BOOK REVIEWS

MICHAEL HERZFELD, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece*, Austin: University of Texas Press 1982. xii, 144pp., Map, Appendices, Bibliography, Index. $17.50.

Ethnicity, ethnic identity, national identity, nationalism - this cluster of terms marks out a field which is becoming of increasing interest to many anthropologists, especially Europeanists, perhaps because it lies at the crossroads of a variety of quite divergent anthropological approaches and concerns. For those sometimes miscast as 'idealists' (i.e. whose interests are with the ideas, notions, concepts, categories which represent, inform, and recreate the social) the concept of ethnicity, whose empirical referents are so notoriously hard to pin down, presents a perfect occasion for the exploration and demonstration of the social construction of social reality and of the entities which it calls into play. For those whose demand is a break with the ethnographic description of small-scale communities and 'partial' societies in favour of a confrontation with the broader economic, social and political histories of the nation-states in which such communities are contained, the study of nationalism seems designed to fit the bill. And for those whose scholarship must intervene in the world of contemporary politics and events, an engagement with the aspirations of emergent (or suppressed) 'nations' plunges them, verbally, into the thick of things. Nationalism is with us, and its standard-bearer is 'culture': the Scots, Welsh, Irish, Bretons, Basques, Occitans, Corsicans are having their day, and the weapon can be a folk-weave blanket as easily as a bomb. It is curious that the study of ethnicity and nationalism in Greece has received so little attention from anthropologists, for there their combination has been, against the odds, triumphant and enduring. We owe to Michael Herzfeld the partial rectification of this omission, and his approach (he calls it ' semiotic') is a historical and systematic analysis of the ideology of Greece's folklorists who, from the War of Independence, have contributed to the making of modern Greece.

A few weeks ago a perfectly respectable centre-left newspaper (*Ethnos*) included the following remarks in its editorial:

> In this land of ours, throughout the centuries, the foundations of Democracy were firmly laid by people determined to establish the right of the majority to manage freely their thought and activity. For the

> first time in the 5th century B.C., Democracy shone and the basic principles governing society were established. Those principles were: equality of rights, equality of political rights, equality of speech and freedom of speech. Specifically equality of political rights meant non-division of people to privileged and non-privileged classes; equality of rights meant that all people were equal before the law; equality of speech meant that all people had the right to speak and no government could take that right away; freedom of speech meant freedom of the press which was an irreplaceable instrument of Democracy .... These four basic principles which have remained unchanged throughout the centuries should govern today all democratic regimes.

One might pass over a few factual errors. If it is 5th-century Athens which is being talked about, then a substantial proportion of the population (perhaps nearly half) were slaves who had no rights at all, who were defined, in fact, as not human; another substantial proportion of the population were resident aliens and their descendants, who were protected, but who had no political rights; and then there were women (and children) who equally were defined as legally and politically incompetent. This leaves perhaps 20% of the total population to exercise their equality in what was a rigidly divided society. But more interesting than these quibbles is the total collapse effected by this passage of both time and space. Democratic Athens was one city (albeit an extremely important one) amongst hundreds of autonomous cities, whose constitutions were as often oligarchic as 'democratic'. Actually, the editorial does not mention Athens. It talks of 'this land of ours'; for, ideologically, the nation state of Modern Greece, which did not exist before 1832, is projected backwards in time and selectively collapsed with the particular city-state whose fame is universal. It is this spatial collapse, or at least indeterminacy, which also allows the statements that democracy has existed 'throughout the centuries' and that its basic principles have 'remained unchanged throughout the centuries'. The implication is that we are talking about Greece where, in the 5th century, in Athens, these principles were founded. But is it meant that they actively persisted throughout the Macedonian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, or indeed the recent Greek monarchy or the Colonels' junta? These questions are side-stepped by a shift in focus from the *institutions* of classical Greece (Athens?) to a set of moral principles, of *values*, which, it could be argued, might have continued to exist 'in this land of ours' regardless of whatever were the actual political realities of the successive stages of Greece's history; but they are also side-stepped by a shift in focus, or rather a blurring of focus, which merges with surprising immediacy classical Athens (Greece?) with 'all democratic regimes' today, such that, through the medium of these values, classical

Athens becomes not only the modern Greek nation state, but also free democratic Europe.

Ethnos' editorial is not a piece of Machiavellian propaganda (nor are its aims anything but laudable). Rather, the successive collapses of an idealized classical past with the modern Greek state and of the eternal values of 'Hellenism' with European civilization as a whole, is a quite innocent habit of mind. How this was achieved, and why it had to be achieved, is a long story. Herzfeld's book tells one fascinating part.

