent of coldness, he lets himself loose and writes quite differently when talking of his home experiences. Perhaps he thinks we should have taken him into our confidence earlier.

The drawings made by Eylmann<sup>108</sup> at Aneara Cave near Barrow Creek belong to Yarumpa totem. The ilkinya,<sup>109</sup> which we saw on the backs of the man at the completion of the Engwura, are not, so far as I can learn, preserved on rocks. They say the old men know them and certainly the Udnirringita designs painted by the old King on his Apmoaura are not preserved except in the heads of the old men. After my return from Hamilton Peak I intend running out to old Ullakupera's country where I hear there are some markings in a cave—I have shown drawings in Horn volume to two Undiara men. One, an old fellow, and he cannot give any explanation. If the design you referred to particularly is close to that of Emu and tracks, it is probably the Churinga ilpintira<sup>110</sup> of the Emu intitchiuma<sup>111</sup>—I have never seen anything so elaborate as the Emu drawing at the intitchiuma ceremonies of that totem and I cannot hear of any similar drawings in connection with other intitchiuma. Eylmann is somewhere in the Territory, I have not heard of him for months but if he returns I will convey your message. I think you would like him, he is an Emir Pasha sort of individual.

Cheque to hands, thanks, I haven't had time to see whether the amount is correct. It's like your core cheek to talk of 'the remarkable vagaries in postal and telegraphic matters in SA'. Evidently you are not aware that the SA post and Tel depts are the best managed institutions of their kind in Australia—and yours are notoriously the worst. All the federal big guns paid a tribute to Todd's<sup>112</sup>

107. The first Spencer and Gillen book, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899).

108. E. Eylmann, German scientist who published an ethnographic work after his travels in the Northern Territory (*Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Südastralien*, Berlin 1908). Spencer and Gillen acknowledged Eylmann's drawings in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899: 631): 'For these [drawings] which are represented in Figure 131 nos 1–5 we are indebted to Dr E Eylmann who, at our request and at considerable trouble to himself, most kindly paid a special visit to the spot which lies some distance away from Barrow Creek and took careful copies and measurements of the designs . . . [They] lie in the country occupied by the Warramunga tribe, there is a small cave at the end of the Crawford Range . . . most of the drawings are outside the cave . . . painted on a red background (artificial) with a white or black pigment . . . we have not been able to ascertain the meaning . . . beyond the fact that they are sacred and associated with the honey-ant totem . . .' See Eylmann's note on 17 April 1897 in Gillen's notebooks, Vol. 3, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide (09–G47).

109. Sacred designs associated with different totems.

110. Special name given to the sacred design of the emu totem drawn upon the ground.

111. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: 179–85.

112. Sir Charles Todd (1826–1910): South Australian Postmaster General, responsible for the construction of the Overland Telegraph line in 1870–2 and Gillen's boss.



splendid administration, and there was some talk of getting his assistance in placing your institutions on a similar sound footing.

Please don't forget to send me a copy or two of *Nature* containing the Engwura paper,<sup>113</sup> they'll jump at it, I'm sure. I wish I could have been present when you were before the Royal Society. I would much like to have heard you. I am glad the slides turned out well, could you induce Henderson<sup>114</sup> to make a set from my plates? Those I made are not up to much. You could fund him in material and debit me. What would be the cost of a little camera like the one you had on Horn Expd'n and had it a fixed focus? I may go in for one—some pictures I took with Cowle's camera a day or two ago look very well though the detail is not good, the lens being of poor quality. The films are useless in summer months but answer very well in the cold weather. Promiscuity entirely free of restrictions appears to have been the rule up to the time of the coming of the Emu reformers. The old map in two pieces, which I got from Winnecke, is unfortunately no longer in my possession—I don't in the least mind Stirling making use of any information he gets from Cowle, no information that the latter could give would in any way discount the value of our work. I predict that Dr Tylor would be enthusiastic about the book and that McMillans<sup>115</sup> will jump at it and give you *carte blanche* as to illustrations. Further than this I am beginning to feel that it will find many readers outside the scientific world—that it will pay handsomely in fact.<sup>116</sup> You are dealing with the material in an attractive manner and there is not a dull line in the pages you have penned—your faculty for lucid explanation, free of obtuse technical terms, delights me, and I thank Providence who gained me such a colleague. I shall glory in it if the book brings you distinction as I think it must do if Howitt and Fison are not merely rosy optimists. I am glad you know Balfour,<sup>117</sup> his letter pleased me greatly.

An Ikuntira calls his son-in-law Gammona or Etnia,<sup>118</sup> synonymous terms but surely that is in the tables? I haven't time to look—judging by your wire of last week the table is giving you some trouble, probably owing to my lack of ability to explain things lucidly. I don't think you'll find a flaw in it—I certainly cannot. Will send more Chillara next mail and now will not keep you longer from the Notes—pray let me down easy. Our kindest regards and best wishes to Mrs

113. See Spencer and Gillen 1897.

114. Anketell Henderson, Melbourne University architect and keen amateur photographer.

115. Spencer and Gillen's publishers. It was Sir James Frazer who arranged for Macmillan to publish their first book.

116. 'Field and I had each a wager with Gillen before he left Alice Spgs—he bet us each that neither you nor he would reap a penny profit from the great work in five years...' (C. E. Cowle to Spencer, 10 June 1899, Pitt Rivers Museum Spencer papers, Box 1A letter 33).

117. Henry Balfour, curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

118. Kinship terms.

Spencer and yourself and love to the Kiddies. I shall be anxious until I know that the notes are safely in your hands.

Yours very sincerely,

F. J. Gillen

*Letter 42*

Alice Springs  
7th August 1898

My dear Spencer,

It is Sunday night, the mail leaves tomorrow morning and I have all my letters to write so this will probably be the skimpiest epistle with which I have ever afflicted you. Of course you'll laugh, but it's a solid fact that for a week or more I have not had time, day or night, to call my soul my own. First of all a double lartna, then an expedition from Ulathirka (Mt Heughlin) group of Udnirringita returning Churinga which were borrowed from this group some four or five years ago. I have not had time to copy my pencil notes but will endeavour to do so before next mail (always provided that official duties are not too heavy). I am sending you photo of the two Wartja<sup>119</sup> painted with totem ilkinya. Please note that the inferiority of the picture (and of others) is due to bad light—photo of men sitting in Apulla<sup>120</sup> singing the lalira,<sup>121</sup> something I have not seen them do before. The lalira<sup>122</sup> (in this instance the knife which I use for castrating lambs) was painted in the same manner as the stone implement. If you look closely at the print you will notice [it] sticking in the ground in centre of group—the picture is instantaneous. This singing of the lalira and the elaborate painting of a shield with totem ilkinya which was subsequently painted on the back of one of the Wartja were the only two features of the ceremony which were new to me. I subsequently bought the shield and have sent it down—yesterday—with some of my collection and household treasures. The returning of Churinga is full of new

119. Name given to the novice during the ceremonies attendant upon that of circumcision after he has been painted but before the actual operation.

120. The ground on which the ceremony of circumcision is performed.

121. 'Singing the lalira': chanting a ritual incantation that located the *lalira* (the knife) in mythological space (see next note).

122. Large stone knives made of flaked quartzite.

and interesting matter which I dare not touch on here lest I should launch out for half the night—I do wish, old fellow, that you were here with your facile pen and rich vocabulary so that the subject might be done justice.<sup>123</sup> It is when a matter of this sort crops up that I feel my whatitsname, I haven't time to look for the word I want—suffice it to say that this returning of Churinga is very different to that previously described. I have been in this up to my neck, my 'Guts' (as Cowle would say!) have been undatthaed and poked with reeking Churinga until my shirts are a sight no Alcheringa man would be ashamed of.

Talk about knowing everything about the Arunda, I shall not be surprised if some of the most valuable work be done during the next twelve months. You thought the examining of Churinga at the Engwura impressive but really it was nothing compared with what has been occurring here for some days. A messenger arrived a day ahead of the Expedition and on the day upon which the latter arrived the old Oknirabata and the King each painted a design upon a shield, one represented the coming of the Udnirringita of the Alcheringa from Ulathirka and the other the Alcheringa place etc of the Oknirabata. These shields were kept carefully covered up until after the stones were handed over and then each one was pressed hard against the stomachs of all the men present. I have the shields safely in my den, you can have one, the decorations are white on a red ground and tufts of red undattha. These udnirringita stone Churinga are the finest lot I have ever seen together, many of them are unmarked but each one is as familiar to the old fellows as if it were branded with an N. I have of course taken some photos,<sup>124</sup> mostly inferior and tonight being short of developer and with the result that two pictures which should have been first class are almost too thin to print from. I have however one fair negative of the bundle of Churinga, oval shaped and about a ft 6 in length, resting on the Alatumja's<sup>125</sup> knees.<sup>126</sup> This was taken just as it was handed to him. I have also a negative of the men grouped around the Churinga—with the Churinga showing, one ditto ditto greasing the Churinga, two pictures of Udnirringita quab [*sic*] undattha. Tomorrow the proceedings are to terminate by taking the visitors to the Ertnatulunga<sup>127</sup> which has not been seen by the old Alatumja who leads the party. I am to accompany the party, and when I came in tonight reeking with red ochre and emitting an effluvia of rancid fat and charcoal and announced this to my long suffering wife she fairly snorted. I should

123. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: 162–6.

124. See Spencer and Gillen 1899: Fig. 23, 1904: Fig. 86.

125. The Alatumja is the head man (and ritual expert) of a local totemic group.

126. Probably Spencer and Gillen 1904: Fig. 85.

127. Sacred storehouse of a local totemic group where the sacred objects used in ceremonies are stored; they may not be seen by women or children. The objects consist mostly of churinga or bull-roarers.

get one or two interesting pictures at the gap<sup>128</sup> but as I have no developer they will have to wait arrival of next mail.

I hope to start south in about three weeks. You can address your letters as usual and they will reach me wherever I am. I have sent a considerable portion of my collection also our silver, pictures etc. The old den looks forlorn now that the walls have been partly denuded and the house too looks somewhat empty. I could not watch these things being packed without experiencing a pang, it seems like beginning life over again, and I have been so completely content and happy here that I doubt whether I shall ever feel quite the same elsewhere.<sup>129</sup>

Note that the double pointing stick sent to you some time ago belongs to the wild duck totem. The Takula<sup>130</sup> (see photo) of which you have one or two specimens belongs to the Yarumpa people out west. I fancy—but I am not sure—that the various pointing sticks are inherited from the particular Oruncha<sup>131</sup> associated with each totem. I read through the proofs carefully, no errors except that you have written Kartwia Quatcha—Kartwia means Country, the word is always placed after the name of the totem as Quatcha Kartwia, Erليا Kartwia, Okira Kartwia etc etc. I thought you would leave taapertapu<sup>132</sup> out of Warramunga, it's a most singular thing that we cannot find another word. The Tennant blacks persist in their original statement.

Do whatever you think proper about photos. I regard them as our joint property and am willing to let you deal with them as you think best.<sup>133</sup> I shall probably add some interesting pictures during the next few months. Don't be the least bit afraid of Frazer<sup>134</sup> being disappointed with the work, he's probably lost in admiration and too much moved to write! But if not then write and tell him to come and try his hand. Seriously though, I hope he'll understand the rush for I am longing to see the work published. Glad to hear the frog was interesting,

128. Presumably Emily Gap.

129. Gillen sent his family and belongings south before the summer. His wife was pregnant and gave birth to Eily Kathleen Gillen on 28th February 1899.

130. A pointing stick.

131. Term applied to men and women who lived in the mythical past, and to spirit individuals at the present day, who are regarded as being of a mischievous nature.

132. Kin term for father's mother in the Warramunga tribe.

133. Anyone attempting to attribute different photographs to Gillen or Spencer must concur. They are a mixed collection, so precise attribution is sometimes difficult.

134. Sir J. G. Frazer (1854–1941), anthropologist and author of *The Golden Bough*. He proposed to the publisher, Macmillan, that they publish the *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, and helped proof-read it.

McKay<sup>135</sup> sent it to me from Barrow Creek. Send me a couple more tins per post and I will send one each to the Barrow and Tennants. Large frogs are plentiful at both places in the wet season. Send along spirits in bulk if you want that large collecting tin filled. I haven't had time to work on the questions contained in your letter. Irunta certainly means cold, and Jim Oroka<sup>136</sup> assured me today that belonging to the cold was the proper translation of Irunturinya. Surely I have mentioned somewhere in my notes that the Ungambikula<sup>137</sup> made country?—hills etc. [...]

I am glad and so is my wife that Mrs Spencer is getting about again. Please give her my kindest regards. My wife has picked up during the winter but she is not very strong and I shall be glad when I have landed her safely at Oodnadatta—it is very probable that I shall be called into town for a few days, I would much rather not go, partly because of the expense and partly because I should feel parting from the wife and bairns more if I accompanied them to the settled districts—the three days in the train after saying goodbye would be intolerable.

Now, old man, I must conclude this disjointed—I'm afraid incoherent—letter. When I sat down I thought of giving you one page and here I am with the fifth. Unreadable letter from French, still after Bower birds I suppose.

Slianthe<sup>138</sup>

Yrs ever truly,

FJG

What an ass Barton<sup>139</sup> was to tackle Reid<sup>140</sup> in his own stronghold.<sup>141</sup> Such bad generalship amounts—in my opinion—to criminal folly, as soon as I heard that he was going to tackle Reid I offered to wager five pounds that the podgy one would win. I haven't had time to look through the papers but I quite expect to

135. McKay was on the staff of the Barrow Creek Repeater Station on the Overland Telegraph line.

136. Aboriginal informant and police tracker.

137. Two beings who transformed inapertwa creatures into humans. The meaning of the term is 'self-existing' or 'made out of nothing'.

138. *Sláinte*, the Gaelic toast.

139. Sir E. Barton (1849–1920), first Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth (1901–3).

140. Sir G. H. Reid (1845–1918): New South Wales Premier; led opposition in first cabinet of Commonwealth of Australia in 1901.

141. In July 1898, Barton resigned his seat in the New South Wales Legislative Council to stand against Reid in the general election but was narrowly defeated. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in September as leader of the Opposition.

find that Reid jibed Barton into this false move. Of the two men Reid is unquestionably the abler tactician. Now all the weak-knee'd federalists will go over to Reid: there are always a large number of people of no opinion who follow the successful side. I'm disgusted with Barton—Reid could not have handled Charlie Kingston<sup>142</sup> in this way. Good night.

FJG

*Letter 58*

*This letter is written from Moonta, to where Gillen had transferred earlier that year. The Native Tribes of Central Australia was published the same year. This letter gives a clear indication of Gillen's lack of confidence about his abilities to write (in this case, his speech to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science) and his views on the treatment of Aboriginal people. It also shows his continuing commitment to research. Many of Gillen's letters contain references to Australian and Irish politics. Gillen was a fervent supporter of Home Rule for Ireland: his parents had emigrated from Ireland shortly before his birth in South Australia.*

Slianthe

Moonta<sup>143</sup>

15th November 1899

My dear Spencer,

Like you I have been head over ears at work, for some weeks one of my assistants has been away ill and I've had to graft daily from 8.30 a.m. until 7.30 p.m. Happily he has returned and I shall now have a little more leisure though none too much. As usual you appear to be doing yourself to death. I am rather

142. C. C. Kingston (1850–1908), South Australian Premier 1893–9; entered federal politics in 1901, becoming Minister of Trade and Customs.

143. Gillen was now the Postmaster at Moonta Post Office. Moonta is on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia, a mining town at that time principally populated with immigrant Cornish Nonconformist miners. Gillen never found the town congenial and sought, unsuccessfully, to transfer to Adelaide or one of its suburbs. He stayed at Moonta until he was transferred to Port Pirie.

sorry that Mrs Spencer has gone home<sup>144</sup> just now, for in her absence you will have no one to curb your enthusiasm. Why on earth you can't take things steadily and work like a rational man I can't for the life of me understand. I don't know any man with such intemperate gluttony for work, and I should feel much happier about you if you would cultivate a little of the Govt Stroke<sup>145</sup> which you libellously attribute to the common or garden Govt official.

I quite expect to see you looking like a walking ghost when I go to Melbourne. Anyhow I hope the three or four days on the Spur<sup>146</sup> were devoted to lazing and smoking and not to some form of labor.

So you have made me President of the Eth Sect'n<sup>147</sup> after all. I was hoping that you would be able to get someone else to fill the position. You certainly could not have got a worse man and by appointing me you have added to your already overburdened [load?]. Now as to the address,<sup>148</sup> I don't think anything could be made out of the new bill<sup>149</sup> to which I am strongly opposed, as you will see by the Tiser's<sup>150</sup> comments on my evidence. The question of the future treatment of the blacks could be dealt with in half a dozen brief sentences. The main points are (1) Govt should provide liberal supplies at all depots and not, as in the past, seek to curtail expenditure in this direction. (2) All pastoral leases should contain a clause reserving to the blacks right of access to all parts of the lease, the blacks should be informed by the Police and by the Protectors that they possess this right, and the Police and Protectors should see that the spirit of the lease is not infringed by the lessee. This, as you know, is one of the greatest sources of hardship to the black and a never-ending cause of friction. Once the pastoral lessee is given to understand that he must not restrict the movements or hunting grounds of the blacks under heavy penalties he will soon come to regard himself and the black as joint occupier, both having equal rights, and we shall hear no more about the bogey of the blackfellows frightening the stock away. Of course Cowle and others will say that under such conditions it will not be possible

144. To England.

145. 'Government stroke': Australian slang for lazy methods of working, first adopted by convicts, now applied especially to civil servants.

146. Black Spur, Victoria, was a scenic mountain resort north of Melbourne. Spencer took Gillen there in 1900 to stay at 'The Hermitage', a fashionable guest-house owned by J. W. Lindt, the ethnographic photographer.

147. The Ethnological Section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

148. Spencer had agreed to draft Gillen's address, which was delivered in 1900.

149. Gillen is referring to the new bill drawn up by Justice Dashwood of the Northern Territory concerning aboriginal welfare. It was defeated, partly because of the evidence given to the Select Committee by Gillen.

150. *The Advertiser*, an Adelaide newspaper.

to stock the interior but we know from experience in the Telegraph Stations and other Stations that after a very little time stock take no more notice of the black than of the white. (3) Powers of Protectors should be extended. At present they have no real power and are only Protectors in name. They should have right of access at all times to places where blacks are employed whether on crown leases or on private property, they should be empowered to take half castes and orphan children and send them to suitable institutions (4) and this is where the great public will arise and say, 'This fellow Gillen wants a fat billet'.

We should have, in connection with the Head Protector's office, an ethnological bureau in which all material collected by the Sub-Protectors or private individuals could be sifted, inquired into and recorded. In this connection Sub-Protectors should be instructed—all over Australia—to interest themselves in the habits, customs and language of the blacks, to record the results and furnish the head of the Dept with quarterly reports. The Sub-Protectors should be salaried officials, that is to say they should be paid a certain salary by the Aborigines department in addition to any salary they may receive from other departments. At present the tendency is to multiply offices without increasing the emoluments of the office holder. A table of questions should be drawn up and furnished to every Sub-Protector and distributed in all outlying districts. Such a table you could prepare splendidly. Boiled down, the whole policy of the department should have two objects—firstly (and from our point of view) to collect and record the habits, customs etc., and secondly to make the path to extinction—which we all agree is inevitable and rapidly approaching—as pleasant as possible.

There is nothing new in what I have written. We have discussed it all time and again and with you I think that 'Magic' would be a much better subject upon which to base the address which you will have to prepare.<sup>151</sup> If you have time—which I fear you have not<sup>152</sup>—a highly interesting paper can be made [of] this subject, and if you have not already used the latest material about returning of Churinga I think this would be an excellent opportunity to introduce it. You have also some particulars of forms of magic which were too late for the book—by all means let it be magic, anything is preferable to your first suggestions which would lay me open to the charge of being a billet hunter which honestly I am not. I am content to remain in the Telegraph Department all the days of my life provided I get an office near the city, but it is quite another thing being tied to a country town where all is routine and stagnation.

Parke writes that he has instructed his cronies on the Alberga to hunt up some of these earth-covered frogs and send them on to me. He also writes, 'I have lately seen what to me is one of the most curious spots I have ever seen in the

151. The title of Gillen's address at the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science was 'Magic among the Natives of Central Australia' (*Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science: Report of the Eighth Meeting, Melbourne 1900*, pp. 109–23).

152. Spencer was editing the handbook for the Melbourne AAAS meeting (Spencer 1900).



country.<sup>153</sup> It is situated about 7 miles from Henbury, and as you take more than ordinary interest in these matters I must describe it to you. It is nothing more nor less in appearance than an immense amphitheatre situated about 1/4 mile from a small range on comparatively level ground, from which level ground you ride up the mound encircling the amphitheatre, to all appearances the same as a mound around a dam, and this mound which completely surrounds the amphitheatre appears to have been placed there by some human agency, to have been taken or thrown there, as it is made ground and quite regular in appearance, bare and like refuse from a mine or quarry. Without the amphitheatre this mound would attract anyone's attention, but when you reach the top of the embankment and look down into the immense inside one cannot fail to be astonished as it is, I should say, 200 feet deep and the floor quite level. The floor would accommodate some thousands of cattle and appears to be white pipe clay with some mulga, acacia and back salt bark growing. The amphitheatre is to all intents round and regular, no breaks or entrance through surrounding embankment, sides a bit too steep perhaps to ride down but sloping. Blacks know and consider as remarkable the place (Oh Lord!), but (isn't this awful) they can give no information about it and have no traditions about it (the underline is mine—FJG). It has not been blown out and the ground has not caved in or whence the mound surrounding. There is another close by which I have not seen and it holds water after rain. To look at it I cannot but think it has been done by human agency, but when or why Goodness knows.'

You can imagine my emotions when I read of this. For six hours I felt like throwing up the PO and going back. Fancy such a place having no traditions, why it must simply reek of tradition—but what do you make of it? Is it, think you, some enormous and long-disused ceremonial pit? Please let me know what you think of it, meantime I have written strongly to Parke begging him to make further examination and to search for traditions amongst the old men. Henbury Station has been stocked and worked for 21 years and yet this extraordinary pit has never before been discovered. It seems to me a remarkable thing that the blacks have never spoken of it before. Oh that I could get up there for a month. It is evident that the Niggers are not eager to impart their traditions to Parke although he is very good to them.

Before I go to Melbourne I hope to have further information from Parke. I expect to leave here on the 3rd or 4th January and reach Melbourne about the 7th. My wife had decided to stay here and take a holiday later on with her people at Mt Gambier. The baby<sup>154</sup> is too young to travel about and she can't be persuaded to leave it.

I haven't time to touch on the Boer war upon which our views are in entire accord. At the same time, as an Irishman and a Home Ruler, I agree with the

153. A cluster of thirteen meteor craters from a single shower within a square kilometre. The craters are up to 183m in diameter, with ramparts up to 6m high (Thompson 1991: 29).

154. Eily Gillen.

action of the Irish Parliamentary Party who are simply carrying out the traditional policy of O'Connell and Parnell.<sup>155</sup> It will be quite time enough to help England with sympathy and support when she has done full justice to the nationalist aspirations of the Irish people—Davitt<sup>156</sup> perhaps has gone too far, but when one reflects that he was unjustly convicted and, while quite innocent, confined for 14 years in English prisons one can excuse him much. Like other Englishmen you seem to think we Irish should be grateful for what even you term merest justice. Grateful indeed, no concession has ever yet been wrung from the English Parliament—except as a result of agitations bordering upon civil war. The land laws are good now certainly, but who have we to thank for that? Parnell and his agitation—and, before an English Govt could be brought to see the justice of the tenantry's demand, thousands of Irishmen including Parnell were, without trial, summarily arrested and thrown into prison for terms varying from 1 month to 12. Then after grudgingly remedying what was an unquestionable evil, you expect me to be grateful—it's very funny—grateful for bare justice which is quite distinct from political favour. Fortunately the feeling of dislike for England is more one of sentiment than anything else, it does not prevent one Irishman joining the British Army, and no great Irish leader has yet gone so far as to advise the Irish peasantry not to join the army. We glory in the triumphs of the British arms just as much as the true-born Briton and although we freely criticise and sometimes abuse the English and their methods, we do not allow foreigners to do so. At the seat of war and at the Cape the Irish to a man are on the side of the British, and they have assailed most bitterly an able dignitary of their Church in the Cape Colony who is Dutch by descent and has Boer sympathies.

Enough of politics about which you don't care a tinker's malediction. The Wallaroo lecture was a great success. I had an overflowing audience, showed 100 lantern slides which were much appreciated. The chairman of the evening in proposing vote of thanks said it was the 'most interesting and instructive lecture ever delivered in Wallaroo'. I am to repeat it at Kadina shortly, am enclosing cutting from local paper. Am also enclosing Recommendations of Select Committee on Aborigines bill just this moment to hand. I have only had time to run through it. Glad you were able to put that shot into Tennyson about my collection.<sup>157</sup> Owen Smyth<sup>158</sup> told me he was annoyed about it. Kingston

155. C. S. Parnell (1846–91), Irish nationalist leader.

156. M. Davitt (1846–1906), Irish nationalist politician and founder of the Irish Land League. Davitt served seven years' penal servitude for sending firearms to Ireland, after which he moved to the United States. When he returned to Ireland he was rearrested. He entered parliament but resigned over the Boer War.

157. Lord Tennyson (1852–1928), Governor-General of South Australia and eldest son of the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This is probably a reference to the sale of Gillen's ethnographic collection to the National Museum of Victoria for £300 in 1899 (Mulvaney and Calaby 1985: 249).

Govt had a narrow escape last week. I hear on unquestionable authority that the Conservative party offered the labor party two seats in Cabinet and everything they want except household suffrage for the Upper House, in return for their support, and for a time it was a toss up which way it went. Isn't it disgusting? Kind regards from us all and Love to little Chaps.<sup>159</sup> Are you in bachelor quarters or still in your own house?

FJG

*Letter 158*

*This letter was written after the two men had returned from their year-long expedition across Australia and during the writing-up of The Northern Tribes of Central Australia, published in 1904.*

Moonta  
19th January 1903

My dear Spencer,

I spent the whole of yesterday going through old papers and rummaging in odd corners to see if I could find any Chitchingalla<sup>160</sup> notes. Not a line anywhere. The account I sent you was copied direct from my rough field-book and was unfortunately not copied into the foolscap books. I did not, idiot that I was, consider it of sufficient importance to make two copies. So far as I can remember the corroboree lasted a week (Roth<sup>161</sup> says 5 days) and followed closely on the lines of Roth's descriptions except that there was no interval for tea and buns. His supposed intervals for refreshment are merely 'rests' for the performers and, of course, the women are not allowed to remain on the ground while the performers are merely lounging. Roth's description of the concluding scene is a little

158. C. E. Owen Smyth (1851–1925), head of the South Australia Works and Building Department.

159. Chaps or Chappie: Alline Spencer, Baldwin Spencer's younger daughter.

160. A ceremony.

161. W. E. Roth (1861–1933), anthropologist, acquaintance of Spencer's from Oxford. Surgeon in north-west Queensland from 1894 and Protector of Aborigines from 1898. For a discussion of the Molonga ceremony and its aftermath, described by Roth, which Gillen is referring to here, see Hercus 1980.

different, you have your own notes as to what took place and can compare with his account. The implements carried by the performers are in all cases the same as described by Roth, but his explanation of the meaning of the title of the corroboree is very different—in the Alice version, speaking from memory, the man who leads the final scene represents a devil woman who upon returning to her camp finds it occupied by men dancing a corroboree. She is very angry and tries to kill them with her magic spear but is herself killed and her camp destroyed. I think you have full particulars of the tradition in your Alice notes. As to me writing out a general account of a corroboree, I really don't remember enough about any one corroboree to be able to do so. My memory so far as corroborees are concerned is like a sieve. The Chitchingalla is the only one that I ever attempted to describe in detail, in fact it is the only one I ever sat out night after night from start to finish. I'm afraid we'll have to leave the description of a corroboree until another time. You might, however, point out—if you think it worth while—the difference between the Molonga of Roth and the Chitchingalla. The words of the corroboree are the same, I mean the chants. I went through all of them with the Niggers and the difference was very slight. I wonder why I never got complete records of other corroborees, I might have had half a dozen while our work was in progress, Atnimokitta—Ilyarnpa—Irkita—etc. etc. I hope you don't attach much importance to having a corroboree—you know enough about them to write a general account of their character and you have plenty of pictures to illustrate the style of decorations.

I wrote the preceding pages this morning. This afternoon's mail brought your letter with Notes on the Mara and Anula class system. I at once retired to my den and after chewing over the Notes for an hour or so it suddenly occurred to me that somewhere or other I had a note to the effect that in the Anula the marriage was not confined to one class. For half an hour I waded through my field notes without any result, then it occurred to me that the note might be in the tiny book I always carried in my pocket. Where on earth to look for this book I did not know, then as a last resource I went to my wife and found that she had taken it from me in Melbourne and stowed it away in her dressing cases. The very first page I opened contained this note, I transcribe it as it is written:

Roumburia  
 Wiallia  
 Urtallia  
 Wauwukariay  
 1 marries Wiallia  
 2   "   Roumburia  
 3   "   Roumburia  
 4   "   Wiallia

On reading it through I realized at once that it was the very evidence we wanted and the absence of which has caused us both and you in particular so much anxiety—on second thoughts I will enclose the note. Now that it is before me in black and white I have a distinct recollection of getting it. It was on the 3rd

November, you were feeling very unwell so I strolled down to the Blacks camp with George and spent some time, as the Mod Rec<sup>162</sup> says, 'Cultivating friendly relations'. I remember mentioning or rather showing the Note to you, and the fact that both Wiallia and Urtallia married Roumburia etc appeared to us to be wrong and I thought that the Niggers had misinformed me. This impression we must have conveyed to the Blacks, who, knowing that we knew the systems of surrounding tribes, equally well known to them, thought it less trouble to give us the table as recorded in our journals. It is quite like the blackfellows to do this. Had you been well when I got this note or had I drawn your attention to it while we were struggling at Borrooloola<sup>163</sup> I think the thing would have been solved long ago. Now it is clear as day. There is not a shadow of doubt left in my mind, and I feel that I am largely responsible for the muddle. If funds permitted I'd run over and tender apologies—I feel greatly relieved and am more excited than if I had won a lovely little thousand at Tattersall. I wired you at once and hope you felt cheered. Slianthe.

Yrs

FJG

162. 'Modest Record', Gillen's name for his field notes from the second expedition. Published as *The Camp Jottings of F. J. Gillen* (Gillen 1968).

163. Spencer worked on the 1901–2 expedition notes while 'marooned' at Borrooloola (Spencer 1928: 579).

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**FUZZINESS, STRUCTURE-DEPENDENCY,  
AND 'STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY':  
AN EXTENDED REPLY TO PARKIN**

**WARREN SHAPIRO**

WHEN I was initially asked to write a review for *JASO* of Robert Parkin's *The Munda of Central India* (Parkin 1992) I balked, on the grounds that my ethnographic specialities do not include South Asia. The editor of this journal then renewed his efforts to enlist my services, with the argument that the book contains a great deal of material on kinship, a field in which I have demonstrated some degree of expertise. I suspect he had some difficulty finding a South Asianist who was prepared to wade through Parkin's kinship data and its analysis;<sup>1</sup> and that this difficulty stems from the oft-heralded retreat of kinship studies from pre-eminence in anthropology (e.g. Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Howell and Melhuus 1993: 39; Shapiro 1982: 257)—a retreat which, I argue below, has not proceeded with equal pace on all fronts. Whatever the case, it is by no means unprecedented or unjustified to allot a book to a reviewer on the basis of his 'theoretical' proclivities rather than his ethnographic ones. And if that book demonstrates a truncated and botched sense of theory, as Parkin's does, it is the reviewer's job to point this out (*JASO*, Vol. XXIV, no. 2, pp. 218–20). I did just that, and now I shall try to do the same for his response (*JASO*, Vol. XXV, no. 3, pp. 269–72).

1. *Editor's note:* For the record, Professor Shapiro was the first and only reviewer we approached to review Dr Parkin's book.

May I be permitted first to place on record my personal pain at Parkin's utterly mistaken surmise that I would restore the state of siege that existed between our respective countries two centuries ago. My own doctorate in anthropology is from a Commonwealth university built upon the 'Oxbridge' model, and from this base I was able to launch a stable and rewarding early career, vestiges of which (as this debate indicates) I am pleased to retain. My last sabbatical leave from my American post was spent mostly at the LSE, and I regard this period too as one of great productivity, and with considerable affection. Some of my best academic friends are British anthropologists.

Moreover, I endorse Parkin's sense of a 'transatlantic anthropology', both as a desirable state of affairs and as an already—if (as I hope to demonstrate) imperfectly achieved one. Indeed, it is far from clear—indeed, it may even in certain senses approach meaninglessness to ask—who is European and who American. My own sojourns have just been briefly noted. The far more illustrious ones of Lévi-Strauss are a matter of published record (Lévi-Strauss 1961). Radcliffe-Brown and Rodney Needham (among others) have dallied on the western fringes of the Atlantic, while David Schneider (among others) has frequently gone to its eastern shores. This is hardly an unusual situation in human social life, as Eric Wolf (1982) reminded us not long ago. Furthermore, in this instance its pace has quickened with time. Thus, more than forty years ago Murdock (1951) could come close to hitting the bull's-eye in his remarks on the parochialism of British anthropology, but two decades later Murphy's comparable indictment (Murphy 1971: 17–27) had to be more qualified. Another two decades have passed, with the result that a commentator upon the matter in 1995 would have to pay yet more attention to its 'statistical' character.

Which is to say that boundaries between categories are usually 'fuzzy'. Cognitive anthropology—what Needham (1971: xxix–xxxi), not I, dubbed 'American formalism'—has been making and substantiating this point for approximately thirty years, since Floyd Lounsbury's seminal articles (1964, 1969) on prototypicality and extension in kin-classification.<sup>2</sup> Lounsbury's argument, since pursued most arduously by Harold Scheffler (see references), is that the prototypical or 'focal' members of kin-classes are those who *by local ethnogenealogical reckoning* are close kin.<sup>3</sup> In his multitudinous writings on 'prescriptive alliance' over the years, Needham (see references) has not so much contested the argument as rejected it summarily, or ignored it; and his students and *their* students have blithely followed suit (e.g. Cunningham 1967, Rivière 1969, Korn 1973, R. H. Barnes 1974, Parkin 1992). Moreover, the Platonic type has been

2. For a recent review of this and other issues in cognitive anthropology, see D'Andrade 1995.

3. The expression 'ethnogenealogical' seems to have been put forward by Conklin (1964), another 'American formalist'.



stroked and maintained at nearly all empirical cost.<sup>4</sup> Since his two-part article on 'Terminology and Alliance' (Needham 1966, 1967), Needham has insisted that there is no correlation between the (alleged) structure of a scheme of 'social classification' and the network of connubial relations among the associated and (supposedly) isomorphic 'descent groups'—or even the very existence of such groups;<sup>5</sup> and again his scholastic lineage has simply followed him. And the contention made in his early work that 'prescriptive alliance' is linked with pervasive dualistic classification (e.g. Needham 1959: 129–34, 1960a: 108–16, 1962b: 87–96) has been discretely abandoned in the face of overwhelming contrary evidence, some of which appears in the essays in the collection he edited (Needham (ed.) 1973).<sup>6</sup> The philosophy-of-science requirement (see especially Hempel 1965: 146ff.) that typologies be 'natural' in positivist discourse—i.e. that they point to a real-world association *of some kind or other*—is not usually considered in the writings of Needham and his followers (see also Scheffler 1975: 232).

The heuristic value of Needham's work on 'prescriptive alliance' lay in the ethnographic caution that there may be kinship-like arrangements in the non-Western world that do *not* have ethnogenealogical referents as their *focal* members. But, in fact, neither he nor any of his followers, including Parkin, has genuinely considered this an open question. Exactly the same can be said of David Schneider's 'cultural constructionist' approach (see especially Schneider 1967). In my review of Parkin's book I gave Schneider deserved credit for unearthing—and encouraging his students to unearth—an impressive array of ethno-embryologies. But his repeated rendition of these as non-genealogical is quite beyond me (Shapiro 1982: 265–7). So too is the closure of his scheme. Thus in 1981 my monograph-length treatment of my Arnhem Land materials appeared, containing extensive argumentation that native kin-categories do indeed have as their primary referents close ethnogenealogical kin. I presented a copy to Schneider, who in the usual gentlemanly manner of his personal correspondence sent me a note of thanks, and proceeded to ignore my analysis.<sup>7</sup> I have no way of knowing whether or not he read the book: certainly it does not appear in any of his bibliographies. But he surely read my later article in *Man* (Shapiro 1988),

4. In a relatively early contribution, Schneider (1965) made precisely the same point. Though at one time frequently cited, however, his essay rambles clumsily from a celebration of the advantages of alliance theory over descent theory to a nasty assault on Needham. Schneider's own position, discussed below, is flawed in remarkably similar ways.

