BOOK REVIEWS

CECIL H. BROWN, *Language and Living Things: Uniformities in Folk Classification and Naming*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1984. xvi, 275pp., References, Index. $35.00.

While rooted in the still flourishing traditions of ethnobiology (represented by Conklin) and cognitive anthropology (Goodenough, Frake, Tyler), Brown's work belongs to the distinctive approach initiated by Berlin and Kay's *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley 1969), and followed up in Berlin's 'Speculations on the Growth of Ethnobotanical Nomenclature' in the first number of *Language in Society* (1972). Having contributed prominently to the journals over the last decade, Brown has now consolidated the approach by giving it a second cross-cultural book. When surveying the field (*Annual Review of Anthropology* 1978), Witkowski and he used the title 'lexical universals', but the essence of the approach would be better expressed by 'lexical evolutionism'; and the present book could well have been called *Life-form Terms: Their Universality and Evolution.*

Comparison of folk classifications with the biologist's taxonomies shows that languages have typically labelled genera, rather than lower-level taxa (species and varieties) or higher-level ones. The kingdoms (animals-in-general and plants-in-general) are seldom labelled, and above the genus typically the only labelling refers to 'life-forms'. Languages vary in the number of life-form terms that they possess, but Brown's argument is that empirically the variation is surprisingly limited. Two sorts of constraint exist, bearing respectively on universality and evolution. First, whatever life-form taxa a given language lexicalizes it will be possible to translate the terms in the first instance by a selection from among ten English terms (five per kingdom). This over-simplified formulation calls for certain qualifications, e.g. that fungi and lichens are ignored and that Brown uses two portmanteau neologisms (grerb < grass + herb, wug < worm + bug); but it serves to emphasise the analogy with basic colour terms. However many colours a language lexicalizes, they too, by virtue of their foci, can roughly be translated by a choice from among only 11 English terms (plus the prefix *macro-*).

The second constraint is on the co-occurrence of life-form terms. The five pan-environmental botanical terms would theoretically allow languages 32 different selections (including no terms and all five), but in the 188 languages examined only fourteen of them are exemplified. Moreover, the pattern of 'choice' is far from random. If a language has any plant life-form terms at all it has one translatable roughly as 'tree', and if it has two or more the second can be rendered either 'grerb' or 'grass';

the full complement includes all of these plus 'bush' and 'vine' (in the sense 'creeper'). Since languages seldom lose life-form terms (except following migration to an area where a taxon is not represented), the facts strongly imply an evolutionary sequence. Languages start without life-form terms and acquire first 'tree', then 'grass' or 'grerb', then the remainder in any order. Zoologically (on the basis of 144 languages), they acquire first 'fish', 'bird' and 'snake' in any order, and only then 'wug', 'mammal' and/or the conjunct of these.

Brown has done fieldwork (with Mayan speakers), and consulted dictionaries, but like Morgan he has assembled most of his information via circulars and personal correspondence. His preface acknowledges by name more than 120 individuals who provided material for the massive appendices, as well as naming 150 others who helped. One notes that P.G. Rivière supplied the data on the 'Tiriyo', who have three plant life-form terms; but the non-specialist will be more interested in the methods than the materials, and will only sample the appendices. The text proper shows that particular language families and areas embrace a range of evolutionary stages, so it could not be argued by an anti-evolutionist that the co-occurrence patterns somehow merely reflected polygenesis. Moreover, within language families (Brown considers especially Mayan and Polynesian), the methods of comparative linguistics confirm the appearance of new life-form terms in the expected sequence. Among the semantic processes leading to the new vocabulary is expansion, as when 'cottonwood' > 'tree' in Amerindian languages of the southwestern United States, or 'wood' > 'tree' in many unrelated languages. A few languages show 'incipient life-form terms' which for the moment group only unlabelled species, as English *bird* does at a certain stage in children's language development. Innovation by metaphor is exemplified by 'tongue' > 'vine' or 'snake', but nowadays the commonest mode is no doubt by borrowings from written languages possessing the full array (for there is a rough statistical correlation between number of life-form terms and 'societal scale').

The evolutionary encoding sequence is a phenomenon of diachronic linguistics which shows itself synchronically in the co-occurrence constraints or 'implicational universals' already noted (a 'grass' term universally implies a 'tree' term, etc). It also appears synchronically in three other guises: the oldest life-form terms are also (i) the commonest in word frequency counts for nation-state languages (such counts not being readily available for tribal languages); (ii) the shortest words in terms of number of letters; and (iii) the first to be learned by children. All five sorts of phenomenon are aligned by means of Greenberg's notion of marking hierarchies (the oldest terms being the least marked).