The Greeks rose in revolt against Turkish rule in 1821. But as Herzfeld says:

> Their goal was far more ambitious than freedom alone, for they proclaimed the resurrection of an ancient vision in which liberty was but a single component. That vision was Hellas - the achievements of the ancient Greeks in knowledge, morality, and art, summed up in one evocative word. What was more, the new Greek revolutionaries went one step further than their forbears had ever managed to do: they proposed to embody their entire vision in a unified, independent polity. This unique nation-state would represent the ultimate achievement of the Hellenic ideal and, as such, would lead all Europe to the highest levels of culture yet known.

The problem was that this vision was shared by a handful of Greek intellectuals and revolutionary leaders on the one hand, and by foreign classically trained Philhellenes on the other. Whether it was subscribed to, or understood by, or worse yet, at all evidenced in the bulk of the Greek population, the *laos*, who, united by their common Orthodox faith and their hatred for the Muslim Turks, fought the war, is rather another matter. It was not one, however, which could be left unsettled.

As Herzfeld stresses, there are two Greek views of Greece: one outwardly directed and constructed from the accumulated materials of European classical scholarship; the other inward-looking, intensely self-critical, and uncomfortably aware of Greece as being on the margins of Europe. These two views are contradictory, but they are not always mutually exclusive. Which is expressed is often a question of context and company. But Greece's pride in its nationhood, literally its place in the world, and, importantly, the early support it enjoyed as a fledgling nation, perforce involved the cultivation of the first image. In post-Renaissance Europe, substantially cut off from the realities of a Greece under Ottoman domination, a vision of Hellas had grown. In a sense, this vision was sold back to the Greeks. Nor could they afford to refuse to buy; but the price was a demonstration that they were in any case its natural heirs. Cultural continuity was an imperative.

But cultural continuity, as Herzfeld rightly states, cannot usefully be regarded as a question of pure fact. At the least,

it requires a screening, a judgement, and an assembly of what, from the present context, is to be deemed relevant. It is on this enterprise which Greece's folklorists embarked: a study which was, in its own terms, both 'archaeological and patriotic'. And Herzfeld traces with admirable clarity and scholarship the development and intricacies of their thought from the early philologists and historians to the great Politis, who, in 1884, finally gave to the discipline the name by which it has ever since been known in Greece: '*Laografia*', the study of the *laos*, the 'people'.

This 'patriotic and archaeological' enterprise was not, however, without its internal dissidents and external challengers. The two views of Greece, already mentioned, produced two strains within Greek folklore studies. The first attempted to discover through the songs, folklore and customs of Modern Greece the substance of Ancient Hellas itself, even if that meant decrying and carefully removing the patina of two thousand years of 'foreign' influence and subjugation. The second strain, more liberal, less elitist, rather than advocating a purification of culture (and language), desired to see in the customs and manners of Greece as it actually was a continuity of the same Hellenic genius which had inspired the glories of the past. Both, however, were equally patriotic, and faced a common enemy in the person of the Austrian historian and polemicist, Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, whose name is still anathema in Greece. For Fallmerayer, from 1830 onwards, in an argument based partly on linguistic and partly on historical evidence, proposed that in the course of the Byzantine period the original population of Greece had been entirely over-run and that Greece's present population was not Greek at all, but Albanian and Slav. The reaction was furious, and Fallmerayer was probably single-handedly responsible for the proliferation of Greek folklore studies.

Fallmerayer's attack also provoked counter-arguments which shared the same premise: the identity of 'race' and 'culture' (a common enough conflation at the time). Greece's folklorists turned to the definition and discovery of 'national consciousness' and 'national character' - a character which was quintessentially 'European' - 'virile' as opposed to the degenerate Asiatic, 'individualist' as opposed to the 'communistic' Slav. But if the search for 'national character' was common in the Europe of the time, the repatriation of Philhellenism to Greece itself created a particular oddity, which Herzfeld nicely labels 'ecumenical ethnocentrism'. Greece was more European than Europe (and Fallmerayer was called a Slav): 'If renascent Greece represented the ultimate vindication and triumph of European culture, who but the Greeks should be best qualified to interpret the larger entity? This ... reverses the broadly phenomenological subjectivism of European philosophers by granting the Greeks an intuitive understanding of culture at large.'