5. I justify below the parenthetical rendering here of 'alleged' and 'supposedly'.

6. I am unable to identify a point in Needham's scholarly career at which the alleged linkage is renounced.

7. It bears noting that I received exactly the same response from Needham. Scheffler (1991: 377) has recently commented upon Schneider's disinclination to address critics.

which contained a less extensive but otherwise comparable reanalysis of Greek-American materials originally treated by one of his students (Chock 1974). For he published a retort (Schneider 1989), which I found rich with 'postmodern' significance but otherwise insubstantial (Shapiro 1989), and patently devoid of commentary on my reanalysis. I do not take this personally: he has given Scheffler's devastating critique (1976) of his own work on American culture much the same short shrift. All this should disabuse Parkin of the idea that I am prone to giving jingoistic renditions of the history of kinship studies. It should instead call attention to one of the strangest 'transatlantic' bedfellowships in this history (see especially Needham 1962b).

Between the respective fates of Needham's and Schneider's work on kinship, though, there is an important difference. Needham's mode of analysis has passed into the quasi-oblivion under which kinship studies nowadays labour, sustained mostly by Parkin and other loyalists of Oxford derivation. In contrast, Schneider not only has a comparable array of students in my own age-grade,<sup>8</sup> he is also a venerated elder of a regnant anthropological 'cultural constructionism' in which kinship studies continue to flourish (e.g. Delaney 1991: 14–15; Yanagisako and Collier 1987: 29–34; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995), and which has traceable ties to 'postmodernism' and other exemplars of the literary left. These ties are only partly dependent upon his alliance with Clifford Geertz. Although the explicit call of 'cultural constructionism' is for closer links between anthropology and the humanities rather than the sciences (see especially Geertz 1983: 19–35), the practical effect is to sustain a *sui generis*, relativist, and particularist discipline with no concern (if not contempt) for larger theoretical issues (Spiro 1986). By this route Schneider takes us right readily back to the parochialism that Murdock saw in British anthropology in 1951. When I was last in the UK, in 1989, I noticed that Schneider and especially Geertz were the most oft-cited American anthropologists in seminars (whose atheoretic quality, I might add, struck me forcibly); I think this is not accidental.<sup>9</sup> For my part I would keep my distance from this mode of 'transatlantic anthropology'. So, I take it from his remarks, would Parkin.

Parkin's charge that I 'use the depths of history as a means of expressing distance and disapproval' is mistaken. I have great respect for Morgan and Lévi-Strauss and find their 'global' sense of the human situation far more engaging than the 'local knowledge' advocated by Geertz, Schneider, and all too much of British anthropology; and if I have been critical of them, as I have been especially of Lévi-Strauss (Shapiro 1982: 260–62, 1991, 1992), I sometimes feel rather like a gnat attacking an elephant. At the same time, it seems to me self-evident that, in the case of Morgan, a man now dead for a century is perhaps someone on

8. For some examples, see Shapiro 1982: 266–7.

9. A 'lateral' influence is the 'rationality versus relativism' debate, which is especially strong in British philosophy and which has counterparts in philosophical circles on my side of the Atlantic; see, especially, Hollis and Lukes (eds.) 1982.

whom to build, but he is unlikely to have provided the most penetrating analysis of all the materials available in his day, much less the fuller corpus we now possess. And I am as bothered by the closure of Lévi-Strauss's theories as I am by those of Needham and Schneider. Of particular relevance here is Lévi-Strauss's continued romance with 'the atom of kinship' he first formulated in 1945, despite what is by now an enormous amount of analytical critique and contrary empirical evidence (Lévi-Strauss 1976: 82–112, 1985: 63–72).<sup>10</sup>

My own view, which I began to systematize some time ago (Shapiro 1982), is that the 'cognitive extensionism' most closely associated, in recent years, with Scheffler's name is far more analytically telling and theoretically impressive.<sup>11</sup> I remain sceptical of the ethnographic reality of some of Scheffler's 'rewrite rules' (but see Scheffler 1972a), but it is simply not true, as Parkin (1994: 269) suggests or claims, that cognitive extensionism is not significantly different from componential analysis, and that it does 'not add anything that cannot be provided by a conventional analysis using genealogical denotation'. Such denotation, to which componential analysis has almost solely confined itself, proffers no appreciation of questions of focality; Scheffler has repeatedly made this very point (e.g. Scheffler 1972b: 324–5, 1972c: 129–30; Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 72–3) and it is now a central issue in semantic theory (MacLaury 1991). To ignore it, as Lévi-Strauss, Needham, and Schneider have all done, is to abandon anthropology's most fruitful cross-disciplinary ties for one or another scholasticism, and/or for the present 'postmodern' rage. I take this up again below. Here I would contest Parkin's reference (1994: 270) to 'Scheffler's blank refusal to consider the affinal terminology [in systems of 'prescriptive alliance'] as anything more than an epiphenomenon of terms for consanguines'. Scheffler has not 'blankly refused to consider' anything: here as elsewhere he has *argued* the issue—in this instance too on the basis of focality (e.g. Scheffler 1971: 235–7, 1978: 135–7; Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 198ff.). For my part, I think it possible in some cases to contest his argument (though this is not the place to do so), but the 'blank refusals' have come not from him but, in the opposite direction, from Lévi-Strauss, Needham, and their followers.

Let me try to illustrate the power and theoretical import of cognitive extensionism by appealing to a time-honoured problem in kinship studies, one which has engaged the attention of Morgan, Lévi-Strauss, Needham, and many others, including Parkin: the association between bifurcate merging kin-classification, with or without special affinal terms, and orderings of the sort that have been

10. The pertinent literature here is enormous. Some of it is summarized in Scheffler 1973 and in Shapiro 1982.

11. This was not always the case in my own thinking. Early on I was much attracted to that version of alliance theory that is, I think, best exemplified in the writings of Louis Dumont (see, for example, Shapiro 1968, 1971a, 1971b).

canonically rendered as 'unilineal descent groups'.<sup>12</sup> The correlation, though not without exception, is beyond question (i.e. beyond chance). Murdock demonstrated it in a classic article (1947) on the positivist method in anthropology, extended its empirical base in his seminal *Social Structure* (Murdock 1949: 164–6), and some years later suggested that many of the exceptions could be accounted for by an appeal to a logically connected structuring through some form or other of unilocal residence (Murdock 1960). But exceptions remain aplenty, especially in Amazonia (see, for example, Basso 1973, Gregor 1977, Kaplan 1975, Rivière 1969, Seeger 1981). What is more, the structure of most bifurcate merging systems, and the practical application of probably all, is by no means fully consistent with unilineal descent or unilocal residence. Scheffler and I have been arguing the point for some time now (Shapiro 1982: 267–8), but clearly with insufficient impact. Supplementary argument is therefore required.

Any system of kin-classification for which a claim of isomorphy with (exogamous) unilineal descent can be sustained must distinguish between the terms a man applies to his children and those a woman applies to hers. But in fact in the overwhelming majority of bifurcate merging schemes, as in English kin-classification, husband and wife apply the same term, or set of terms, to their mutual offspring. That is, if relationship terms are 'group'-specific, as alliance theorists and others have argued, and the 'groups' are exogamous, my wife and I, as members of different 'groups' must by deduction have separate ways of referring to our mutual offspring. The 'groups' argument can here be salvaged by positing that locality rather than lineality is the formative principle, but in that case it has to deal—and it cannot—with the fact that my brother and my wife's sister use the 'offspring' term or terms for *our* children in nearly all these systems, *whether or not these kin are co-resident with us*. Even more patently destructive to 'group' interpretation is the equation, again in the overwhelming majority of bifurcate merging systems, of paternal and maternal grandparents, which neither a 'unilineal' nor a 'unilocal' theory can for an instant sustain. And there are further difficulties with these theories at more distant collateral positions (Lounsbury 1968: 133–4; Scheffler 1971). It seems fair to suggest that 'group' renditions of these terminologies are naïve in the extreme, and that they disrespect ethnographic data that have been secured since Morgan's day (again see Lounsbury 1968: 133–4). In view of Parkin's admiration for Morgan, I would suggest he

12. In what follows I use the expression 'unilineal descent groups' in what I take to be this canonical sense. But I think I am entitled to observe, in 1995, that the rubric refers to an incredibly mixed bag of ethnographic materials, one which is not yet fully unpacked by any means. Thus, for example, Adam Kuper's assaults on 'lineage theory' (Kuper 1982a, 1982b: 43–50) strike me as important but, none the less, perhaps only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Other pertinent literature is far too extensive to cite here. I would note, though, that my use below of the term 'groups' in quotes signals this same dissatisfaction: I think it can fairly readily be shown that most of what appear in the theoretical literature as 'groups' are in fact categories (Keesing 1975: 9–11).

attend more closely to the tables in *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*.<sup>13</sup>

Most Aboriginal Australian systems of kin-classification are remarkable in that they seem to satisfy all the requirements of a 'unilineal' interpretation, including separate 'man's offspring' and 'women's offspring' terms and a terminological separation of paternal and maternal grandparents. But this conclusion rests upon an analysis only slightly less superficial than the one made by alliance and other 'group' theorists for the non-Australian systems. Let me illustrate by appealing to my own extensive data from north-east Arnhem Land.

Here a man calls his MB by a term I shall gloss as 'uncle'. It is the 'uncle' class that is the appropriate WF category—so much so that, even when a man's father-in-law belongs initially to another class, he is sometimes *but by no means always* reassigned to the 'uncle' category. This is somewhat—only somewhat—helpful to alliance theory. But now consider that the designation of MB as 'uncle' rests solely on the ethnogenealogical reckoning of him as MB, and that the same designation of other men nearly always rests on comparable reckoning—of the sort 'I call him "uncle" because my mother called him "brother"'. Although he can be construed as a potential 'wife-giver', this construction is irrelevant to his designation. This is bad news for alliance theory.

Now if my MB has a son, and if I base my classification of his son solely on my classification of the boy's father, I shall call that boy by another term, which I here gloss as 'cousin'; and if that 'cousin' has a son and I base my classification of *that* boy solely on my classification of *his* father, I shall call this youngest boy 'uncle'. So the pattern is: 'uncle' – 'cousin' – 'uncle' – ('cousin'). Informants readily recited this cycle in the abstract, though for reasons that will soon become clear, it is not frequently realized in my concrete genealogies. Even so, these are the best data for alliance theory and other 'group' renditions of systems of kin-classification. The 'unity of the lineage'—to employ a notion that alliance theory has borrowed from Radcliffe-Brown (1941), though it assiduously avoids his expression—has been preserved; and the fact that other 'lineages' display the

13. Alf Hornborg is one among many who tries to save the day for 'group' interpretations of those bifurcate merging systems lacking special affinal terms by appealing to the alleged 'two-line' structure of these systems *sui generis*. In this cause he employs an argument, glossed over by Scheffler (1971: 34), that 'each term has a different meaning for male as opposed to female speakers' (Hornborg 1987: 456). But the 'two-line' interpretation still runs foul of the absence of lineal distinction at the grandparental (and other) levels, which Hornborg (*ibid.*) simply dismisses as irrelevant in generating a 'symmetric alliance structure'. This juxtaposition of tactics thus raises the question as to whether the alleged 'structure' or 'structures' exist in Hornborg's head or in the data he analyses. As I have argued elsewhere (Shapiro 1985), they do not exist in the data. In general, his article is remarkable only because of its strategic employment of the most tenuous Lévi-Straussian mysticism about 'underlying structures' (see below), and because he is the only alliance theorist who even begins to confront the structural problems that his analysis of a system of kin-classification faces. But, thus begun, the confrontation is abandoned in an attempt to salvage the theory. See also Hornborg 1993.

same pattern is no problem, for alliance theory has long insisted that it is the *category* of 'wife-giving lineage' and not specific 'lineages' that counts (see especially Maybury-Lewis 1965). And especially in recent years it has become enamoured with the 'alternate-generation' pattern we see in evidence here, as Parkin's response indicates.

But now recall that this neat scheme is based upon native notions of patrification. If, by contrast, comparable notions of *matrifiliation* are employed, the entire structure can and does collapse. Suppose, for example, my above-mentioned 'cousin' through patrification sires a son through a woman I call 'sister' and I now choose matrifiliation to classify this son, we have—as we say on this side of the Atlantic—a whole new ball game, to wit: 'uncle' – 'cousin' – 'sister's child' (for further pertinent data see Shapiro 1981: 34–8).

Now for alliance theory this is sheer chaos: 'wife-giving lineages' (i.e. those with men ego calls 'uncle') become 'wife-taking lineages' (i.e. those with men ego calls 'sister's child'), and any semblance of 'the unity of the lineage' collapses. This is because in alliance theory 'lineage unity' is a gimmick based (as I have argued, and will argue further below) on a limited analysis of a limited genealogical space (see also Scheffler 1970: 262–4).

It bears repetition that resort to matrifiliation in this way is a very frequent procedure, not only in north-east Arnhem Land but in others parts of Aboriginal Australia as well. Indeed, the available evidence suggests that it is at least as common as patrification in this sphere (see, for example, Falkenberg and Falkenberg 1981: 169ff.; Shapiro 1977: 30, 1981: 35; Turner 1974: 16–18). But I would insist that it is alliance theory that is chaotic. Aboriginal Australian systems of kin-classification, for their part, are quite orderly *when viewed as systems of kin-classification* and not as schemes of 'prescriptive alliance'. This is Scheffler's argument (see especially Scheffler 1978), and he is right as can be, or nearly so (but see Shapiro 1982).

There are, however, even more data pertinent to this argument, and they are even more important for anthropological theory. North-east Arnhem Land semantic structure divides all kin-classes into 'full' (*dangang*) and 'partial' (*marrkangga*) subclasses. In the case of the uncle class informants were likely to nominate for 'full' membership any 'uncle' of ego's mother's patriclan, and/or whose mother's patriclan is that of ego's MM. Which is to say that the 'uncle' kin-class focuses on certain persons who are *by native criteria* kin and not non-kin (see Shapiro 1981: 40–41). The fact that it also includes, in a secondary sense, others who are rendered by these same criteria as non-kin is of interest, as is the fact that this is the normative kin-class for male ego's father-in-law. Alliance theory's error—and here it commingles with more than a century of anthropological thought on Aboriginal Australia—is to elevate these secondary semantic considerations to primary status.

The foregoing analysis can be pushed still further. In the form I have so far presented it, it applies equally to women of a kin-class I would gloss as 'mother', who usually refer to men ego calls 'uncle' as (a term I would gloss as) 'brother'.

Now, since Dumont's well-known article (1953) on 'Dravidian Kinship Terminology as an Expression of Marriage', alliance theory has suggested that the designation of ego's genetrix is structurally secondary, an epiphenomenon of sorts of her being a sister or wife of a male in an affinal relationship with another male. But in point of fact, not only is the genetrix the focal member of the 'mother' class in north-east Arnhem Land—a point I have argued in greater detail elsewhere (Shapiro 1981: 87ff.)—but she is also the focal member of a superclass whose members include the denotata of both the 'mother' and 'uncle' classes. This is so because men of this latter class too are sometimes called 'mother'—as if membership in the superclass were extended, without regard to gender, by appeal to its quintessential member. And this is *precisely* how my informants put it. They often referred to men of the 'uncle' category as *ngama darramu* (literally 'male mother'), expanding with *nakuna ngama, yurru darramu* ('like mother, but male'). And they idiomized their relationship to their own sisters' children by referring to the latter as *ngarraku gulun* ('my abdomen', 'my womb') or by touching their abdomens—this despite their knowledge (or, in deference to the 'cultural constructionists', their 'construction') that men sire children but do not give birth to them or have wombs (ibid.: 16–20). Nephews and nieces, for their part, sometimes say that they 'come from the wombs' of their own mother's brother (*gurrukanawuy* or *gulunpu*), which is to say they use the maternal idiom of generation (ibid.: 87–8). And they signal the mother's brother by touching the right nipple, just as the genetrix herself is indicated by the left nipple. These are, I submit, decisive points against alliance theory, as well as against the (enormous) relativist component of 'cultural constructionism', but there are parallels throughout Australia (Scheffler 1978) and, indeed, elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

None of the foregoing should be taken to mean that 'groups' and other local institutions have no role in the shaping of ethnogenealogical space, or that native users of kin-terms do not employ such considerations in assigning people to kin-classes: there is abundant evidence for these operations, and Scheffler (e.g. 1972b: 324, 1973: 767–9; Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 198) has, I think, shown a consistent appreciation of them. Nor can Murdock's important findings, some of which were noted above, on the salience of 'institutions' in kin-classification be dismissed. It is not that these operations and findings are irrelevant: *it is that they are secondary*. And they are secondary not—or not only—because

14. Some of this argument may seem to be indebted to Radcliffe-Brown's classic formulation (1924) of the MB/ZS relationship in Bantu Africa and elsewhere, in which case I would retort that his extensionist analyses are often on the mark. As Scheffler (1978: 70–74) has observed, much later non-Australian ethnography supports him. And although, because of his most famous comparative treatment (Radcliffe-Brown 1931), he managed to lead subsequent generations of scholars to see Aboriginal Australian kin-classification only as 'allied patriline', shortly before his death he proffered a far more insightful—if less well-known—analysis (Radcliffe-Brown 1951; see also his (1953) retort to Dumont). The left/right dichotomy as a representation of the female/male one is, of course, widespread, as Needham's important compendium (Needham (ed.) 1973) shows.

Lounsbury, Scheffler, and some other anthropologists, including myself, say so but *because the natives say so*. Parkin can cite Needham, just as Needham can cite Fison, Hocart, and the Dutch Masters until the cows come home (Shapiro 1975). And Schneider can score points by appealing to the self-hatred of the trendy left (Shapiro 1989) until the bimillennium, and some recent commentaries suggest he will do just this (e.g. Schneider 1989, 1992, 1995). But despite both Needham's and Schneider's professions of concern for careful ethnographic analysis, neither has rendered it, partly because both are awesomely ignorant of current issues in semantics, especially prototype theory. Bifurcate merging and other systems, I would suggest, appear so different from the 'lineal' ones of English and other Indo-European languages because for well over a hundred years we have, in analysing the former, mostly ignored questions of subclassification, discursive commentary, and ease of translation or 'codability' (Brown 1956: 307ff.). We have founded a neo-relativism on *precisely* the same kind of translation fallacy that forged the initial great period of relativism in anthropology *circa* 1930.<sup>15</sup>

I now come to a key point. I submit that, when we entertain these questions, we have substantial evidence for the genealogical unity of humankind, for which Schneider and Needham, among others, have expressed such contempt (see especially Needham 1962a; Schneider 1984: 119ff.). This conclusion is mostly implicit in Scheffler's work, but it is more fully blown in the theorizing of certain other anthropologists, for example, J. A. Barnes (1973), Derek Freeman (1973), and Roger Keesing (1990).<sup>16</sup> If this seems like 'biological reductionism', it is a 'reductionism' with considerable evidential support, and there is no reason whatsoever to ascribe to it the immutability that has been used historically to sustain polemics against such interpretations. Indeed, there is some evidence that the new reproductive technology already requires its modification (see Shore 1992, Strathern 1992). But I daresay it can be sustained for most of human history and ethnography and is thus an accurate rendering of an aspect of the human situation, not an ethnocentric distortion of the facts.<sup>17</sup> As for the debate at hand, I endorse

15. On this, see Lounsbury's distinction (1969) between 'limited' and 'complete' relativism and Lukes's important contribution (1982). The latter contains important references.

16. Judging from his most recent critique (1991) of 'cultural constructionism', I suspect that Scheffler is about ready to join them.

17. In contrast, both alliance theory and 'cultural constructionism' have charged cognitive extensionism with overcommitment to Western notions, or even to notions more or less confined to certain anthropologists (e.g. Needham 1962a, Schneider 1984). Schneider in particular has shown consistent opposition to innatist argument (Schneider 1976, 1995). Needham occasionally uses essentialist language in reference to bipartite schemes of classification—'a fundamental feature of the human mind' (1960b: 106) or 'primary factors of human experience' (1973a: xxxi)—but such claims, he rightly notes, 'rapidly pass the limits of proof' (*ibid.*). It seems safe to speculate that neither is aware of the mutability allowed for in recent biological theory (e.g. Hinde 1982: 85ff.; Lehrman 1970; Ridley 1993: 313–20), or of the fact that—and I think this is especially important given the present hegemony of 'cultural constructionism'—'biological'



Parkin's admonition to attend to Morgan and Lévi-Strauss, but I should certainly add at least Freud and Darwin to my reading list.

Finally, and related, there is the question of how seriously 'structural anthropology' in the UK, France and elsewhere takes the notion of 'structure' in human affairs. Lévi-Strauss pays lip-service—nothing more—to neurology (see Rossi 1982: 267–74). Needham is at least as constricted. In one of his more mature statements on 'prescriptive alliance' he distinguishes among 'three main aspects of collective conduct and representations...(1) behaviour, (2) rules, (3) categories' (Needham 1973b: 171), giving the last a decided analytical priority on grounds that, I think, can be fairly described as Platonic. And a more recent article (Needham 1986) suggests a yet more profound retreat into the realm of Pure Forms. All this corresponds quite closely with Lévi-Strauss's decided preference for 'elementary' as opposed to 'complex' structures. The point that Needham's 'categories' and Lévi-Strauss's 'elementary structures' have been misanalysed has already been made and is not the issue here. What is remarkable at this juncture is the simplistic sense both scholars have of 'structure', particularly the way in which they regard it as separate from 'behaviour' and as having an intrinsically 'collective' character.

In contrast, consider what Howard Gardner (1985) calls 'the cognitive revolution' in psychology. In one of its pioneer articles, Karl Lashley (1951) called attention to a variety of behavioural operations that we now call, following Chomsky (1972: 61), 'structure-dependent', for example, transpositions in typewriting. One of the commonest, to which the editors of scholarly journals will surely attest, is the simple transposition of adjacent letters ('bald' rendered as 'blad'), but there are considerably more sophisticated ones. Yet even the simplest call attention to the fact that chunks of behaviour do not occur atomistically, as the early cognitivists' behaviourist opponents would have it, but depend instead on an overarching plan or structure; and two generations of ethological research have attempted to identify such structures not only in *Homo sapiens* but in the rest of nature as well (Gardner 1985: 31).

Now, it may seem a long way from typing transpositions to systems of kin-classification, but this is true only if one sees the latter as structurally simple, intrinsically collective, and devoid of context and history, as Lévi-Strauss, Needham, Schneider and their followers all tend to do. But in fact there is an enormous amount of evidence, in addition to that of my north-east Arnhem Land materials presented above, that this is not the case. Which is to say that such 'systems' are often less than systemic or, if I may borrow an expression the late Roger Keesing liked to use, 'messy'. This being so, there is no reason to follow the purity-quests of Lévi-Strauss and Needham and suppose that 'prescriptive alliance' schemes are any less messy than 'behaviour'. Both have elements of

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theories of human affairs have at least as often been associated with the political left as with the political right (Degler 1990).

'chaos' that it is the job of analysis both to appreciate and to order, attending in the process as closely as possible to comparable operations performed by native informants. Lévi-Strauss and Needham may take refuge in ancient Durkheimian fiat to escape this messiness, just as Schneider achieves the same result by embracing the literary conceits of his friend Geertz that 'culture' is intrinsically shared (Geertz 1973: 10) and that it exists apart from species constraints (ibid.: 33–54). But 'the cognitive revolution' and its implications are here to stay; and only an increasingly desperate polemics, often combined with scholarly ignorance of the most forced sort, can pretend otherwise.

So there is no ultimate analytical difference between 'terminology' and 'behaviour', as Parkin, clearly following Needham, says there is.<sup>18</sup> Those of us who see this do indeed have more sweating to do, but it is sweating over rich data, in an effort to find analytical schemes that respect them. By contrast, alliance theory and 'cultural constructionism' are defending houses of cards.

18. At this point in his response Parkin conflates several distinct issues in the history of anthropology—among them the alleged isomorphy between kin-class and behavioural class, the relationship between such classes and ongoing behaviour, and the structural analysis of behaviour in general, whether or not it is associated with kin-classification. For a partial untangling, see Shapiro in press. In contrast, in an earlier exchange, Maybury-Lewis (1974: v) observes that my critique (Shapiro 1971b) of the first edition (Maybury-Lewis 1967) of his monograph on the Shavante of Central Brazil 'misses the point of structuralism', which, he claims, is the unified analysis of behavioural and cognitive data. He thus assumes towards me much the same role Lévi-Strauss (1960) adopted towards him some years earlier, and which Hornborg has more recently endeavoured to effect (see note 13 above). All this suggests that some of the grand (and probably untestable) claims that Lévi-Strauss makes for 'underlying structures' have diffused not only to the UK (and the USA), but also to parts further removed from the transatlantic centre of the discipline. In any case, I am now sympathetic to Maybury-Lewis's programme. However, his analysis of Shavante kin-classification has many of the defects of alliance theory with which I have more recently charged Parkin. Neither Maybury-Lewis nor Parkin can be accused of 'missing the point of structuralism' as a scholastic niche. What they lack instead is a sense of the requirements of an earnest structural analysis of real-world data, whether cognitive or behavioural.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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PAUL STOLLER, *The Cinematic Griot: The Ethnography of Jean Rouch*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1992. xvii, 266 pp., Bibliography, Index, Maps, Photographs. £31.95/£13.50/\$45.95/\$19.50.

The life and work of Jean Rouch, the French ethnographer and film-maker, are portrayed here in an intellectual biography. The author, Paul Stoller, is an anthropologist who has worked among the Songhay of West Africa, whose lives have also been the subject of numerous works by Rouch over many years. The relationship between these two ethnographers is just as fascinating as the relationship that each has developed individually with the Songhay. Stoller dubs Rouch 'the cinematic griot' with respect to his corpus of ethnographic film. The term 'griot' was coined by early French writers on West Africa and is thought to derive from the Mande word (or from one of its dialects) denoting a specialized praise-singer, a custodian of tradition, a bard who revels in the mastery of language and the power of speech. In Stoller's view, Rouch has become a griot or praise-singer of the Songhay, since he has frequently shown his own films in the villages and cities of Niger. Thus he is portrayed as one who represents the Songhay past, their traditions and rituals (many of them now defunct), as well as those persons now long dead who are reanimated, coming to life on the silver screens set up in village squares or local cinemas. In Stoller's words, Rouch has, as a griot, 'fulfilled his greatest responsibility: to pass on his knowledge to the next generation' (p. xvi). The relationship between Rouch-the-griot and his audience is not, however, always easy, for cinematic representation is a contested issue in Niger: some claim that his images reinforce stereotypes of the 'primitive African', while others are grateful for the experience of reliving the memories of deceased relatives. Stoller's point is that, whatever their reaction, the Songhay are brought into a relation with their past.

The picture of Rouch as griot is complicated on many fronts. Stoller himself is the 'griot's griot' (p. 104), singing, throughout the text, the praises of Rouch's ethnographic and cinematic work, hailing the brave deeds of his own anthropological ancestor (Stoller is 'son of Rouch' in Songhay classification). An account of the intricate relationship between these two ethnographers of different generations cannot be developed in this review (see my 'Reflections of Rouch: Images in the Hall of Mirrors', in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Religion in Africa* for an account of the 'crisis of representation' in both authors' writings). The present book, it can be simply noted, complements our view of that relationship, in which Stoller is now cast in a griot's role—a position of privilege in which it is not unknown for the singer himself to portray his own deeds alongside those of his honoured subject.

The picture of Rouch as griot is further complicated by what one gleans from Rouch's writing on how the Songhay have viewed his own participation in their lives. Rather than a griot, he is seen as a man of power, one who has absorbed and has been absorbed by the mysteries of Songhay spiritual life. The person of Rouch as observer and participant, as ethnographer and film-maker, has been assimilated into Songhay

categories of thought such that—far from being a griot—he becomes one possessed of spirit when filming possession trances (he enters a *ciné-transe*), or one who possesses the power of sorcery to devour with his camera people's 'doubles', which are then transformed and projected on to a screen at a later date. He becomes the *mangeur* and later the *montreur de reflets*; see his *La Religion et la magie Songhay* (Paris, 1989, pp. 348–9).

But let us return to the present book, for the representation of Rouch is only one part of a larger project. The central concern is to integrate and interpret the often disparate images of Rouch-the-ethnographer and Rouch-the-film-maker. Rouch's work has been frequently misunderstood by one camp (film critics) or the other (anthropologists). Through an examination of his work in both domains and a review of the intellectual influences that informed his ethnography and film, Stoller argues that there is a continuity and mutually reinforcing relationship between them. 'This book', Stoller states, 'is an attempt to write an anthropological analysis of Rouch's work' (p. 194).

The key connection between film and text in Rouch's corpus is participation: participatory cinema and shared or participatory anthropology (*anthropologie partagée*). Both are developed through an active engagement with the concerns of Rouch's 'subjects'; one of the implications of this method is that the familiar distinction between object and subject becomes blurred: the observer becomes subject, and subjects create their own objects for investigation. Film and text are not simply complementary but related intimately, such that 'the making of...film stimulated historical and sociological inquiry, and the results of that inquiry further informed the film' (p. 96). Not only is a dynamic established (film provokes questions that provide new data that stimulate new films), but the two forms of representation engage our attention in different ways—albeit for a similar purpose. Ethnography that is often reported in a 'flat', 'terse', journalistic style—see, for example, Rouch's *La Religion et la magie Songhay*—is 'shocked into life' in film, with the overall result that we are challenged on two fronts simultaneously, by the scientifically unthinkable and by the philosophically untenable. The combined effect of text and film in disrupting our categories of Western knowledge lies at the heart of the often implicit theoretical intentions that underlie Rouch's work.

Stoller also takes us beyond the specific and appealing aspects of Rouch's work towards a vision of the future course of ethnographic practice and representation. Using Rouch's notion of shared or participatory anthropology as an exemplar, Stoller plots a course towards a 'radical empiricism' and a phenomenology of fieldwork in order to produce a reflexive and more artistic kind of anthropological expression. He proffers the thought that it is not ethnographic film that is the answer to anthropology's representational and theoretical quandaries; instead, our 'future ethnographic practice is to learn anew how to dream, how to fall in love' (p. 218).

Whether we should take to heart all of these recommendations is an open question. But what is beyond doubt is that this book is full of challenging insights into the forms of representation Rouch has deployed to capture Songhay realities and into the possibilities these forms provide for future anthropological methods. This book is a rich and important source for scholars of West Africa, for those involved in ethnographic film and visual anthropology, and for those who care about the future

directions of field methods and anthropological writing. It is a pity, however, that an ethnographer of around twenty years' standing among the Songhay should mar his text with such a blatant infelicity as 'Tabaski, the Muslim holiday commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Issac [*sic!*] to God' (p. 87).

ROY DILLEY

RUSSELL THORNTON, *The Cherokees: A Population History*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1992 [1990]. xvi, 237 pp., References, Index, Tables, Figures, Maps. £10.95.

This is a paperback reissue of the original 1990 edition. The seven chapters cover the manifold issues of Cherokee demographics from the pre-contact period to the 1980s. It is not possible to count a people without having criteria for membership. Identity is therefore a central issue in the book. In the end, it demonstrates that there is no consensus on the question of who is and who is not a Cherokee and that there is therefore no way to know how many Cherokee there are. In the 1980 census only about a third of the 232,344 self-identified Cherokees held tribal membership. This proportion contrasts with the fact that two-thirds of all American Indians reported tribal membership.

The 1980 census forced respondents to make a single choice of racial category, but permitted them to indicate more than one type of ancestry, although only the first two ethnic ancestries were counted. Over half of the Cherokee population reported only American Indian ancestry. Over 50,000 claimed mixed ancestry. About 27,000 listed no American Indian ancestry.

Between the 1970 and 1980 censuses there was an increase of 72 per cent in the number of persons claiming American Indian identity. It is reasonable to assume that this change resulted in large part from shifting self-identifications between the two censuses. During the same period the reported Cherokee population increased by 251 per cent, far exceeding an expected natural growth of 43 per cent. One source of this discrepancy could have been a gross undercounting in 1970. The more likely source is a 'tidal shift in racial identification'. Among plausible reasons for change in racial self-identification are 'ethnic pride movements' of the 1970s, declining racial discrimination, affirmative action programmes and Bureau of Indian Affairs scholarships. These factors would have affected different age groups differently. However, except for children under five, who appear to have been undercounted by 13 per cent, every age group shows a large discrepancy between expected and reported size.

The authors conclude that the discrepancies arose from a variety of causes. What they do not explain is why these factors affected the Cherokee so much more than the American Indian population as a whole. Perhaps the answer is to be sought in part in the fact that there are really several different Cherokee populations, spread from the south-east to the south-west and in various urban centres such as Los Angeles. These

groups have quite various histories, degrees of coherence and degrees of active retention of Cherokee culture and language. Some persons with a vague family memory of a Cherokee relative who in the past would have identified themselves as white, or perhaps black, may today be tempted to claim Cherokee identity. However, the statistical effect of the 'Cherokee grandmother' syndrome is uncalculated.

The great bulk of this book is concerned with issues in historical demography of a more familiar if at least equally vexed kind. Historical estimates of Indian population size are rarely easy to interpret clearly or reliably. Cherokee demographics are complicated by various forced migrations in the historical period and by continuous difficulties about the nature of Cherokee identity. The size of the 1840 population after the 'Trail of Tears' march from Georgia to what is now Oklahoma is quite unknown. The authors try to arrive at a figure by extrapolation forward from 1835 and backward from later in the century. These projections produce a possible figure of over 10,000 Cherokee who would have been alive if the Trail of Tears had not happened. Nevertheless, these calculations merely give a number to an uncertainty which was there before.

R. H. BARNES

STEVEN VERTOVEC (ed.), *Aspects of the South Asian Diaspora* (Oxford University Papers on India, Vol. 2, Part 2), Delhi: Oxford University Press 1991. xvi, 201 pp., References, Index. £11.95.

With refreshing honesty, the title of this collection of papers, from a conference held in Oxford in 1987 on 'South Asian Communities Overseas', announces its disparate nature. The seven papers give an idea of the very different kinds of work being done by anthropologists, geographers and religious studies specialists.

Helweg and Bhachu provide conventional surveys of Indian immigrants in Australia and East African Sikhs in Britain respectively. While no doubt useful for those in the field, one misses any feeling for the voices and concerns of the people being written about. Much the same can be said for Kim Knott's programmatic survey of South Asian religions in Britain. She usefully lays out what is known, along with a framework and questions for future research, though without much indication of what these might reveal.

For anthropologists the two most interesting papers may prove to be those by Peter van der Veer and Alison Shaw. In a paper entitled 'Religious Therapies and their Valuation among Surinamese Hindustani in the Netherlands', van der Veer shows how ritual therapies have become part of the internal debate among Hindus. Reformists (mainly followers of the Arya Samaj) would do away with them as superstitious, whereas the traditionalists (who have constituted themselves as Sanatanists) are more ambivalent: while condemning them in public, the Sanatanist pandits often earn a considerable income by practising as healers with these very therapies. Likewise, the Hindu laity mostly seem to espouse a purified Great Tradition in public, while

increasingly resorting in private to ritual therapies, which they acquiesce in labelling as 'superstitious' and 'un-Hindu'. In a paper that provides the most detailed and subtle fieldwork data of the book, Alison Shaw outlines two case-studies of community leaders who emerged among the Pakistanis of 'a British city'.

By exploring the dynamics of interaction between host community professionals, would-be leaders and different factions among Pakistanis, Shaw demonstrates the futility of any simplistic talk of 'the Pakistani community'. She also provides an exemplary case-study of local politics, which, hidden away as it is in a conference collection, will probably not receive the exposure it deserves.

The collection closes with two papers by geographers. The first, by Suresh Patel, is a conventional survey of patterns of Asian retailing in Birmingham. The second is a Marxist study by John Cater and Trevor Jones entitled 'Community, Ethnicity and Class among South Asians in Britain'. They argue that, as with older and now largely superseded community practices among the white working class, 'the ethnic community provides an extremely cheap means of sustaining the ethnic population in Britain: cheap, that is, for British capital.... To the extent that ethnicity and community enable Asians to be *self-reproducing* then the state is relieved of responsibility for their reproduction' (p. 174; original emphasis). The authors maintain that Asians in Britain are obliged to depend on family and female labour, because they are excluded from the resources that White British receive; but at the same time they wish to see 'ethnic community as an expression of the conscious will of its own members' (p. 181). Whether or not they can keep these two balls in the air at the same time (and I also wonder whether their approach is an adequate basis from which to generate research), it is certain that their paper is a welcome antidote to stereotypes of Asians as successful businessmen immune to the class-based exclusions to which Afro-Caribbean and White British are subjected.

DAVID N. GELLNER

JAMES R. WALKER, *Lakota Society* (ed. Raymond J. DeMallie), Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1992 [1982]. xvi, 207 pp., Bibliography, Index, Illustrations. £9.50.