It is not clear why a language lacking life-form terms is labelled Stage 1 for plants, Stage 0 for animals, nor how close an evolutionary correlation exists for particular languages between the two domains of terminology. Some will wonder if Brown's

neologisms are really necessary, and others may object to his particular definition of 'life-form', which differs in detail from Berlin's. But the big questions for the critic concern the validity and significance of the whole approach. Those who distrust genealogical analyses of kinship terminologies, or colour term analyses that ignore connotation and symbolism, will raise the same sorts of objection to life-form terms: what of the ambiguities of pragmatics, of the richness of meaning so often attached to natural species, of totems and anomalous pangolins? Such questions are in fact posed in Ellen and Reason's *Classifications in their Social Context* (Academic Press 1979), which is barely cited here, and only for its data; but in so far as the questions are intended as *objections*, they are misconceived. A researcher is perfectly justified in restricting his curiosity in order to make a definitive contribution within a narrow field; and even if subsequent work blurs the sharpness of Brown's evolutionary schema the general trend is now established. No one denies that there are *also* 'special purpose' classifications (edible/inedible, domestic/wild, etc.), that symbolism is important and interesting, that perfect translation is difficult, or that words are relevant to behaviour in ways that dictionaries do not capture.

But perhaps the findings of lexical evolutionism, even if true, are trivial, or irrelevant to social anthropology proper? In D. Parkin (ed.), *Semantic Anthropology* (Academic Press 1982) it is only Ardener who even refers to the approach (interestingly, he too emphasises the quantitative aspect); Ortner's 'Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties' (*Comp. Stud. Soc. & Hist.* 1984) totally ignores it. Though by no means an ethnobiologist, I think it deserves wider recognition and consideration. This is partly because, if we think of the relationships between anthropology and linguistics in the terms used by Ardener (Editor's Introduction to *Social Anthropology and Language*, Tavistock 1971), then at the technical and pragmatic levels lexicology has more to offer us than most other branches of linguistics, and it is therefore significant to discover that certain of its domains (albeit of rather narrow scope) show a greater degree of order than was previously realised. But the major significance lies at the explanatory level, where three points can be made. First, the lexical evolutionists direct attention to the neglected analytical notion of markedness, which I have explored from another point of view elsewhere (in R.H. Barnes *et al.* (eds.), *Contexts and Levels*, JASO Occasional Papers No.4, forthcoming). Secondly, they have developed a new method for tackling certain sorts of long-term historical problems. There is a great deal still to be done using the traditional language-family framework - most obviously, the prodigious achievements of Dumézil have still to be properly assimilated and carried forward - but our armoury is reinforced. Thirdly, because they have a sound method, they have helped to broaden the range of topics for which an evolutionary explanation is worth envisaging. The world-historical awareness, so pronounced in the thought of giants such as Mauss, so patchy and

deficient in many more recent doctrines, will always provide some of the essential insights of anthropology, and some of its central problems. One of these, raised by Morgan but still unsolved, is the problem of kinship terminologies, at which the lexical evolutionists have so far only nibbled (Witkowski, following Greenberg). Although their method in its present form is unlikely to be sufficient alone, it may contribute to the solution, and at any rate its achievements so far suggest that it was not because they were *evolutionary* that Morgan's answers went astray. Brown's work points far beyond ethnobiology, to broader issues of this sort.

N. J. ALLEN

AKBAR S. AHMED and DAVID M. HART (eds.), *Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus*, London etc.: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1984. vii, 330pp., Bibliographical notes, Index. £7.95.

The subtitle of the book indicates one obvious criterion by which to assess it: its range. Its geographical range is immense, its temporal range extends from the Numidian Kingdom to a present-day development project, and its thirteen contributions are aligned to the widest possible range of schools and approaches. Unfortunately, their quality, too, covers the entire range from the classic through the (once-)fashionable to the ephemeral. In fact, the book as a whole covers range instead of establishing scope. This is partly the fault of the Introduction.

My own copy contained two imprints of the Introduction, one appended by mistake at the back of the book. Should it be missing in another reader's copy, the loss will hardly be felt. It is short in size and short of ideas, void of any new thought and repetitive and imprecise on any old one it manages to cite. Given the range of the book, unifying ideas may be difficult to handle. But the reader could have expected at least a guide to what is to come, and how it coheres. Instead, the contributions are arranged in geographical order, from west to east: suitable for a single-minded motorist perhaps, but hardly for a book with this title.

That title, *Islam in Tribal Societies*, is in itself the shortest formulation of a recurrent and general problem: the problem of studying a world religion in local societies, or, conversely, of studying local cultures from within, with an anxious eye always on the Islamic Society without. The failure of the Introduction to tackle this problem is compensated to some

extent, as several of the contributions ably raise the question from a variety of angles.