Herzfeld's book, as he states himself, is essentially 'an anthropology of anthropologists'; but, in my opinion, its importance is much greater than any study of a group of mere academics and

intellectuals. In many respects it resembles Chapman's excellent *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture*. But if Scottish nationalism and Scottish culture seem only now about to reap the rewards of a limited political success, Greek nationalism and culture followed in the wake of political independence and the establishment of a nation state. Their triumph has been genuinely to bring into being out of remarkably diverse material and within what was a remarkable diverse country a cohesive sense of identity based on the appropriation of the past. *Laographia* as an academic discipline in Greece has changed and is changing; but the legacy of its early years is now part of everyday life.

ROGER JUST

JEANNE FAVRET-SAADA, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage* (trans. C.Cullen), Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme 1980. vi, 273pp., Index, Diagrams. £5.95.

This is an interesting, sophisticated and intense book. It is also in some ways a very good book. The 'Bocage' referred to in the title is the 'countryside of Western France marked by intermingling patches of woodland and heath, small fields, tall hedgerows and orchards'; the exact location is never revealed, and nothing so empirically vulgar as a map is provided, but we seem to be in or close to the Department of Orne, in the south of Normandy. *Deadly Words* is a book about witchcraft in this area, as experienced by the ethnographer, Mme Favret-Saada, between 1969 and 1975.

The work is an attempt to deal seriously and credibly with a phenomenon, and a discourse, that are for various reasons well insulated from positivist enquiry, or from the simple question-and-answer techniques that are often the first bonds between ethnographer and informant. Witchcraft in the *bocage* arises as an explanation for a string of misfortunes that seem grouped in such a way that 'chance' can be ruled out. The misfortunes cited are those that we might expect - dried-up cows, non-laying hens, death and disease among livestock and personnel, and so on. The discourse of witchcraft is entered when an individual decides that he is bewitched. This decision is not taken entirely spontaneously or independently, but is rather provoked, in the most oblique of ways, by a friend or acquaintance here called the 'annunciator', who asks some question like 'do you think someone is doing it?' From there, the bewitched can begin to formulate suspicions, according to local circumstances and jealousies. Those who believe

themselves to be betwitched can react with a series of defensive measures, designed to seal themselves off from magical attack (avoidance of social, body or eye contact with the presumed witch, liberal sprinkling of holy salt or holy water at strategic places round the farm, and so on). If, however, the defence does not work, if the misfortunes continue, then an 'unwitcher' is called. The unwitcher is an acknowledged expert who identifies the witch, suggests defensive measures that have not been taken, and, in cases of dire need (impending death of the bewitched, for example), goes onto the offensive, that is, 'returns evil for evil', attacks the witch with a force stronger than his own, and thus forces him into retreat or death. All this is done covertly, and at a distance; there is no open accusation, and overt strife is avoided. The only signs of the success of the unwitcher are the distress of the presumed witch (should any such distress be perceptible), and the recovery of the bewitched.

There are no self-avowed, self-confessed witches in the Normandy *bocage* (or, if there are, this book is not about them). There are only those who think themselves betwitched, their unwitchers, and those who are accused by the bewitched and unwitcher of witchcraft. Since accusation is never publicly made, the accused play little part in the discourse of witchcraft, except unwittingly to show signs that can be interpreted as weakness or defeat. The unwitcher is the one that, for financial gain or for reputation, attacks with magic, and it is she (or less often, it seems, he) who orchestrates and induces many of the events of bewitchment and cure. In any external judgement of the events, it might seem reasonable to call the unwitcher 'a witch', and this is indeed what frequently happens whenever witchcraft events are reported in the local press; internally, however, the unwitcher is not a witch, but his contrary, forced nevertheless to fight the witch on his own ground. In a world where there are bewitched but no witches, anyone who knows him/herself, by implication or inference, to be the target of unwitching, will regard this as witchcraft, and treat it accordingly; the author seems to suggest, however, that in order to deny any imputation of witchcraft (that is, in order to deny that one could ever be the legitimate target of unwitching activity), one looks elsewhere than the unwitcher, or than the bewitched on whose behalf s/he is acting, for a witch to accuse. And so, backwards and sideways, the logic of accusation traces its rather unpleasant path.