This paperback reissue of the hardback edition of 1982 is the second volume of documents about the Oglala Lakota recorded by Walker, who served at Pine Ridge Reservation from 1896 to 1914. As with *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (edited by Elaine A. Jahner and Raymond J. DeMallie), this book provides unpublished and carefully corrected and re-edited published pieces that, taken together, substantially enhance our understanding of Lakota society. Much of this material was recorded at the instigation of Clark Wissler of the American Museum of Natural History, who visited Pine Ridge in 1905. He engaged Walker, the medical doctor on the reservation, and Charles and Richard Nines, white men who had grown up with Oglala and were fluent in Lakota, to continue ethnographic collecting for the museum. These documents are the result

of this broader collaboration. Authorship of the various documents extends in various ways beyond Walker to include informants and interpreters. DeMallie attributes nine documents to Richard Nines. Other authors of record include John Blunt Horn, Antoine Herman, Spotted Elk, Charles Garnett, Bad Bear, Thomas Tyon, Iron Tail, Woman Dress, Red Feather, No Ears, High Bear, Seven Rabbits, Short Man, Iron Crow, and Beard.

DeMallie has divided the book into three parts: 'The Structure of Society', 'Hunting, War, Ceremony, and Art' and 'Time and History'. The first section begins with legends of the division of the Sioux into 'the Seven Council Fires' and further sub-tribes. It continues with descriptions of chieftainship, band structure, government, societies, gender roles, friendship and kinship. Perhaps of most interest in the accounts of tribal organization is the description of how bands formed and fell apart, as chiefs attracted or lost support. What DeMallie rightly characterizes as the dynamism in social organization and the differences of individual interpretations of shared principles are probably a key to understanding Lakota society in prehistoric and early historic times. Anyone interested in Lakota kinship will now be obliged to consult the restored, retranslated and corrected information for Walker's important early paper (1914) on Oglala kinship terms in Documents 19-22. These documents also complement DeMallie's own substantial contributions on Lakota kinship.

Section II presents a miscellany of information on aspects of daily life. Like the first section, it is of considerable general interest, as it is devoted to a careful comparison of the Oglala winter counts, the illustrated records of the passage of years that provided the Oglala with a chronology of sorts. The central document is the copy made for Walker by No Ears, which extends from 1759 until 1912. DeMallie's commentary on comparative and interpretative issues is particularly helpful. He includes a compilation of the No Ears, Short Man and Iron Crow counts with his own translation. He also publishes the drawings from Short Man's winter count. There is a discrepancy of a year, from 1823 until 1848/9, between No Ears and Short Man, which can throw off the unwary reader. The final document is a ghastly description of the Wounded Knee massacre by a survivor named Beard.

R. H. BARNES

RUBIE S. WATSON and PATRICIA BUCKLEY EBREY (eds.), *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, Berkeley etc.: The University of California Press 1991. xvii, 370 pp., References, Index, Figures, Map, Tables. \$49.95.

This book concerns the study of gender and marriage. As such it represents a departure from the majority of previous studies, which have tended to focus on the patrilineal characteristics of Chinese kinship. The contributors, mostly historians but also a sociologist and an anthropologist, provide a comprehensive picture covering the Great Tradition of upper-class élites and imperial royalty from the classical period to the present, in addition to the Little Tradition of the commoners.

One of the themes discussed is how gender inequality between husband and wife, in families of both commoners and royals, relates to the socio-political sphere. Thatcher claims that as early as the Spring and Autumn dynasties (770–453 BC), the marriages of elite women served the purpose of creating political alliances. Holmgren delineates the relationship between imperial marriages and the political role of the emperor's wife in both native Chinese and non-Han states from the Han (206 BC–AD 220) to the Ming dynasties (1368–1664). Chaffee (p. 159) specifically discusses the balance of power as affected by clan marriage exchanges of dowries and official titles, as well as the Confucian norms of obedience to husbands despite the high status of the wife in the Sung dynasty (960–1279). With regard to the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911), Rawski discusses how marriage and succession practices prevented substantial political challenges to the throne from affines, but did not guard against challenges from agnates.

In general, women are not considered to be passive participants shaped by the system of moral beliefs and sanctioned norms. On the contrary, Mann (p. 222) investigates how women—their literacy, religiosity and strivings for comfort and security—helped to provoke the mid-Ch'ing discourse on marriage and posed a challenge to the social order. Hershatler discusses prostitutes in the early twentieth century in the context of women as subjects/objects, while Ocko discusses the perpetuation of gender inequality in the People's Republic of China. The sociologist Lavelly likewise discusses how marriage has related to social mobility under rural collectivism since 1949. Drawing on his recent fieldwork, Watson discusses the status of wives and concubines in the New Territories of Hong Kong.

The contributors also investigate the important issue in gender studies of the relationship between women and property and women as property, with special reference to dowry as a basis for political alliance. Ebrey claims that in the transition from the Tang (617–907) to the Sung (960–1279) dynasties the importance of the dowry increased as it became a means to strengthen the ties between families of social and political equals and to balance the power between families of unequal status. Dowry escalation is believed to lead to a more major shift in the system of transmitting property toward 'diverging devolution', to use Jack Goody's term. As I have found in my fieldwork in Fanling Wai, in the New Territories of Hong Kong, dowry exists today but is of little value and has no great significance for the villagers. Daughters usually inherit nothing from the father, and although this is changing under the influence of the Western bilateral system, land is still never given to daughters but only to sons. Further ethnographic research needs to be done to relate the current situation to Goody's concept.

Overall the book is successful in its investigation of gender inequality as it relates to the socio-economic sphere and corporate groups, but it underemphasizes the descent ideology. The unequal descent status of sons and daughters stems from birth in that only sons are born with a *fang* descent status, while daughters acquire membership in a patrilineal descent group via their husbands. This difference in acquiring status relates to socio-economic gender inequality and would have merited fuller discussion.

SELINA CHING CHAN

ANTHONY P. COHEN, *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, London and New York: Routledge 1994. xi, 217 pp., References, Index.

For most of this century, the notion that the self is socially or culturally determined has been the dominant theoretical perspective in British social anthropology. According to Anthony Cohen, it has led anthropologists to attribute an individual's behaviour and mental state to the group or category, such as nationality, ethnic group, gender, religion and so on, to which he or she belongs. We assume, unreasonably, that orthodox performances express similarity of thought and consciousness—that mental states can be read from behaviour or simply from membership in a particular group. In so assuming, we deny individuals self consciousness and represent them as automata who do not have to think, as actors performing roles to a script we have written largely through our use of categories rather than self conscious individuals reflecting on their own behaviour and their social and cultural context. Consequently, Cohen says, we have been dealing with 'bogus entities' and 'fictitious ciphers of the anthropologist's theoretical invention' (p. 7).

Our general concern with behaviour neglects the variety of motivations, meanings and perceptions underlying actions. Even among closely knit groups we cannot assume the existence of common understandings and meanings. We may all obey the same law, for example, but our motives for doing so may be vastly different; we may all participate in the same religious ritual, pray the same liturgy and speak the same language, but we are under an illusion if we assume that these social forms convey the same meaning to each of us. For Cohen, culture and society form a framework where shared forms of exchange, politics, communication and so on provide broad limits on what an individual can do, but not what he or she will do within those limits. Society's rules are constructed in accordance with publicly expressed and affirmed principles, but these principles are often circumvented in practice by individuals who reinterpret and reconfigure them for their own purposes.

Cohen's 'alternative anthropology of identity' inverts the traditional 'society to individual' approach to an 'individual to society' one. He urges us to recognize the strength of the authorial self in the construction of society and culture. Individuals in any group are conscious of their unique identity within that group. The self is not a passive object of society and culture but is the agent of culture, making its own world through interpreting its social and cultural context. Failure to adopt this 'individual to society' perspective risks misrepresenting the people we claim to know and represent in our ethnographies. Moreover, this perspective, Cohen argues, brings us back to some of anthropology's most fundamental questions. How do groups cohere when internal discourse is so diverse? How is it that group symbols, so variously interpreted, result in attachment and commitment to the group? In short, how is society possible?

*Self Consciousness* is not a polemical work but a demonstration of this alternative anthropology. Drawing on a large number of ethnographies, Cohen shows how an interpretation from an individualistic perspective provides insights into the nature of the self and society. In some cases this perspective was taken by the original author Cohen cites. In others, he demonstrates how the material can be reinterpreted.

There are a few drawbacks to the book. *Self Consciousness* is not an easy read, being relatively dense, repetitious and vague. For example, self consciousness, 'the



real subject matter of the book', is defined as 'consciousness of the self'. In an endnote to the preface this is distinguished from 'self-conscious' (i.e. with a hyphen) which is 'the colloquial sense of heightened sensitivity to the self'. This 'definition' leaves one wondering what self consciousness is, and how it is constituted. In chapter three he tells us that the self is constituted by experience. But this either presupposes the self or is deterministic. If we are simply the sum of our experiences (not what Cohen intends), differing only because we have different experiences, then we are determined. If, on the other hand, the self is constituted by the assimilation or interpretation of experience, then the self is presupposed—what is it, if not the self, that assimilates or interprets experience?

The basic questions Cohen asks are: Who am I?, Who are we? (p. 119), and What do the symbols of my cultural milieu mean to me? In answering them, he argues, we can begin to answer the anthropological questions: Who are you? and What do these symbols mean to you? These are subjective questions requiring subjective answers. Indeed, as Cohen has tried to demonstrate, we are all individuals, and the same things will mean or symbolize different things to each of us. This creates an epistemological difficulty. Although symbols are cultural and therefore public forms, their meanings and interpretation are substantially individual and private; hence they are unavailable to the anthropologist (p. 142).

Perhaps a more appropriate question to ask might be not *who* but *what*. What are we? What sort of creatures are we that we can have a sense of self or that we possess self-consciousness? What sort of creatures are we that things can have meaning and symbolic value?

The book deals with an important issue and is a valiant attempt to provide a positive alternative to the interpretation of ethnographic material. But it raises more questions than it answers. For this reason it is worthwhile reading for those interested in cognitive anthropology, symbolic anthropology and questions of identity.

CHRIS HOLDSWORTH

HELENA WAYNE (ed.), *The Story of a Marriage: The Letters of Bronislaw Malinowski and Elsie Masson* (2 Vols.), London and New York: Routledge 1995. Vol. I: xviii, 196 pp., Illustrations, Map, Notes, Index; Vol. II: viii, 261 pp., Illustrations, Notes, Index.

'There are different layers in the things we do, life flows in different currents and though the deepest stream matters most and I would like you always to try and give me the trend of your inmost feelings and your real metaphysical life, the ripple on the surface also will interest me always' (Vol. I, p. 46). This passage—so typical of Malinowski, who always wanted to get below the surface of things—was written by him to his future wife, Elsie Masson (the mysterious E.R.M. of his *Diary*), on his way to the Trobriand Islands on 10 November 1917. For the next eighteen years Malinowski and Elsie wrote faithfully to each other whenever they were apart, even if for only a few days. Considering that they lived on three continents and wrote to

one another from nearly two dozen countries it is remarkable that most of their letters have survived. They have now been collected and edited in two volumes by their youngest daughter, Helena. Volume I contains the letters from their first meeting in 1916 to the beginning of 1920, when they left for Europe. Volume II covers the period from their arrival in Europe in April 1920 to Elsie's death in 1935.

Most of the letters in the first volume were written during Malinowski's second field trip to the Trobriand Islands between 1917 and 1918. There is much in them that is reminiscent of Malinowski's *Diary*: the vivid description, the frequent use of the word 'nigger', his hypochondria (Malinowski had all his teeth removed before he returned to the Trobriands, hoping that this would improve his health), the constant longing for E.R.M., and so on. Indeed, the letters are little more than an addendum to his *Diary*, providing scant additional information about his fieldwork methods or the development of his thought. Volume II similarly gives only an occasional glimpse into the development of his ideas. The letters are a chronicle of Malinowski's trips abroad, the people he met (which seems to have been nearly everyone who was anyone), and his lectures at the LSE (Elsie was in Italy and Austria for much of the time that Malinowski was in London), as well as more practical matters. The letters do, however, provide great insights into Malinowski the man, who is seen here as a loving husband and devoted father.

For this reason, *The Story of a Marriage* is indispensable for Malinowski scholars, though there is little of general anthropological interest. But then it is the 'story of a marriage'. The letters in Volume I tell of the blossoming and growth of their love, of their eventual marriage, and of their hopes and dreams of a future together in Europe. Volume II tells of Malinowski's rise to fame and the poignant story of Elsie's courageous fight against her increasingly debilitating multiple sclerosis and her desperate search for a cure. It is for this story, and for the fact that every letter, without exception, is beautifully written, that *The Story of a Marriage* should be read by anyone interested in personal relationships.

CHRIS HOLDSWORTH

JEREMY BOISSEVAIN (ed.), *Revitalizing European Rituals*, London and New York: Routledge 1992. ix, 204 pp., References, Indexes. £35.00.

One of a series of prompt publications resulting from the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) inaugural conference held in Coimbra in 1990, this book brings the anthropology of Europe right into the limelight at a time when some anthropologists may have been attempting to negate its validity and pertinence. There is certainly no lack of diversity in society within Europe, nor of 'otherness', if that is the prerequisite for fruitful enquiry, and *Revitalizing European Rituals* is evidence enough of this. A tendency to think of European rituals with any vestige of longevity as being in decline, or in some sense corrupted, has more to do with notions of purity and the legitimacy of change than with the practice of festivities.

Not only have public festivities been on the increase in Europe over the last twenty years, as these studies from Britain, Poland, Spain, Italy, Malta and Greece testify, but they have also been part of a process of transformation informed by changing migration patterns, cultural and political formations and, not least, tourism. This collection looks at the nature of the transformation by expanding the idea of invention to include revival and reanimation, restoral and resurrection, retraditionalization and folklorization. All of these further facets are incorporated into the notion of revitalization, which is to be seen in the rituals and 'traditions' of many parts of Europe at present.

As a response to Hobsbawm and Ranger the collection deals with contemporary local rather than national celebrations (apart from Mach's account of Polish May Day), paying more attention to processes and events of ritual change in a wider social context. In other words, as Boissevain points out: 'They attempt to answer Why questions as well as What questions' (p. 2). Nor do they shirk from the political considerations which infiltrate or even initiate such public demonstrations. Mach's account of Polish May Day celebrations is the most obvious example, but Poppi's analysis of Ladin carnival is equally explicit in its consideration of the 'political economy of tradition' (p. 113).

In the first of the articles, Wright highlights the pervasive and pernicious contemporary obsession with 'heritage' by setting it in opposition to 'critical history'. The former representations are 'divorced from the economic and political relations in which they were located in their time; tensions, conflicts, and divisions are expunged' (p. 20). This heritage image of society demands 'passive acceptance of external processes of change' (p. 21), as opposed to a critical use of the past which 'shap[es] the spaces and opportunities for change in the present' (*ibid.*). Such a perspective has much to say about nationalism too, as Poppi shows. Although Ladins were once part of a continuum of variety in the Tyrol, between their Austrian and Italian neighbours, a rising tide of nationalism on both sides left them to build up a separate 'Ladin tradition', neither German nor Italian. Reference to the past is seen as crucial in the creation of a political economy of difference, and the carnival is one of a series of cultural traits revived or created anew 'as a carrier of a specific "traditional"—and therefore "Ladin"—character' (p. 118).

Three forms of celebration in Spain are looked at with respect to ideas of 'modernization'. In all cases, this entails some degree of re-contextualization, be it the attraction of outside spectators to patronal festivals in the Jerte valley (Cruces and Díaz de Rada), performances of Andalusian dawn bell-ringers in the evenings (Driessen) or the transformation of a pilgrimage by media-men and 'yuppies' (Crain).

This collection takes the debate over heritage and history forward into European ethnography, showing to anyone who may doubt it (and there are still doubters) that European anthropologists must consider the inherent power relations of their work if anthropology is to move forward into the next century with any conviction.

SIMONE ABRAM

ALFRED GELL, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology), Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993. xi, 347 pp., Bibliography, Index, Figures. £35.00.

Anchored at its corners by Hawaii, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Rapa Nui (Easter Island), the Polynesian triangle has long attracted anthropologists and other researchers intrigued by the opportunity for controlled comparison presented by these far-flung yet closely related cultures. *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*, Alfred Gell's recent contribution to this tradition, argues that in historic Polynesia the frequency and extent of tattooing co-varied with contextual social and political characteristics. In Chapter 1, Gell establishes a theoretical framework for the discussion of tattooing and social structure. Synthesizing the work of Mauss, Foucault, M. Strathern, T. Turner, Anzieu and others, he proposes that 'socially appropriate self-understandings' are formed and reproduced through the deployment, display and modification of the body. The succeeding chapters demonstrate that it is in the mid-range between face-to-face intimacy and anonymity that tattooing becomes a significant medium for socio-political expression (p. 301). According to this schema, tattooing is incompatible with a largely depersonalized state (Hawaii), and redundant in a small or isolated polity (Tuamotus, Pukapuka). Tattooing receives its greatest elaboration in societies where the status hierarchy is either fragmented and competitive (Marquesas, New Zealand) or integrated and well established (Samoa), so that it becomes the bodily registration of 'the politics of defiance' or commitment to authority.

Overall, Gell's approach is synchronic rather than diachronic, for he quite rightly points out that gaps in the primary sources preclude a fully ethnohistorical study (pp. 41–2). This orientation may also result partly from his acknowledged dependence, as a Melanesianist, on the 'pre-masticated Polynesia' available in the scholarly literature (p. v). As Nicholas Thomas's finely textured analysis in *Marquesan Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990) demonstrates, there is still much archival material to be incorporated into the literature—including descriptive and visual records of the tattoos of known individuals that would have enabled Gell to include more specifically ethnohistorical analysis in his study. While Gell's arguments are compelling, his conclusions may be modified as further archival and, in some cases, field data are brought to bear.

At the heart of this work are the chapters that focus on individual Polynesian cultures: Western Polynesia (Samoa, Tonga) and Fiji, the Society Islands, the Marquesas, Mangareva, and outer Eastern Polynesia (New Zealand, Chatham Islands, Easter Island, Hawaii). They include much sensitive and creative exegesis, integrating the visual analysis of tattooing designs and practices with a discussion of politics, religion and mythology. Gell takes care throughout to link tattooing with visual representations of the body and tattoo in a variety of media. In this respect, the relationship between textile and tattoo designs could have been explored further, for Gell makes the important point that textiles and tattoos are not functionally equivalent: while tattooing creates a non-removable second skin, wrapping in textiles has as much to do with taking off social skins as putting them on (pp. 87–91). The similarities and differences between textile and tattoo motifs in Hawaii, the Society Islands, Tonga and

other Polynesian cultures suggest that this dialectic was played out in visual as well as gestural terms.

One of the most intriguing and potentially controversial parts of this book is Gell's analysis of the relationship between Euro-American and Polynesian tattooing in the opening and closing chapters. That the two are now bound up together—at least in the Western mind—is obvious from the fact that 'tattoo' is one of the few Austronesian loan-words to appear in European languages (along with 'mana' and 'taboo'). Inspired by Sperber's epidemiological model of cultural representation, Gell proposes that certain characteristics of tattooing as an expressive medium make it appealing to 'susceptible populations', from Polynesian islanders to Western soldiers, prostitutes and gangsters (p. 19). With warnings about the need for cultural relativism and the danger of pursuing ideas too far, Gell notes an affinity between the 'paranoid excess' of tattooing as practised in devolved Polynesian societies and the oppositional element in sub-cultural tattooing in the West, and also between the 'passive heroism' of Samoan youths and that of regimental soldiers. Those interested in the revival of tattoo in contemporary Polynesia as an expression of cultural identity may find this discussion suggestive, as will those exploring the mechanics and politics of cultural borrowing in an increasingly global environment.

Several editorial errors mar what is otherwise a well-written volume. In Chapter 3, the Society Islanders' name for themselves, Maohi or Ma'ohi (a cognate of the more familiar Maori), is misspelled Moahi. Moriori, the name of the Chatham Islanders, though correctly spelled in the index and elsewhere (e.g. p. 290), is misspelled Moriri on pp. 268–70. Less obvious errors also occur (for example, in the bibliography William Thomson's *Te Pito te Henua, or Easter Island* is listed as *Te Pito de Henua, or Easter Island*, and the surname of the Hawaiian writer Samuel Kamakau is listed as Kamakan). There is a similar problem with the figure captions, which are generally incomplete. Most of the objects are credited only to secondary sources, without the provenance, date, measurements or, in some cases, materials being listed. In addition, Sydney Parkinson's study of Society Islands buttock tattoos (fig. 3.1) is misattributed to Sir Joseph Banks.

None the less, *Wrapping in Images* is an impressive scholarly achievement which will interest both those new to Polynesia and specialists in the field. For the novice, this book provides a useful introduction to the region and its scholarship (though a map would have increased its value to this readership). Gell presents provocative ideas about both Polynesian cultures and the nature of tattooing which will undoubtedly stimulate further discussion in anthropology, art history and culture studies, especially given the recent interest in the body as a category of analysis. More specifically, this work presents a detailed test case which has the potential to shape ongoing debates about the relationships between Polynesian cultures.

ANNE D'ALLEVA

CATHERINE A. LUTZ and JANE L. COLLINS, *Reading National Geographic*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1993. xvii, 309 pp., References, Index, Figures, Table, Photographs. £15.95/\$22.95.

As for so many other people, *National Geographic* was part of my childhood. My father subscribed to it for my brother and me when I was about seven years old, and it was my first glimpse of a world beyond my sheltered north-country upbringing. I loved it, the rich yellow cover and smell of the glossy paper—and the pictures. I cannot remember any details of the first encounter beyond the horror of an advertisement for an American drug company in the form of a painting representing a shipboard amputation. When I first saw *Reading National Geographic* I wondered whether it was going to reveal the foundations of my own academic obsessions with images. Would it be a kind of analysis or therapy?

The volume sets out to untangle the massive success and influence of this American institution of serious popular science, in particular its use of photographs, for which it is so famous. Lutz and Collins look at the history and ethnography of the magazine and its strategies, how stories and photographs are chosen, and the ways in which images and texts work together to perpetuate a very particular, culturally constructed reading of racial and cultural difference that reflects the wider values of American society. In this the authors have tackled an immense subject of deep complexity, for the subject-matter is, in a nutshell, the consumption of much of the rest of the world, especially the distant and developing world, by a massive section of the American public, especially amongst the white middle classes.

The authors relate this ethnography of the institution, its marketing and its readership to theories of photographic realism, mass consumption, shifts in American foreign policy and social change within American society as expressed through attitudes to development, war, women, civil rights, tourism and the exotic. It is within this enormous sweep that the weakness of the volume lies. Lutz and Collins ask all the right questions, such as to what extent are popular notions of race, gender, the exotic or development and progress in the 'Third World', informed and sustained by *National Geographic*, to what extent does coverage in *National Geographic* reflect US foreign policy interests, and where does the main focus of coverage lie? They produce very interesting data to show, for instance, the preponderance of Asian subjects, or that as a ratio of articles to the population of an area, Latin America and the Pacific far outstrip other regions. Africa is the most under-represented, being perceived as a 'problem area', the site of violence and famine. Here two themes come together: the role market forces play in the selection of topics, and the relentlessly positive attitude of *National Geographic*—if something positive cannot be said, don't run the story—a policy which obviously causes tensions between the editors or caption-writers and the serious and committed documentary photographers who contribute to it. It meant, for instance, that Korean War coverage amounted to cheerful US troops doling out ice-cream to equally cheerful 'dark-eyed' children.

Yet for all this there is something deeply irritating about the way the argument is constructed. The theoretical position underlying the authors' critique rests in uncomfortable lumps of semi-digested photographic theory and sociology of consumption, interspersed with potted histories of racial attitudes, the civil rights

movement, the status of women or the Vietnam War. This is never integrated fully with the detailed reading of the images themselves and thus is never applied with its full analytical potential. No knowledge is ever assumed; rather than covering their backs, the authors have succeeded in fragmenting their argument. Their habit of quoting other authors with 'as X has said', rather than absorbing and moulding concepts for their own analytical use, only reinforces this. At times this becomes deeply irritating, for example, 'Who was Saddam Hussein and—to paraphrase Freud—what did he want?' (p. 281). They are not helped—and this may seem a strange criticism for an academic book—by their desperate attempts at objectivity and impartiality. One longs for just a little bit of polemic. I couldn't work out quite what was unsettling me until I got to their otherwise interesting illustrated discussion of why Ronald Haeberle's photographs of the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War did not appear in *National Geographic* (they were published in *Life* magazine). Of these images, which are surely etched into the collective consciousness of the Euro-American world, they write that they show 'the anguished faces of a small group of people from My Lai village just before they were murdered' (p. 100). Anguish? Mere anguish? This is total, raw, unalleviated terror. The authors' language appears to have absorbed the banality of *National Geographic*. Only in the epilogue, on the Gulf War, which broke out after the main text was finished, does one sense what the book could have been, but by then it is too late, and the epilogue sits uncomfortably and unfocused; we have become bogged down in a stultifying, gentle liberal humanism.

Having said all this, *Reading National Geographic* is an important book which should be read by anyone interested in the intersection of imagery, popular culture and global relations. It does include some rich material which I would gladly have seen extended at the expense of some other sections: the ethnography of the *National Geographic* institution itself is considered and revealing. The way the interview material is integrated and edited (leaving in all the hesitations, 'ums', 'ers' and 'sort ofs') in analysing the consumption of images (always methodologically tricky) is equally revealing, though their random sample is small (twenty images) and comes from a relatively limited time-span (1977–86). But as I have suggested, the volume also demonstrates the pitfalls of trying to write something which is in effect the outcome of complex cultural, economic and political relations between the US and the rest of the world as a contained ethnography.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS

JAMES D. FAUBION, *Modern Greek Lessons: A Primer in Historical Constructivism* (Princeton Studies in Culture / Power / History, eds. Sherry B. Ortner, Nicholas B. Dirks and Geoff Eley), Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1993. xxiv, 307 pp., Bibliography, Index, Photographs. \$35.00.

This is a study of modernity and the way it is conceived, experienced and debated in modern Greece. Faubion takes as his focus the Athenian middle class, particularly the

intellectuals whom he alternatively refers to, correctly, as a sociocultural élite. The presentation does not resemble conventional ethnography.

During the period of fieldwork the author resided mainly in the upper-middle-class neighbourhood of Kolonaki—the Kensington of Athens—but he did not attempt to conduct a study of social relations in this circumscribed locality. Instead he pursued middle-class ideas about gender, history, tradition, individualism and modernity as they cropped up in the daily press, at dinner parties, in interviews with selected informants and in any number of other contexts. Faubion could best be described as a latter-day flâneur wandering the streets of the capital, with a keen eye for detail—of architecture, personal dress, the activities of stray cats and the manner in which rubbish is disposed of—which he then uses to comment on Greek conceptions of modernity and ‘civilization’ (*politismos*), or the lack of them.

I had assumed the topic of ‘modernity’ to be fairly dead in anthropology. Weber wrote about it early in the century, and after the Second World War prominent sociologists such as Parsons and Bendix took it up again. It was an idea that seemed important for global development, and it featured in the applied social-science literature which various First-World governments commissioned and drew upon. Anthropologists were never that interested in it; in fact they criticized it as an ethnocentric concept which tended to impose a stereotypical gap between us and the people we wanted to understand. In any case it proved very difficult to define modernity rigidly; the people we assumed to be non-modern were not so for consistent reasons. Marxist sociology carried on a decades-long debate as to whether the trajectory of modernizing countries would repeat the course of events experienced by Britain, France or the USA. Following Weber, albeit with many qualifications, Faubion more or less agrees that modernity involves a rupture with a traditional world that was probably more homogeneous, consensual and solidary in its world-view and social forms. Modernity introduced social and ideological diversity, but these were not just facts of the historical coupure with tradition—doubt, dissent and difference formed some of the perennial, internalized, subjective qualities of what it might mean to be modern.

*Modern Greek Lessons* consistently attempts to reveal and analyse how the trope of doubt pervades the middle class’s questions about its relation to ancient Greece as opposed to Byzantium as opposed to the Ottoman Empire as opposed to Europe. He argues that these doubts are not neatly resolved but result rather in various hybridities, compromises where all of these possible historical identities are blended. This is evident in the cityscape where streets are named after ancient poets, Church Fathers, national heroes, and foreigners ranging from Lord Byron to Henry Miller. In the living-room of a ‘neo-Byzantine’ Athens house, Greek provincial furniture sits atop Turkish rugs. In Greece, it seems, history will not settle down into layers of pastness; on the contrary, any number of past periods can coexist in the present. Of course, this happens as a result of social agency and intentionality—the Greek language did not spontaneously introduce archaizing forms into itself in the nineteenth century.

Obviously this was done by grammarians with a cause. Faubion makes a contribution to the anthropological study of how history is used in Greece by applying the concept of metalepsis (substitution), borrowed from Harold Bloom’s studies of literary influence. Metalepsis can be either introjective or projective, an absorption of the present into the past or vice versa. In its turn, this ‘historical constructivism’ serves



as an idiom for talking about modernity; one defines oneself in relation to the question of modernity by the syncretic, metaleptic syntax one chooses to string together. Modernity thus becomes a proper topic of anthropological interest in so far as it forms a subject of popular discourse and social experience in places like Greece where its appropriation, attribution or denial can now be studied ethnographically.

This book has been criticized in the Greek press for its errors, and it is true that there are many minor mistakes in Faubion's presentation of names and places and in his analysis of Greek words. In his very interesting chapter on masculinity and homosexuality, for example, he gets the grammatical gender of the word for 'gender' wrong (*phylō* is neuter). But these are pedantic quibbles that do not affect his main points. Readers may find his dense writing style more annoying, but in a book devoted to the plurality of individual positions and the pervasiveness of social doubt and stylistic oppositions—all characteristics of modernity—a smooth, totalizing narrative was never on the cards.

CHARLES STEWART

FRANÇOISE ZONABEND, *The Nuclear Peninsula* (transl. J. A. Underwood), Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1993 [1989]. xii, 138 pp., Index, Illustrations. £19.95/\$39.95.

Despite a wealth of sociology of work and industry, there is a striking lack of anthropological studies of industrial work. We have long recognized that anthropology needs to come closer to home and that the urban should be considered as well as the rural; but most urban studies have focused on issues of class, race or gender, and even in the growing anthropology of Europe, few have considered industry or industrial work. When we consider how large a proportion of the world has been industrialized, this is little short of astounding, but anthropology could be said to have risen out of a general nostalgia for non-industrialized society; indeed, the primitive was defined directly in opposition to industrial civilization, whether within or outside Europe. Although European anthropologists have left such issues to sociologists and psychologists, the anthropological approach has much to offer in complementing those of other disciplines, and the field of industrial or professional work presents a fascinating arena for anthropologists to discover.

La Hague, the nuclear peninsula of Zonabend's title, is on the northern coast of France and gains its unfortunate nickname from the development there, since the Second World War, of a nuclear reprocessing plant, a nuclear munitions arsenal and a nuclear power-station. This has transformed the working lives and social environment of the former farming and fishing community, and they have had to come to terms with living in the midst of potentially dangerous industrial plant. Their reactions to this radical transformation of the environment form the subject of Zonabend's study. However, given this wide-open subject, and also the impressive track record of Françoise Zonabend, whose previous studies of a French village have become classics

of European anthropology, it is difficult to imagine how the present volume could have been more disappointing.

Zonabend begins with a preface explaining how she began her study in the leafy lanes of Normandy, where she was initially thinking of studying kinship. However, 'time passed, and it was not until several months later that I thought again about the industrial buildings springing up in increasing numbers on the plateau right behind my house. That was when I became conscious of the fact that in this place two opposing worlds existed side by side. Coming and going between Paris and this spot at the back of beyond, I found that a fresh surprise greeted me on each return' (p. ix). Zonabend thus sets up a dichotomy between one world locked in a remote past, in dwellings where 'a wood fire burns all year round in the tall fireplace in the communal room, tended by an old woman kneeling on the stone hearth in ancestral pose, [where] time does indeed stand still', and another, 'wide open to the technology of the future', where 'that tranquillity is shattered' (p. x).

It is easy to trace this view of industry and modernity back to Georges Henri Rivière's dichotomy between rurality and modernity, and equally easy to see as a modern metropolitan view of tradition and rurality, but it is difficult to stomach this as a basis for a study of attitudes to risk and work. Although the author herself casts some doubt on this position, describing herself as an 'ostensibly impartial, neutral observer' (p. 1), one suspects early on that the book provides an arena for the author to espouse her own prejudices rather than attempt to explain those of the people of La Hague. Indeed, one's suspicions are immediately furthered when the author claims to be 'trying to capture thoughts, feelings, and private, secret areas of behaviour that people likewise find difficult to express in speech' (ibid.). Although I sympathize profoundly with a researcher trying to do fieldwork among people who tend not to express themselves much in speech, how can we believe that the author has discovered private thoughts and feelings? Indeed, throughout the book, Zonabend refers to 'repressed fears' and 'latent anxieties', applying a very elementary psychoanalysis in an unconvincing manner. For example, she describes long conversations with people who described in detail how safety precautions at the reprocessing plant meant that there was little danger for them. However, when doubts were expressed over the extent of knowledge about the side-effects of radiation, Zonabend takes these to express a 'repressed anxiety' which negates the preceding reassurances. But why should we believe her rather than accept that people are generally quite satisfied about the risks, despite their occasional residual doubts? It is apparent that Zonabend herself is deeply troubled about nuclear energy and that it is she who harbours the most serious fears about the nuclear plant. As a result, the most penetrating questions about people's perceptions and tolerances of risk (particularly in reference to the possible effects of radiation on child development) are bypassed rather than exploited, as Zonabend hardly looks beyond her own preoccupations.

It is also clear that Zonabend's understanding of the technological processes involved is superficial, leading her to ignore any quasi-scientific discourse as smoke-screening. In the introduction, she brings up the central question of the discourses which people use to talk about the plant: 'if you ask technicians directly about the jobs they do in the plant and about the risks to which they are exposed when entering radioactive areas or handling ionising products, they reply readily enough, it is true, but

they do so in a wholly remote, impersonal way, using technical terminology in an ostensibly "scientific" type of utterance very like that found in current publications dealing with this type of work' (p. 3). This suggests to me that the technicians respond in the language in which they understand the question, that they are well informed, and that this tells us something about how they think about the work. However, to Zonabend it suggests that 'all questions bearing directly on incidents that might have happened to the interviewee were parried or obscured in this way by a scientific discourse', so that 'what is involved here is a way of the speaker not saying or not hearing himself say something he wished to conceal' (p. 4). Indeed, this wholesale dismissal of scientific discourse and later of technical language strikes one as indicating Zonabend's own difficulty with such language and her failure to recognize ways of thinking other than her own as valid or meaningful.

There are many ways in which this study could have been made much more convincing. Had Zonabend recognized that many of her observations about workers' attitudes to the plant are common to many types of industry and other work, then a comparison between the behaviour of workers in the nuclear industry with, say, those in the steel or coal industries, or better still, the non-nuclear electrical generation industry, might have enabled her to identify specific attitudes and reactions to the nuclear. As it is, comments about 'an industry in which worker safety could never be totally guaranteed' (p. 4) are naive and unspecific. Equally, workers who never tell their families anything about what they do are hardly unusual. This seems to me to be a very widespread trait among engineers in particular. Although we are told that 'the Hagars have gained a reputation as smugglers and wreckers and are for that reason regarded as folk well-suited to face perils whether old or new' (p. 14), no comparison is drawn between the people's approaches to the risks of the sea and those of the nuclear plants. Her treatment of the wider political or technological context is also minimal. Where most of her criticisms of the nuclear installation refer to management techniques or the behaviour of national politicians, Zonabend draws back from extending these arguments into a cohesive criticism. Nor at any point does she reveal any understanding of how and why France's nuclear policy was developed. Instead, in her section on the politics of nuclear power, she deals only with the local politics of industrial plant taxes and local anti-nuclear demonstrations.

There are interesting points punctuating the book, for example, the way in which work in the plant is organized and workers' ways of destabilizing the mechanical orderliness of the processes in a bid to avoid boredom. It is unfortunate that these few gems are hidden within Zonabend's own dominating view of the nuclear industry. In her conclusions, she states that she has not set out to take up 'a position either for or against the exploitation of this form of energy' (p. 121), but the final words of the book, describing nuclear waste as '[a] kind of rubbish that can never be got rid of, a poison that will linger for all time, an everlasting blemish, permanent, indomitable pandemonium' (p. 128), leave the reader in no doubt whatsoever that she has done precisely that.

SIMONE ABRAM

TERESA DEL VALLE (ed.), *Gendered Anthropology* (EASA Series), London and New York: Routledge 1993. xii, 227 pp., References, Indexes, Figures, Photographs. £35.00/£11.99.

PATRICIA LYONS JOHNSON (ed.), *Balancing Acts: Women and the Process of Social Change* (Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective; series editor Sue Ellen Jacobs), Boulder, etc.: Westview Press 1992. x, 177 pp., References. £19.50.

BARBARA DIANE MILLER (ed.), *Sex and Gender Hierarchies* (Publications of the Society for Psychological Anthropology 4; eds. Robert A. Paul and Richard A. Shweder), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993. xix, 401 pp., Index, References, Figures, Tables. £40.00/£14.95/\$64.95/\$19.95.