By sheer geographic chance Gellner's study of 'Doctor and Saint' (1972) in the Atlas has been reprinted as section 1 of the book (pp. 21-38). The article investigates the dialectical relationship between the urban *ulama* and the tribal saints, set in a most subtle discussion of the mechanisms of legitimacy. It seems to be perched right on top of that wobbly bridge that at the same time separates and links the one Islamic Society and the many societies of Muslims. The theme of scholars and saints is the concern also of Colonna's (1974) reprinted article on 'Cultural resistance and religious legitimacy in colonial Algeria' (section 4, pp. 106-26). The scripturalist and the mystical-charismatic traditions of Islam acted as two complementary lines of resistance against colonial domination: one in the urban and legal arena, the other in the rural armed struggle. In recent decades the modern state has become an important variable in the relation between the local and the universal Islam.

The role of the modern state comes up in various contributions, and is most centrally addressed in Magali Morsy's 'Arbitration as a political institution: an interpretation of the status of monarchy in Morocco' (section 2, pp. 39-65). Morsy's wide-ranging historical survey argues that arbitration was the fundamental political institution of pre-Islamic Morocco; that it has, with Islam, been endowed with effective social power; and that it has since been crucial in the formation of the modern state. It is not entirely clear to the reader whether arbitration defines any 'real' political institution that could provide an actual historical continuity, or whether it is primarily the analyst's non-temporal constant in a search for patterns too deep for real life.

The difficulty of balancing empirical history with theoretical *bricolage* is shown also in the contribution by David Hart, one of the editors of the book. It consists of a reprint of his 1967 article on 'Segmentary systems and the role of "five fifths" in tribal Morocco', augmented by a more recent addendum (section 3, pp. 66-105). The five-fold division of primary tribal segments appears to Hart as the 'quintessence' (his pun) of Moroccan tribal structure. The adducing of four ethnographic cases is impressive, but it may seem unnecessary, given that: 'if the concept...may not work perfectly,...this is because it... represents a structural strategy' (p. 94). How imperfectly may a concept work in order to represent only itself?

Both Colonna's and Morsy's arguments cross the boundaries of tribes. These boundaries are discussed in several contributions concerned with intertribal relations. Tapper's stimulating 'Holier than thou: Islam in three tribal societies' (section 9, pp. 244-65) shows how inter-tribal competition among three nomadic groups in Iran is expressed through claims of religious superiority. These in turn are then taken seriously within each community beyond their original competitive purpose. Competition is also the concern of Pastner's 'Feuding with the spirit among

the Zikri Baluch: the Saint as champion of the despised' (section 12: pp. 302-9). Pastner's suggestion seems to be that people compete with stories of saints when they have nothing else to compete with. It is unclear, however, how this 'hypothesis' could be validated even through the proposed measurements of 'status mobility'. A third article dealing with intertribal relations is Dupree's 'Tribal warfare in Afghanistan and Pakistan' (section 10, pp. 266-86). It provides some details of intertribal raids and some general musings based on 'two new *social* laws' (p. 282 - emphasis mine). These are that mankind is (i) evil, and (ii) short-sighted. (Perhaps more far-sighted journalism than this might help us to improve on original sin?)

More modest truths are sought in Cole's essay on 'Alliance and descent in the Middle East and the "problem" of patrilateral parallel cousin marriage' (section 6, pp. 169-186). Al Murrah society in Saudi Arabia coheres through descent and marriage, and manages its external relations through trade and the division of labour. Though this is not perhaps a great surprise, the article gives some clear-cut ethnography. This is also true of Tavakolian's account of 'Religiosity, values and economic change among Sheikhanzai nomads' (section 11, pp. 287-301). This is based on six months' fieldwork in North-Western Afghanistan, and describes Sheikhanzai religious and social values and their effect on a current development initiative.

While the four last-mentioned articles focus on the 'tribal' pole of the book's concern, four others investigate in more depth the religious beliefs, rituals and symbols of different Muslim societies. Two of these stress an historical dimension.

The welcome reprint of Lewis' 'Sufism in Somaliland' (1955-6) (section 5, pp. 127-68) explores the transfiguration of tribal ancestors into Sufi Saints in the dual context of originally urban Sufi ideas being adapted to rural circumstances, and of Somali lineage organization. The arguments about the 'persistence of pre-Islamic beliefs' have been supplemented in Lewis' more recent work by an argument for the 'continuity of non-Islamic beliefs', and indeed their re-emergence at certain periods. But the earlier article stands, and deserves reprinting in its own right. Its merits are shown in comparison with Basilov's study of 'Honour groups in traditional Turkmenian society' (section 8, pp. 220-43). This study of honour groups claiming holy descent is firmly set in ethnological rails. While social anthropology has no monopoly rights in ethnographic description, one may be forgiven for thinking that Basilov's distinctions of high culture and low, original and debased, represent so many 'survivals'.