That is to put it very briefly, and the author would probably deprecate such bluntness; I felt, however, that some summary was necessary before I went on to praise and criticism. First, then, the praise. It is clear that witchcraft in the *bocage* is an extremely difficult phenomenon to investigate, and equally clear that the author of this book has pursued her fieldwork with an admirable insight and tenacity. She argues, convincingly, that there is no place in the discourse of witchcraft for neutral information, of the type that the ethnographer might wish to gather and take home. Witchcraft announces itself, and discusses itself, in a discourse of allusion, or even of silence, and information

is only divulged to those that are assumed to be prepared to take an active place themselves in the witchcraft process. The ethnographer describes how she was drawn, in spite of herself, and rather by accident, into the fringe of the witchcraft process, and how it was only thus that she was able properly to investigate it. Combining the roles of bewitcher/unwitcher/witch (for she seems to have been on the verge of taking up all of these statuses), and of ethnographic reporter, was plainly not easy, and Mme Favret-Saada's account of the moral and intellectual strains imposed on her is eloquent. The local press, eager for supernatural titillation, called her 'the witch of the CNRS'. The peasants wanted to pay her for unwitching services that she did not at first know she had even performed. Her colleagues in the CNRS wanted to know if what she was doing was science.

The peasant of modern France lives, like ourselves, in a theoretical universe where witchcraft has only a very suspect status. The law, the medical profession, the social services, the church, academic folklore studies and everyday common sense all, in different ways, deny it the possibility of existence. In many studies of folklore, witchcraft is treated as a survival, a relic from a more primitive logic, whose phenomena exist not as a system, but as a random collection of curiosities (charms, spells and so on). As such, the science of folklore is quite rightly criticised here for its elementary failure to take seriously what the people under investigation take seriously, and to place the items that it 'collects' in the context in which they can be understood. The medical and psychiatric professions are also criticised here for the way in which they deal with witchcraft. Indeed, the approach of these two professions to witchcraft is, at least as described here, almost hilarious, for it consists largely of the application of empirically immune and semi-superstitious categories such as 'psychosis' and 'collective delirium'. The irony of the juxtaposition of this hermetic ideological discourse with that of witchcraft, equally hermetic, equally ideological, is not lost on Mme Favret-Saada, although she has a lot less fun with it than she might. The attitude of the church to witchcraft is more equivocal, but in general the priests seem to find that the diocesan authorities are happier if cases of presumed witchcraft are referred to the correct positivist authorities (doctor, vet, psychiatrist and so on). It is also interesting that the people in the very middle of the witchcraft events, the villagers themselves, will also invariably argue, at least on first asking, that witchcraft is only something that 'used to be done', or that only 'backward or demented' people would believe in, or that it is only believed in elsewhere. Faced with this stark positivist denial at the centre of its field of operations, it is not surprising that witchcraft is allusive and secretive, and that its investigation would pose an ethnographic problem. We are shown, in this book, through a few very detailed case histories, and through minute nuances of interpretation and utterance, how a series of witchcraft events is generated; we are shown how those who, believing themselves to be 'locked in' to

impotence and disaster through the spells of the witch, come to be locked in to the discourse of witchcraft, and to become at once its manipulators and its victims, with often unpleasant consequences.

It has long been a problem for folklorists, and more recently for anthropologists, that many of the folkloric phenomena that they study seem to be on the point of disappearance, but can yet remain at this point of disappearance for generations. In what I found to be one of the most satisfying insights in the book, Mme Favret-Saada says:

> Folklorists might ask themselves what their informants mean when they talk in the past: 'in the old days' people believed in spells and said that...etc. Is this not because the unwitcher - and not the folklorist, for example - is the only person to whom the bewitched can talk in the present? The folklorist takes this use of the past as the basis for firm statements about the forthcoming disappearance of witchcraft (and this has been going on for more than a century) without thinking that a *discourse* on the past is perhaps not quite the same as a past *event* [p.6, note 1, original emphasis].

This comes in a footnote, and as such is not untypical. The text has an extensive apparatus of footnotes (mercifully easy to consult) and appendices, without which it would at times be almost unintelligible. Which brings me to the criticism.