In her Introduction to *Gendered Anthropology*, Teresa Del Valle argues that 'the acceptance of gender as a new analytical category implies the acceptance of a knowledge that has already been considered marginal and on the periphery' (1993: 16). The essays presented in this collection attempt to reintegrate this marginalized knowledge into mainstream anthropological discourse and challenge traditional perceptions within the discipline. Adopting a mainly theoretical approach to central themes within anthropology, such as kinship, personhood, symbolism and dualistic notions of gender, the authors articulate the centrality of gender to any understanding of power, hierarchy and social structure. Although focusing on gender as the primary constituent of difference, the essays also stress the need for a political and historical context to cultural analysis as well as a recognition of the inter-relationship of 'gender' with other social structures, such as 'race' and 'class'. Thus the book moves forward from an earlier emphasis on gender relationships as almost discrete spheres of interaction towards a more dynamic, complex and integrated understanding of power relationships within which gender differences are constructed and achieve meaning.

Verena Stolcke's essay, for example, argues that sex/gender dualisms are the product of a socially constructed discourse which serves to essentialize and naturalize inequality as biological 'facts'. As with discussions of 'race', 'sex' is constructed as a neutral category, while 'gender', like 'ethnicity', has come to represent socially defined relationships. However, as race/ethnicity distinctions become blurred at the boundaries of nature versus culture, so too do sex/gender constructions. Stolcke asserts, therefore, that all discussions of gender/sex relationships are endowed with social meaning and cannot be divorced from social, historical and political circumstance. Similarly, Signe Howell and Marit Melhuus's essay on kinship and personhood stresses the socially constructed and value-laden meaning of sex/gender attributions, which subordinates the role of women as 'mothers, sisters, daughters and wives' (1993: 43) in the former and renders them invisible in the latter. Studies of personhood in particular, the authors claim, reveal the constructedness of gender, which brings into question the notion of sexual 'difference' as a presocial fact.

Several more ethnographically based essays attempt to explore gender constructions in both 'traditional' societies and 'at home'. Serge Tcherkezoff's dense and complex account of Samoan dualisms, for example, argues that gender and sex distinctions are transformed and reversed at different levels of analysis, while Marianne Gullestad's

account of Norwegian homes illustrates the gendered and class identities of their occupants, allowing for expressions of both sameness and difference within the domestic arena.

*Gendered Anthropology* represents a coherent and consistent attempt to provide a theoretical framework from which to advance and consolidate the study of gender. Most provocative and significant is the concluding essay by Henrietta Moore, which argues for the analysis of gender as merely one form of 'difference' within a Foucauldian framework of power discourse. She argues that 'We have to begin to recognize how persons are constituted in and through difference' (ibid.: 204). This involves a move away from the analysis of 'gender' as a universal distinction to consider the shifting, political and contextual nature of gender formation.

In some ways, *Balancing Acts: Women and the Process of Social Change* can be seen as an attempt to explore some of the theoretical questions and issues raised in Del Valle's book. Focusing on one aspect of gender formation—the role of history and social change—Patricia Lyons Johnson's collection addresses the dynamic nature of gender roles for women throughout the world. Recognizing the increasingly global nature of identity formation, Johnson and her co-authors present a series of complex portraits of women, which acknowledges the inter-relatedness of their social position with wider processes. Its emphasis is thus on continuity and change, on negotiation between the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. Gender is only one element within the changing circumstances which define the lives of women, the exact configuration being constituted by a myriad of individual choices and constraints.

The most striking aspect of the collection is the immediate and personalised nature of the ethnography. Each essay focuses on the ways in which globalized historical processes are actualized on a local level and affect the lives of individual women. This approach allows for a detailed analysis of the complexity of experience and action which such processes involve and precipitate. The scope of the book ranges from !Kung life-history narratives to an exploration of change in Papua New Guinea, India, Ecuador, New Zealand and Spain.

Of particular significance for the anthropological study of gender—and again engaging with issues raised in Del Valle's collection—is the questioning of any homogeneous notion of 'community', and within that, of a uniform understanding of the position of women. Gender is placed within a wider, interactive perspective, which problematizes the isolationist approach to imagined traditional societies. Karen Sinclair's chapter on Maori women and Ann Miles's study of the urban *chola* of Ecuador, for example, take women out of a 'traditional' setting and explore the divisions of experience and self-definition that result. Similarly, Susan Wadley's portrait of the 'village Indira' and Carol McAllister's of the people of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, discuss the multiple social, economic, political and religious arenas which structure the lives of women but also allow negotiation between them. Johnson's essay on the Gainj of Papua New Guinea is particularly impressive for the complexity of its analysis.

The inherent tensions involved in studying societies which are constantly in flux are present throughout the book, leading at times to the concretizing and isolation of complex interactive forces. Some of the essays therefore tend to focus on the processes of change as ends in themselves, rather than on the effects of change on the position

of women. In some instances, therefore, the issue of gender disappears from the analysis or becomes marginalized, while other forces affecting the role of women remain unconsidered. Moreover, several of the essays seem to envision social change as a movement away from a static, almost 'pure' traditional culture towards a state of hybridity, opposing the 'traditional' and the 'modern' without recognizing the historical constructedness of both.

Although somewhat more theoretically traditional in its approach to the anthropology of gender—the work still focuses primarily on women rather than gender—*Balancing Acts* does represent an important move towards recognizing the ways in which women are positioned by historical change and wider global forces. The richness and intensity of the ethnography included in the collection, particularly that by Johnson, Sinclair and McAllister, thus provides a convincing foundation from which to explore the theoretical advances of *Gendered Anthropology*.

By contrast, *Sex and Gender Hierarchies* seems a loose and rather eclectic collection of essays, bringing together contributors from archaeology, physical anthropology, social/cultural anthropology and linguistics. The essays range from discussions of gender hierarchies amongst non-human primates to discourses of reproductive technology in the United States, from the analysis of gender among Japanese and Sambia to the skeletons of prehistory and the Queens of Silla. Approaches from within these academic sub-disciplines seemed to vary significantly, with a marked emphasis from some writers on evolution and 'natural' sex/gender roles and a more complex analysis of socially constructed gender from others. The basic theoretical assumptions of the two other books on gender considered here seem to be left largely unresolved and contentious in this volume.

Thus a number of the essays accept the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' as unproblematic, the former rooted in essential biological characteristics, the latter in cultural constructions. The naturalization of 'sex' as a basis for gender distinctions is a common thread, although some authors simultaneously assert the indeterminacy of the relationship between nature and culture. Barbara Diane Miller writes, 'a penis is a penis whether it is possessed by a orangutan, a Yanomamo or a New Yorker, and the same goes for XX and XY chromosomes' (p. 5). However, she also asserts—but fails to account for—a culturally relative understanding of gender. Discussions of 'sex' are, moreover, closely linked with evolutionary theory, with Joan Silk relating gender hierarchies in hunter-gatherer societies with those found in non-human primates, and Adrienne Zihlman using chimpanzees to explore human gender construction. Both Marvin Harris and Brigitte Hauser-Schäublin assert the biological roots of gender, with Harris arguing that male dominance and chauvinism is based in the male's superior physical size and strength in hunting and warfare. Hauser-Schäublin focuses her argument on blood as a natural and unalterable symbol of gender distinction, but her essay then proceeds to elaborate so many different cultural approaches to it that the original assertion becomes dissolved in cultural relativism.

Counterposed to the biological approaches to gender are a number of chapters on the social construction of gender which are more consistent with the works by Del Valle and Johnson. Rayna Rapp's work on amniocentesis in the United States explores the power discourses of birth and ethnicity, which renders the 'natural' arena of reproduction a politically contested domain. Similarly, Elinor Och's work on gendered

language, and the discussion by Maxine Margolis and Marigene Arnold of male striptease, use contemporary settings 'at home' to analyse the complexities and ambiguities of gender discourses. Other chapters on India and Burma also discuss the historical and political location of gender relations, which allow for social change and multiple spheres of action and ideology affecting gender roles.

*Sex and Gender Hierarchies* is the least consistent and perhaps the least satisfying of the three books reviewed here. Lacking any overall conceptual framework, the work as a whole seems uneven, unwieldy and directionless. It can, however, be seen as encapsulating a more diverse, wide-ranging approach to gender issues which possibly reflects more mainstream attitudes towards the area. By contrast, *Gendered Anthropology* and *Balancing Acts* are tightly focused, clearly argued and politically motivated. In recognizing the political nature of gender issues, the works reflect an engagement with inequality, difference and change which is obscured by traditional approaches to gender both within and without anthropology. In particular, Del Valle's collection is a stimulating and forward-looking work which should provoke a renewed interest in, and serious reconsideration of, the place of gender in anthropology.

CLAIRE ALEXANDER

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## **IRAQI ASSYRIANS IN LONDON: BEYOND THE 'IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE' DIVIDE**

**MADAWI AL-RASHEED**

### *Introduction*

THE Assyrians are a minority group in Iraq by virtue of their Christian faith and language. While some have lived in Iraq since ancient times, the majority arrived as refugees from south-east Turkey during the First World War. They were welcomed by the British mandatory authorities who recruited them into local levies established to protect the British presence in Iraq. The Assyrian military association with Britain distanced the Assyrians from the local Arab population. When Britain ended its military presence in Iraq in the 1950s, the levies were disbanded and many Assyrians migrated to Britain in search of new economic opportunities. The settlement of this pioneer Assyrian community in London was the product of both the group's contact with Britain and its uneasy and sometimes arduous existence in Iraq since the country's independence. In the 1980s and the early 1990s the community expanded due to the arrival of refugees fleeing the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War.

With the arrival of Assyrian refugees in the 1980s the pioneer immigrants began to define themselves as a community of refugees rather than as immigrants whose emigration in the 1950s and 1960s was motivated by a desire to improve their economic situation. Their collective memory focuses on the early refugee experience of their parents who abandoned their villages in Turkey and moved to Iraq during the First World War. This past experience, and the memory attached to it, are fused with the recent experience of Assyrian refugees from Iraq seeking

asylum in Britain. Their memory solidifies the identity of the community, which is now projected as a refugee identity. Drawing on field research among the Assyrian community in Ealing and upon case-studies of immigrants, this article explores this shift of definition in the community in London.<sup>1</sup>

Many sociological studies have stressed the distinction between 'immigrants' and 'refugees' (e.g. Anwar 1979, Robinson 1986). The former are described as people who voluntarily leave their country of origin in pursuit of economic opportunities, the latter as people whose migration is forced and, in most cases, caused by political events such as warfare, violence or civil disorder. Such classifications, although often challenged as inadequate by sociologists, have been used by governments and policymakers to include or exclude both potential immigrants and genuine refugees.<sup>2</sup> This study avoids such classifications altogether, since they are more likely to lead to stereotypes with serious consequences for the people under investigation. Moreover, as this article will show, there are immigrants, such as the Assyrians in London, who cannot be placed easily into any one category. Instead of entering a futile debate about whether Assyrians are economic immigrants or genuine refugees, my intention is to show that such definitions are themselves subject to change and manipulation by investigating how the community is defined by its own members.

### *Who are the Assyrians?*

Before the First World War, Assyrians inhabited the Hakkiari mountains between Lake Van, in present-day Turkey, and Lake Urmia, in Persia, commonly known as Kurdistan. Some of their villages were also located within the northern

1. Initial contact with Assyrians in London was made in 1990–1 through their community associations, clubs and church. Research was delayed in January 1991 because of the Gulf War and resumed in 1992 (March–September).

2. Governments usually rely on the definition of refugee contained in the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. These refer to any person, who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unwilling to return to it' (UN 1951, Article 1 [2]). While this definition is restrictive, governments continue to reserve the right to interpret it as they wish depending on their willingness to grant or refuse refugee status. In recent years, many potential refugees have been refused asylum on the basis that they are genuine economic migrants who present themselves to immigration officers under the guise of being refugees. The distinction between 'immigrants' and 'refugees' has proved to be useful in enforcing state control and excluding the movement of people between countries.

boundaries of modern Iraq—a territory they shared with the Kurds and other minorities and which was once part of the Ottoman Empire.

Isolated in their villages in the rugged mountains of Kurdistan, this Christian community followed the Assyrian Ancient Church of the East, previously known as the Nestorian Church.<sup>3</sup> Their church liturgy was in Syriac-Aramaic, which is maintained to the present day. The community, however, spoke a dialect which they claimed was related to this ancient language. Both language and religion separated the Assyrians from the dominant local Muslim populations, i.e. the Kurds, Turks, Arabs, and Persians.

The Assyrians of the Hakkari mountains and northern Iraq were recognized by the Ottoman Empire as a distinct religious *millet*. Under the *millet* system, they enjoyed internal autonomy, having control over their property, education, and social affairs.<sup>4</sup> The head of the community, the Assyrian patriarch, was chosen by themselves and approved by the Ottoman sultan. The patriarch represented his group and dealt with religious and secular matters. In addition to being the head of the Assyrian Ancient Church of the East, the patriarch also dealt with Assyrian relations with the Ottoman Empire and their neighbours, mainly the Kurds.

The First World War led to the displacement of Assyrians in south-east Turkey. As a Christian minority among a predominantly Muslim population, they always looked towards Western powers and missionaries to free them from their second-class status in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>5</sup> They declared war against the Ottomans when Russia promised the Assyrians their support. Assembling the villagers in the Hakkari mountains, the patriarch marched them towards northern Persia (Urmia) where Russian help was expected. The Russian revolution in 1917, however, led to the withdrawal of Russia from the war, and the displaced Assyrians found themselves without support. Prevented from returning to their

3. The Nestorian Church originated from the Nestorian controversy which revolved around the nature of Christ. According to the doctrine of Nestorius, the fourth-century bishop of Constantinople, Christ had a dual nature, one human and one divine. Nestorius was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431, those who refused to acknowledge his condemnation being referred to as Nestorians. For more details on the Nestorian Church, which became known as the Assyrian Ancient Church of the East, see Atiya 1968, Betts 1975, and Arberry 1969.

4. The *millet* system was a bureaucratic arrangement that applied to the non-Muslim communities of the Ottoman Empire such as the Jews and Christians. While these communities were required to recognize the authority of the Ottoman sultan, they were given internal autonomy with respect to their family, inheritance law, education and social affairs in general. For more details on how the system worked among the different religious groups, see Valensi 1986.

5. Throughout the nineteenth century Assyrians maintained contact with Western missionaries in the hope that they would grant them protection. Their relations with the Church of England were particularly useful as they paved the way for future contacts with Britain. On Assyrian relations with the Church of England, see Coakley 1992.

villages by the Ottomans they started looking for an alternative sponsor to enable them to continue the fight against the Ottomans.

British troops had already freed the territory of Iraq from Ottoman domination by this time and were marching northwards towards Turkey. Their officers made contact with the Assyrians, now in Persia, with the intention of recruiting them to help in the war. The Assyrians responded favourably as the British promised to return them to their homeland after the war. Famine conditions in Persia also compelled many to search for a secure location, and almost fifty thousand Assyrians marched toward British headquarters in northern Iraq. Many failed to reach their destination, perishing on the road. Those who made it, however, were placed in refugee camps (*baquba*) set up by the British authorities to accommodate them. After the war, they looked to the British authorities to fulfil their promise and return them to their villages in the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire. Assyrian leaders travelled to the peace conference in Paris to put their demands for 'an Assyrian state under the protection of some mandatory power in order that the Assyrian people might be freed from the repetition of the former barbarities to which they have been subjected for centuries' (Joseph 1961: 154).

Britain felt responsible for their fate and was ready to support their resettlement in their homeland. A plan to assemble and march them to their villages in Kurdistan was put forward, and by 1920 6,000 armed Assyrian men were ready to move north (Omissi 1989: 312). The plan failed, however, due to lack of co-ordination and Kurdish opposition to their return. They soon found themselves back in the refugee camps in Iraq, and the British authorities, now the mandatory power in Iraq, found themselves with the problem of the Assyrians unresolved. An easy option was to recruit them into the Iraqi levies while waiting to be repatriated. Assyrians began to be listed as a gendarmerie force to protect their own refugees and also to defend the Mosul frontier in the north. By 1928, the levies were entirely Assyrian (Stafford 1935). Recruitment was made easier by the famine conditions which prevailed in the refugee camps, a form of economic enlistment impossible to resist (Omissi 1989: 312). Although the repatriation of Assyrians was discussed at many international conferences following the war, these attempts were not successful.<sup>6</sup> The refugees remained in Iraq as Turkey refused to allow them to return to their villages. They were moved to Habaniyya, a British Royal Air Force base, where the British began to use the Assyrian levies to suppress Arab and Kurdish revolts.<sup>7</sup>

6. At the Lausanne Conference, Lord Curzon put forward their claims hoping the Turkish authorities would guarantee the Assyrian language, schools, customs and religion. These requests were also repeated at the League of Nations. The Turks, however, remained suspicious of any plan to repatriate the Assyrians to their homeland or to assemble them in villages near their southern borders. See Omissi 1989 and Dadesho 1987.

7. In 1941 the British used the Assyrian levies to crush the Arab revolt of Rashid Ali-Al-Gailani, the Iraqi prime minister.



Instead of encouraging Assyrians to take up full settlement and integrate in Iraq, the British created a distance between them and the local population. As a minority allied to the British, the Assyrians were regarded by Arab nationalists as an obstacle and a threat to independence as they were repeatedly used to suppress Arab uprisings against the British. In 1933, a group of armed Assyrians went to Syria to seek support from the French mandatory authorities. The French, after consultation with the British, ordered them to return to Iraq. On their way back, however, they were met by the Iraqi army which opened fire on them and killed nearly three hundred Assyrians near Simle (Omissi 1989: 316). Following the massacre, the Assyrian patriarch was expelled to Cyprus with the approval of the British authorities (*ibid.*: 316–17).

Assyrians continued to serve in the levies under British control until the mid-1950s, when they were disbanded after Britain turned over its military base to the Iraqi army. Assyrians living at the base moved to a new settlement south of Baghdad, where they were employed in the new oil refinery installations. Others moved elsewhere in Iraq in search of employment. Today, the Christian community in Iraq is estimated by the British Refugee Council (1989) to be about 700,000. A lower estimate gives a figure of 500,000, 82,000 of whom are believed to be Assyrians (Norris and Tylor 1992). Other Assyrian communities are to be found in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. Over the past forty years, Assyrians have established small colonies outside their homeland. The exodus to the West started in the 1950s, and they are now found in North America, Australia and Europe. The London Assyrian community consists of those who came from Iraq after the withdrawal of British troops in 1955. Its size is estimated at between 3,000 and 4,000 individuals.<sup>8</sup>

### *Migration to London*

Although many Assyrians found jobs in the expanding Iraqi economy and accepted Iraqi citizenship, some saw no future for themselves in Iraq after the country gained its independence because their military association with Britain alienated them from the local population. Consequently, many regarded emigration as the only option as all plans to return them to their native villages had failed.

Assyrian migration to London occurred in three phases. The first phase of settlement in the 1950s and 1960s was an exploratory phase. Initially, young Assyrian men began to arrive on their own. In this respect, their early migration

8. There are no accurate statistics regarding the size of the Assyrian community in London or elsewhere in Britain. This figure is an estimate from the Assyrian Cultural and Advice Centre (personal communication).

resembled that of many other migrants to Britain.<sup>9</sup> Some reported that they had been to England for a short visit before they decided to migrate. They had 'passports', i.e. a 'British Subject' document issued by the British authorities in Iraq in recognition of their services or marriage to British citizens. They found employment in the local post offices, police force, and civil service. Many were employed by the Home Office as clerks, interpreters, and office workers. Assyrians of this generation spoke English as a result of their work in the levies, and they regarded their migration to Britain as a continuation of their association with this country.

As soon as they found secure jobs, they sent for their wives and children and later distant relatives. This represented the second phase in Assyrian migration. During this second phase not more than twenty-five households were established in the London Borough of Ealing.<sup>10</sup> Almost all came from Habaniyya, where refugees had been settled by the British during the mandate period. Family reunions crystallized in the 1970s when immigration controls were imposed. The only way of settling in Britain was through application to the Home Office for family reunification.<sup>11</sup> Some Assyrians were successful in bringing as many as a dozen relatives to join them in London. This phase of migration led to the establishment of a viable community concentrated in Ealing. Chain migration, whereby immigrants were able to send for their relatives, meant that almost every Assyrian in London was able to bring a relative to the city. Each in turn sent for their families.

Assyrian migration entered its third phase in the 1980s. The beginning of the Iran-Iraq War in the early 1980s and the Gulf War in 1991 led many Assyrians to seek refuge in Britain. Immediately upon arrival they applied for asylum on the grounds that they had been persecuted and deprived of their rights as a minority group in Iraq. Consequently, the Assyrian community in London grew. But the status of these newcomers differed from that of the initial pioneer immigrants and their immediate followers. The majority of these late-comers arrived as refugees. According to one Assyrian source, almost three hundred Assyrians applied for refugee status in 1991, most of whom had settled families already living in London. They relied on family networks for information regarding immigration

9. The first Asian immigrants were single men who came looking for new economic opportunities, as were other immigrants from the Middle East such as the Yemeni Arabs. On the latter, see Halliday 1992.

10. The Assyrian residential concentration in Ealing dates back to the 1940s and 1950s, when the expelled patriarch lived in St Steven Avenue. The area around his house is regarded as a special location which continues to attract new immigrants.

11. This refers to the 1962 Immigrants Act, which introduced the voucher system whereby already settled immigrants could apply to the Home Office to bring their relatives and families to Britain. For more details on how this system worked for Asian immigrants, see Anwar 1979.

procedures, housing benefits and employment, and they found accommodation with relatives upon arrival.

Because of the three phases of migration, the Assyrian community in London consists of a mixture of immigrants and refugees. This is not unique, as many immigrant groups in London expanded as a result of the arrival of refugees.<sup>12</sup> In the case of Assyrians, the established immigrants responded by welcoming the refugees, providing shelter and various other forms of support. This was a function of kinship loyalties and a feeling of responsibility towards not only relatives but also members of an ethnic group. The immigrants felt responsible towards the refugees, who were treated as co-ethnics, sharing a common origin, culture, religion and language. Above all, the new refugees were perceived as representing continuity with the Assyrian past. Their recent upheaval and flight activated among the early immigrants their memories of having been refugees themselves, which their parents experienced as they abandoned their villages in south-east Turkey and moved to Iraq during the First World War.

### *Collective Memory and Being Refugees*

In recent years, Assyrian discourse has centred on a reconstruction of the past in the context of their migration and settlement in London. Their collective memory functions as evidence for membership of a distinct ethnic group and creates communal bonds between Assyrian immigrants who see themselves as participants, not only in past historical events, but also in a common destiny. Memory is profoundly influenced by discourses and experiences in the present. This makes it a very complicated construction and an active process (Collard 1989: 103) and also implies that a changing present entails a process whereby people are constantly engaged in selecting, forgetting, or creating new collective memories to suit their present circumstances. In other words, collective memory is not static but responds to changing realities and interests. Assyrians respond to their changing circumstances by reconstructing the events which led to their migration. The early immigrants responded to the arrival of Assyrian refugees from Iraq by recollecting their own memory of being refugees—their displacement from their native villages in Turkey and their settlement in refugee camps set up by the British mandatory authority in Iraq during and after the First World War.

Having been a refugee is an experience deeply rooted in Assyrian memory. None of the first-generation Assyrian immigrants, now in their sixties and seventies, lived in the camps but they must have been born when the camp population was taken to settle in the British Royal Air Force base. The oldest

12. The Asian community, for example, expanded as a result of the arrival of Asian refugees from East Africa. See Robinson 1986.

Assyrian interviewed was born in 1922 in Urmia (Iran), where she lived with her family until she migrated to Britain in 1947. Nevertheless, Assyrians have a collective memory relating to the experience of having been refugees, which they must have inherited from their parents. This experience is mentioned not only by the older generation but also by the younger generation of Assyrian immigrants. Mr J, who came to London in the 1960s, describes how his mother and her family suffered when she joined the march to Iraq in 1917:

The Turks destroyed our villages in the mountains. They had no belongings. Everything was gone. They could not take with them whatever remained of their belongings. They left on foot. Some people had donkeys and other animals. Some relatives died during the journey. They did not have any food. Some people left their sick children because they could not carry them. It was like paradise when they arrived at Baquba. They were given food and shelter in tents. Later the men found jobs in the levies so that they could feed their children.

Another Assyrian of the same age-group remembers the refugee experience of his family:

My family came from the Hakkari mountains. They walked to Iraq during the war. When they arrived there, they were taken to Baquba camp. The children were ill and malnourished. Many families saw their children and relatives die because of the cholera epidemic. My father was recruited into the British levies. He accepted because he could not tolerate staying at the camp. He needed to feed his family.

The suffering and upheaval which this memory establishes seems to be shared by everybody. It has become a common collective cause selected from Assyrian history and 'reinvented'. The memory of suffering in refugee camps has two dimensions. First, it is an internal mechanism directed towards solidifying community boundaries by creating communal experiences of hardship and shared suffering. It invokes the image of a threatened minority whose survival is dependent on the solidarity of community members. This memory carries a message to the Assyrian immigrant community. Displacement and dispersal are recurrent in Assyrian history; therefore, without community solidarity the group risks losing its common identity and distinctiveness as an ethnic and minority group. This selection and reinvention of history is thus an exercise in the construction of identity.

This memory can also be interpreted with reference to the arrival of refugees in recent years. The memory of a previous refugee experience at the turn of the century is combined with the stories of recent flight and uprooting. This shared memory fuses past and present experiences and establishes continuity at the level of identity. Early immigrants and recent refugees become part of a collectivity with a common memory of suffering. While the former inherited the memory of the experience of being refugees from the previous generation, the latter are

themselves refugees. In many respects, this memory reduces the distance which separates the early immigrants from their refugee co-ethnics. If both groups share a common experience marked by upheaval, then the social and economic boundaries between immigrants and refugees might become less rigid. The earlier immigrants are better established, most of them owning their own houses and having stable jobs, whereas the refugees arrived with few belongings and a need for a long period of time to become able to support themselves. The shared memory of being refugees bridged the gap between the two groups.

Secondly, the memory of having been a refugee is a response to immediate concerns stemming from one's presence in Britain. Assyrians in London try to create for themselves an ethnic niche in a country where various indigenous and immigrant communities search for economic, social and legal recognition. While Assyrian memory solidifies internal community boundaries, it simultaneously projects an image of persecution and a history of suffering on to the host society, thus pleading for understanding, sympathy and tolerance from it.

Assyrian shared memory is a response to new circumstances brought about by the recent instability and war in Iraq. Although the immigrant community here is not directly affected by this instability, it reacts to these changes by reinventing past experiences which are framed in such a way as to establish continuity with the past. The following three cases are discussed in detail to show how Assyrian immigrants are today redefining their status in London as a community of refugees. They have been chosen because they exemplify what immigrants in general are expressing in their discourse and projections about themselves.<sup>13</sup>

#### Case 1: Mrs V

Mrs V was born in Habaniyya (Iraq) in 1943. Her parents came to Iraq from the Hakkari mountains in Turkey in 1914 and were among the Assyrian refugees who left their villages after the First World War had started. Her parents stayed at the refugee camp until her father found work with the British mandatory authorities, working in the levies until they were disbanded. In 1955 her family moved to Baghdad, where her father became an established businessman. She describes herself as a middle-class woman. She went to Baghdad University, where she obtained a BA in English Literature and in 1976 won a scholarship from the Iraqi government to do postgraduate studies in London. She arrived here with her husband, both on student visas.

After she had finished her studies, she and her husband decided to remain in London. They both found jobs as interpreters and were able to pay back their scholarship money, which was requested by the government from those who failed

13. The three individuals discussed are identified by letters which bear no relation to their real names. Some details have also been changed to protect their identity.

to return to Iraq to work there. Mrs V is now settled in Ealing and holds a British passport. She has been able to bring her mother and aunt to live with her.

Today Mrs V's household consists of herself, her husband, her mother and her two young cousins, whom she regards as her own children. Her cousins are in their early thirties and came to London in 1982–3—at the height of the Iran–Iraq War—to continue their higher education as Mrs V had done. When they had finished, Mrs V encouraged the two young men to apply for asylum so that they could remain in London. Her argument on their behalf centres on the fact that had her cousins returned to Iraq, they would have been recruited to the Iraqi army to fight in the war. Assyrians, she argues, need not be involved in a war fought by Muslims; their rights as a minority group in Iraq are not respected; and they have always been a persecuted minority deprived of full citizen rights. There are no prospects for her cousins in the country, and she adds that they will never be able to get good jobs and that their future promotion will always be blocked by various forms of discrimination. Her two cousins applied to the Home Office for refugee status but were refused because their cases were not considered genuine, as they had not personally been subjected to any form of torture or persecution (criteria used by the Home Office to establish refugee status). Instead, her cousins were granted exceptional leave to remain in the UK on a yearly basis until the situation in Iraq changes.

The arrival of Mrs V's cousins, their unsuccessful application for asylum and their precarious and insecure immigration status activates a process whereby Mrs V redefines herself and other Assyrians in Britain as a community of refugees. The initial circumstances of her migration, however, by no means put her in the category of a forced migrant or persecuted refugee. She came here as a student on an Iraqi scholarship and continued to live in this country as an immigrant who was later naturalized. That she is now a British citizen does not deter her from claiming that Assyrians like herself are refugees. The question is why Mrs V and many other Assyrians are redefining their status. During the interview session, she made elaborate references to how Assyrians are badly treated in Iraq—a situation that does not attract media attention. Unlike the Kurds, whose plight is publicized in the news, Mrs V claims that Assyrians, especially those living in northern Iraq, are the target of similar persecution. Their language is not respected and their cultural distinctiveness is not acknowledged by the authorities in the country. Mrs V concludes that Assyrians migrate because they want to escape their second-class status in a country where minorities are not respected. She asserts her own refugee identity and refuses to regard herself as an immigrant in Britain. According to her, she is not an immigrant like Pakistanis, Bangladeshis or Afro-Caribbeans and prefers to create a distance between herself and many immigrants in this country. Her main argument centres on the fact that Assyrians are a minority in Iraq. When they migrate, they want to escape the disadvantages that this entails. She sums up her argument as follows: 'We are not immigrants here, our ancestors were refugees, and here we are refugees.' This is a clear assertion of the refugee identity that many Assyrians project today in Britain.

Case 2: Mr E

Mr E is in his late forties. Prior to his emigration, he worked as an administrator in Baghdad. The circumstances of his migration differ slightly from those of Mrs V. A relative who had been settled in London for some time found him a job in 1970 and was able to send for him. He arrived as an economic migrant with a work permit which tied him to his job. After his initial contract, he succeeded in renewing his visa and work permit, as he found a more promising job as an account manager. When he fulfilled the initial residence requirements, he was granted the status of permanent resident in the mid-1970s. Mr E, like Mrs V, is now a British citizen. He owns his own business, which until the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991 specialized in trade with Iraq. Mr E was successful because he was able to combine his expertise in business matters in this country with his knowledge of Iraq and his contacts there. After the Gulf War, he moved into trade with other Arab countries by drawing on his fluent Arabic.

Since his settlement in London, Mr E has been able to bring fourteen relatives to join him. Some came under the family reunion scheme, whereas others came on visas and work permits tied to specific jobs. Helping other Assyrians to emigrate is an aspect of Mr E's responsibility, not only towards his immediate and distant relatives, but also towards other Assyrians. He realises that tighter immigration controls in recent years mean that many Assyrians will be left in Iraq, separated from their relatives in Britain. The Gulf War resulted in the flight of many Assyrians to neighbouring countries, mainly Turkey, Jordan, and Iran. Together with a group of other Assyrians, Mr E has formed a committee to bring the scattered Assyrian refugees to a secure country where they can be granted asylum. He has been successful in contacting a handful of refugees in Turkey and Jordan and arranging the necessary applications on their behalf. This involvement of Mr E's has led him to reconsider how he defines his own status and identity in London. His recent reflections on his own migration and the circumstances that led to it are shaped by his present concerns. The invention of his refugee identity is a reaction to the flight of Assyrians, the war conditions in Iraq in the 1990s, and the minority status of Assyrians in the country. Moreover, this invention is also a response to the situation in Britain, where refugees are generally accepted only with reluctance. By invoking a refugee identity, Mr E implicitly is asking the British authorities to recognize the plight of his Assyrian brothers who, at present, are stranded in Middle Eastern countries. Although his migration in the 1970s was strictly driven by economic considerations, i.e. a desire to improve his financial prospects, he reflects on the motives which led him to emigrate:

We did not have freedom of expression in Iraq, and we Assyrians were not respected as human beings. We lacked recognition of our language and culture. We did not belong to the country and its religion. We were stuck between Arabs and Kurds, Shia and Sunnis. We came to Iraq as refugees and we leave as refugees.

Mr E's last statement contradicts the previously mentioned circumstances of his migration. His claim to be a refugee does not correspond with the actual motives he originally described to account for his emigration. Initially he emphasized how he had a comfortable job in Iraq before he came to Britain. Later he revealed that he wanted to be a successful businessman who would profit from his association with Britain and Iraq. This materialized in founding his trading company. In Mr E's discourse, however, a refugee is not necessarily a person who is subjected to direct persecution. According to him, Assyrians are refugees in Britain because they migrate to escape discrimination which they may or may not be subjected to as individuals. Projecting an identity in terms of refugee status is assisted by the fact that, unlike some immigrants in this country who come from the majority population of their homelands, Assyrians are a minority in Iraq.

### Case 3: Mr Y

Mr Y is 46 and was born in Habaniyya, where his father worked as a levy officer. When the levies were disbanded, his father came to London after twenty-six years of service 'so that he could collect his pension from the British government'. By 1970, Mr Y's parents, sister, and two brothers were living in London. He, however, decided to remain in Iraq, as he had a job in the Iraqi army and felt no need to migrate.

According to Mr Y, his superiors in the Iraqi army regarded him with suspicion because all the members of his immediate family were outside the country. He felt that this delayed his promotion and hindered his future success within the army, and so he left the army in 1968 to work as a lorry driver. Meanwhile, his brothers in London had found him a job in a chandelier factory where many Assyrian immigrants were already working. They immediately sent for him to join them and he travelled from Iraq on an Iraqi passport. When Mr Y was asked about the reasons why he accepted the offer to emigrate, he explained that he had no family left in Iraq. Consequently, he felt isolated and wanted to be with his relatives. His migrant status was cleared, and five years later he became a British citizen.

Since his early settlement in London, Mr Y has joined one of the Assyrian political parties in exile, which is banned in Iraq because it calls for the establishment of a separate and autonomous Assyrian enclave in the northern parts of the country. Mr Y has become very politicized and begun to voice his objections to the minority status of Assyrians. He objects to Assyrians being called a minority in Iraq. In his own words: 'Assyrians are the original inhabitants of the land.' He explains that his migration, like that of many other Assyrians, was a forced migration. Assyrians, according to Mr Y, do not choose to leave Iraq: rather, they are driven from the country by the regime's suppression of minority rights, cultures, and languages. He adds: 'I came to London to join my



family. The Home Office regarded me as an immigrant, but in fact I was a refugee.'

Mr Y's refugee identity is a consequence of his more recent political involvement. The beginning of the Gulf War in 1991 raised his hopes and those of many Assyrians of similar political persuasion. As the collapse of the present Iraqi regime seemed imminent at the time, Mr Y opted for a self-definition in terms of refugee status; he was no longer the immigrant who came to London twenty years earlier in search of new economic opportunities and family reunion. While the two other individuals have no strong political views or commitments, Mr Y is typical of those immigrants whose self-definition is directly motivated by their political agenda. His political activities, which centre around the idea of a return to a lost homeland, would have been rendered meaningless had he continued to be satisfied with his status as an immigrant. By claiming to be a refugee, Mr Y and many other politicized Assyrians give meaning to their political behaviour by starting from the most fundamental levels—that of the self and the community as a whole. If all Assyrian immigrants define themselves as refugees, then the question of returning to an Assyrian autonomous homeland is not only a dream entertained by detached immigrants, who may feel nostalgic about their country of origin and may anyway entertain a myth of return, but is a commitment to which all Assyrians must subscribe.

### *The Meaning of Refugee Identity*

The three cases mentioned above describe how three Assyrian immigrants with different experiences of migration invoke a refugee identity in the 1990s. The student who came to study in Britain with the authorization of Iraq, the successful entrepreneur who acted as a middleman between Iraq and Britain, and the politicized Assyrian who entertains the idea of an autonomous Assyrian enclave in Iraq are all committed to defining themselves as refugees in this country. They are typical of the Assyrian community in London. The reasons for their migration, their economic circumstances, and the details of their life-histories are similar to those of the majority of Assyrian immigrants who came to this country in the 1960s and 1970s. The arrival of Assyrian refugees in the 1980s triggered a process among them whereby they abandoned their perception of themselves as immigrants in favour of a definition which embodies images of being a persecuted minority whose members are forced to leave Iraq under various pressures. The Gulf War endowed this definition with credibility as the political climate in Britain shifted towards accepting this readily available formulation. As the media concentrated on portraying images of displaced Iraqis fleeing the country to secure safe havens, Assyrian immigrants in London responded by redefining themselves as refugees. Their collective memory of an earlier refugee experience during the

First World War played an important role in providing continuity with a distant past. Assyrians began to believe that 'history repeats itself'. In this respect, the immigrants are trapped between two refugee experiences: that of their parents who fled south-east Turkey to Iraq, and that of the recent refugees from Iraq. Their response is to claim that they themselves are refugees.