Right into the thick of anthropological debate is aimed Emrys Peters' wide-ranging yet precise discussion of 'The Paucity of ritual among Middle Eastern pastoralists' (section 7, pp. 187-219). This paucity has been documented in numerous enthographies, and given special attention by Barth (1964). Faced with a striking absence of large-scale, politically integrative ritual among the Bakheri, Barth has refilled the 'gap' by redefining ritual as any activity 'pregnant with special meaning'. Thus, a

camp-fire or an annual migration qualified as ritual to recompense the impoverished. Peters analyses the antecedents of this re-definition, refutes its cogency, and removes the problem itself: the absence of large-scale integrative ritual is no deprivation in a society that has no need to define itself as a large-scale polity. The paucity is equalized by a preponderence of sacrifices that are understood to tie Bedouin camps among themselves, and to the larger Muslim world.

Again the reader feels he is negotiating that wobbly bridge that separates and joins the local and the universal Islam. Akbar Ahmed, one of the editors of the book, also touches on it in his essay on 'Religious presence and symbolism in Pukhtun society' (section 13, pp. 310-30). Pukhtun piety can endow with symbolic significance even carriers that are not intrinsically ritual in use or religious in meaning. They are validated by local use and by reference to the pan-Islamic idiom of association with the Prophet's life.

It is a pity that any such ideas are obscured by the mindless sequence of the book, and forgotten in its Introduction. There would have been ample scope for them in a collection that, after all, contains some admirable work, and some that is worth questioning. As it is, the book coheres by its soft covers alone. The covers, however, are well-produced, and the book is well-bound, decently printed and reasonably priced.

GERHARDT BAUMANN

HIROSHI WAGATSUMA and GEORGE A. DE VOS, *Heritage of Endurance: Family Patterns and Delinquency Formation in Urban Japan*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1984. xii, 460pp., Appendixes, Bibliography, Index, Plates. £32.00.

The 'heritage of endurance' is an important factor in explaining the relatively low rates of delinquency found in urban Japan, despite rapid change and social dislocation. Thus argue Wagatsuma and DeVos in the latest of their psychocultural analyses of members of Japanese society, which includes all the usual paraphernalia of Rorschach and TAT tests, as well as Glueck techniques for predicting delinquency on the basis of quantitative measures of family cohesion and parenting.

The stated aim of the book is to test some of the conclusions of European and American research on the contribution of primary socialisation and family relationships to various forms of delinquent behaviour. An experimental design was established investigating a group fifty families, thirty with a delinqent son, and twenty matched for socio-economic background, but with a non-

delinquent son. Interviews were also held with policemen, teachers, social workers and voluntary probation personnel.

The importance of the social context is not ignored, however, and it is emphasised that the 'psychocultural' approach is concerned also with 'social structure as part of cultural continuity', but noting also 'that explanations for socially deviant behaviour involve to some degree the particular psychological mechanisms and social attitudes resulting from the basic socialization process within given families of given cultures in contrast with others'.

The study was carried out in a lower-class area of Tokyo, described as the 'wastebasket' of the city, and indeed selected for this reputation. However, the authors find 'a functional neighbourhood, rather than a disorganized slum' with 'formal and informal social control', where 'authority is generally respected and is seldom perceived as being so venal as to be thoroughly distrusted'. They also note an increased tendency for Japanese citizens to participate in local voluntary organisations. These characteristics they contrast with those of similar neighbourhoods in the United States, where the delinquency rate shows less sign of diminishing, as it has in Japan.

However, they find the family factors affecting the likelihood of delinquency formation in children directly comparable with findings made in Europe and the United States. They rather preclude the possibility of associating delinquency directly with broken homes by selecting a sample of intact families, but there is a significantly greater number of second marriages in the delinquent sample, as well as broken marriages in the grandparents' generation. They concentrate, however, on trying to measure 'family cohesion' and 'interpersonal attitudes of parents to each other', and these, together with other factors such as ease of acceptance of role behaviour, and consistency or otherwise of discipline and affection, they claim to be able to relate incontrovertibly with the likelihood of delinquency formation.

The question, then, in assessing this part of the study, is whether the reader is convinced by the ability of the observers to measure such things. Apart from the psychological tests, applied to each of the parents, as well as to the delinquents and control group of non-delinquents, a great deal of anecdotal material is presented, based on interviews and general observations made in the neighbourhood. Four families are examined in detail, and their life-histories analysed and evaluated for evidence of positive or negative aspects of the above factors. In fact, the least convincing of these case-studies, within the authors' own terms of reference, is the only one which seems to have a really delinquent son. The young offender is diagnosed as severely disturbed and showing schizophrenic features, and his rapes and thefts are eventually rather lamely put down to 'a strong, perhaps semi-conscious, incestuous attachment to his own mother'. The authors qualify the whole chapter, however, by noting that their conclusions are 'at best highly speculative on the basis of the incomplete knowledge provided by our interview data and projective test protocols'. One wonders,then, if their material is so 'incontrovertible', why they didn't choose a delinquent family which more aptly illustrated their wider conclusions. The other delinquent

family presented has all the family features expected, but the son has only a brief encounter with delinquency before becoming an apparently rather upright citizen.