The meaning of refugee identity to Assyrian immigrants does not correspond to that of someone who is physically displaced, personally tortured, and expelled from his or her country. In their discourse, being a refugee is a state whereby a member of a minority group like themselves migrate either in search of better economic circumstances, or because of direct and indirect discrimination. The crucial element in this definition is minority status, regardless of whether this minority is discriminated against politically, culturally, religiously or economically. Perceived discrimination is what matters rather than actual acts of violence directed towards the individual or collectivity. The definition of the community in terms of refugee status justifies migration, rationalizes it, and makes it more comprehensible.

Whether they call themselves immigrants or refugees, the heart of the matter remains that Assyrians are increasingly alienated from their country of origin and aspire to have their minority rights respected in Iraq. Their definitions are responses to changing circumstances in the home country brought about by political instability and war, and to a changing situation in the host society where it has become more acceptable for Iraqis living in London to call themselves refugees. This new definition fits in with and, in many respects, justifies the dominant political climate of hostility towards the present Iraqi regime. As long as this regime continues to produce 'refugees', its dismantling becomes not only acceptable, but also urgently required by people with various political interests.

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## AN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: FORM, FUNCTION, AND MEANING

HENRY M. JOHNSON

### *Introduction*

WHILE the study of musical instruments<sup>1</sup> is unified within the field of organology,<sup>2</sup> these objects of material culture are also studied within areas such as musicology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, archaeology, area studies, art history, iconology, and museology. The range of these fields clearly illustrates some of the diverse aspects embraced in the study of musical instruments (e.g. van Gulik 1940; Sachs 1940; Grame 1962, 1972; Winternitz 1967; Grame and Tsuge 1972; de Vale 1977, 1988, 1990; Tsuge 1978; Simonson 1987; Kárpáti 1989; Brincard 1989; de Vale and Dibia 1991; Johnson 1993).<sup>3</sup>

1. The terms 'musical instrument' and 'music' are used initially on the surface level of inquiry. Indigenous concepts would, of course, predominate throughout a specific analysis, where it could be seen that certain forms of behaviour and ways of conceptualising sound-producing instruments may relate directly with similar terms cross-culturally.

2. Descriptions of the range of organology are provided by, for example, Hood 1971, Wachsmann 1984, Dournon 1992, De Vale 1990, and Kartomi 1990.

3. These authors, among others, have examined musical instruments beyond their purely physical form and have tended to look at such aspects as cultural meaning, symbolism, mythology and iconology, seeing musical instruments more as signifying objects of music material culture than as sound-producing objects alone.

None the less, although the main focus of ethnomusicology is on the music or sound object in its socio-cultural context, the discipline might also explore the study of musical instruments in a way that is generally more holistic than that of some other fields. This is primarily because ethnomusicology can combine aspects of organology, musicology and anthropology to produce a study of instruments that includes an examination of the interrelationship between the material object, its context and its music, together with an understanding of the meanings connected with each of these areas in specific and general environments (i.e. the contexts in which a sound-producing instrument is played or understood).

The present discussion deals with four main areas of study that illustrate some of the ways in which ethnomusicology may study musical instruments: form, context, performance environment, and the interrelationship between instrument, performer and sound object. The identification of the form of the material object and the context in which it is found, which may include its performance environment, show the function of the instrument in specific situations. The importance of studying the event in which a sound-producing instrument is used, in order to understand its functions and meanings in culture, is illustrated in the penultimate section of this article. It is argued that the object of analysis is not just the instrument itself, but the combination of the player and the sound produced, together with the underlying meanings that are connected with the event in its entirety.

### *Form*

A basic question that is fundamental to an ethnomusicological examination of musical instruments is, What are they? This brief but very challenging question is intended to provoke an analysis of the form, function and meaning of musical instruments and other objects so that they may ultimately be understood in a way that is not alien to the different cultures and contexts in which they exist. While this question necessarily makes a predetermined judgement as regards certain sound-producing objects by classifying them as 'musical instruments', the actual aim of the inquiry is to motivate analysis of sound-producing objects and not to assume that they have the same attributes as similar objects in other cultures. Just because some objects of sound-producing material culture are used in a way that can be directly compared cross-culturally does not necessarily mean that the objects used are conceptualized or function in the same way. Ethnomusicology must aim to produce an organology which is an anthropology of sound-producing objects, in the same way that it aims to produce an anthropology of music.

Cross-cultural comparisons of sound-producing objects might well conclude that there are objects that can be classified universally as musical instruments, but as Kartomi (1990: xvii) has pointed out, 'not all cultures have classifications of

instruments', although 'few cultures may be isolated as having no musical instruments at all'. This is directly relevant to ethnomusicology, which recognizes that not all cultures have a distinct concept of music. 'There are many societies that have no word for "music" and do not isolate it conceptually from dance, drama, ritual,<sup>4</sup> or costume' (Blacking 1987: 3).<sup>5</sup> Should ethnomusicologists look at dance instruments, drama instruments, ritual instruments, costume instruments, etc.? Such classifications and others should be isolated for examination, but only if that is how they are classified in the cultures concerned. It goes without saying that even though the concepts of 'music' and 'musical instrument', together with their equivalent translations, are found in many cultures, initially the sound and its sounding objects should not be compared directly with the same concepts in other cultures. Concepts must not be confused cross-culturally, even though such cross-cultural comparisons may actually help explain culture at further levels of analysis. The main concern here is that sounds do form part of a mode of human behaviour in which the term 'musical instrument' may be applied cross-culturally, although it must be regarded as a general term only, even though it may initially bestow false meanings upon the objects concerned.

Even musical instruments themselves do not always function primarily as producers of humanly organized sound,<sup>6</sup> but their involvement in music conceptualization gives them the status of musical instruments, and they should be studied as musical instruments even if they are never played. The conceptual divisions between musical instruments, sound-producing instruments and even objects that are capable of producing sounds are categories which should be considered the standard starting-point in any research concerning sound-producing environments. Some objects of material culture may well be classified as musical instruments, and others may be seen as sound-producing objects (whose function is found outside the 'music' environment). An object is not always seen as a musical instrument just because it is capable of producing sound. Also, even if the object concerned is not conceptualized as a musical instrument playing music, it may still be demarcated for study as a musical instrument because of the human behaviour involved during the 'performance' of the sound-producing object. In this case, it is the human behaviour and conceptual frame involved that is studied in relation to sound-producing material culture and not just the concept of a musical instrument (cf. Merriam's 1964 ethnomusicological model for the anthropological study of music). The example of sound aesthetics in traditional Japanese gardens helps illustrate this point. As Schafer (1992: 40–1) notes:

4. See De Vale 1988 for a discussion of the use of musical instruments and ritual.

5. The lack of an understanding of the functional contexts of musical instruments helps to explain the lack of an organological theory of dance and voice. While for practical reasons it is difficult to capture the dancer or voice for museum display, the human body must be seen as a musical instrument if that is how it is used.

6. 'Humanly organized sound' was the term used by Blacking (1973: 26) to define 'music'.

Japanese gardeners traditionally cultivated the many variations [of sound] which water produces, not only in their placement of rocks in the beds of streams to modulate the sound, but also in their use of decorative bamboo irrigation pumps which tip when filled with water and drop back against stones producing pleasant hollow pitches. One researcher, Ya Wakao, had devoted himself to the study of water harps...resonating jars [*suikinkutsu* 'water, *koto* (zither), cave'],<sup>7</sup> buried under rock basins where the hands were washed before entering the tea house. The jars, which served no purpose, were set so that the spilled water which dropped into them would produce a melodic cascade of hollow pitches from below. The water harps are found only in the oldest gardens; the tradition seems to have been abandoned about two hundred years ago, but the soundscape group hopes to revive it.... It would be futile to debate whether such things are music; I would call them examples of soundscape design.<sup>8</sup>

It is not being maintained in this instance that all objects which produce sound are musical instruments, but it is suggested that sound-producing objects should not be ignored in ethnomusicological discourse concerning sound environments, because all sound-producing objects are surely capable of being objects which produce sound during a form of human behaviour that may generally be labelled music-making. A musical instrument makes music (or an equivalent or related concept), and a sound-producing instrument or object only makes a sound during everyday behaviour or in the conceptualization of that behaviour. Only when the conceptual frame functions to negate the mundane does the object become a musical instrument. This distinction is primarily intended to show that a musical instrument is a sound-producing object of material culture used to make humanly organized sound during a context which is aesthetically removed from everyday behaviour.

A discussion of the form of sound-producing instruments must be followed by an analysis of their function. If they are objects used in music-making, whether or not they are sound-producing objects of material culture, they must be studied as part of that event. The function of the object can only be understood in the context of its primary environment and not in a secondary environment or conceptual frame. While there are indeed objects of material culture which produce humanly organized sound that is not used during music-making, and other objects used during music-making that do not necessarily produce humanly organized sound as their primary function, a category of material culture may be delimited and studied as a musical instrument because it is used essentially as the means by which humans meaningfully construct sound during performance and ritualistic contexts.

7. For an introductory discussion of the *suikinkutsu*, see Tatsui Take No Suke (ed.) 1990.

8. See Schafer 1973 for a further discussion of soundscape, and Feld 1982, Roseman 1991 for examinations of signifying sound environments.



A basic concern of an ethnomusicology of musical instruments should be not the identification of musical instruments, but rather the behaviour and concepts associated with the objects of material culture in the first place. Using such an approach, one is able to assess not only the form and function of material culture, but also the relationship that such objects have with the human structuring of sound. An object may immediately be seen as a musical instrument by a member of one culture, but not by a member of another.

Although organology has mainly examined musical instruments in terms of their physical dimensions, I am not arguing in the present discussion that such demarcation is not beneficial to ethnomusicological dialogue, but I am suggesting that the form of a musical instrument is not always a simple structure separate from other cultural processes and structures, whether physical or conceptual. Musical instruments are usually discussed in terms of their primary form without considering the many extensions of the primary object that would inevitably help to reveal the true musical instrument by interrelating the object to the performer and the contextual environment. A musical instrument or equivalent, to use a general definition of the term, can only be understood fully once its form is known in direct relation to its function and meaning.

### *Context*

The form and function of a sound-producing object must be identified at the initial stage of the ethnomusicological analysis of musical material culture in order to establish whether or not it is directly relevant to the study of music. It goes without saying that the context in which a musical instrument is found and the rationale concerning the presence of an observer who acknowledges its existence may be seen analytically as the two areas in which the meaning of the material objects concerned may be examined.

The relative lack—though by no means absolute neglect—of consideration of the meanings of instruments outside their academic or museum forms has done little for the development of an ethnomusicology which is able to examine comprehensively the performance event in which sound is structured aesthetically with musical instruments. Ethnomusicologists have often approached the study of musical instruments by using a methodology that misrepresents the true and functional portrayal of instrument form, function and meaning. To separate the object of analysis from its performer—or performance (physical or conceptual)—and context is to take away the true environment in which the musical instrument and its culture can be understood.

The universally used classification system established by musical instruments of Hornbostel and Sachs (1961 [1914]) has become the paradigm of organology in many cultures in the same way that the use of five-line staff notation has proved

to be inadequate in the ethnomusicological depiction of music sound. Just as ethnomusicologists find it difficult to depart from their often ethnocentric visual forms of sound, so too do organologists face a difficult task in parting with a classification system that is practically ubiquitous to the field. As a legacy of the colonial age, museums catalogue their collections of 'exotic' musical instruments in a methodological and consistent way which covered all instruments. The Hornbostel and Sachs system and its modifications (see Kartomi 1990) do help in conveying knowledge about instruments, but I contend that such information says more about the cultural frame of the analyst than the musical instrument itself. The observer of an instrument in the context of a museum, for example, is usually confronted by an abstract display of the primary form of the material object, in which it is very often understood aesthetically in terms that are alien to its indigenous culture. In this context, the musical instrument is displayed in such a way that little more than just the basic structure of a sound-producing tool of material culture is shown, very often with little visual presentation of even the way in which the instrument would be positioned by the player in a performance setting. Aspects concerning the performance environment and the interrelationship between instrument, performance and music are rarely found.<sup>9</sup> Without undermining the heuristic function of museums in helping to give the viewer a visual representation of an object outside its cultural or performance context, such an initial medium of representation should be seen as an abstraction of the object's more complex and extended structures.

In the case of a musical instrument, the signification of meaning must be concerned primarily with the practical function of the instrument in the first place. Of course, instruments which are not played will be examined in connection with their cultural meaning and importance in signifying aspects of the culture's concept of music. While any context will have a plethora of signifiers and signifieds, the performance (or playing) context is part of the musical instrument's functional environment and should be considered in its entirety during ethnomusicological discourse.

### *Performance Environment*

Based on the premise that a main function of a musical instrument is to play music and that ethnomusicology is mainly concerned with the sound object itself, it may be postulated that the true context of the musical instrument in ethnomusicological

9. Some museums do aim to provide a 'working' environment for their artefacts, or else additional audio and/or visual mediums with which to enhance the display. See Arnold-Forster and La Rue 1993 for a discussion of the problems of museum displays of music and musical instruments.

analysis is the performance environment.<sup>10</sup> In order to emphasize the importance of studying music and musical instruments during performance, in this part of the discussion I argue that while the abstraction of an object for analysis can reveal certain physical features within a limited contextual frame, such a process can never obtain a full understanding of the functional meaning of an instrument without taking into consideration the event that constitutes the human behaviour and concepts in which the objects are found and used meaningfully during music-making. An examination of the sound object might also attempt to include the sounding instrument as part of any holistic analysis. As de Vale has commented (1991: 255), 'trying to understand musical sound without first investigating the musical instrument is akin to trying to interpret the meaning and function of a disembodied voice or attempting to understand vocal music without understanding the text'.

Musical instruments may not always be made primarily to play music, but the study of instruments made for this purpose should aim to identify the relationship between sound-producing objects and their performers in the musical context. Even if an object is not considered to be a musical instrument by either the culture concerned or the field-worker but still produces sound during music-making (or an event where sound is conceptualized as being removed from the mundane), its performance (or conceptualization) may be seen to constitute an event which can help in the understanding of how cultures structure sound, which may itself be directly related to musical structures within that specific culture and others.

The performance context is the true functional environment in which a musical instrument signifies its primary meaning in music-making. All other concepts and contexts concerning the instrument should be seen comparatively in direct relation to this primary context. Using such an approach, even the form of an instrument can be extended in order to understand exactly how it interacts with its performer and performance context. For example, as Sorrell (1990: 20) comments in connection with the *gamelan*, instruments that are held are regarded as 'essentially extensions of the human body (and voice) and those which are not held as essentially depersonalized. . . . The gamelan is in fact hardly touched at all. It is the mallets which make the contact, and only on some instruments are the hands used, usually in the secondary function of damping.'<sup>11</sup> Indeed, this is actually how the *gamelan* gets its name; as Lindsay (1979: 9) has noted, 'the name "gamelan" refers to the method of playing the instruments—by striking them—as they are almost entirely percussion.'

While the intermediary devices that connect the instrument to the performer are basically finite in form, the extension devices that connect the musical

10. Waterhouse (1986) and Yamaguti (1986, 1991) have also argued in favour of a more holistic approach to the study of the performance event.

11. Sorrell (*ibid.*) makes an analogy with bells and organs in churches in order to stress that the extensions of instruments are fundamental parts that must be taken into consideration: 'the ropes intervene between ringers and bells, and the organ keys serve to unlock the sound'.

instrument to its performance context may be seen to occupy two distinct levels of analysis.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand there are the immediate objects that may support the instrument (including the performer), and on the other hand there are the objects that extend from the supporting objects. The former are the primary extension objects and the latter must be seen as secondary, although they will certainly help in the holistic study of the instrument in general.<sup>13</sup> The musical instrument, performer and performance context are examined in an attempt to understand not only the music and its function, but also the cultural form and function of the material objects involved in the performance environment in general.

### *Instrument, Performer, and Sound Object*

The examination of musical instruments in their performance contexts while they are being played during music-making will help show the interrelationship between material object (musical instrument), performer, and sound object (music), thus allowing the performance event to be understood in its entirety and revealing how material objects are used in the production of organized sound, whether or not the event is actually seen as music. Using such an approach, the object of analysis can also be correlated with the total environment of the event, taking into consideration such aspects as aesthetics, meaning, the function of the performance, its reception, and temporal and spatial features. The function of a musical instrument often goes beyond the purely musical, and in many instances the playing of music is secondary to the symbolic function of the music, instrument or event. While the form, function, and meaning of instruments is the main focus of this discussion, the tripartite model of instrument, performance, and music that forms the object of the study should be seen as an initial stage in an ethnomusicology of musical instruments. In this approach, the function of sound-producing instruments is related directly to the behaviour, and concepts that contribute to the events in which musical instruments are the main focus of attention.

The type of approach being put forward in this paper may thus be seen to be directly related to Merriam's (1964) tripartite model, which regards the interrelationship between music, behaviour and concepts as fundamental to

12. This area has been analysed by the author (1993: 213–38) in connection with the Japanese *koto* (thirteen-stringed zither).

13. As Wachsmann notes (1984: 408), the organological approach of Dräger (1948) included physiological features that 'led him to consider not only aspects of the object as they present themselves to the eye but also the many linkages that tie a musical instrument to the player's person', although he still aimed at producing a classification system for cross-cultural analysis.

ethnomusicology. While Merriam did briefly consider musical instruments (ibid.: 64), the application of such a model to instruments themselves during their function of music-making is seen to be equally useful to ethnomusicology. An ethnomusicological examination of musical instruments must aim at not neglecting the concepts and behaviour that underlie the function of these material objects. Through an analysis of musical instruments in ethnomusicology, the principles of organized sound may be examined in direct relation to the behaviour and concepts that contribute to the performance event. This is not to say that such an approach is a unified theory for ethnomusicological research, but it is a method that can help show how musical instruments are meaningful objects of material culture that are just as much part of the music as the sound itself.

In connection with the Afghan *dutār* (long-necked lute), for example, Baily (1977: 275) has commented that

The way the human body is organized to move is, in certain respects, a crucial element in the structure of music. A musical instrument transduces patterns of body movement into patterns of sound. The morphology of an instrument imposes certain constraints on the way the instrument is played, favouring certain movement patterns that are, for ergonomic reasons, easily organized on the instrument's spatial layout. Thus, the interaction between the human body and the morphology of the instrument may shape the structure of the music, channelling human creativity in predictable directions.

Music is therefore determined by the range of the instrument, the physical and 'musical' ability of the performer, and the relationship between the morphology of the instrument and the human body. Stockmann too pointed out (1991: 326) that 'the construction of . . . instruments may materialize and fix the basic features of a musical system, and their shape and function, moreover, may signify extramusical meaning.'

The actual 'architecture' of the instrument itself, which thus reflects structures within the cultural whole, may also be related to the organization of the music. This point has been made by de Vale and Dibia (1991: 35) in connection with the Indonesian *gamelan* orchestra, in which 'the "three-ness" which informs the structure and design of the *plawah* [resonator cases] and the bronze sounding parts is also inherent in the nature and function of *gamelan* music'. Such correlation is seen to be a fundamental aspect of the structuring of material and sound culture. De Vale and Dibia's remark that 'the orchestration of *gamelan* can be explored as a musical icon of social structure' (ibid.: 40) seems appropriate in this instance, emphasizing the importance of correlating music structure and the environment in which the music is played (see also de Vale 1977).

The spatial layout of the construction of the instrument may correspond to the organization and use of space in the context of the instrument's performance or even to aspects of the instrument's society in general. Even such areas as the dress of the performer and notations can be seen to contribute to the meaning of

the performance of musical instruments in general.<sup>14</sup> The visual analysis of the performance event can also contribute to ethnomusicological analysis. The basic movements of the performer will obviously correspond to changes in pitch in the music and thus become a visual means by which one can read the performance. Tokumaru (1986: 116), for example, in connection with the *shamisen* (three-stringed Japanese lute), noted the importance of the practical position of the pitch and the performer's fingers. He also shows (*ibid.*: 111) how music, instrument, and performer are interrelated by noting Abraham and Hornbostel's transcription (1975 [1903]: 51, n. 41) of Madame Sadayakko's *koto* performance at the beginning of this century in Berlin:

They [Abraham and Hornbostel] must have visually observed Madame Sadayakko playing the *koto*, and on the basis of this were able to discriminate between 'the tones raised by pressure on *koto* strings' [indicated with x in their transcriptions; called *oside* (*oshide* 'pushing hand') in traditional terminology; Abraham and Hornbostel 1975: 68] and the unpressed tones. They must have read the facial expressions of the Japanese musicians, because they wrote 'we should mention here that the innate politeness of the Japanese makes it very difficult to obtain an unfavourable opinion'.

Through a study of the interrelationship between musical instrument, performer, and sound object, one is able to understand the functional context of performance as a meaningful event that can be related to other areas of cultural analysis.

### Conclusion

This article has not aimed to produce a critical history of organology or ethnomusicology, nor has it attempted to devise a new system of musical-instrument classification (a common concern of many organologists). What it has done is to show that ethnomusicology can contribute further to a study of musical instruments by examining these specific sound-producing objects of material culture in a holistic way which does not exclude the performer or music. The main object of study should not be just the instrument itself—even when the main emphasis is on it—but the interrelationship between the instrument, performer, and music in the functional environment. The performer is, after all, essential to the event, and the music is the primary, though not, of course, the only function of the instrument.

A musical instrument is more than just a sound-producing instrument. It is essential for music-making, and an analysis of the performance event can enhance

14. See Tsuge 1983, 1986 for an examination of these areas in connection with Japanese music.

and contribute directly to ethnomusicological, anthropological, and organological discourse. Musical instruments are not only part of music culture, they are very much part of a wider context where they can contribute directly to cultural analysis. It has been suggested here, therefore, that an ethnomusicology of musical instruments can offer an anthropology of instruments as part of a wider anthropology of music.

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## ENCHANTED BODIES: WYSIWYG IN TANA TORAJA

DIMITRI TSINTJILONIS

### *Introduction*

IN a brief contribution to a recent issue of *JASO* (Vol. XXV, no. 3 (1994), pp. 255–62), Peter Rivière suggests that ‘the native people of Amazonia live in a highly transformational world where What You See Is Not Necessarily What You Get’ (p. 256). Discussing the connection between appearance and reality, he insists that ‘appearances are deceptive, in the sense that they may be put on and taken off like clothes that hide the underlying reality’ (ibid.). Indeed, if you are an Amazonian Indian, ‘it is never entirely safe to believe the evidence of your own eyes’ (p. 261). Such evidence can involve anything from the human body (which, *in reality*, may only be a ‘dress’ for the soul) to a jaguar descending a tree with a monkey in its jaws (which, *in reality*, may not be an animal at all but a shaman in the form of a jaguar).

In almost total contrast to the peoples of Amazonia, the people of Tana Toraja<sup>1</sup> live in a world where What You See Is What You Get—hence the subtitle

1. The Toraja (more precisely, the Sa’dan Toraja) number approximately 350,000 and are primarily wet-rice farmers whose homeland comprises the administrative region (*kabupaten*) of Tana Toraja, located in the northern highlands of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Fieldwork on which this article is based was conducted between July 1988 and March 1990, mostly in Buntao, a community in the eastern part of the region. I am grateful to the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and the Universitas Hasanuddin (UNHAS) for sponsoring my research. I am also indebted to R. Needham and R. Barnes for their assistance and guidance, and to M. J. Lloyd for her comments and advice.

of this essay. According to the Toraja, far from hiding some underlying reality, appearances are a constituent part of existence—not in the sense of portraying or mirroring it, but in the sense of being embedded in and growing out of it. Even when appearances are delineated as covering or enveloping, they are, to echo the *Soliloquies* of George Santayana, 'like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover' (1922: 131).

While emphasizing that there is no gap between 'seeing' and 'knowing', what I intend to do is examine a few examples concerning the relation between appearance and reality. I am especially interested in the way the human body is traditionally perceived and articulated. The Toraja, matching a central aspect of Amazonian ethnography (see Rivière 1994: 261), make a clear distinction between an inside and an outside bodily domain. However, the outside is not seen as an outer covering which mediates between some inner self and society. Human bodies are separate and distinct from each other not because they are closed (or covered) on the outside, but because they are turned in on their own centre.

Of course, much has changed in Tana Toraja over the last fifty years (see Volkman 1985). For one thing, at least according to official census data, the majority of the population has converted to Christianity. In this respect, it is certainly true that many of the ritual practices which both gave rise to and expressed most of the notions I am interested in have been abandoned or modified. Nevertheless, apart from the question of how much of the traditional framework remains intact, I do not think the essence of what I am about to describe has changed. Whether belonging to the old religion (*aluk to dolo*, 'ways of the ancestors') or having converted to Christianity, a Toraja will still look at the way something appears (i.e. 'its face') as a 'measurement' (*sukaran*) of what it is.

As most of my information originated in the community of Buntao',<sup>2</sup> the term 'Toraja' will mostly be used in this paper to refer to this community. However, despite considerable regional variation, there is a great deal of similarity between the various Toraja communities, and in this sense, much of the ethnographic material incorporated in the following discussion is meant to extend and support existing ethnographies.

2. In terms of present-day administrative patterns, the community of Buntao' is divided into two 'villages' (*desa*), Buntao' (with a population of about 3,500) and Buntu Dengen (with about 4,000 people). According to local estimates, around thirty per cent of the population still adhere to the old religion. At the time of my fieldwork, the traditional ritual organization (with the major exception of the 'death priest', who died while I was there) was still intact. My main sources of information were the various functionaries and an array of older people who are known as *gora-gora tongkon* ('the ones who speak while seated'). The latter would traditionally act as advisors to the ritual authorities, and in many cases their knowledge of traditional custom surpassed that of the various functionaries.

### *Seeing and Knowing*

The people of Tana Toraja, both in everyday life and within ritual contexts, 'reveal a fascination with the surface of living things' (Zerner 1981: 101). From interpreting the configuration of speckles on the hides of water buffaloes to registering the direction of veins on banana leaves, this fascination both manifests and embodies a specific mode of knowing—knowing which beings 'match each other', what their intrinsic sacrificial value is, how or when they can be used and, above all, where they fit in the pre-ordained pattern of the cosmos as a whole or, to put it another way, what their true 'kind/nature' (*rupa*) is.

Although a black-and-white buffalo, to give but one example, is much more valuable than an all-black or an all-white one, it is the exact configuration of the colour patches that both embodies and manifests its kind. The more this configuration resembles a spiral, especially one which appears to move from right to left, the more valuable a particular buffalo is said to be. If such a configuration is combined further with similar patterns in the hair (especially near or on the forehead), it is thought highly propitious and its value increases accordingly. Beyond being propitious, such an animal is also described as true and good/beautiful. Its truth and its beauty have to be matched both in terms of ownership (not everyone can own one) and sacrificial use (the sacrificer must be of noble descent). Its truth and its beauty, like its value, are embodied and manifested in the configurations of colour and hair on its hide.<sup>3</sup>

Through an effusion of such 'signs' (*tanda*), life proclaims its variety and discloses its arrangements. In a fashion partly reminiscent of Peirce's explication of 'indexical signs' (1955), *tanda* are existentially rooted in the very things they signify—beyond mere contiguity, they actually inhere in the things they describe. Transcending signficatory indices based on simple proximity, they constitute 'marks' (also *tanda*) of material implication. Rather than bearing the impress of what they signify, they are im-pressed on it. In this way, the essential attributes of life are revealed in the actual appearance of its instances. Although beauty, virtue and truth, as well as sacrificial value and use, are grasped in terms of their signs, they are not in the eye of the beholder but embedded in what is beheld.

The notion of *rupa*, being both appearance and reality, conflates 'the real' and the way it is perceived. Bridging the gap between what Lévi-Strauss has distinguished as 'lived in' and 'thought of' orders (see de Heusch 1985: 2), it presents an example of what Geertz has construed as 'enchanted worlds' (see Errington 1989: 295 n. 1). As the interpretation of reality (i.e. the recognition of true nature) is grounded in non-arbitrary signs which both manifest and embody it, morality itself stems from the way things *are*, rather than how they should be—the ethos of Toraja culture is itself part of nature. From veins on banana

3. The size and shape of a buffalo's horns are also important. For a more detailed discussion of the ways in which water buffaloes are classified and valued, as well as their importance in ritual and myth, see Nooy-Palm 1979: 184-205; Tangdilintin 1975: 219-25.

leaves or speckles on buffalo hides to the *pamor* on the blades of ancestral knives or the nodes on the branches of a tree, the ciphers of enchantment reside in the very nature of things. Thus, whether dealing with beauty, value or truth, 'rather than being neutral or purely aesthetic, these configurations on the surface of the things of the natural world...are laden with meaning, and used by the Toraja in making sense of the world' (Zerner 1981: 101).

Human beings themselves are not exempt from this hermeneutics. Pimples, spots, birthmarks, warts, furrows, lines, wrinkles, hair, veins and cuticles are all signs. With its unsullied or blemished surfaces, the human body is as marked as the rest of the universe. Indeed, 'the Toraja use the same term, *ura*', to note the patterns of *pamor* on the blades [of ancestral knives], the furrows and lines on human hands, the veins on human bodies, and the veins on the leaves of plants' (ibid.). While signs which present themselves in a linear form (furrows and lines on hands, face wrinkles, veins, etc.) are examined in terms of breadth and continuity, signs which form curves or resemble circles (hair, birthmarks, pimples, etc.) are scrutinized with respect to direction and focus.

In general, long and unbroken lines as well as circular patterns, which appear to stem from a definite epicentre and to move 'from right to left' (*liling kanan*), embody and manifest good fortune and health. Conversely, discontinuity or movement 'from left to right' (*liling kairi*) foretell and instantiate misfortune and illness (cf. Forth 1985: 104–7; Barnes 1974: *passim*; Howe 1981: 228). Sometimes, as with the spots of smallpox, colour and diffuseness are all-important; described as similar to grains of rice or stars in the sky, they are thought to herald an abundance of children and material wealth. On other occasions, as with patches of ringworm near the joints, location is all that matters.

As with health, wealth and fortune, truth, goodness and beauty can also be detected on the surface of the human body. Especially truthful bodies are thought to be hard and relatively impenetrable. Their hardness, mostly manifested in what is described as a 'lack of gaps', is perceived as a lack of blemishes. Implying solidity and cohesiveness, this hardness is explicitly associated with truth and goodness: the harder a body is, the more truth it embodies; the more truth it embodies, the better it is. Thus those at the top of the traditional hierarchy<sup>4</sup> are not simply harder than those at the bottom, they are also better and truer. At the very top, the traditional priest-leaders of the Toraja are the very emblems of this goodness and truth. In the cogency of their speech, the sagacity of their wisdom,

4. Toraja society is traditionally divided into nobles, commoners, and slaves. In the community of Buntao', the nobles are designated *to makaka matasak* ('ripe elder siblings'), the commoners *to makaka* ('elder siblings'), and the slaves *kaunan*. The essence of this division is described in terms of *tana* ('stakes'). Three different kinds of 'stakes' are used to equate the value of people with the value (and intrinsic qualities) of different material substances: *tana' bulaan* ('golden stakes') for the nobles, *tana' bassi* ('iron stakes') for the commoners, and *tana' karurung* ('stakes from the hard core of the sugar palm') for the slaves. In the area of Buntao', *tana'* is always inherited from one's mother and, at least in the 'ways of the ancestors', it finds its most important expression in distinct ritual rights and duties.

the efficacy of their potency and the subtlety of their actions, they are 'the true ones' (*tau tongan*).

*Beauty* is a further dimension of the same configuration—to be truthful is also to be beautiful. Everyday activities like grooming, bathing and applying coconut oil are not attempts to embellish or transfigure one's body but to accentuate what is always already there. Clothes and jewellery themselves must match the true nature of the body. By not doing so, a Toraja risks more than ugliness or bad taste. For instance, if a woman of slave descent was to adorn herself with a pair of golden earrings or a golden bracelet, she would become ill and might die.<sup>5</sup> As gold is extremely potent and powerful ('hard'), such an illness would arise from the fact that her body and the substance of gold did not match each other. Being much more than a simple accoutrement, a piece of gold jewellery is viewed as a sign similar to the colour patches on a buffalo or the vein patterns on a blade. In a parallel fashion, when, in traditional stories and some ritual practices, a man (as it usually is) wants to remain anonymous and avoid detection, rather than using clothes to change or mask his appearance, he undresses. This action makes 'his path' nearly invisible and difficult to follow. Like jewellery, clothes instantiate and delineate reality, they do not hide it.

Echoing the idea of enchanted worlds, truth, goodness, beauty and fortune may be described as appurtenances. Like arms or legs, they form an integral part of one's bodily configuration. Within this configuration, reality and appearance are integral parts of a single existential register. This is not to say that everything which is knowable is visible and vice versa, but to insist on the importance of seeing as the fundamental mode of knowing.<sup>6</sup> This mode of knowing extends beyond the particularities of human embodiment implicating itself in the workings of the universe as a whole. Signs such as speckles on the hides of water buffaloes, veins on banana leaves, patterns on blades, birthmarks, pieces of jewellery and so on constitute both material instances of what knowledge is and manifestations of how it can be attained. Rather than having meaning because they are signs, they are signs because they have meaning. Inscribed in the true 'kind/nature' of the very things they signify, they confront each other in the reality of the world, not in the way it may be hidden, falsely represented or modified.

The Toraja fascination with the surface of living things is based on the assumed intermingling of two different aspects of existence. Although neither can

5. Although slavery has been abolished, persons of slave descent form a large part of the population in Buntao'. In the past, as Nooy-Palm notes, 'slaves were forbidden to wear ornaments of precious metal or brass; female slaves, moreover, were not allowed to adorn themselves with armlets made of shell' (1979: 46). Although these regulations have been abandoned today, descendants of *kaunan* 'behave with caution. Heirlooms and regalia are only put on by those who belong to traditionally pre-eminent families in Toraja society' (ibid.).

6. However, as the patterns of their overall arrangement can be complicated, recognizing and explaining the various signs may require the knowledge of specialists (*to mentiro* 'those who see').

be reduced to the other's terms, all living things are seen as having an outside and an inside domain. It is the relationship between these two domains that endows signs with their significance and introduces the possibility of true knowledge or accurate exegesis. Much more than providing a transitory or illusory manifestation of it, signs can be seen as crystallizations of the way in which the inside and the outside intersect, overlap and articulate each other.

In the remaining sections of this essay, by focusing on the indigenous notion of the human body, I shall briefly examine this articulation in order to emphasize two related points: first, rather than occluding each other, the connection between the two domains is one of reticulation; and secondly, embodied and manifested in signs, this reticulation is not a relation between external appearance and internal reality but a material configuration between the life-giving qualities of an invisible centre and the life-sustaining qualities of its visible periphery. In other words, rather than enveloping or hiding its essence, appearances form an integral part of the production and reproduction of life.

### *Seeing and Being*

The Toraja word for body is *kale*. A body has an outside and an inside: in the former context, it is called *batang* ('trunk') and is thought to include the bones, hair and skin; in the latter context, it is known as *ba'tang* ('pith') and is said to be formed of those constituents which are fleshy, juicy and pliant (for further details, see Tsintjilonis 1993). In addition, at the very centre of the pith-body there is a small spherical stone ('inner kernel') which is intimately linked with life, speech, thought and potency. With their sources arranged around this inner kernel (from right to left), the domains of inside and outside are not meant to delineate immutable dimensions of being but a flexible process of interaction and mutual constitution.

Described as soft, moist and throbbing, the inside is the locus of life itself and is thought to originate in the maternal contribution to the reproductive process, i.e. blood. Although its major dimension is co-extensive with the element of flesh, its embodied articulation is said to include everything apart from bones, skin and hair. Secretions of all kinds (tears, saliva, sweat, etc.) are thought to have their sources on the inside and to manifest, in their emergence, its perpetual wetness and pliancy. In fact, in its softness and moistness, it is often likened to egg yolk or mud. In clear contrast to this softness and moistness, the outside is described as hard and dry. Being like a stone, its articulation indicates fixity and solidity rather than fluidity or pliancy. In its major manifestation, it is equated with the skeleton

and is said to originate in the paternal contribution to the reproductive process, i.e. bone.<sup>7</sup>

In the configuration of their embodied relationship, the domains of inside and outside (like the substances of blood and bone) are seen as 'forming a pair' (*simuane*) or, in a parallel expression, as 'adhering to each other' (*silopak*). Their apposition, which may be interpreted as involving both complementarity and opposition, is usually explained in terms of 'intrinsic connections' (*kasiumpuran*) and is thought to be analogous to the affinity between 'the two halves of a split bamboo'. The 'connexity', to echo Needham (1987: 85), between inside and outside is meant to reflect the fact that they necessarily belong together. But what exactly does this connexity involve and how is it related to the realm of the signs?

According to the Toraja, blood is the essence of life. As a substance, it is extremely efficacious because it carries the vitality which gives rise to life itself. In its life-giving capacity, it is described as 'full of riches' and is considered 'the source of increase'. Seen as both the base and origin of human embodiment, it is often depicted as the 'source of the path' (*to' lalan*). Beyond the possibility of simple somatic growth and development, if it remains untangled this is the path that may lead to long life, fortune and abundance. In order to remain untangled, however, blood itself must be organized (*masseke*, 'fastened') through the hardness of bone. If, for some reason, this does not happen, a human offspring will dissolve and the prospective mother will have a miscarriage or stillbirth. Lacking in firmness and density, misembodiments of this kind are said to resemble sago. However, as soon as the arrangement of the blood substance has been consolidated in the form of the skeleton, an embryo takes on the familiar human shape and starts to develop.

The proper axis of this development is embedded in the notion of a trunk. Like a tree which is 'leaning east', the human body should grow upwards ('from root to tip') and face east. In this way, the vitality of the soft domain may be seen as directed and ordered through the determinacy of its hard frame. Nevertheless, although it could be argued that this vitality will ebb away unless it is enclosed, the notion of *masseke* implies closeness and intimate contiguity rather than definite closure. For instance, in the context of everyday life a buffalo is usually described as *masseke* ('being close') when it is tethered to a stake by a short rope. In a similar fashion, the softness of the blood is kept 'close' by being tethered rather than bounded. Furthermore, as a buffalo is tethered to a stake, so the substance of life is tethered to the innermost part of the body, i.e. the inner kernel. In this sense the human skeleton can be seen as resembling a short rope.

Thus, despite the possible implications of the actual designations, the conjunction between the outside and the inside should not be construed as a

7. In relation to 'blood and bone', my own information is quite different from that contained in some other ethnographies. For instance, according to Waterson: 'no idea exists among the Toraja such as is reported in a number of New Guinea societies, where bones are considered a male element and blood a female one' (1986: 103).



relation between the deceptive appearance of a conspicuous surface and the reality of an inconspicuous depth. The contiguity of the two domains does not imply a definite closure in which one delimits, circumscribes or conceals the other. On the contrary, instead of existing as an opaque boundary or an illusory mask, the outside transverses and arranges the inside. Although the human body can be distinguished as a relatively separate entity, in a way reminiscent of ancient Greece, 'it is not shut up on itself, closed, isolated or cut off from the outside, like an empire within an empire' (Vernant 1989: 29). Remaining essentially open, it reveals its reality in a manner neither exterior nor anterior to the way it appears. To phrase it somewhat differently, being seen is an integral part of being.

Indeed, beyond the specificity of any particular sign or as the sum total of all of them, the body as a whole is thought to constitute a manifestation of 'being in determinate ways' (*tampa rapa*) and an embodiment of 'true nature' (*rupa tongan*); while the former accounts for the similarities between people, the latter engenders and expresses the differences between them. In both contexts, however, being and appearing interlock and arrange themselves in relation to each other. Signs, rather than hiding or masking reality, articulate and reveal it.

### *Being Seen*

In the indigenous commentary, the proper balance of softness and hardness, the arrangement of their sources around a centre and the tethering of the life substance to the inner kernel are all parts of *tampa rapa* ('being in determinate ways' or, perhaps, 'determinate form'). The possibility of proper growth (that is, life as the Toraja understand it; see Tsintjilonis 1993) is established, embodied and manifested in the determinacy of its organization. The result of indeterminate (i.e. disorganized) growth is likened to the remains of an early miscarriage: it is 'soft and without a kernel'. Misembodiments of this kind are described as lacking roots, and their frames are said to be reversed with their 'beginning' up and their 'end' down. If life is to be successfully embodied and reproduced, it must be organized according to the dictates of *tampa rapa*. Embodying and manifesting this organization, signs are linked together and articulated according to patterns intrinsic to the production and reproduction, rather than representation, of life itself. In its visible attributes, the configuration of the human body signifies because it is, and it is because it appears. Its appearance unfolds itself as an enactment of *tampa rapa*.

Reflecting this enactment, the Toraja concept of 'bodiliness' (*pa'kalean*) conflates the notions of being and appearing. Signs are said to be 'rooted in' and 'to emerge from' the body. For instance, with no obfuscation intervening between the sign and its content, an absence of blemishes on the surface of the body both embodies and manifests the proper intermingling of softness and hardness. In a

similar fashion, untangled lines and focused spirals embody and manifest the way in which a body is organized and centred (i.e. from root to tip, around the inner kernel, having a front and a back, an inside and an outside, a left and a right, etc.). 'Bodiliness', in this sense, embodies and manifests proper growth. Its power of signification stems from the lack of arbitrariness characteristic of growth and, to this extent, is shared by *everybody*.

However, the most important of the imperatives associated with determinate growth is the need to pair different substances properly. In this context, the emblematic pair is that of blood and bone. For instance, the blood of a noble mother should not be paired with the bone of a slave father. If it were, the tethering of the life substance would fail and, as the inside and outside of the resulting offspring would not mesh, death or extreme ugliness/untruth would result. Depending on descent, blood may be more or less 'ripe' (*matasak*).<sup>8</sup> People with a great concentration of ripe blood (the nobles) are thought to be extremely powerful and potent. Material wealth is itself seen as a dimension of this potency, a potency that is the locus and sign of supernatural power (*ma'karra*, 'hardness', usually rendered in Indonesian as *kesaktian*; see Volkman 1985: 180–1 n. 4). It is this potency rather than the hardness stemming from the substance of bone that renders a body solid and relatively impenetrable (cf. Rivière 1994: 259–60). The more solid a body is, the more truthful, beautiful and fortune-laden it is considered to be. A body's true nature is a reflection of its potency, and its potency is a reflection of the successful pairing of blood and bone.

In the sense of true nature, people are different—they may be more or less beautiful, poorer or richer, harder or softer, more or less truthful, and so on. Whatever these differences may amount to, however, they are thought to embody and manifest different degrees of potency. This is the potency that clothes and bodily ornaments have to match. This potency cannot be hidden or masked. Turning a body into *somebody*, it gives rise to more specific dimensions of 'bodiliness' by constituting and pervading one's actions, words and thoughts. In fact, like pimples and spots, thoughts, actions and words are not only rooted in and emergent from the body, they are also arranged and organized like the body, i.e. from root to tip, around a centre. Furthermore, as this centre coincides with the corporeal centre of the body, their emergence is an integral part of being and of the way this is articulated with appearing.

Positioned at the very centre of the pith-body and depicted as a tiny stone, it is the inner kernel which is considered to be the embodied source of this potency and seen as the 'essence' (*bombong*) of one's body. Implying different degrees of potency, this essence may be described further as made of gold, iron or wood (see Tsintjilonis 1993). However, in transcending the materiality of its substantive core and the fixity of its definite emplacement, the 'inside stone' (*batu ba'tang*) is said to give rise to a flow of energy which pervades the body as a whole. The pattern

8. In some Toraja communities, blood is said to exhibit different degrees of purity (*rara masero*, 'pure blood') instead of ripeness (see Nooy-Palm 1979: 154; Volkman 1985: 60).

of this flow is understood as continuous movement around its source and, in its inception, is attributed to the ability of the actual stone to rotate, from right to left, around its own axis. This pattern is said to be similar to the shape of an 'inwardly moving spiral' (*ma'suale lu tama*). In this way, the inner kernel imparts movement to the body and focuses its various dimensions in the form of a centripetal spiral.

Although there is some disagreement as to the exact moment of its onset,<sup>9</sup> it is the configuration of this flow which constitutes the 'life spirit' (*deata*) of a particular human and, at the most basic level, it is manifested in the throbbing of the pulse and the blinking of the eyes. In its actual flow, it replicates the arrangement of the corporeal body and gradually becomes its double. In its overall arrangement around the body, the life spirit is said to follow the veins and to enable a particular embodiment to remain untangled, full, round and complete—that is, alive.

The rotation of the inner kernel is further linked with thinking, speaking and acting. In this respect, its quintessential mode, common to both humans and gods, is often described as bringing 'their innermost being into movement' or 'the kernel of their inwardness into action' (van der Veen 1965: 67). For instance, thoughts are said to be generated in this way and to leave the body finally in the form of words. In fact, the truth of the resulting discourse depends on the ability of the speaker to retain and reinforce the original motion (*ullisu kada*, 'rotate the words'). In addition, rotating the words also imposes a specific order: there is always a beginning, a middle, and an end, and a story must be told from root to tip. As it can cause illness and death, mixing the order would be risking more than incomprehension. Like words, actions manifest and embody the rotation of the inner kernel; if an undertaking is to be completed, the necessary actions must be carried out from root to tip, around a centre.

As with pimples and spots, words, actions and thoughts are rooted in, and emerge from, the body. Rather than concealing or masking its reality, they constitute signs of material implication and correlation, indices which both signify the corporality of a particular body and are inscribed in its materiality. Within this framework, to borrow Frank's expression, a human does not so much 'have' a soul (according to Christians, the correct translation of *deata*) or certain thoughts as 'produces these in the medium of the body' (1991: 46; cf. Feher 1989: 14–15; Bourdieu 1977: 87–95). The reality of this production does not present itself in a series of arbitrary signs: it is these signs. In the relation between thinking and speaking, for instance, one's words manifest and embody one's thoughts; and, in their turn, one's thoughts are manifestations and embodiments of the inner kernel and its rotating action.

Even the soul, to borrow from Tazi's discussion (1989: 536) of Tertullian and his implicit adherence to the Stoic doctrine (*Nihil enim si non corpus*), 'does not

9. According to some information, it is the wind, in the form of 'breath', which initiates the rotating action of the inner kernel as soon as it enters the body for the first time.

juxtapose itself to the body, but rather appears as a kind of double that adapts itself to its container and retains its qualities in every part of the body it occupies'. As in archaic Greece, Toraja corporality 'does not acknowledge a body/soul distinction, nor does it establish a radical break between the natural and the supernatural' (Vernant 1989: 21). Like one's actions or thoughts, the life spirit is attributed to, and embedded in, the material arrangement of one's body.

Thus, to return to the initial theme of this essay, although the Toraja, like the peoples of Amazonia, separate the domains of inside and outside, they do not perceive this separation as an antithesis between reality and appearance. There is no dichotomy between being and appearing. Indeed, in all of its attributes, appearance is a bearer of being. Signs are endowed with significance because they are endowed with life. Rooted in and emerging from the body, they reveal its foundation, document its arrangement, and render its potency visible. Rather than providing 'a means for expressing the varieties and intricacies of human nature' (Rivière 1994: 261), clothes and coverings, just like words and actions, or wrinkles and furrows, form an integral part of it. Rather than simply 'expressing', they both manifest and embody it.

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## ON THE HORIZONS OF A NEW DISCIPLINE: EARLY WOMEN SOCIOLOGISTS IN GERMANY

THERESA WOBBE

### I

IN the introduction to his *Sociology* (1908), Georg Simmel describes the new discipline, which was still in the process of carving out its territory alongside other disciplines, as the El Dorado of the homeless and uprooted. Simmel himself knew very well that both Jews and women belonged to those groups for which sociology, as a new field of knowledge, was opening up intellectual experiments and professional training.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the first women sociologists entered German academia simultaneously with the new discipline of sociology itself.<sup>2</sup>

Almost forty years later, Viola Klein, born in Vienna in 1908, described these two phenomena in a similar way. Klein, who received her first Ph.D. in literature from the University of Prague in 1937, emigrated to Britain in 1938, where she wrote her second dissertation, in sociology, with Karl Mannheim (Sayers 1989; Kettler and Meja 1993).

1. See Simmel's classic text on the ambivalence of the 'stranger' in modern society (1908, 1950). With regard to Simmel's reflections on women and outsiders, see Coser 1977; on Simmel and social theory, see Frisby 1992.

2. On the emergence of sociology between 'literature and science' in Germany in comparison with Great Britain and France, see Lepenies 1988.

In her book, *The Feminine Character* (1946), she stresses the dilemma of equality in modern society.<sup>3</sup> As newcomers, it was almost impossible for women, Jews or immigrants to enter the established professions. Instead, they depended on the emergence of innovative fields in order to obtain professional positions. Klein argues that during the nineteenth century, two newcomers, social reform and the women's movement, shared important similarities due to their break with traditional ideas of social order. In her words, 'the humanitarian interests which formed the starting point of social research, and practical social work itself, actually provided the back door through which women slipped into public life' (1946: 17).

These observations by Simmel and Klein form the point of departure for this survey of the first generation of women sociologists in Germany. My intention is to make a contribution to the history of sociology and of women sociologists in the formative years of the discipline in early twentieth-century Germany. The connections between modernity, knowledge and gender relations in the field of an emerging academic discipline will be illuminated. In the following sections I will first present a framework situating female sociologists born between 1884 and 1895 as a particular intellectual and political generation, and secondly offer as examples the intellectual projects of Frieda Wunderlich and Mathilde Vaerting.<sup>4</sup>

3. In 1946 another book by a German-speaking émigré was published in the field of sociology. This was *Women and a New Society* by Charlotte Luetkens (Mendelsohn-Bartoldy), a former student of Alfred and Max Weber (see *Biographisches Handbuch* 1980). Luetkens received her Ph.D. in 1921 from Heidelberg University. Among early women sociologists, she linked politics, journalism and scholarship. Together with her husband Gerhart Luetkens, she emigrated to Britain and was involved in the circles of the Social Democratic Party in exile. She succeeded in obtaining a professional position as a lecturer at the University of London (1937–49), during which period she worked as Mannheim's research assistant. However, from different sociological perspectives, Klein and Luetkens focused on modernity and gender relations from the point of view of historical and social change. Luetkens's book deals with the transformation of the personal and social type of woman, a change which took place from the nineteenth-century Victorian female ideal to the modern woman of the 1930s and 1940s. The book was deeply inspired by social and political changes in Britain, which seemed to promise new social and personal horizons to women. Against the background of the emerging welfare state, Luetkens identifies shaping gender relations and modified ways of inclusion.

4. The arguments in this paper are based on my research project 'Frühe Soziologinnen (1920–1960): Intellektueller Aufbruch, institutionelle Hindernisse, Politische Zäsuren' (Early Women Sociologists, 1920–1960: Intellectual Departure, Institutional Obstacles and Political Ruptures), submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Free University Berlin in May 1995 as a habilitation thesis.

## II

Professional women sociologists belong to the first generation of female scholars who were able to make a university career in Germany, where women obtained the right to work as professors in academic institutions after only 1920. Following Karl Mannheim's concept of generation (1928), these women formed a generation because they established a specific relationship with the political events and social opportunities of their time. Their entry into the academic profession took place against the same background. They could enrol as students and become members of the academic community only in roundabout ways. Only from the academic year 1908/9 could they enrol regularly as students at universities in Prussia, the largest state in the German Empire.<sup>5</sup>

However, the First World War provided further steps towards modernization with regard to the integration of women into the work force and the professions. The political change from empire to republic signalled reform in several respects. For the first time, women were offered access to professorships at German universities. The main requirement in obtaining a chair had been the habilitation thesis, which at the end of the nineteenth century had become the normal requirement for obtaining the *Venia Legendi* and with it a professorship (Schmeiser 1994). The habilitation can be described as a cognitive and social process of socialization into the academic community. It formed the most powerful instrument of self-recruitment and social closure the academic community possessed.

In view of the German tradition of *Bildungsbürgertum* ('the educated classes') and the social content of the notion of the *Akademiker* ('academics'), we know that the status of university graduates was more than just possession of professional skills or particular knowledge. The *Akademiker* were at the core of the social strata forming the specific cultural milieu which M. Rainer Lepsius, with reference to Max Weber, identified as *die ständische Vergesellschaftung des Bildungsbürgertums* ('the corporate socialization of the advanced classes') (Lepsius 1992, Ringer 1969, Mommsen 1987, Clark 1987). With regard to the cultural aspects of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Huerkamp and Lepsius point to the relevance of the division of labour between the sexes. In contrast to the men, who produced public status and power, the women of the *Bildungsbürgertum* continually reproduced this milieu with regard to socialization, marriage patterns and cultural conventions (Huerkamp 1994a, 1994b).<sup>6</sup>

In 1920, the highest official in the Prussian Ministry of Education, Carl-Heinrich Becker, issued a decree that women were no longer to be excluded from

5. For a comparison of the participation of women scholars in Britain, see Perrone 1993; with regard to the United States, see Rossiter 1982.

6. On the historical traces of the gendered dimension of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, see Frevert 1989.



participation in the habilitation.<sup>7</sup> Thus the Weimar Republic introduced several reforms which opened the gates to academic and professional careers for women scholars. Besides the habilitation, the *Berufsbeamtentum* ('tenured civil service') also became accessible to women, though with certain restrictions. The celibacy traditionally required of women in this professional field, as for instance for teachers, was only partly abolished (Albisetti 1986).

The Weimar Republic also brought about a change in cultural respects. Karl Mannheim identified this process in his well-known phrase 'die Demokratisierung des Geistes' ('the democratization of the mind') (1928, 1936). Margarete Susman focused on the symbolic horizon when she pointed out that the change in gender relations implied a 'struggle over language and imagery' (1926: 144).<sup>8</sup> With the rise of National Socialism, this political and cultural process was ruptured. Many of the first women scholars in Germany were dismissed from their university positions. Out of a total of seventy-two female teaching scholars at German universities, thirty had to leave their posts because of the Nazis' *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*, or 'Law for recreating the tenured civil service' (Habeth 1985).

In addition to these external factors, the first generation of women scholars participated in the same professional frameworks and patterns. According to Gabi Förder-Hoff, despite these changes most women during the first three decades of the twentieth century did not establish careers when they entered academia. As a result, the experiences of this generation were shaped by a lack of collective professional experience and of professional precursors. We may compare this generation with the 'heroic' type of 'female warrior' to whom Marianne Weber (1917) introduces us in her essay 'Der Typenwandel der studierenden Frau' (Changing types of female student), in which she focuses on the German female student who had to fight her entry into university by herself. Weber's 'heroic type' provides a useful description of the first generation of women scholars. Through their great persistence and endurance, the first female professors overcame a great variety of problems. Their actions were shaped by the knowledge that they belonged to the 'first' for whom the barriers to a university career had been raised. To define this generation as pioneers and warriors touches the very heart of the matter.

Most of these women received their fundamental political inspiration from the feminist movement of the German Empire. They were part of an emerging professional generation within an expanding women's movement linked to the development of social reform and social research. Once again we may refer to Weber's essay, where she describes the disposition of the heroic type as a

7. The decree was administered by the philosopher Edith Stein, previously assistant to Edmund Husserl (see Wobbe 1996b); for the correspondence between Stein and Becker, see Wobbe 1995.

8. Susman's statement has a specific connotation in the context of the German cultural tradition of literature; see Lepenies 1988.

'powerful virginity'. The first generation of woman scholars also demonstrated this disposition, which offered both moral strength and innovative power. In addition, the friendships and networks which emerged between these women created a context for new patterns of acceptance and solidarity, allowing them to develop social concepts of womanhood and female roles transcending those of family life.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the first female sociologists interacted within a framework, the normative basis of which had already been established before 1914.

With regard to this group of women, we can define the term 'generation' even more precisely. According to Hans Joas (1992), new generations contribute new motives and paradigms which often result from specific generational experiences and become productive in intergenerational communication. The feminist movement provided something like a catalyst while linking ideas of social reform to those of social research. Against this background, a new cognitive generation tried to connect their academic careers and intellectual projects to ideas of social reform and to the women's movement.<sup>10</sup>

In defining this first generation of women sociologists as a group, precise criteria are needed. With regard to the distinctive history of German sociology, that is, its institutional formation late in history, I have delineated the pool of possible entrants according to criteria laid down by Dirk Käsler (1984; also Deegan 1991), defining as sociologists those who fulfil at least one of the following five criteria:

- (1) occupation of a chair in sociology and/or teaching sociology
- (2) membership of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie* (the German Sociological Society)
- (3) co-authorship of sociological articles or textbooks
- (4) self-definition as a sociologist
- (5) definition by others as a sociologist

Käsler (1984: 449ff.) distinguishes five generations in early German sociology, the grandfathers (1850–9), fathers (1860–9), sons (1870–9), grandsons (1880–9) and great-grandsons (1890–9). He places the first professional sociologists in the cohort of the grandsons and defines the last generation, that of the great-grandsons, as those who represent the sober mind of the twentieth century. The First World War meant a break in their intellectual and political world-view.

As we have seen, in comparison with their male colleagues, female scholars had restricted access to the resources of higher learning and the professions. Because of these unequal opportunities, we first find professional women in the field of German sociology in what might be called the generation of the

9. On Germany, see Stoehr 1991; on the United States, see Vicinus 1985, Cott 1987; for an international and comparative perspective, see Bosch and Klostermann 1990, Offen 1988.

10. On the link between social reform, social research, and the women's movement in the United States, see Fitzpatrick 1990, Kish Sklar 1991, Ross 1996.

granddaughters and great-granddaughters. The former include Mathilde Vaerting (1884), Frieda Wunderlich (1884), and Charlotte Leubuscher (1888), the latter Käthe Bauer-Mengelberg (1894), Charlotte Lorenz (1895), Charlotte Luetkens (1896), and Gertrud Savelsberg (1899). In what follows, I will discuss as examples the careers of the first two members of this cohort—that is, Vaerting and Wunderlich.

### III

Mathilde Vaerting (1884–1977) was one of the first two female professors to receive a chair at a German university. Her career is a striking example of how political constellations and intellectual projects were linked to each other in the context of the Weimar Republic. It was made possible by political reform politics in higher education (Ringer 1969); it came to an end with the rise of the Nazi regime.

In 1923 Vaerting was appointed to a chair in education at the University of Jena. Her employment was part of a Sachsen-Thüringen government programme to reform teacher training (see Kraul 1987; Wobbe 1992, 1994, 1995). The faculty never accepted their new academic colleague and immediately organized opposition to her, led by Ludwig Plate, one of the editors of the *Archiv für Rassenhygiene* and occupant of the chair of Ernst Haeckel. Plate attacked Vaerting's competence and her suitability as a scholar and university professor. In 1933 she was dismissed from the University on the basis of the *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*, recently decreed by the Nazis. Vaerting was thus one of those professors who were dismissed because of their lack of political correctness.

Vaerting began as a scholar in the field of psychology and education. In the early 1920s she published her two-volume *Neubegründung der Psychologie von Mann und Weib* (New foundation of the psychology of man and woman), (1921, 1923). In her approach, the term 'feminine character' occurs as a cipher for power relations between men and women. Vaerting considered attributes ascribed to women as a code for the hierarchy between the sexes. In introducing this perspective, she was challenging the dominant natural-science and medical discourse on gender difference (on this discourse, see Honegger 1991, Klein 1946), using a sociological approach to deconstruct conventional discourse on the 'feminine character'. Her contemporaries made reference to the bold and striking shape of Vaerting's concept: Alice Rühle-Gerstel, for instance, described her work as a threat to the usual world-view (1932).

By concentrating on the sociology of power, Vaerting went on to deconstruct the connection between power, body and knowledge. At the end of the 1920s she published her two-volume *Macht der Massen* (Power of the masses), (1928, 1929).

As in her former research, she was interested in the stability and productivity of power relations. The main term she uses in her ideas on power was the 'construction of difference', which she saw as a 'factor of power' correlating with inequality and social distinctions. It was thus a powerful instrument of social closure.

With regard to the contemporary sociological discourse of the 1920s, I would like to focus on just two of the most striking aspects of Vaerting's theoretical conceptualizations. First, the idea of the 'construction of difference' between the sexes formed a basis for describing power relations between other social groups, for instance classes, races or ethnic groups and generations. In doing this, Vaerting demonstrated correlations between the stereotypes attributed to those groups. Women, Blacks and Jews, for instance, are all described as passive, emotional and irrational, and they also resemble one another with regard to the ways in which they are segregated and separated from other groups. By pointing out that they do not have the same opportunities for mobility as classes, Vaerting showed how social constructions could be naturalized and could thus cast light on the social construction of reality as a process which the social sciences had made their own (Mannheim 1936; Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Secondly, what makes her study innovative is her view of the coherence and stable dimension of power. Vaerting stressed the effective and productive dimensions of power in the individual him- or herself. According to her, the 'construction of difference' makes possible the coherence and continuity of the social order. It forms a constitutive process of how individuals create their social reality, that is, it forms a part of the self-interpretation of the individual. The 'construction of difference' not only reproduces the social order, in doing so it achieves validity and is accepted. The originality of Vaerting's approach therefore lies in her subtle perspectives on the 'productivity of power' (cf. Foucault) and the distinctive dimensions of power (cf. Bourdieu).

The political rupture of 1933 caused Vaerting's work to be forgotten in several respects. After being dismissed from her chair and excluded from the academic community, she never again obtained a chair at a German university right up until her death in 1977. The reception of her sociological work and theoretical approach, which was just starting in the early 1930s, was interrupted by the rise of National Socialism. As we now know, this meant the end of its reception altogether. My concern here has been to situate Vaerting in the context of the history of sociology and to provide her with a place in the academic memory of the discipline.

Frieda Wunderlich (1884–1965) is the second sociologist I would like to introduce here. Like Vaerting, she was able to make a career as sociologist thanks to the political reforms of Weimar Germany, though unlike her, her status as a student of Franz Oppenheimer meant that she belonged to an academic school as well as to a political party, the Deutsche Demokratische Partei; she was a member of the Prussian Parliament from 1930 to 1932. Wunderlich was one of the relevant

figures of the Weimar social reforms, and edited the famous journal *Soziale Praxis* (Social practice).

Wunderlich belonged to those women of her generation who obtained a Ph.D. in the field of national economy. It was against this background that this generation tried to combine their normative ideas of social reform and feminist movements. As a member of the first generation of female sociologists, Wunderlich has most in common with her colleague Beatrice Webb (1858–1943). Though the Berlin scholar was not a socialist like Webb, she had the same deep insight that social research was one of the most powerful instruments for changing social inequality.<sup>11</sup>

Wunderlich's book, *Hugo Münsterberg* (1920), and her theoretical study, *Produktivität* (1926), were well received by the academic community (see Wobbe 1995). She also became an expert on social security and social policies generally. In the German context, she wrote the first article on 'Die Frau als Subjekt und Objekt der Sozialpolitik' (Women as subject and object of social policies), (1924), which summarized the results of social reform with regard to women in Germany.<sup>12</sup> The article is sober and sceptical on account of the various economic crises the Weimar Republic went through.

In 1930, Wunderlich obtained a professorship in the field of sociology and social policies at the newly established Staatliches Berufspädagogisches Institut (Public institute for vocational education) in Berlin. This was the splendid height of her career. In 1933 she was dismissed as professor because of her Jewish descent. During these dramatic first months of the Nazi regime, she decided to leave her country. As a prominent democrat involved in the social reforms of the Weimar Republic, a feminist and a Jew, she could not expect to obtain any other professional position in such a climate of political pressure and hatred. In June 1933 she was offered a professorship at the New School for Social Research in New York, which she accepted immediately. She belonged to the 'Mayflower Group', that is, the founding group of the Graduate Faculty of Social and Political Science at the School. Of these first eleven professors, of whom she knew most from the Oppenheimer class, she was the only woman.<sup>13</sup>

Wunderlich worked in the economics and sociology department, giving classes on social security, social policy, war economy, and the labour movement. Like her colleagues, she was eager to understand and analyse the rise of National Socialism

11. On Beatrice Webb, social research and social reform, see Lepenies 1988, Lewis 1991.

12. On social policies, the welfare state and women, see Bock and Thane (eds.) 1991, Stoehr 1991.

13. For the history of the New School for Social Research, see Alvin Johnson's autobiography (1952). For the history of the Graduate Faculty of the New School of Social Research, see Krohn 1987. For the cognitive and social aspects of German scholars in exile during the Nazi period, see Srubar 1988. Kruse has *inter alia* reconstructed the historical sociology of Franz Oppenheimer (1990).

in Germany. In her view, National Socialism represented a new mentality, something like a substitute for a religion, in the sense that the totalitarian claim implied a 'belief' in the higher value of the German race. Rights were no longer a part of the liberal tradition or of the political context of belonging to a nation state but of membership of a mystic community. Wunderlich considered this 'belief' to imply a relationship of violence. To her, totalitarianism meant the undermining of the political basis of modern society and its social institutions.

With regard to the family and the position of women under National Socialism, Wunderlich took a clear view in stressing the shifting boundaries between the public and the private. National Socialism was destroying the institution of the family by claiming the whole sphere of education as the preserve of the state. Thus women regressed to a position which only allowed them the technical roles of housework and child-raising within the family. However, the family as a mental and social unity, as a medium of socialization, had also become a political organization. She also examined the population and war-economy politics of Nazi Germany (see Wobbe 1995).

As a professor, Wunderlich would have created quite an impression with the young female students who were starting to study sociology at German universities after 1945, giving them an orientation and even professional identification with regard to their own academic careers. But she did not return to Germany and work in universities there. Instead she became a US citizen and was grateful for the career opportunities she received there. Also, she noticed cultural differences between Germany and the United States with regard to gender relations, especially the higher social status of American women and the higher acceptance of social heterogeneity and of the plurality of lifestyles: 'In Germany the fundamental principle is that woman is meant for marriage, while in the United States woman's life is regarded as an end in itself which may find completion without marriage.'<sup>14</sup>

However, Wunderlich's situation at the New School was not always easy. First, she had to fight for her existence, which included those of her sister Eva, her brother Georg and his two children. Secondly, as a scholar with very high academic and ethical standards, she sometimes seems to have come under attack from her German colleagues at the New School. Felicia J. Deyrup, who started her career in 1949 as an assistant professor of economy at the New School, gave me the following description of her:

The status of non-married female scholars was probably higher in the United States than in Germany, but it certainly was peculiar. Male scholars viewed female scholars either as non-entities or [as] nun-like, above academic political life (because most were powerless), or on the contrary, as extremely thorny, dangerous, manipulative people who had to be handled with caution. Dr Wunderlich's male colleagues generally viewed her as being in the last category, partly because she

14. F. Wunderlich, 'Women in Germany and the United States', ms., p. 20, in the Frieda Wunderlich Collection, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, Box2/II/5ab.

had the loyalty of a major administrator, partly [because] she stimulated loyalty and devotion in various people whom she had helped, and partly because of her extremely strong character, her great persistence, and her willingness to wait a long time to achieve important goals. Her patience and endurance gave her enormous strength vis-à-vis her male colleagues.<sup>15</sup>

However, Wunderlich considered her professional situation and the social environment at the New School to be a matter of great luck.

#### IV

The careers of Vaerting and Wunderlich show that women sociologists entered German academia simultaneously with the new discipline of sociology itself. The profession of sociology started to become visible institutionally during the 1920s, thanks to the reform of professional education (Lepsius 1981). Viola Klein (1946) argued that newcomers depend on the emergence of innovative fields in order to obtain professional positions.

Vaerting was hired by a Social Democrat government and received a chair at the University of Jena to carry out a reform of teacher training. Wunderlich received her professorship at the newly established Public Institute for Vocational Education, which itself had been founded in the context of social and educational reform. Thus Vaerting and Wunderlich achieved entry into academic careers thanks to these reform projects.

In Germany, the profession of sociology started to progress beyond its rudimentary beginnings only in the Weimar period (see Lepsius 1981). By contrast, American sociology had been recognized as a distinct academic profession with the founding of the first graduate department of sociology at the University of Chicago in 1892. From the beginning, women participated in sociological education and teaching.<sup>16</sup>

The change of political system in 1933 interrupted the institutionalization of sociology in Germany. In addition, many scholars of the first professional female generation were dismissed from the universities. The stories of Vaerting and Wunderlich offered an insight into the different forms an interruption of one's

15. Letter to author, 14th May 1994. Deyrup is the daughter of Alvin Johnson, then President of the New School.

16. See Deegan 1981, 1988; Fitzpatrick 1990; Bulmer *et al.* 1991. Since American sociology emerged in another institutional and cognitive context as regards the academic system (see Wobbe 1995) and the social sciences (Ross 1991), women had more possibilities to participate in the formative years of the subject than in Germany. However, American women scholars also had to face male-dominated professions (Rossiter 1982, Cott 1987).

career might take. The newcomers were pushed out of the system. Vaerting stayed in Germany but was never appointed to a chair. The reception of her theoretical work ended. Wunderlich did not return to Germany, nor did her sociological work.

A final example of how political rupture in Germany shaped careers is that of Charlotte Leubuscher, who also belonged to this generation. Like Wunderlich, Leubuscher was dismissed as professor because of her Jewish origins and emigrated to Britain. Before 1933 her professional career had been a success. In 1921 she became the first woman in Germany to obtain a habilitation in national economy at the University of Berlin, where she worked as assistant professor. Later, in 1929, she obtained a professorship. When she emigrated to Britain, she was able to revitalize her links with Girton College, Cambridge, where she held a scholarship from 1934 to 1936. Since her main field of research was the social politics and social policies of Britain, she had many personal ties and institutional contacts, which allowed her to obtain scholarships like the one she was granted by the London School of Economics from 1942 to 1944. However, she never obtained a university professorship again.<sup>1</sup>

Only in the 1960s did sociology in Germany begin to reconstruct itself following the earlier ruptures in the century. This reconstruction was initiated by a generation whose personal experiences did not reach back to the Weimar Republic. The rise of a new generation of female scholars also reopened perspectives on the history of the discipline. This new generation changed the agenda of sociology in the context of the second feminist movement. In thus changing its horizons, the history of sociology is also changing the academic memory of the discipline.

17. On Leubuscher, see *Biographisches Handbuch* 1980; Wobbe 1995, 1996a.

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## JASO OCCASIONAL PAPERS No. 9

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### **GOVERNING THE NUER: Documents in Nuer History and Ethnography, 1922-1931, by Percy Coriat**

Edited by Douglas H. Johnson

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Douglas H. Johnson, a historian, is a Research Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford. He has worked in the Southern Sudan since 1972, the same year he began his research on the Nuer. He is the author of *Nuer Prophets* (Oxford, 1994).

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## OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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### **ABSTRACTS OF THESES IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1994**

Note: The research theses in social and cultural anthropology listed here are those for which higher degrees were awarded by the University of Oxford in 1994. The text of each abstract is as supplied by the author in the copy of the thesis held in the Bodleian Library of the University. Those wishing to consult a particular thesis should apply to the Bodleian or to the British Library Lending Division (BLLD), which should be able to supply microfilm copies or reprints on request. BLLD references numbers have been provided where available. 'Restricted' theses are not available for consultation until the date specified.

SIMONE ALMOND ABRAM, *Recollections and Recreations: Tourism, Heritage and History in the French Auvergne*. D.Phil.

This thesis is concerned with how people represent the past, and how such representations become symbolic of local identity. Although written history is generally seen to be authoritative, other means of interpretation and representation of the past contrast with it. In particular, heritage has become a commonplace attitude to how the past should be preserved in the present, and its links with tourism are considered in relation to expressions of local-ness.

The ethnography is based on a period of participant observation in a predominantly rural highland area, the Cantal Department of the Auvergne, but it is not a village study. The thesis reflects the variety of fieldwork undertaken, both in the network of tourism administration based in the Cantal's capital and in a valley commune. The Cantal is in economic and demographic crisis and has seen drastic depopulation over the past century, so that many people say the past is being revived because the future looks so bleak. However, the past is recollected and re-created in many different ways: in written histories, biographies, at events such as fêtes or in conversation. The thesis addresses the ways in which ideas and

ideologies of heritage, history and tourism are expressed officially and locally, to suggest that there is interaction between the different arenas of understanding and representing the past.

After a preface about the fieldwork, the thesis begins with a review of relevant literature on heritage, history and anthropology, tourism, locality and community. These form the background for three subsequent chapters about different ideas of the Cantal—heritage, tourism, ecomuseums and local histories. The following three chapters consider how these ideas are represented in contrasting ways at local village fêtes run by village groups and in presentations to tourists run by a folklore society.

MUKULIKA BANERJEE, *A Study of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, 1930-47, North-West Frontier Province, British India. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-6148)*

This thesis is a study of the *Khudai khidmatgar* (servants of God) movement in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. The movement lasted seventeen years between 1930 and 1947. This was the principal nationalist movement in the Settled Districts of the Frontier and it was affiliated to the Indian National Congress. This study aims to be a social history of the *Khudai khidmatgar* movement based on two principal sources. The first are the archival holdings in the India Office Library, London, of secret and confidential reports and correspondence between the British officials in the North-West Frontier Province, British India, and those in Whitehall. The second source is a set of seventy interviews that I held in the North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan, over three trips made between 1991 and 1993 with old men who were active participants in the *Khudai khidmatgar* movement.

The movement was based on an ethic of *khidmat* or service. It was started initially as a movement of self-reform and then grew into a political movement for independence from British rule, a well-organized task force of thousands of non-violent 'soldiers' who were deployed in extensive civil disobedience activities.

This thesis is the first historical account to ask rank-and-file members about why they joined, what they did, and how they perceived the ethics and aims of the movement. The main problematic of the thesis is: how were notoriously violent Pukhtuns converted to an ethic of non-violence? I show that this process used and transformed older social structures and combined Islamic revisionism with a redefinition of the traditional code of honour. The success of these developments shows the inadequacy and essentialism of many previous ethnographic presentations of Pukhtun culture and illustrates the problems which arise when anthropologists ignore modern political developments.