The research for this book was carried out in the 1960s, and that includes most of the reading - more recent entries in the bibliography are mostly of other works by the authors, and indeed, we are warned to 'guard against the supposition that more recent studies can be interpreted as "disproving" previous ones when results are different'. Potentially, the fact of having started work with a group of particular families in the early 1960s would seem to provide a perfect opportunity to follow up their developments over the period of a whole generation, particularly since the stability of the area is mentioned several times. This has not been attempted, however. Indeed, no recent reference is made to the sample group at all, and one cannot help wondering therefore about the accuracy of the predictive techniques.

This is a historical account, then, making use of historical data (and historical research methods, it would seem - certainly the studies chosen for comparison will soon qualify for such status, if they have not done so already - 1925, 1929, 1932, 1947, 1956, 1960 are some of the dates). As such, it probably has some value in itself, and a major strength of the book from the point of view of those untrained to assess the 'psychocultural' side is in its ethnographic content, or what the authors describe as 'narrative documentary'.

An early chapter depicts an interesting contrast with recent concern with the lives of company workers, in its picture of the seamier side of life in Tokyo, and of the conceptual difference between *shitamachi*, the old downtown local area, and *yamanote*, the newer mountainside suburbs. The former, which is the setting for this book, is an area of small family production units, unlike the salaried nuclear family occupants of high-rise apartments in the suburbs; but business is by no means always assured and life is somewhat precarious - or at least it was at the time of the study. After a period of relative prosperity, which was developing during the course of the study, the oil shock of 1973 may have plunged such families into a new era of uncertainty, but unfortunately no recent observations are supplied. There is some detail about the contemporary sexual activities of minors, gang encounters, and an institutionalized local thug hierarchy, although this is depicted mostly through the eyes of social workers and voluntary probation officers. We are also given much detail about the success of the latter with reformed offenders.

Generally, the tone of the conclusion is one of appreciation of the Japanese cultural factors which have kept the delinquency rate low in comparison with other industrialized countries. A few pages also point to the inapplicability of Marxist theory to the Japanese case. One is left feeling rather cheated, however, that a book with this title makes no reference at all to Japanese problems of school and family violence, which have been much reported in the Japanese press in the last few years.

JOY HENDRY

DAVID PRICE and GOTTHARD SCHUH, *The Other Italy*, London: The Olive Press 1983. With Photographs. £3.50 (paper).

That truth is, or can be, beauty is nowhere better illustrated than in the best of documentary photographs. We certainly must be thankful to David Price for publishing several of Gotthard Schuh's evocative, unrhetorical and technically perfect photos of provincial and rural Italy. As is explained in his editorial note, the book is a 'variation, an essay in words and images on a similar theme, the traditional and communal life of *The Other Italy*'. The book certainly succeeds in communicating the writer's love for the Italian countryside and its people, and, in places (for instance, 'The Olive Press') it does convey a certainty that some traditions, some obsolescent agricultural methods, but above all, some areas of morals and manners, are not yet dead.

Price's prose style - at times sketchy, but at other times self-indulgently purple - contrasts with the spare and unromantic concision of the photographic images, while his love of analogy often makes the writing just a trifle too 'cute'. Take, for example, olive trees. Compared to 'giant meringues' in 'medieval Tuscany', these are 'sometimes silhouetted like Japanese prints against the sunset', while in Puglia and Calabria they are 'fashioned like huge antique sculptures, as old as Methuselahs'.

People are always described with affection, but the anthropologically fastidious may be disturbed by the writer's marked tendency to 'naturalize' his characters and push them into to the background landscape. The weakest essay is 'In Search of Verga'. Here, inspiration for revisting Aci-Reale and Aci-Trezza is a literary one, Verga's great novel *I malavoglia*; but Price's attempt to recapture something of its moral and aesthetic quality or to sum up some of the social changes which occurred in that part of Sicily remains rather perfunctory, while absence of new insight makes the re-statement of known ideas rather futile.

The general contention that essays and photographs together describe some 'other' Italy, now a cliché which has reached the tourist market (witness Barzini junior's article in Alitalia's Magazine, Dec. 1983-Jan. 1984), with its presumption that some 'first' or 'not-other' Italy is already well-known and can be taken for granted, is now both well-worn and only too easily refuted in the light of recent sociological description. Nonetheless, the book is well-produced, and it does not lack descriptive vigour, while some interesting observations, for example, about exchange, or about relations between land-owners and *mezzadri*, are effectively related to their rural or small-town milieux.