CHRISTINE DANIELS, *Defilement and Purification: Tibetan Buddhist Pilgrims at Bodhnath, Nepal*. D.Phil.

Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage places have long attracted academic interest, but accounts of the people who visit them are scant. This study focuses on pilgrims from Tibet in Bodhnath and examines how they come to assess themselves as defiled and pilgrimage as purificatory. By exploring the notions of 'ordinary people like us', I identify six forms of defilement that preoccupy pilgrims, namely wrongdoing, pollution, supernaturally caused harm, inauspiciousness, ignorance and the condition of being a woman. The journey, in turn, provides a unique combination of purificatory measures that include hardship and religious practices pertaining to the body, speech and mind, as well as blessings from individuals, objects and places regarded as sacred.

The expectations which pilgrims brought with them from Bodhnath, and their attitudes during temporary residence at the site, show an apparent homogeneity of views on pilgrimage, but on closer inspection this breaks down into diverse, though not competing, discourses. The result is a play between a standardized discourse and discursive practice that pilgrims termed 'making use of what is to hand'. Long-term residence in Bodhnath enabled me to observe the resulting ways in which they integrated, or failed to integrate, into the resident Tibetan community.

While these pilgrims invariably assess themselves as hell-bent through defilement, they simultaneously speak of pilgrimage as a happy time. In doing this, I argue, they are expressing a legacy of eschatological beliefs prevalent in the wider society. The legacy reveals attitudes to a range of everyday concerns that rule out the conception of Tibetan pilgrimage as a liminal phenomenon. Consequently, a study of Tibetan pilgrimage may tell us as much about popular concepts of gender and sexuality, for example, as about popular Tibetan practices. In this way we can finally understand how certain persons are constituted as pilgrims and, moreover, how pilgrimage constitutes, for participants, a death-ridden, suffering-laden and consequently happy experience.

MARILYN HERMAN, *Songs, Honour and Identity: The Bet Israel (Ethiopian Jews) in Israel*. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-6370)

The Bet Israel define their identity essentially in honourable terms, and largely in relation to others. Their attributed 'dishonour' in Ethiopia was defined by their perceived lack of link with the land. However, their identity as Bet Israel linked them to Israel.

Established as the Ethiopian 'ethnic group' in Israel, the Bet Israel have become characterized by their connection with Ethiopia. This may limit their honour in negatively determining perceptions of them, and in the absence of family



members who bestow 'belonging'. However, the link with Ethiopia may also be favourably evoked as a medium for the pursuit of honour.

The way in which Bet Israel identity definition is shifting in Israel can also be seen where traditional Bet Israel values associated with the Ethiopian village are essentially upheld by 'elders', defined in contrast to values, attributed to Ethiopian 'townspeople', which are gaining ground among Bet Israel youth.

The Band of Porachet HaTikva displays its ethnic group's concern with honour and aspirations to get ahead in terms of its Ethiopianness. Its repertoire includes honourable song types presented, together with the values expressed within them, as associated with the Bet Israel, and it also includes song types attributed to 'Christians' in the Ethiopian town.

An account of the music and dance of the Band of Porachet HaTikva shows the way in which songs and dance are inextricably linked, and the importance of words in a song, while their conceptualization is characterized by features cited as definitive of their identity.

The Band is expressive of the shift in Bet Israel self-definition in the extent to which it crosses, and to which it remains within the bounds of, comportment traditionally seen as integral to Bet Israel identity.

CHRISTOPHER JOHN HOLDSWORTH, *The Revolution in Anthropology: A Comparative Analysis of the Metaphysics of E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942)*. D.Phil.

The revolutionary changes that occurred in British social anthropology in the 1920s, usually associated with Bronislaw Malinowski, are generally perceived as methodological and epistemological. This thesis argues that fundamentally they were metaphysical: that is, that they involved changes in the basic assumptions about the nature of anthropology's subject-matter. In particular, it argues that the functionalism of the 1920s and 1930s represented a transformation of classical evolutionism's assumptions about reality, human nature, culture and society, and the character of Western and traditional cultures. It is approached through the comparative analysis of the work of two anthropologists who serve as exemplars of the anthropology of their respective periods: Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942).

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I begins with a biographical sketch of E. B. Tylor and traces the development of his ideas within the social and intellectual context of the 1860s and 1870s. This is followed in chapter three by an analysis of his concept of culture and its underlying assumptions. Chapter four examines his view of reality, language and human nature. Chapter five looks at the relationship between the individual and society and the contradictory assumptions underlying moral and intellectual evolution that became apparent in his later work.

Part II follows a similar pattern. It begins with a brief account of the changes that occurred in anthropology between the publication of *Primitive Culture* in 1871

and *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922. The remainder of the chapter traces Malinowski's intellectual development. Chapter seven examines his rejection of the evolutionary thinking of his predecessors and compares his concept of culture with Tylor's. Chapter eight compares his concept of reality and language with Tylor's, and looks at the implications for his anthropology of his view of human beings as essentially emotional and instinctive. Chapter nine examines his assumptions about the nature of society and the relationship between society and the individual and the implications this had for his general approach to understanding other cultures.

In the final chapter, Malinowski's and Tylor's metaphysics are summarized and compared, concluding that Tylor's and Malinowski's assumptions about human nature, culture, society and so on were the antithesis of each other. The suggestion is made that anthropologists need to re-examine some of their assumptions and that Tylor's metaphysics offers a fruitful alternative with respect to dealing with problems of relativism, cultural determinism and subjectivism.

DIANA MARTIN, *Pregnancy and Childbirth among the Chinese of Hong Kong*. D.Phil.

This thesis addresses the management of pregnancy, childbirth and infancy in Hong Kong.

I argue that mothers are distanced from their infants and are not regarded as indispensable to their daily care. In my view this distancing does not represent a major break with earlier practice but is making use, for different ends, of an existing ideology. The patrilineal, patrilocal Chinese family, in which the husband's mother was responsible for organizing the care of the baby, has given way to the modern, socially mobile Hong Kong family, in which the baby's mother is an essential wage-earner. I show that she prefers to return to work rather than to care for the baby on a day-to-day basis.

Hong Kong is an industrialized, urbanized community which has undergone considerable change of community and family structure in the last forty years. Marriage partners are now freely chosen. Despite neolocality, contacts with siblings and extended family remain important. The desired number of children has sharply decreased to two.

Although childbirth takes place in hospital, pregnant women follow traditional pregnancy restrictions and the expected reclusive behaviour for the month after birth. My information has been collected through interviews with women. I enumerate and try to explain the food and activity restrictions that the pregnant woman follows for the sake of her baby. I look at the different styles of birth management in three Hong Kong hospitals, and the reasons for the decline of breast-feeding. The meaning of the traditional behaviour during the month after birth is examined. Finally, I show that family attitudes to offspring in Hong Kong are 'parent-centred' and an infant is thought to have only physical needs. Thus it is acceptable to arrange weekly residential childcare away from the parents' home.

REEM SAD MIKHAIL, *Peasants' Perceptions of Recent Egyptian History*. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-3211)

This thesis focuses on Egyptian peasants' perceptions of recent Egyptian history. It is based mainly on material collected during one year of fieldwork in a village in the Governate of Fayoum. A starting premise is that the representation of peasants in academic literature and in the Egyptian public political discourse has suffered from 'urban bias'. I am concerned with the peasants' 'voice', not only to make up for their absence in official texts, but also because this approach is informative about the contemporary Egyptian village.

The questions with which this study deals are: (1) What is the link between personal experience and perceptions of history? (2) How do concerns of the present influence perceptions of the past? (3) How are political and economic developments at the national, and to some extent international levels reflected at the village level, and how are these developments perceived by peasants? (4) How do experiences and narratives of peasant men articulate the village and national levels, and what effects do these have within the village?

The study concludes that the village is linked to the nation on a structural as well as a discursive level. The villagers attempt to place themselves within national history, and the terms through which they express their ideas about the past are significantly influenced by economic transformations at a macro level. The social memory of Egyptian peasants is inextricably linked to their multiple identities as peasants, members of a powerless class, and as Egyptians.

JOANNA SAVORY, *Curanderismo*, 'Traditional' and 'Modern', in Galicia. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-6377)

This study is concerned with *curanderismo* (healing) in Galicia, N.W. Spain, and its 'modern' counterparts. It is also concerned with the way in which these are seen and represented within the political and religious context of the early 1990s. Traditional *curandismo* has historically been described under the auspices of 'superstition' but now, within the ethnos of *Galeguismo* (concern with Galician ethnicity), it has attained the status of being part of 'authentic Galician culture', while the increasingly popular modern forms, such as tarot-card reading, astrology and parapsychology, tend to be seen as eclectic and outside it.

Images of traditional Galician culture are studied, from the nineteenth century search for origins and the ensuing folkloric material, to present-day literature, magazine articles and television presentations. The research focuses on intensive interview material with a varied group of practitioners and their clients, the skills the practitioners claim to have, their notion of 'power', the *otro mundo* to which they refer, the importance of envy and *mal de ojo*—also the different kinds of 'seeing' involved and the shift from divination to prediction. Why do people visit

*curanderos*, and how do accusations and comparisons function as a way of defining the different discourses involved?

Several wider themes are drawn from the material. The popularity of esoteric themes and the fashion for parapsychology are considered within the history of European occult movements and neo-gnosticism. The role of the audio-visual material is analysed in relation to the function of 'seeing' and it is argued that, allied to this, there is a tendency towards the de-location of the symbolic, and the emergence of an abstract monism in the notion of 'energies'. Divergent 'traditionalist' and 'modernist' tendencies are identified within the plural discourses of *curanderismo*, which link with wider political and cultural trends, such as the tension between the concern for ethnic traditionalism and the desire for progress and modernization.

VERONICA STRANG, *Uncommon Ground: Concepts of Landscape and Human-Environmental Relations in Far North Queensland*. D.Phil.

This thesis is concerned with the human-environmental relationship and the creation of environmental values—why and how different groups value and care for their land in completely different ways and, in particular, what factors encourage or discourage the development of affective values and attachment to the land. This essentially cultural question is examined through a comparative analysis of two groups on the Cape York Peninsula of Far North Queensland: the Aboriginal community in Kowanyama, and the White pastoralists on the surrounding cattle stations. The thesis also considers the long-term conflicts over land in Australia, which have brought to the surface their diverse environmental values. The dynamics of their respective environmental relationships are explored, using the concept of landscape to examine the ways in which an affective response to the land is both individually and culturally constructed. By providing a common idiom, this concept shows how different values are located in the land according to social, cultural, historical and ecological factors.

The thesis outlines the human cognitive processes through which values are acquired, and considers both the universal and cultural factors that lead to the development of particular values. However, the major emphasis is on the cultural aspects of the human-environmental dynamic. It therefore focuses on the historical background of both groups, and the various cultural forms through which environmental values are created and expressed. These include land use and economic modes; socio-spatial organization; language, knowledge and socialization; forms of oral and visual representation; and cosmological beliefs and systems of law.

The central argument of the thesis is that human-environmental relations are largely an expression of cultural values; that these recur consistently in all cultural forms which, acting upon each other, form a coherent pattern of value. In

articulation with universal human imperatives and ecological pressures, this creates a particular 'mode' of interaction with the environment.

The main aim of the thesis is to explore two very different modes of environmental interaction and abstract from this analysis the particular factors that influence the development of affective concern for the environment.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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JAMES J. FOX (ed.), *Inside Austronesian Houses: Perspectives on Domestic Designs for Living*, Canberra: Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University in Association with the Comparative Austronesian Project 1993. ix, 237 pp., References, Figures, Photographs. Aus\$25.00.

The eight papers that comprise this volume share a common purpose, which is, in the words of the editor James Fox, 'to examine the spatial organization of a variety of Austronesian houses and to relate the domestic design of these houses to the social and ritual practices of the specific groups who reside in them'. The houses considered here include three types of longhouse from Borneo, traditional Minangkabau houses in west Sumatra, Maori meeting houses, and the domestic architecture of Roti in eastern Indonesia and Goodenough Island in the D'Entrecasteaux Group.

It is impossible to do justice to the ethnographic richness and diversity that this collection of essays represents in the space available, but some common themes and points of interest can be identified. First and foremost, the Austronesian house defines a social group. In the case of the Bornean longhouse, the entire community is housed beneath one roof, which makes for a singularly close, not to say intense, form of social interaction. Christine Helliwell characterizes the Gerai longhouse of Kalimantan Barat as a 'community of voices', where light and sound emanating from neighbouring family apartments draws the community together: flimsy partition walls between apartments ensure that neighbours are always conscious of one another's presence. In this respect, an unoccupied apartment interrupts this flow of light and sound along the length of the longhouse, and it is ritually prescribed that a fire must be lit by family representatives in the hearth of empty apartments every five or six days to ensure that the sense of communality stretching from one end of a longhouse to the other is not permanently ruptured. Helliwell writes: 'An apartment without light, without fire, is most essentially an apartment without human beings; it is this lack which dismays the members of neighbouring apartments.'

The house as a place of residence is perhaps the least important aspect of Austronesian architecture: the Austronesian house is a ritually ordered structure through which a number of key ideas and cultural concerns are refracted. Indeed, one might be forgiven for thinking that the function of the house as a dwelling-place is of almost secondary significance to its ritual and symbolic value for many of the societies discussed.

A concern with ancestral 'origins' constitutes a key epistemological orientation in Austronesian societies, legitimizing group membership, inheritance rights and succession to office. In the case of the Lahanan of Sarawak, East Malaysia, discussed by Jennifer Alexander, longhouse headmen derive their political authority by virtue of their being able to trace a direct genealogical link to a founding ancestor. In many

instances, the house itself is identified as an ancestral embodiment of the social group it represents. The Maori meeting houses described by Toon van Meijl actually represent the body of an eponymous ancestor, typically from the legendary Polynesian homeland Hawaiki.

The idea of origin is commonly expressed in terms of a botanical metaphor—the notion of organic growth provides a vehicle for the representation of a number of important Austronesian concepts, including notions of precedence, continuity and process. The method and manner of house construction readily lends itself to the expression of such ideas: house posts are ‘planted’ and other structural timbers arranged according to their direction of growth to create a ritually ordered space where ridgepoles, roof beams, the hearth, ladders and other house parts are imbued with symbolic or cosmological significance. There are also a common set of spatial coordinates: dichotomies between inside and outside, east and west, front and back, and upstream and downstream. Together these structural elements and spatial divisions provide a symbolic lexicon for the framing of cultural concerns; for Fox the Austronesian house is a rhetorical device through which key cultural ideas and values are conceptualized and articulated.

The Austronesian house, however, does more than simply signify; it is an instrument of that which it represents, in that as a physical structure it provides a means of actualizing these ideas on the ground, so to speak. Structural elements provide the foci of ritual action—what Fox calls ‘ritual attractors’—which together with the spatial divisions within the house constitute a symbolic framework for ritual action. In this respect, Fox suggests, the Austronesian house may be considered the ‘theatre of a specific culture, the temple of its ritual activities’.

The representational capacity of the Austronesian house is virtually unlimited and speaks for almost every aspect of human experience, literally from the cradle to the grave. Among the Tetum of Timor the house is identified as a womb, while in Roti the dead were traditionally buried under the house. Among the Minangkabau of western Sumatra, the house is very much identified as the domain of women, and Celia Ng describes how the organization of domestic space within the Minangkabau house in terms of sleeping, seating and eating arrangements charts the social trajectory of women from childhood, through marriage and motherhood, to old age in this matrilineal and matrifocal society.

An important concept in Austronesian architecture is the house as microcosm. Among the Iban of Sarawak, the longhouse and its immediate environs are ritually identified with the mythical geography of the spirit world. Clifford Sather describes how ‘longhouse space is transformed by Iban rituals of birth and death from the familiar mundane setting of everyday social life to a symbolically organized landscape, displaying basic social distinctions and mirroring a series of superimposed realities, both seen and unseen’. He adds: ‘Everyday social space is merged with unseen “spiritual” space, and through the ritual organization of the longhouse, the underlying Iban social experience is given explicit form, while at the same time this order is transformed to conjoin the seen realities of everyday social life with the invisible realities of the soul, spirits and gods.’

While the symbolism of the Austronesian house rests on esoteric knowledge, conversely the house may itself be considered a mnemonic device for recalling and

structuring this knowledge. In the case of the domestic architecture of Goodenough Island, the house is also a place for concealing knowledge—the hidden interior is the repository for magic and magical paraphernalia, which are inheritable property. Michael Young characterises the Kalauna house as a ‘house of secrets’.

Although one finds a common repertoire of symbolic elements in traditional Austronesian architecture, the significance or meaning of these elements differs between societies and even within the same society according to context. In this last respect one should be careful to note that the house as a model for cultural values and social orientations is not a total system: one should not conflate different levels of significance and contexts of meaning. In Sather’s words, the Iban longhouse represents a ‘plurality of symbolic orders’ which are constantly ‘created and re-created in ritual’.

Roxana Waterson’s concluding essay draws together many of the themes in this collection and questions some of the more entrenched analytical categories and past tendencies towards rigid and over-systematized structural analyses. Waterson provides a number of contrasting examples and stresses instead ‘contextual relativity’.

In conclusion, this collection of essays represents the best kind of comparative anthropology, that is, a close examination of a clearly defined field of study within a single language-group. The fascination lies partly in the richness of the subject-matter and partly in the way one sees a set of common, or related, ideas and elements transformed and developed in response to local situations and specific cultural histories. Not all of the contributions have the same degree of engagement with the subject as Sather’s richly textured study of the Iban longhouse, but in their way they all have something to offer and interest the reader.

JULIAN DAVISON

JONATHAN WEBBER (ed.), *Jewish Identities in the New Europe* (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization; eds. Philip Alexander, Nicholas de Lange and Jonathan Israel), London and Washington, DC: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, for the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies 1994. xix, 307 pp., Index, Figures, Tables. £16.95.

This volume brings to publication the proceedings of the conference ‘Jewish Identities in the New Europe’, held at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in July 1992. Twenty-five essays and an introduction by Jonathan Webber face the task of unravelling, delineating or simply presenting the problems encountered by Jews and non-Jews in seeking to understand the meaning of Jewishness in post-Soviet Union Europe. The book is divided into seven sections, which break the study of Jewish identity into component parts reflecting the intellectual and geographical diversity of the topic.

In his introduction, Webber speaks to the volume both as a vehicle for documenting the ‘remarkable diversity of Jewish life’ and as a testament to the diversity of



frameworks in which Jewishness can be conceptualized. He proposes an overall framework for understanding Jewish identity as a dialectical process that unfolds between continuous and discontinuous conceptions of Jewish tradition. Hence, the introduction posits a solution to the Herculean challenge faced by anthropologists wishing to privilege neither orthodox or heterodox structures of opinion, while at the same time seeking to establish a working model which inevitably violates the authority of one or more of the identities which it objectifies. Admirably, Webber attempts a definitive statement neither on Jews nor on Europe and acknowledges the obvious lacunae in the book ('There is no essay devoted to Greece, or to Switzerland, Belgium or Holland...Jewish youth culture, the *ba'al teshuvah* (Jewish revivalist) movement, the Jewish *yeshiva* world of talmudic seminaries, Jewish fundamentalism, Jewish secularism, the impact of Lubavitch Hasidim..., the role of women' [p. 31]).

Webber's introduction constitutes a much-needed sociological perspective on Modern Jewish Studies by bringing the volume itself within the discourse of contemporary Jewishness. This transforms the book into a meaningful primary resource for a reflexive sociology concerned with discursive expressions of identity in literate societies. Thus, the book should concern a readership far beyond the communal boundaries of Jewish Studies. Furthermore, the tension between Webber's opening essay and the volume it introduces should be of general interest not only to ethnographers of Jewish communities, but also to social anthropologists interested in the relationship between ethnicity and objectifying structures of analysis.

For example, many of the essays juxtapose the clarity of diachronic studies of Jewish society with the mystery of synchronic readings of the experience of European Jews, including essays by Beloff, Schweid, Kovacs, Schnapper, Trigano, Alderman and Wistrich, as well as Webber's own essay, 'Modern Jewish Identities'. Similarly, discussion of the past gives way to speculations on the future. Several contributors discuss the future of interfaith relations, including an essay on Jewish-Catholic relations by Pier Francesco Fumagalli, and an essay on the implications of the New Age Movement for Jews by Margaret Brearley. Even discussions of the future, however, are rooted in analyses of the past. Theological postulations on the future of Jewish law and leadership, for example, are contingent upon institutionally recognized proficiency in Jewish historiography, symbolized by the theological-humanistic title 'Rabbi Dr', connected with essays by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; the President of Yeshiva University (New York), Norman Lamm; and the Principal of Leo Baeck College (London).

Taken together, therefore, individual essays in *Jewish Identities in the New Europe* constitute a broader articulation of Jewish identity, one for which the synthesis of past and future constitutes authority in contemporary Modern Jewish Studies, Jewish communal identity, and Jewish transnational politics. Although the degree to which knowledge of the past constitutes intellectual and political authority in the modern Jewish world is never addressed by the contributors, such awareness would only be revealed through reflexive ethnographic analysis. Essays which focus on the present choose instead to re-examine internal questions concerning the relationship between synagogue affiliation in comparison to religious confession, as discussed in the essay by Stephen Miller; or developments in Holocaust commemoration by Evyatar Freisel, including an assessment of 'museumania' amongst North American, European and

Israeli Jews (p. 229). One can only conclude that the lack of analyses of the Jewish present testifies to the glut of European historians situated within North American, Israeli and European Jewish Studies when compared to the dearth of social anthropologists, particularly those whose ethnographic interests transcend the anthropological imperative for the exotic and focus on Western and Central Europe.

In what is one of the most poignant statements of the book, Julius Carlebach suggests that 'the future of the Jewish people is in its history' (p. 205). Undoubtedly, the devastating impact of the Holocaust on Modern Jewish Studies resonates in this paradoxical statement. Could it be that one long-term effect of the Holocaust on transnational Jewish communities with ties to Europe is an obsession with history? It is difficult to dismiss this possibility, yet a Jewish concern for history undoubtedly predates Auschwitz. Authority within public and private social spaces within the European Jewish intelligentsia has always been predicated on a mastery of ancient texts, languages and rituals. Among other losses, however, the Holocaust signified the destruction of these social spaces, thus bringing about a total collapse in the structures of authority on which identities were made manifest. The Jewish historian is just one of the figures who, since 1945, has stood up to fill the lacunae of authority in the United States, Israel and Europe.

Since the Oxford conference of 1992, the implications of the role of the Jewish historian within Jewish history have begun to unfold under the impact of post-structuralism on modern Jewish thinkers. Writers such as James Young and Jonathan Webber have juxtaposed the history of memory and commemoration, thus questioning the whole idea of a manageable, pre-Auschwitz, Jewish reality.

Webber's introduction, however—together with a brief discussion of 'invented identities' by Norman Solomon (pp. 86–98)—is the only essay in the volume to question the objectifying structures through which analysts of Jewish culture seek to understand ideational concepts of Jewishness. *Jewish Identities in the New Europe* therefore lays the groundwork for sociological questioning of the basic classifications of Jewish history. Speaking directly to this impetus in their 1993 essay 'Diasporas: Generational Ground of Jewish Identity' (*Critical Inquiry*, Vol. XIX, no. 4, pp. 693–725), Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin—although a continent away in North America—suggest that 'Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another' (p. 721). Jewishness, in this reading, must be addressed by social anthropologists who seek to analyse collective identities and yet fail to question the subjective limits of their objectifying structures. Yet, if Jewishness disrupts, then all identities disrupt. Indeed, the problems encountered and embodied in *Jewish Identities in the New Europe* strike deep at a core of assumptions present, for example, in 'identity' as a guiding metaphor. Most prominent among these assumptions is the alienation of subject and object imposed by theories which, in their insistence on measuring the present against a monolithic, ideological representation of the past, overlook the full range of practices whereby individuals negotiate authority and reinvent culture to their own benefit.

JEFFREY FELDMAN

TAKIE SUGIYAMA LEBRA, *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility*, Berkeley etc.: The University of California Press 1993. xvii, 430 pp., Glossary, References, Index, Tables, Figures, Photographs. No price given.

The research for this book on Japanese nobility was conducted over a period of fifteen years, including fieldwork in 1982, 1984–5 and 1991. The author was in a unique position, being of Japanese descent and having access to a group that is generally believed to be difficult to approach. Lebra's in-depth interviewing has provided a large number of oral histories, or 'stories', as she calls them. The reliability of these stories is greatly enhanced by the fact that the lives of many of the informants are intertwined, facilitating cross-checking, and by the fact that a number of events are well recorded in historical sources.

Lebra concentrates on the nobility before the Second World War rather than on the life they have been leading since, and she advises those readers who are familiar with the history of Japanese nobility up to the Meiji era, which started with the opening of Japan to the West in 1868, to skip two chapters altogether. Her book provides many insights into the changes the nobility lived through during this period of Japanese history. Her informants felt that they were Westernized sooner than the rest of Japan. Interestingly, the term 'Westernization' was used to refer both to the adoption of ways of life thought to be similar to those of the British nobility, and to the adoption of American egalitarian values. This illustrates very well the inadequacy of the word itself, which can refer to changes that are diverse to the point of being opposed to one another.

The deprivation felt by many members of the nobility just after the Second World War is reminiscent of Chekhov's description of Russian nobility in *The Cherry Orchard*. Dependence on servants existed to such an extent that getting used to life without them posed major problems. Many of Lebra's informants never even saw money until the end of the war, and in some cases servants took advantage of their master's inability to cope with worldly matters. Other nobles, however, relished going out without an escort and doing what ordinary people do: shopping, riding on trains, going to coffee shops, and so forth.

Although Lebra stresses that she was looking for the particular rather than the average, her informants did not include those who were totally ostracized by their families as a result of their behaviour, and the subject of homosexuality only turns up in a short discussion of the historical figure Tokugawa Iemitsu. This failure to deal with those one does not speak of in many circles in Japan is a shortcoming that can be found in almost every anthropological work on Japan. Special methods of recruiting informants would probably have been necessary to find such cases. What Lebra did find were problems caused by the discrepancy between feelings and duty, which in some cases led to women running off with the man they loved against the wishes of her family. Once it was too late to prevent their daughter from marrying whom they saw as an unsuitable partner, the family had no choice but to reconcile themselves to him.

*Above the Clouds* offers an enormous amount of information on a specific group of Japanese, on a range of topics from education and socialization to marriage, career and lifestyle, and the changes that took place in these fields in a relatively short space

of time. It discusses how the Japanese nobility used to live and how they responded to the changes confronting them from the Meiji restoration, which nominally restored the imperial line to power, to the democratization of the Showa period after the Second World War. This book offers much to discuss and think about, for which reason I recommend it to scholars of Japanese society and history and to all those who are interested in social outsiders, because to live 'above the clouds' implies that one stands outside one's own society, even while being in some sort of central position, as this book very adequately demonstrates.

WIM LUNSING

ELEANOR HOLLENBERG CHASDI (ed.), *Culture and Human Development: The Selected Papers of John Whiting* (Publications of the Society for Psychological Anthropology 6, eds. Robert A. Paul and Richard A. Shweder), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994. xiv, 358 pp., Bibliographies, Index, Figures, Tables. £40.00/\$59.95.

ALLISON JAMES, *Childhood Identities: Self and Social Relationships in the Experience of the Child*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1993. viii, 246 pp., Bibliography, Index. £35.00.

Recent work in the anthropology of learning showing that cultural transmission is a complex and active process rooted in everyday activity has led to important changes in the way we conceptualize cultural continuity. Current assumptions about culture as an accumulation of factual knowledge which can be passed on from generation to generation are being challenged, as are those which take the internalization of collective representations as essential for cultural continuity. Theories of learning-in-practice state instead that processes of learning and understanding are socially embedded and take place in the course of everyday activity. Such developments have led to the growth of interdisciplinary research on cognition and child psychology. While cognitive psychologists are recognizing the importance of the phenomenological experience of perception and embodiment on the one hand and of social interaction and intersubjectivity on the other, a growing number of anthropologists stress the relevance of a cognitive framework to the study of symbolic meanings and cultural knowledge. It offers, they argue, more plausible hypotheses of how cultural knowledge is acquired, represented, stored and transmitted than does linguistic theory. Whatever anthropologists' primary interest in psychological processes (which they include in their analyses in order to distinguish religious representations from the representations of practical domains of knowledge, to explore the phenomenological conditions of social life, and to define the social constraints under which people use their cognitive abilities), most of those interested in the cultural transmission of knowledge and in learning are turning to the study of children. While some study cognitive development, particularly 'spontaneous learning', the part of human knowledge which is not socially transmitted, others study the acquisition of norms and values by children. John Whiting's life

interest has been the study of how children are emotionally compelled to become part of their culture, while Allison James studies the social relationships that develop between English children and their sense of identity.

The collection of Whiting's selected papers, admirably edited by Eleanor Hollenberg Chasdi, convey well both his interest in the process by which culture is transmitted from one generation to the next and his search for general principles of human behaviour across cultures. This edited volume includes a very useful introduction by Roy D'Andrade, an insightful autobiographical essay, five thematic sections introduced by Hollenberg Chasdi, and a complete bibliography of Whiting's writings. While D'Andrade locates Whiting's vision of anthropology as a natural science in the context of current developments in psychological anthropology, Whiting's autobiographical notes give the reader a feel for what it was like to be a student of Murdock (as well as, for a brief period, of Malinowski), and to work in the Yale Institute of Human Relations and Harvard's Department of Social Relations during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. These were decades when Boasian ideas about environmental factors and historical variables, as reformulated by Julian Steward and others, had reached their zenith. It was also a time when American anthropologists like Whiting, fascinated by psychoanalysis, undertook to test cross-culturally Freud's theory that childhood experiences are a powerful force in shaping adult cognition, personality and behaviour. As Whiting was primarily concerned with promoting an integrated science of human behaviour (of which anthropology would form part), his methodology for establishing scientific laws depended more on Murdock's Human Relations Area Files (pp. 87–8) than on first-hand field-research.

There is no need to elaborate here on the flaws of a method which assumes, in a typically Boasian way, that culture is essentially symbolic, and divisible into discrete units called 'customs' (pp. 78–9, 84). Customs, or social habits, are regarded as hard facts which allow for the scientific cross-cultural comparison of child-rearing practices, sex-identity conflicts, or the internalization of moral values. The method, in calling for causal explanations of cultural variations, leads more than often to questionable conclusions—for example, that rites of passage are therapeutic, that religious beliefs directly reflect the impact of carrying devices on personality development (Chapters 4 and 9), or that abortion is an alternative to male circumcision and that the long postpartum sex taboo is an adjustment to protein deficiency (p. 234). Despite such outmoded environmental determinism, which no doubt reflects a theoretical eagerness to find a balance between biological and socio-cultural explanations of human action by taking *both* sociogenic and psychogenic factors into account, some of Whiting's work, focused on the social and interactional aspects of infancy and childhood and concerned to document the deep effect of experience on human behaviour, is still of interest today. This is especially true of the research projects based on fieldwork which stress the importance of sleeping arrangements during infancy and provide detailed analyses of the cultural settings (including dwelling organization, parents' economic activities and household composition) in which children acquire the values central to the socio-cultural order in which they grow up. 'The learning of values' (Chapter 5), written in collaboration with, among others, Hollenberg Chasdi, is a particularly good example of a successful cross-cultural comparative study combining fieldwork data, historical facts and psychological insights.

While sharing Whiting's conviction that the process by which children become adults is of prime interest for anthropology and that, more generally, social and cultural phenomena cannot be fully understood without psychology, Allison James approaches the study of childhood experiences using an interpretative framework which completely repudiates Whiting's scientific method of hypothesis testing. Her theoretical goal is to conceptualize children as individuals and, despite their marginality and lack of status in modern English society, as social persons. For this she uses an individual-centred form of ethnographic research inspired mainly by Anthony Cohen's and Nigel Rapport's interpretations of Geertz' hermeneutics. Her ethnographic data thus comprise not only direct observations of four- to nine-year-old children (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) and verbal exchanges between them and the ethnographer, but also analyses of dominant discourses that construct childhood as a liminal category set apart from the rest of society and, more significantly, from the productive world of adults (Chapters 3 and 4). A large place is also given to childhood memories, including those of the researcher herself (Chapter 1), as well as to parents' accounts.

In a previous book she edited with Alan Prout (*Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, London: The Falmer Press 1990), James proposed a new paradigm for the sociology of childhood which considered age to be a structuring principle in society and identified the time dimension—i.e. the chronologization of the life-process—as central to the analysis. In this book, James and Prout recommend the use of critical theory—in particular, of Foucault's theory of discursive practices and power—to uncover the ways in which childhood and other age categories, based on the definition of what is normal and abnormal, create identities of exclusion and cultures of marginalization. After presenting a processual theoretical framework to grasp how childhood is continuously experienced and created as a social phenomenon (p. 231), James and Prout conclude that transitions into, during and out of childhood are the most important moments to document (p. 234).

However, this agenda is not quite followed by James in *Childhood Identities*. Although the reader finds the same critique of the Western ideology of childhood and the same concern with portraying the complexity of children's social lives, there is no clearly articulated theory, nor are any of the author's central points thoroughly illuminated by the ethnographic material. This is due to the overly ambitious scope of the book. Too many topics are addressed, and none is dealt with as thoroughly as might be expected. The book is an attempt to summarize and analyse critically (in small sections at the beginning of various chapters) one hundred and fifty years or more of child policies and laws, the creation of a child consumer market, and the rise of multiple discourses on the nature of childhood—an impossible task which limits the depth of the analysis. The review of the sociological and anthropological literature on childhood (pp. 75–91) is somewhat cursory in character, and although James's fieldwork is almost entirely located in a primary school, there is no mention of research on schooling as such.

Her discussion of ethnographic data suffers from the same lack of thoroughness and depth. Using narratives of parents with mildly disabled children to explore the ways in which normality is constructed is an excellent idea, but James fails to show how the negotiated discourses coming from the family, the medical world and the

school system end up shaping the disabled child's sense of identity. In order to prove convincingly that social categories are merely ideological and have no sociological relevance outside the individual and heterogeneous lived experiences which they conceal, James would need to focus on a few life-histories as told by children, their friends, siblings, neighbours, therapists and teachers, instead of confining herself to accounts from parents. For this same reason of the lack of fit between ethnographic observations and theoretical claims, the crucial question addressed on page 67—'How might an ideology of childhood feed and sustain children's own image and self-identity?'—remains unanswered.

However, the book contains very rich ethnography of children's social relations in the school playground. James proves to be an insightful observer of childhood's dilemmas in the chapters on embodiment (Chapter 4), play (Chapter 6) and friendship (Chapter 7), which make for engaging reading. Again, the reader would like to see the same children dealing with their bodies, playing and having friends in other settings and contexts than the playground, but the information provided is rich enough to confirm that children's social relations—rather than personal experiences—have a lot to bring to anthropology. James's fascinating discussion of the power relations that sustain children's friendships and frame interaction between girls and boys, as well as her perceptive remarks on learning identity through play, would have been strengthened had she chosen a theoretical framework more concerned with social dynamics. The theory of social practice, and more particularly Jean Lave's and Etienne Wenger's theory of situated learning, powerfully underline the importance of active participation and the desire to belong through joining in. Children form communities of practice structured by relationships between 'newcomers' and 'old-timers' in which identities are learned through on-going participation. Childhood, therefore, is not merely the artificial product of Western ideology, but a social category created from within, the product of children's social practices.

LAURA RIVAL

C. M. HANN (ed.), *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice* (ASA Monographs 31), London and New York: Routledge 1993. xiv, 271 pp., References, Indexes, Tables. £15.99.

This is an interesting ASA monograph, which unlike some of its predecessors is free both of lame-duck papers and monish abstractions. However, its treatment of world socialism is arguably rather partial. For instance, there is no real discussion of national variations in socialist ideas and practice; from Laos to Romania, socialist projects are described so briefly that they leave a sense of monolithic unity, with the socialist regimes everywhere promoting rapid modernization, and attacking religion and family farming. There are no comparative papers. Far more ethnographic richness is brought to bear, however, on counter-ideals and the local practices of resistance to and accommodation with the state. Five broad types of relationship between centre and periphery emerge.

First, there is the situation of diverging views of the status and needs of a local community. Thus Pat Caplan (Tanzania) and Susan Wright (Teesside, UK) highlight the disparities between the grandiose plans of socialist regimes, which see a local community as but part of the wider modernization programme, and the needs perceived by the locals, who focus on the utility of proposed projects to themselves and their neighbours. Secondly, there are cases where the regime deploys a particular vision of local communities for its own ends. Angela Cheater describes how, in the face of economic setback, Mugabe's ailing regime in Zimbabwe has resorted to appeals to authoritarian aspects of 'tribal tradition' and to an overtly nationalist and sexist emphasis on putative traditional culture. Thirdly, there are the contexts in which a local community is able to utilize aspects of the socialist system deliberately in order to sustain its own values and structures. Thus Michael Stewart on Hungarian gypsies and Frances Pine on Polish farmers show how family members were deployed to take advantage of the flexible employment conditions and shortages existing in their countries, thus sustaining their traditional lifestyles, in contrast to government hopes that socialist wage labour would undermine their petty-bourgeois inclinations. Fourthly, it seems that structural features of socialism can preserve or reinvigorate local phenomena that have ostensibly been weakened. Thus, Katherine Verdery traces the way in which older ethnic tensions in Romania were unwittingly exacerbated by the economics of shortage and erratic supply, with the micro-economics of favour and goods exchange passing down ethnic lines of inter-personal friendship. Lastly, there are situations in which some surface features of local life remain, though their essence has been altered under the impact of the socialist state. Thus, Grant Evans shows that despite the Laotian regime's tolerance of religion, the demise of private property has largely undermined the 'potlatch' style of merit-making that was so central to Laotian vernacular Buddhism.