LIDIA SCIAMA

MICHAEL J. BELL, *The World from Brown's Lounge: An Ethnography of Black Middle-Class Play*, Urbana, etc.: University of Illinois Press 1983. xii, 180pp., Bibliography. £12.00.

This is a study of black American folklore - not, as traditionally, traditional folklore, but folklore as 'the creation or communication of art in face-to-face interactions' (p.x). The interactions take place in a black middle-class bar, the Brown's Lounge of the title, in West Philadelphia. The author is white, he tells us, and middle-class, we guess. He is a folklorist and a member of an English faculty, and carried out participant observation in the bar for about eighteen months in the early 1970s. He worries rather predictably over his research methods and not at all over his theoretical approach and consequent method of analysis, which he does not label but which are phenomenological.

We are given a brief description of the bar and its history, of the neighbourhood, of the owner and his staff, and of the patrons. This is all by way of background to Bell's main concern, which is to show how the patrons and staff of Brown's Lounge create the world in their use of language. What would appear to a complete outsider as casual and haphazard he reveals as intense word-play. Story-telling, joking, arguing, and the involvement of all present, whether acting or viewing, is governed by the bar's own rules and ethics. Bell does not make it clear how particular these are to Brown's Lounge and whether they might be general to black middle-class bars.

Some of the description and analysis of the word-play uses 'indigenous' terms such as *talking shit, telling lies, rapping, cracking, playing, styling* and *profiling* (all of these happen to be praiseworthy), and good accounts of these words and the relevant behaviour are given. This aspect of the book is its most interesting and useful. For the most part, however, Bell's descriptions and analyses (and these are by no means always clearly distinguished) use the terms of phenomenology, and some passages are hard to penetrate.

In a work on folklore of 180 pages it is rather surprising to have less than twenty of actual text (and then mostly of short lines of only a few words each), especially as many social anthropologists make good and extensive use of texts in their ethnographies. It does not seem that the full texts have been made available elsewhere. Here, the texts are incomprehensible on their own, especially without the silences, laughter, tone, inflections, accents, posturing, actions and so on which would give them context. The author tries to give us some account of context, but there is not nearly enough for this reviewer. What becomes abundantly clear also is that there is nothing isolable about Brown's Lounge, and that in order to understand what is said and done there, one needs to know much more than we are given here about the wider context: not only about black middle-class life and culture but also about the personal life and

histories of those involved, their knowledge of each other, their relationships with each other and with others outside the bar. Bell ignores all of this as far as he can, though occasionally an extramural piece of information is introduced when it would be impossible to have any understanding of a piece of text without it. What we are given is still, despite Bell's knowledge, an outsider's view of the bar.

This is not to deny that Brown's Lounge has an individual existence where particular (though hardly unique) styles of behaviour are enjoined - or that Bell gives a useful account of it. It *is* to say that the patrons' time in the bar is only one part of their lives, and that it cannot usefully be separated analytically from the rest. The author's view of the bar and what he presents to us is authentic, as every patron's view is, of course, but it is a white, middle-class, academic, phenomenological, authentic view. His experience of the bar cannot be separated from the rest of his experience.

These deficiencies are not compensated by any scintillating analysis. The assumptions of phenomenology are not questioned, but are merely used to create the facts, which in turn are merely described in phenemonological terms. And it does not seem that anything is added to phenomenological theory. This is not to say that for a phenomenologist this might not be a good piece of work, but only that for any student with an interest in society in lacks substance. For the patrons of Brown's Lounge - not one of whom 'would recognize all of what has been presented nor would every patron agree with what has been said' (p.179) - its author would probably be criticised for *worrying*, and they and we would much prefer some *rapping* or some *partying tough*.

Scholars, who *worry* more than most, will be concerned that there is no index. Readers of Bateson's *Naven* will be surprised to find that though it is listed in the bibliography, there is no discussion of the notion of schismogenesis, which would surely be useful in an analysis of the ritualized exchanges between staff and staff, and staff and patrons. Also, one is sometimes not sure whether Bell is translating the patron's view, or freely interpreting. At one point the patrons are said to have seen 'that they were being given a ritualized script through which to reinvest themselves appropriately' (p.97); I somehow doubt that anyone could see that.

JEREMY COOTE

GEORGE COLLIER, RENATO ROSALDO and JOHN WIRTH (eds.), *The Inca and Aztec States 1400-1800: Anthropology and History*, New York and London: Academic Press 1982. xx, 464pp., Maps, Diagrams, Index. $49.00.

This collection of sixteen articles is a reaffirmation and continuation of the trend in Mesoamerican and Andean studies which in the 1960s began reorienting work away from generalisations and comparison towards intensive research on the regional zones of the two areas. A number of the original students most closely involved in this have contributed papers to the present volume, including John Murra, James Lockhart and Karen Spalding. With the collaboration of other scholars this approach has revitalised the history and anthropology of these areas by providing a powerful disclaimer of earlier works - works which, using a minimum of empirical facts, extrapolated developmental sequences of the rise of civilisations by the use of models borrowed exclusively from Old World experiences (Baudin and Wittfogel for example). Typologies thus became well instituted in place of empirical facts, as models of the particular indigenous responses to the conquest. The reversal of this line of enquiry has been slow, but the fruits uncommonly rewarding, already drastically altering established views of the stages in the evolution of the hacienda through Mesoamerica, the nature of the American colonial encounter, and the development of regions within the polity of New Spain.

Perhaps the present volume's most singular contribution is to extend these insights, throwing doubt on the historical periodization into pre-conquest and post-conquest societies that has arisen through presuming a radical break with traditional social structure and religion.

One of the most important of the new positions permitting such a radical questioning of this periodization has been a movement away from using the chronicles as a primary source of ethnohistorical data of general applicability to the area as a whole, and the systematic use instead, of ecclesiastical, municipal and governmental archives on the circumstances of marriage, land tenure, tax and tribute in specific regions.

Carrasco, and Calnek, argue that the Aztec state - unlike that of the Inca described by Rowe - never succeeded in wielding centralised authority. They demonstrate that the image much favoured by Bandelier, of the monolithic Aztec state apparatus subjugating neighbouring peoples by coercion and the use of force, was fallacious. Instead, a system of co-option was the favoured strategy, tribute being exacted, but the subservient political units retaining a high degree of local autonomy.

The change discussed by Rounds the early pre-imperial Aztec settlement, in which government followed filial rules in regulating succession, to the later expansionist state, in which fraternity played an important part in the creation of a corporate state did not have such operative repercussions as

generally assumed. The structure of authority during the initial period of settlement and consolidation of the city state was not dissimilar from that of other ethnic groups in the area. Despite changes in its own rules of succession and corresponding shifts in the distribution of power it did not attempt the integration of conquered city states, nor radiate outwards to incorporate them into its bureaucratic structure. The empire was administered through indirect rule and the apparatus of domination operated through persuasion. Carrasco, Calnek and Collier all concur that the political constitution of the city states in the Valley of Mexico remained essentially the same after the Aztec conquest. Furthermore, Lockhart's paper in this collection firmly demonstrates the continuity of this pattern of autonomous polities after the Spanish Conquest and well into the 17th century.

Regionalism and relative political autonomy implies a heterogeneous response by the indigenous population to the importation of Christianity. Klor de Alva argues that the most common response was what he calls nepantlism - a response which held the indigene in a kind of suspension, in which condition his misunderstanding of Christianity led him to seek guidance from the remnants of his own religious tradition. The widespread occurrence of this condition, according to de Alva, is the reason for the longevity of pre-Hispanic traits after the conquest, and well into the 18th century.

If these authors contend that indigenous organisation and the systems of thought established in pre-Aztec times survived the Aztec hegemony and persisted during much of the colony, then other contributors to this volume have found some new factors of acculturation which eroded them over time. Borah's paper traces the effects of the introduction of Indian Law, namely the Indians' incorporation into the Spanish judicial system and the undermining of native authorities, though at the same time changes were instigated in the conceptualisation of justice. The judicial process provided a plane on which indigenous concepts confronted and accommodated or absorbed foreign ones. The nature of this conceptual confrontation is well discussed in Lockhart's paper. The theme is also discussed by Karttunen, who attributes acculturation to Nahuatl literacy and the use of the indigenous language in cases of litigation, arguing also that it brought greater contact and familiarity with colonial legal conventions and concepts.

Thus this collection of papers erodes the myth of unconditional, violent and wholesale change, with its associated connotations of upheaval, displacement and expropriation, which informed the Black Legend while also demonstrating avenues of acculturation little explored previously. Together, these challenge significantly the accepted and common view of post-conquest society, as well as some important characteristics of the Aztec and Inca states themselves.

The volume concludes with a paper by Tom Zuidema on bureaucracy and 'Systematic Knowledge in Andean Civilisation',

which questions the assertion that a form of writing is a prerequisite for scientific classification and cumulative knowledge. He argues that among the Inca the *Khipu*, or knotted strings, served to record temporal and locative indexes of political and cosmological significance. Furthermore, he suggests that the sight-lines radiating outwards from the Temple of the Sun in Cuzco acted as referents in coordinating agricultural and ritual activities with astronomy and calendrical prerequisites. The investigation of these illuminates a previously neglected facet of the Inca, and suggests a degree of complexity and inclusiveness of a type of conceptual knowledge which has generally been thought to exist only in Mesoamerica. Again Zuidema warns of the danger of applying generalized criteria for evaluating the achievements of a society, while demonstrating the ethnocentric bias which still informs the concept of civilisation.