In his forceful introduction, Chris Hann argues that the variety of inter-relationships between local community and socialist state portrayed in this volume ought to encourage anthropologists to move away from the unhelpful dichotomies of society/state or private/public. In this, however, he seems to be somewhat at odds with his contributors. While showing the *de facto* links with the state, they nevertheless give the virtually uniform impression that socialist ideas and ideals have had little impact on people's consciousness and private lives. The volume contains little discussion of agitprop, political re-education, cults of personality, policing, socialist ritual or participation in forms of socialist democracy, such as workers' councils. This leaves an implausible, or at least perhaps unduly taken-for-granted image of populations wholly alienated from their regimes (though this theme is more successfully treated in several of the contributors' own full-length monographs). In short, as Hann observes, in future a far more nuanced approach to the successes and failures of socialist regimes in popularly legitimating themselves will be required. In the present volume, Jonathan Spencer on Sri Lanka and Ladislav Holy on Czechoslovakia deal with this question most extensively.

In short, this is a book of much interest, not least because it will highlight for a wider audience some excellent monographs. The feeling remains, however, that on the whole the questions considered here are fundamentally questions of centre-periphery relations in modernizing states rather than those of the phenomenology of socialist life



that Ernest Gellner broaches in his 'Introduction', though this is perhaps not wholly unreasonable given socialism's status as the archetypal modernizing discourse.

JULIAN WATTS

DECLAN QUIGLEY, *The Interpretation of Caste*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993. ix, 169 pp., Bibliography, Index, Figures. £30.00.

Since the mid-1960s, Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (1966), the standard account of Indian caste, has often been challenged but never seriously threatened. Of all those who have subsequently tried to substitute the Kshatriya for the Brahman as the linchpin of the system, Quigley is the most radical. Equally, he displays scant awareness of what is most crucial in Dumont's thought. Not unreasonably declaring that neither idealist nor materialist approaches are adequate on their own (Dumont supposedly being the supreme example of the former), he goes a long way towards achieving an equivalent degree of inadequacy in the mixed approach he himself pursues.

Quigley's first task is to attempt yet another deconstruction of Dumont based on a critique of the latter's disjunction of status and power. His argument that status cannot be superior to power, because it depends upon it, is simply naive and, moreover, entirely disregards the notion of encompassment which characterizes this and all other distinctions in Dumont's thought. In fact, Quigley only deals with encompassment once (pp. 30–1), and in such an inadequate fashion as to make one wonder whether he really understands either it or its significance. For one thing, Dumont's explanation for caste cannot be reduced wholly to ideology: material factors are recognized to be present, but they are encompassed, and appear only at an inferior level of the ideology. Similarly, the claim that Dumont errs in 'reducing the whole to one of its parts [namely] hierarchy (or status)' (p. 161) ignores both his definition of hierarchy, to which the notion of encompassment is vital, and the fact that hierarchy is not a 'part' of the system but its very explanation. The accusation of Dumont's hidden substantialism when talking about castes neglects his clear reference to structure in the passage cited by Quigley (pp. 32–3). Quigley also charges (p. 51) that Dumont confuses power with authority: 'He is left claiming that power is authority in relation to force but something less than authority in relation to authority *par excellence*.' In fact, this is a perfectly acceptable hierarchy of values: temporal authority *is* authority, not merely power, but for Dumont it is a lesser authority than the spiritual authority represented by the Brahman. Further, renunciation is confused with the rejection of caste as oppressive by low-status groups (p. 42): 'medieval mass conversions to Islam and Sikhism' are hardly the same as renunciation, which is sociologically within the Hindu tradition, has personal salvation as its goal, and is largely identified with the Brahman.

Quigley is certainly correct in pointing out that the conventional identification of Brahman and priest is not absolute in India: not all Brahmans are priests, nor all priests Brahmans. But although there are indeed grounds for arguing that it is the Brahman,

not the Kshatriya, who is the real problem in Dumont's account, Heesterman showed long ago how this could be overcome by taking the renouncer fully into account (*The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 1985). For Quigley, Heesterman is simply one example among many of a writer who continues to treat the Brahman as supreme, despite his or her own evidence. This critique even goes to the lengths of denying hierarchy in order to topple the Brahman from his pedestal, the varna scheme being represented as a matter of separation alone. Yet the functions, colours and body parts associated with each varna clearly indicate hierarchy. Nor does disrespect for the Brahman as a person amount to a denial of the values he represents, any more than Christian anti-clericalism necessarily signals irreligion.

Quigley's own solution leads him to Hocart, from whom he takes not only the ritual centrality of the king but also the notion of caste as lineage. Indeed, his most radical suggestion would up-end the usual idea of caste completely: we should be talking not of castes, each of which may indulge in farming or administration as well as their more specialized occupations, but of kin groups, each of which performs some specialized task in addition to its more usual farming or administration (the latter appears to be the real, i.e. empirical Brahmanical task for Quigley). This links up with kingship on the one hand and forms of marriage on the other. Modifying Gellner's view of how nationalism developed out of agrarian polities, Quigley suggests that caste instead was the outcome in India, where centralizing powers attempted to counter the fissiparous tendencies of pre-modern Indian kingdoms—their tendency to decay into localized kin-based units—by ossifying kinship boundaries. However, the resulting endogamy had to be tempered with hypergamy, which Quigley sees as a way of integrating such units through the transfer of women upwards as tribute. This, in its turn, threatened the caste structure, since the accumulation of unmarried men at the bottom of each stretch of the hierarchy encouraged breaches of endogamy.

The similarities of this oscillatory model to Leach's account of the Kachin polity (*Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 1954) and Parry's account of caste in Kangra (*Caste and Kinship in Kangra*, 1979), with their conditions of instability within an overall equilibrium, are obvious. This is the outcome of preferring empiricism to ideology. It cannot, however, explain the conjunction of kinship (in the form of caste) with the distinction of ritual functions, nor their allocation to groups—which Quigley admits requires conditions of *stability*—nor the extreme micro-differentiation of status that the caste system entails. Nor can it account for either the uniqueness of caste, nor the significance of Hinduism, which frequently appears as something disembodied in Quigley's account. As for the king, allowing him ritual centrality and his own ritual status does not entail denying supreme value to the Brahman (Dumont) or the renouncer (Heesterman): he still represents primarily power, which in India as elsewhere is regarded as a thing of this world, not a transcendent ideal. Such naivety characterizes an account which is often ingeniously argued and productive of insights, preventing it from being at all persuasive in the last resort.

ROBERT PARKIN

PETER GOSE, *Deathly Waters and Hungry Mountains: Agrarian Land Ritual and Class Formation in an Andean Town*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1994. £39.00/£15.00.

SARAH LUND SKAR, *Lives Together—Worlds Apart: Quechua Colonization in Jungle and City*, Oslo etc.: Scandinavian University Press 1994.

Andean peoples are renowned for the intricate use of duality throughout their socio-economic and cosmological relations, and so it is fitting that these two books approach peoples of the Peruvian highlands from complementary angles. Peter Gose's book integrates the political economy of a small Andean town with the yearly cycle of agrarian rituals, connecting fertility, production and consumption, while Sarah Skar's book looks at the effects of separation on people moving from an Andean community to the urban capital of Lima and to the rainforest area of Chanchamayo.

Both books look at the dynamics of community life, but where Gose digs into the ritual organization of labour, Skar moves outwards, encompassing a geographical cross-section of Peru within community organization. The wealth of material in these two studies underlines the complexities of highland life and draws the reader inexorably towards the often contradictory relationships between Andean peoples and the nation-state.

Gose describes Huaquirca as a small Andean town which shares characteristics with many other Quechua-speaking communities. Agriculture is divided vertically into lower maize- and upper potato-growing areas, while the town also has upper and lower areas inhabited largely by 'commoners' and 'notables' respectively. The book distinguishes two types of relations of production. *Ayni*, preferred by commoners, takes place during the growing wet season (October to March) and consists of collective male groups who exchange days of labour by working on each other's crops, thus defining household claims to common lands. In contrast, during the dry season (April to September) the commoners work for the notables, mostly bringing in the harvest from the lands to which the latter have claims as individuals. This male work is known as *mink'a* and consists of labour which the notable landowners repay with food and drink for immediate consumption. The distinction between the symmetry and asymmetry of these work arrangements pervades the whole book.

Throughout the year, the people of Huaquirca carry out agrarian rituals which Gose describes in fascinating detail. Rituals performed during *ayni* work are designed to parallel events surrounding a death. When a body is buried and clothes of the deceased are washed, energy is released from the soul of the dead person, which travels to the mountains, where it provides water enabling crops to grow. In a similar way, men work physically, and through the 'death' of soul-loss which arises from hard labour, they provide the energy to plant or bury seeds irrigated by water from the mountains.

The collective work activities of the rainy season are contrasted with the dry season, when production comes to be eclipsed by appropriation and consumption. During this period the farmers carry out a series of rituals called *t'inka*, which involve men and women in a series of offerings ranging from libations to sacrifices to the spirits of the mountains (*apu*). The purpose of these offerings is to recognize the

hierarchical relationship with the mountain spirits and so ensure fertility and water for the next year.

The symmetric *ayni* work relationship between men is contrasted with an asymmetric totalizing hierarchy which relates women to men and the mountain spirits to all people. The relationship consists of a system in which life is perpetually renewed and symmetrical hierarchy fits with symmetrical equality through an annual alternating cycle.

The mountain spirits are portrayed by the commoners as 'Hispanic' forms of authority. A similar imagery of hierarchy is used by the 'notables' who, consisting of ten per cent of the population, make a class distinction between themselves and the 'Indian' commoners, who make up ninety per cent of the population of the town. Notables are distinguished from commoners because they have been further through the educational system, take the lead in national day parades, and have their own conspicuous consumption ceremony of banqueting during the Carnival celebrations in February. The greatest distinction, however, is that they do not participate in *ayni* work.

Gose describes the relationship between the commoners and notables as a class relationship. He argues that the agrarian rituals connected with *ayni* not only define cultural identity but also class identity because, by organizing labour relations, they distinguish commoners from notables. He argues convincingly that where the totalizing asymmetrical aspect of ritual breaks down, exploitation occurs and discontent can quickly turn into violent conflict. The fact that communication with mountain spirits has been an intimate part of highland rebellions shows how often rebellion is an attempt to restore the mutually reciprocal relationship with hierarchy, rather than getting rid of it.

The theoretical approach which Gose advances is that class should not be separated from ethnicity, because the concepts 'derive from a common, or at least, overlapping, set of practices' (p. 16). He sets himself against authors who would separate the two, thus committing himself to defending what he calls a 'culturalist' approach to class. This line defines class with reference to internal factors, in particular the *ayni* and *mink'a* relations. However, by concentrating on 'culture' he fails to give any social information as to who actually participates in these work groups. The external imagery for defining ethnic relations is also subsumed in the discussion. Thus the racial ideology of *mestizo*/Indian may be a 'myth of the conquest', as he says, but, as with the distinction *runa* (Quechua people) and *misti* (non-Quechua), these terms exist and refer to contemporary perspectives of hierarchies which can be seen as other ways of expressing class relations.

Even though Gose's text is about class, his theoretical approach removes three elements commonly connected with that notion. Ideology is normally connected with class relations, yet Gose tries to separate the ideology of the racial 'myth of conquest' from the class-connected mountain spirits which 'are not just an ideology' (p. 254). The second aspect of class which Gose avoids is history. He advocates a synchronic view of class to avoid historiography and concentrates on the 'experience of class relations' (p. 297). This connects up with the third feature of class which Gose avoids, namely the distinction between class 'in' and 'for' itself. He considers that this contrast separates social being from social consciousness, and he uses his material to

transcend the separation (p. 27). Whereas this approach enables class and culture to embrace each other without contradiction, the decision not to tackle these areas is disappointing, because the question of race, history and the dynamics of social relations emerge regularly in the text.

The question of ethnicity is more apparent in Sarah Lund Skar's book, in which class is not the main theme. This work is an excellent study drawing together the coast and rainforest of Peru into one highland framework. Matapuquio is a community of Quechua people (*runa*) who are distinguished from the towns where *mestizos* live. The community has been influenced by the history of a *hacienda* which was collectivized in the Agrarian Reform of the 1970s and destroyed by the guerrilla activities of Sendero Luminoso ten years later. In contrast to the *ayni/mink'a* distinction, used by Gose but not described sociologically, Skar's analysis sees the distinction between *ayllu* (related group with a spiritual tie to a territory) and *mitma* (part of the *ayllu* which is separated from the central entity) as fundamental.

The book follows the Matapuqueños as they take leave of the community and, armed with bundles of food and talismans, make their way to the city or to the rainforest to seek a new life or escape tensions at home. All people moving from highland villages need to arrange identity documents which establish within the migrant an external, state-imposed image of an individual. Moving to Lima involves a *t'inka* libation which ensures the continuation of a tie with the community and the mountain spirits. To the rainforest, however, there is often no leave-taking, as young people are tricked into working as virtual slave-labourers of colonists in Chanchamayo.

After describing the arrival and re-establishment of the self in the new territory, Skar goes on to deal with life in Lima, where people are organized into seventeen clubs working to support themselves and their community. The collectivity and competition encountered in the city by the men in the clubs reflects the *ayni* relationships discussed by Gose. Skar also refers to the support they send home as 'tribute', a reflection of the asymmetrical relationships in the community.

The rainforest is completely different. Matapuqueños who are not tricked into servitude move down to the east, where they reach the 'depository of ancestral knowledge'. Skar's description explains the desire of the colonists to clear the dangerous areas of forest trees and reproduce highland agricultural patterns. The killing of trees to cultivate plants relates to the connection between death and planting discussed by Gose during the rainy season in the highlands. Meanwhile a clear asymmetry emerges in the rainforest, where men go to towns to work and women remain alone organizing and controlling landholdings. Skar clearly analyses the ambivalence of highland colonists for lowland indigenous peoples in Peru, which anyone who has lived in the area must have encountered. While lowland peoples are respected for their primordial knowledge, the highland colonists have a conviction that forest dwellers are inferior and have no rights to land. This perspective explains some of the major confrontations which regularly occur throughout the western Amazon.

The contrast between solidarity in Lima and isolation in Chanchamayo continues when looking at space and time. The collective urban land occupations form small townships in Lima and contrast with the scattered homesteads of the Amazon, which are connected by roads and tracks. The lack of mountains in the rainforest means that the *apu* spirits are not so apparent, which causes spiritual power to become diffused

and each person's soul to become weak within the body, resulting in sickness. In Lima, on the other hand, the lack of agriculture means that wealth is measured in money which becomes linked to the moral progress of the individual person. The focus of those in Lima is to the future and to upward social mobility. Population movement to the 'primordial' rainforest thus looks back in time, while that to Lima looks forward.

The notion of absence in the highlands implies a return, and at some time in their lives the people come home, either temporarily or permanently. The return has its own rites, and often problems arise, as migrants try to find their position back in the community. The book ends with a discussion of the millenarian sect, the Israelitas, which is based on the notion of sacrifice and claims that Israel will return from the eastern rainforest and restore the original Peru. Thus between the sacrifice at the leaving and sacrifice for the return of Israel, the Matapuqueños complete a cycle of separation and reunion which embraces not only the lives of members of the community but the whole cosmos.

Interestingly, although Skar's study does not deal with class, it shows its importance. The 'myth of conquest' is not seen to be such a myth at all but a vibrant expression of asserting identity as a people in the face of ethnic mixing (*mestisaje*) (pp. 23-4). Throughout the book, the history of Matapuquio returns constantly, and violent events in the community cause waves which are felt in both Lima and Chanchamayo. The question of 'in' and 'for' itself is not addressed from a class perspective but appears from the perspective of the process of objectification of Matapuquio by those who move to Lima as they enter class relations. In this way, without discussing class, Skar raises the very aspects of class analysis that Gose has jettisoned.

These two books are welcome additions to the rich ethnography of the Andean area and together provide a fascinating complementary focus. Although Skar does not mention *ayni* or *mink'a*, and Gose does not mention *ayllu* or *mitma* (which could be because they are dealing with different communities in the Peruvian Andes), the detailed descriptions enable the reader to see several parallels. The people who move to Lima or the rainforest leave the agrarian ritual life described by Gose and turn to non-collective pursuits for survival. Yet it is possible to see reformulations of the *ayni* material described by Gose in the solidarity and collective work of the Lima clubs and in the 'death-for-growth' principle in the deforestation carried out by highland colonists in the rainforest, as well as in the libations and sacrifices connected with departure and return.

However, as already indicated, there are also strong contrasts. Gose draws class and ethnicity closer by 'culturalizing' the subject (p. 257) and thus losing some features associated with class analysis, while Skar historicizes Quechua cosmology by placing it in time and space and objectifying it through the eyes of the Matapuqueños themselves—an aspect of class analysis. What is so arresting about the complicated sociocultural systems of Andean peoples is that the dynamics of their worlds take the investigator and (thanks to these authors) their readers through a journey which draws you in the very direction you thought you were leaving.

Clearly, ethnicity and class sometimes fit together, sometimes not. In a highland town such as Huaquirca, class relations are far more dominant than in a smaller community such as Matapuquio, where ethnic distinctions cross-cut class divisions. In

fact, the relationship between the two rests on political activity and historical context as much as on analytical distinction. However, there is one area where both books demonstrate clearly that class and ethnicity can only be tied down in local perspectives and indigenous political activities: the Andean peoples of Peru have retained a distinct identity from the state which has not resulted in their inevitable integration into a wider hegemonic body. On the contrary, both books show that Andean peoples are perfectly capable of incorporating the state into their own cosmovision.

ANDREW GRAY

JACK GOODY, *The Culture of Flowers*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1993. xvii, 462 pp., Bibliography, Index, Plates, Tables. £40.00/£13.95.

Jack Goody is obviously enjoying his retirement and at the same time putting it to strenuous and entertaining good use in exploring a most attractive topic. This latest work has allowed him to travel widely and interestingly; we find him counting the number of graves with flowers in cemeteries from North Carolina to Berlin, attending New Year celebrations in southern China, and visiting the flower market in Ahmabad. We are introduced to the secret language of flowers in nineteenth-century France, the place of flowers in European popular culture, and the garland—as opposed to cut-flower—culture of India. It is, however, the travelling rather than the arriving that is the attraction of this book, because those who have journeyed with him previously will find that the destination is much the same as before. Nor is there any attempt to make it a mystery tour, for the route is well signposted from the outset.

The question addressed (also the title of Chapter I) is ‘No flowers in Africa?’ In other words, why in sub-Saharan Africa, other than those parts that are heavily Islamized, do flowers play such an insignificant role, not simply in themselves but representationally in literature, art and decoration? In general, peoples of this region do not grow domesticated flowers, make little use of wild ones, and rarely portray them in graphic and verbal arts. This contrasts with the great importance of flowers in many areas of life in Europe and Asia. Because there is little that can be written about what is not there, most of the book is taken up with the cultures of the two northern continents.

As hinted at above, the answer to the question is fairly predictable: along with the absence of dowries, ploughs and haute cuisine in Africa, that of flowers is associated with the lack of a hierarchical class structure of the sort that characterizes European and Asian societies. The cultivation of flowers—plants that have neither great nutritional nor practical value—occupies time, space and effort that only societies with a surplus can afford. In other words they are a luxury which is the privilege of the ‘higher’ groups in a literate, stratified society. Even here the culture of flowers has no easy ride, as periodic waves of social or ideological puritanism—the upsurge of a critical position inherent in such societies—banishes it for longer or shorter periods, and to varying degrees. For example, Goody contrasts the almost total disappearance

of a flower culture in Europe during the Dark Ages, under the double influence of a Christianity intent on purging itself of any pagan relics and a barbarism with little time for such niceties as flower gardens and botanical knowledge, with the situation in Islam, where the banishment of flowers from religious practices was not matched by a similar fate in the secular sphere, where botanical practices and study continued to flourish. However, argues Goody, even under the most adverse conditions, the culture of flowers retains an extraordinary resilience, because even when their use is totally banned, that culture can survive through graphic and verbal representation to re-emerge when the social and economic climate improves, like seeds lying dormant in desert soil awaiting the rain.

All this is argued with Goody's normal force and clarity, but he has never been one to shy away from the broad canvas, either temporal and spatial. This work is no exception. For example, in 40 pages he tackles 35 centuries of Chinese cultural history, glancing ('looking' would be too strong a word) at agriculture, botanical knowledge, floral motifs and design, flower poetry and painting, flowers and women in poetry and painting, manuals on flower-painting, flower-arranging, the contextuality of the symbolism of flowers, and their social and religious uses (this section offers a comparison of Buddhist and Confucian attitudes to plants). The reader comes away from all this reeling from the sheer richness and density of the colour and scent that he has been asked to assimilate.

The geographical coverage is just as wide as the historical is deep. Goody's investigations range from California to China via Europe, the Near East and India. He would have virtually encircled the globe had not his publishers declined, on grounds of space, to include completed chapters on Japan and Indonesia, although references to these areas, and to Mexico, are to be found. Goody also makes the interesting suggestion that the rise of the mass consumer society in the West, coupled with modern modes of communications, has had the tendency to replace the local, class-based production of flowers with one of global scale. In this new market, it is the poorer countries that are now growing the flowers for the richer, just as in the past it was the poorer people who cultivated flowers for the better off.

This brief account barely begins to do justice to a work that, like a luxuriant flower garden, is jammed with a fascinating and colourful assortment of facts and fancies. The book is well illustrated with both colour and black-and-white plates, and the paperback version is reasonably priced. My only grouse is the thinness of the index; four-and-a-half pages is totally inadequate for a book of this thickness (in both senses). Finally, it is almost worth having the book for the portrait on the back cover: a greenish gnomish Goody half-hidden in a flowering bush. **[Postscript:** Some months after writing this review I was having lunch with Olga Linares of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institution and learnt that she was the photographer. Furthermore it was not the photograph that Jack wanted used. On this occasion the publishers may have been right.]

PETER RIVIÈRE



JOHN D. KELLY, *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality, and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1991. xvi, 266pp., References, Index. £31.95/£13.50.

In recent years, many anthropologists have attempted to incorporate history in their writing, or, more grandly, have sought a rapprochement between anthropology and history. But John Kelly has gone a step further: he seems to have spent a large part of his time in Fiji in the government archives, and his first book is a work of history. The story he puts together is a fascinating one. It begins with the Indians brought to Fiji as indentured labourers between 1879 and 1918 to work in the sugar-cane plantations. Indenture came to an end, in spite of the fact that Europeans in Fiji wished it to continue, because of the pressure brought to bear by India, where the indignities suffered by Indian women at the hands of European overseers had become a *cause célèbre* fuelled by the increasing influence of Indian nationalism. Within Fiji itself, there was a fierce debate involving missionaries, colonial administrators and doctors about the nature of Indian culture and its expectations of women: the position of women among the Indian population was particularly acute, because of the extreme sex imbalance.

With the end of their period of indenture very few Indians returned to India, and there thus emerged 'the Indian problem'. What rights were free Indians to be given? What laws should govern their social life? From the Indian point of view, there was also the crucial issue of how they were to define themselves, and which cultural and political leaders they should accept.

From here on, the story focuses largely on the efforts (and ultimate failure) of the reformist and Hindu fundamentalist Arya Samaj to speak for all Hindus, reform their religion or establish English-language schools which would both enable Indians to compete effectively in colonial Fiji and instil in them its own version of Hinduism. The Arya Samaj, as elsewhere, was eventually caught up in the contradictions of a Protestant-influenced Hindu fundamentalism: they rejected so much of what ordinary Hindus were attached to in their traditional religion that they generated an opposing Sanatan Dharm movement, which was more successful. As Kelly characterizes them, the Arya Samaj were, 'by their own lights, the Hindu enlightenment, the Hindu great awakening, Protestant Hinduism, and modern and scientific Hinduism. They were all of these, and also true Hinduism, reckoned by a particularly Christian search for the pristine essence of revelation. Rationalists and revivalists, they were also Hindu 'nationalists' above all, proponents of an 'Aryan' civilization' (p. 241).

The Arya Samaj alienated many Hindus by attacking all Hindu scriptures other than the Vedas in public debates with Sanatan Dharm pundits and by publicizing and pouring contempt on later scriptures' descriptions of the sexual activities of prominent Hindu gods. In this way, they destroyed the Hindu unity that they had previously succeeded in building up. These vitriolic disputes about religion and sexuality, and the inflammatory political consequences of the associated political pamphlets, both in Fiji and in India, show that the Salman Rushdie affair most certainly did not emerge out of a vacuum.

As far as possible, Kelly lets his sources speak for themselves. This produces some fascinating juxtapositions of radically different views of the same events: an

Australian overseer's memoirs, fifty years on, of his time in the 'lines'; Hindi tracts denouncing assaults on the virtue of indentured Indian women; fierce debates between different administrators over how best to govern the Indians; and even more vociferous exchanges of views between the Arya Samaj and its opponents.

Kelly's approach can be characterized as a form of discourse analysis. As such, it has to be said, it is strangely disembodied. He provides no map of Fiji. There are virtually no statistics. There are no photographs, except for the front cover, which dates from 1890, well before the period covered here. This is discourse about the body, without the body itself. More importantly, we are given virtually no description of the everyday life or social relationships which the Indians—most of whom became 'free' sugar-cane growers after their indenture was over-created in Fiji. There are no comparisons with other parts of the Indian indenture diaspora. This relative lack of emphasis on social relations or political economy makes it rather ironic that Kelly gives such prominence to Marx's aphorism, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please', using it as an epigram at the very beginning of the book and returning to it, with an extended quotation, in the conclusion.

Thus *A Politics of Virtue* itself exemplifies the virtues of a discourse analysis approach, as well as the drawbacks of over-reliance on it. We remain bound within the circle of those whose voices happen to have survived. (Kelly recognizes that the voices of the women about whose virtue and sexual proclivities so much was so tendentiously said are absent from his text.) As the story moves on, we are given an up-dated version of traditional historiography's 'what happened next': who said what next to whom. Although we are told that the discourses generated in this period are still powerful, evidence from the present is not adduced to sully the historical picture. Presumably the larger picture will be provided by the forthcoming companion volume that Kelly promises, *Capitalism, Colonialism and Hindu Devotionalism in Fiji*.

In spite of these reservations, *A Politics of Virtue* succeeds in evoking the disparate voices of most of the participants in a dramatic clash of power, culture and religion. It is an important, vivid, highly readable book and deserves a prominent place in all reading lists on colonialism.

DAVID N. GELLNER

WILLIAM M. O'BARR and JOHN M. CONLEY, *Fortune and Folly: The Wealth and Power of Institutional Investing*, Homewood, Illinois: Business One Irwin 1992. xii, 245 pp., Index, Figures. \$30.00.

There may have been much talk in the last decade about doing anthropology 'at home', but remarkably little has been done on one of the most distinctive cultural arenas of the West—its major financial institutions. For instance, there has, to my knowledge, been no ethnographic study whatsoever of any part of the City of London: a few sociological papers on merchant-banking families, and some 'higher journalism' by gifted writers like Anthony Sampson and Jeremy Paxman, but nothing more. The usual excuse is

access. The busy bankers and brokers of the Square Mile and Wall Street aren't going to give mere academics the time of day. According to this conventional knowledge, privileged financiers see no reason to break their useful traditions of exclusivity and secrecy for the sake of an inquisitive anthropologist or two.

In fact, of course, this flimsy excuse is little more than a myth. Based on meagre factual evidence, its primary purpose is to justify anthropologists' inactivity or lack of interest in a cultural domain which is either insufficiently exotic or ideologically abhorrent to them. For, if (as is the case) resourceful, patient ethnographers have managed to do successful fieldwork among the Highlanders of Papua New Guinea or the crack dealers of the Bronx, are others of that ilk going to be stumped by a banker's reluctance to talk? They may not be able to participate, but they can still look, ask and listen.

O'Barr and Conley show how it should be done. They chose their subject—pension funds—well, as the funds are today the largest single group of institutional investors in the American market, with an enormous yet still unrealized potential to wield economic (and hence, to a certain extent, political) power. Once fund managers understood what the authors wanted to know, they appeared to open their minds to them. Access was only an initial hurdle, not an insurmountable barrier.

The core of the analysis demonstrates convincingly that, at least within pension funds, *homo economicus* is a myth. Even though the livelihoods of many millions of Americans depend ultimately on the correct management of these funds, their controllers frequently do not act in the most economically logical way. Instead, they persistently allow factors which are not strictly economic to sway their financially weighty decisions.

The authors discovered, for instance, that most funds do not have a corporate vision and that there was consequently a lack of institutional coherence within each fund. More worryingly, most fund executives and employees do not justify the particular culture of their institution primarily in economic but in historical terms: things are the way they are not because that's the way things should be, but because that's the way they've always been. Even worse, in discussions about evaluating and deciding whether or not to retain outside managers, fund executives admit that the fostering of personal relationships is often a more important consideration than the bottom line. Quite frankly, is this the way such a very significant sector of America's (the world's largest) capital market should run itself?

O'Barr and Conley's book is full of such anxiety-creating details. What it shows, in unpretentious prose, is that the revelatory potential of anthropology when applied to the very heights of Western capitalism is great. And in times like these, when a country's longest established bank can disappear over the course of a weekend, the potential benefits of such work for the financial institutions themselves are not to be sniffed at either. The main feeling I had on finishing this book was, 'More, please!'

JEREMY MACCLANCY

GLORIA GOODWIN RAHEJA and ANN GRODZINS GOLD, *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1994. xxxvii, 234 pp., Glossary, Bibliography, Photographs, Figures. \$45.00/\$17.00.

This book, jointly authored by two already well-known anthropologists of Indian society, is a welcome addition to the body of work on South Asian oral traditions, which in part has grown out of the fruitful merging of the interests and approaches of folklorists and cultural anthropologists working in this area. There is a series of chapters analyzing women's songs and stories which are performed at various life-cycle rituals and other festivals in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These ethnographically specific chapters are individually authored, by Gold on Rajasthan and by Raheja on Uttar Pradesh. Raheja also provides a framing introduction entitled 'Gender Representation and the Problem of Language and Resistance in India', and the book concludes with a jointly authored chapter providing 'Some Reflections on Narrative Potency and the Politics of Women's Expressive Traditions'. There is also a jointly written preface which sets the scene with a brief outline of the fieldwork contexts and the experiences and developments in the authors' thinking which led to the writing of this book.

The ethnographic chapters go some way towards conveying the contexts and atmosphere of the 'complex and arresting beauties' (p. xii) of women's expressive genres, but the main point of the book is rather to single out from these texts material showing that women hold views on gender and kinship relations which profoundly differ from and challenge the dominant patriarchal ideology. This fundamental theme is encapsulated in the symbolism of the heron of the book's title. In predominantly male performance genres, the heron symbolises predatory hypocrisy and the dichotomous split between purity and corruption. In women's texts, however, 'Hérons act as narrators, inviting listeners to consider tales of illicit encounters, resistance to dominating power, or both' (p. xi). The heron thus introduces us to alternative views of gender, sexuality and kinship, which are 'shaped by women but are sometimes shared by men' (p. xii).

The theoretical introduction in Chapter One provides a very useful and tightly packed review of the issues, in relation to which the authors intend to pursue their aim of showing how women's traditions comprise a moral discourse 'in which gender identities are constructed, represented, negotiated, and contested in everyday life' (p. 1). They argue that their work will require a rethinking of established views of marriage and patrilineality in South Asia. They also link their arguments to a fundamental shift away from anthropological notions of culture as a homogeneous and coherent totality towards a view of culture as made up of a plurality of competing discourses and practices. Linked to this shift is their further aim of providing a constructive critique of the work of the *Subaltern Studies* historians, who share the authors' general concerns with interpreting power relations and recovering the voices of those who have been subordinated. The *Subaltern Studies* scholars' approaches to 'resistance' are criticized as being based on too crude and essentializing a dichotomy between a fixed hegemonic tradition on the one hand and a total and radical social transformation on the other. Instead it is argued that tradition and resistance

interpenetrate and co-exist. The more fine-grained ethnographic approach to women's oral traditions is here intended to 'recover' the plurality of subaltern voices and reveal contextual creativity in shifts between tradition and subversion, as well as the 'strategic deployment of varying discourses by particularly positioned actors' (p. 25).

The main dimensions of women's alternative and subversive views are covered in subsequent chapters. All revolve around splits in the images of women in North Indian gender ideologies. Thus Chapter Two, on Rajasthani women's songs, finds that these undermine and resist the split between the destructive sexual potency of women as wives and the more positive capacities of women as mothers by expressing a positive view of sexuality and a 'conjoining of eroticism and birth' (p. 27). Chapter Three tackles the contradiction inherent in women's transfer from their natal to their marital homes. The evidence of songs and women's manipulation of ambiguous kinship relations points to women as providing a critical and ironic commentary on this split, which renders them simultaneously 'foreign' to their natal kin and alien to their husbands' kin. More subversive, however, are the songs discussed in Chapter Four, which examines women speaking specifically as wives. These songs point to a woman's need to build close conjugal ties with her husband, while countering the authority of the husband's senior kin and undermining the overarching emphasis on patrilineal solidarity. In Chapter Five, the analysis of a story shows women challenging the assumption that 'independent and powerful women are intrinsically dangerous and destructive' (p. 29).

The authors tell us that they are less interested in what they call the positivist enterprise of seeing how speech 'reflects' gender differences than with how gender identities are constructed and negotiated in discourse. In a broad sense, then, they are concerned with how women speak about and 'imagine' themselves. They are, however, also concerned with what women do with words. They specifically raise the crucial but very difficult question, does their power reside only in imagination or do these textual worlds 'flow into lived worlds' (p. 182)? Although there are some interesting and worthwhile discussions of the power of discourse, this question is not convincingly answered. It is noticeable here that, at various points where this link is discussed, the authors are suggestive and provisional in their language. Thus, for example, they say, 'those self-perceptions, and the discourses in which they are constructed and negotiated, *may* subtly but distinctly alter the widely ramified networks of relationships in which both women and men live their lives' (pp. 20–1, my emphasis). It is striking too that the main section of the book which does convincingly address this issue does not deal with oral traditions as such but with the language of kinship. This comes in the latter part of Chapter Three, where Raheja cites a series of specific cases to show how women are able to manipulate ambiguous kinship relationships in strategic ways to strengthen their position and further their interests in their marital villages, where they lack their natal kin support networks.

One of the ways, perhaps, of beginning to tackle the problem of the actual or potential power of women's songs and stories would be to include analyses of women's own views about these genres. For a book which is so sensitive to the plurality of voices in a culture and to issues of reflexivity in general, it is odd that this dimension is lacking. Similarly, we are also given little idea of the total range or repertoire of oral genres from which the examples in the book have been selected. Fuller

ethnographic contextualization of this sort would help the reader assess the significance of the texts used. It may be that this kind of ethnographic depth and context is limited because, as the authors tell us, neither went to India 'intending to study women, gender, or oral traditions' (p. xii).

Despite these problems, however, the book is a valuable contribution to the study of gender and of women's oral traditions in North India. It is fluently written and very enjoyable to read, making it readily accessible to a wide range of readers.

CHRISTIAN MCDONAUGH

*ANTHROPOLOGICAL JOURNAL ON EUROPEAN CULTURES*, edited by Christian Giordano and Ina-Maria Greverus, Institut für Kulturanthropologie und Europäische Ethnologie, Frankfurt. Two issues a year, SFr 52 (institutions). SFr 35 (individuals).

The burgeoning interest in the anthropology of Europe means new journals to meet the rising need. *AJEC* is the latest. It attempts to stimulate interdisciplinary discourse (i.e. within the social sciences) and to transcend the discrepancies between theory and practice from an anthropological perspective. It concentrates on current European dynamics, those resulting from fundamental structural changes, increasing complexity and individualization on the one hand, and from forced homogenization on the other.

The themes it intends to tackle include social, regional and ethnic movements, migration, urbanization and multi-culturalization, development in political culture, and environmental and ecological perspectives. The ultimate aim of the editors is that discussion of these themes will 'enlighten contemporary European experiences and expressions of cultural identities and cultural differences'.

Each issue deals with a specific theme. For instance, the contributors to Volume III no. 2 (1994) discuss the tortured ethical problem of doing fieldwork in a variety of European settings. The list of contributors is impressive (and genuinely pan-European), the quality of their articles high. If the editors can maintain this standard, *AJEC* will become an invaluable addition to the anthropology of Europe.

JEREMY MACCLANCY

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