The contributors to this volume provide an insightful look into the ways and achievements of the positions which have stimulated a fundamental rethinking of ancient American civilizations, and this will be of interest to ethnographers and historians, as well as archaeologists, working in this area.

ANTHONY SHELTON-LAING

ABNER COHEN, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1981. xxii, 237pp., Bibliography, Index. £4.25.

There are few sociological and anthropological studies centering on the culture of the elite. Researchers tend to focus on either the middle or lower classes of a particular society. The study of the Creoles, the elite of Sierra Leone is, however, an exception.

The research for Abner Cohen's *The Politics of an Elite Culture* was conducted in 1970 but not published until 1981. Cohen is concerned primarily with the patterns of interaction among the members of the modern-day elite themselves and between them and the provincials. As background to his study, he surveys the history of the Creoles' interaction with the British during the colonial period and traces their lives up to 1970. He is especially interested in their numerous ceremonials (funerals, 'cult of the dead' rites, weddings, etc.), in order to ascertain the extent to which they co-ordinate the corporate activities in which their communal relations are expressed. His analysis aims to determine the causal relation between the symbols underlying

the Creoles' culture and the power relationships in which they are involved.

The Creoles are the descendants of slaves who were emancipated by the British in the period from 1787 into the nineteenth century and were settled in Freetown, 'The Province of Freedom'. Over the years there has been continual tension between the Creoles, a powerful minority and the provincials. Despite the fact that they are two per cent of the country's population, the former do not hold many elected positions in the government or the legislature, and Cohen claims that they do not belong as a group to a political party, that they avoid voting in elections, and that they are not economically dominant. They do, however, wield power by indirect influence. While most of the executive, legislative, army and police positions belong to other ethnic groups, from the provinces, the Creoles play a distinctive role as high-ranking civil servants and professionals (lawyers, doctors, teachers, and trade union representatives), not only shaping public policy but also advising those in authority. In Cohen's view, without the Creoles' aid there would be difficulty in the smooth running of the government.

The Creoles are not a formally organized group. Cohen states that if they were, they would be highly criticised, and threatened by the country's other ethnic groups. Instead, they are bound together by a network of kinship, affinity, friendship, and old-boy groupings to which they feel a moral obligation. Men are related to one another and to women in various ways, both as consanguines and as affines, both directly and classificatorily. Relationships of affinity established in one generation generate consanguineal relationships in the next: the alliance becomes a 'cousinhood'. This form of relationship is the basis for a special grouping within Creole society called the 'Grand Cousinhood', in which the family's alliances are developed and maintained through women.

With these moral obligations, there are intense pressures on individuals to fulfil their customary duties, not only in day-to-day school, church, and club associations, but also in numerous costly, elaborate, time-consuming, and dramatic ceremonies. It is through these that the Creoles' identity and interests are reinforced.

Cohen demonstrates how each of these ceremonies entails many distinctive markers which he refers to as symbols. These strengthen the bonds between kin and friends. The symbols are learned informally from family, kin, and friends and are often subtle, vague, and mystifying to the outside observer. These may, for example, be one's manner in relating and conversing with others, or one's poise or propriety. Cohen speaks of these elements as 'mystique'. While they are acquired in the family circle, they are reinforced through formal education, especially in private schools, church services, and club functions which tend to be exclusive to the elite. Thus, through this pattern of associations, the members tend to mingle with those of their own kind. This network of relationships works to develop and maintain

members' interests.

Another institution that Cohen focuses upon is that of the Masonic cult subscribed to by Creole men. As with other gatherings and associations this organization provides an opportunity for men to strengthen their relationships in yet another activity. In all of the social functions in which the elite participate there are several layers that are pertinent. The first and most observable purpose is to bring the members together in a socialization process in which they rekindle their moral bonds. Cohen labels this process as being 'particularistic' in that it is self-serving, perpetuating one's own power and privilege. The second layer exists on a higher level. While none of these organizations is considered to be political, political elements occur as one meets and interacts with one's counterparts. The members, all civil servants of the state, are then able to co-ordinate and manoeuvre interests which are part of their position within the state, and thus their concerns become, as Cohen labels them, 'universalistic', because they are made for the sake of the state.

Thus one can observe that the symbols have a contradictory purpose. While they help protect and advance one's personal status, they also help in co-ordinating activities within the departments of the country. Both layers of commitment to the informal organization shield and enhance the power of the elite in Freetown.

Through the observation of ceremonies and the collection of biographical interviews Cohen has elicited information for a valuable study of a modern elite society. He notes that as more and more provincials obtain education they will become a threat to the security that the Creoles enjoyed in 1970. One wonders today, thirteen years after the study was made, what effects, if any, the rise in the number of educated provincials has had on society. Another question is, have the Creoles been forced to play down the external symbols of their elite status to draw closer to the provincials?

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