This work is not particularly easy to read. The translation seems to be good, but for various reasons the text is sometimes both elusive and indigestible. Firstly, it is written in a style that has become common enough in post-structural intellectual France, but whose rhetorical flourishes and daring denials of positivist authority tend to seem merely self-indulgent when translated into English (although they have their English imitators, to be sure). Secondly, because the work is a systematic criticism of the 'positivist' approach to witchcraft, the author seems to have sought a 'non-positivist' style, and this sometimes seems to provoke a deliberate retreat into obscurity, and a frequent refusal to say with simplicity and clarity those things that can be so said. Thirdly, this is not an ethnography of a village, or of an area, but of witchcraft. The ethnographer lived a long way from the areas which she studied (fifty miles from her main case study, for example, although she had ethnographically sound reasons for having done so), and her case studies took her over a wide geographical area. There is no attempt to give any systematic economic, social or political background either to the area, or to the particular villages concerned. If we come across farming practices at all, it is only in the form of bewitched livestock. The communities in which the case studies are set are hardly described, and we get only a very little idea of who or what are the people involved. As a

consequence, the whole work has a curiously insubstantial feel, with its only structure a thread of witchcraft, connecting a few bewitched farmsteads set in a landscape of magic salt. It is one thing to argue that witchcraft is not necessarily socio-economically determined. It is quite another to ignore socio-economic factors altogether. We are not, either, and this is a crucial failing, given any real idea of what importance witch-craft has to the society under study. It must surely be allowed that many of the peasants that said variants of 'we don't believe that now, it's all rubbish', meant what they said. The main case study concerns a heavily indebted alcoholic whose marriage remains unconsummated after many years and whom the ethnographer first meets in a psychiatric hospital. If his neighbours said 'only alcoholics and demented people believe in witchcraft nowadays', they may just have been right. We are not told sufficient to allow us to judge. The author expresses the hope that she will not be subjected to the cheap and easy criticism that she went to the *bocage* to study witchcraft in order to work out her own fantasies. I would not make such a criticism. When we consider, however, the deliberately elusive style, the very few (although intensive) case studies, the inevitably exiguous and ambiguous nature of the witchcraft evidence, and the lack of any broader social picture in which the witchcraft could be placed, then I think that if the reader has suspicions of fantasy then the ethnographer has only herself to blame. Mme Favret-Saada says of herself: 'she has chosen to investigate contemporary witchcraft in the Bocage of Western France' (p.3). Why? We are not told. For a book so self-assertive in its subjectivity, this is a curious omission.

This work is self-avowedly iconoclastic and innovative. I feel, however, that some of its icons are long broken, and some at least of its innovations already made. Mme Favret-Saada finds her own theoretical virtue by distancing herself from traditional approaches, but the traditional approaches that she criticises are in several cases almost archaic. In folklore studies, for example, she cites as typical the views of Sebillot (born 1843), and of Van Gennep (born 1873); in a more obviously anthropological tradition, she criticises Lévy-Bruhl (born 1857); in order to situate the ethnographic tradition, she tells of her reaction to the work of Spencer and Gillen (born 1860 and 1856). She cites Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937) as a crucial text, but then takes no notice of any work done on witchcraft in this country since. In particular, she makes no mention of the ASA volume *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (1970), edited by Mary Douglas. This work was intended explicitly as 'Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic revisited', and it foreshadows many of the insights and suggestions made by Mme Favret-Saada.

Parts of *Deadly Words* read like a rather exciting and mysterious 'who-done-it?', as we go in pursuit of the witch and the unwitching; it is something of a disappointment, in a way, to discover that it was the discourse what done it. This is,

perhaps, less startling as a *dénouement* than it was even only a few years ago, and it risks becoming a banality. It has been argued in the pages of this journal (see M.Crick, 'Two Styles in the Study of Witchcraft', *JASO*, Vol.IV, 1973) that witchcraft should be regarded as a discourse with its own internal rationality, and its own capacity to define reality. Such is very much Mme Favret-Saada's view, and I think that in general she has more allies than she is prepared to acknowledge. Part of the problem seems to be that she is in retreat from a positivism even more dogmatically inept than that which sometimes prevailed in anthropology in this country. She says:

> But of all the snares which might imperil our work, there are two we had learnt to avoid like the plague: that of agreeing to 'participate' in the native discourse, and that of succumbing to the temptations of subjectivism.

The British tradition of participant observation was an altogether more complicated practice, it seems, and it certainly did not provoke its ethnographers into extremes of participation and subjectivity by forbidding these altogether. I remain unsure whether this research dogma was really one forced on Mme Favret-Saada by the CNRS in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, or whether it is a dogma that she keeps on the shelf next to Sebillot, Lévy-Bruhl, Van Gennep, and Spencer and Gillen.

In spite of its faults, however, this is an impressive and subtle book. We are promised a sequel, although what exactly this will contain remains unclear. *Deadly Words* is a valuable and original contribution to European anthropology. With the right sequel, it could be even more so.

MALCOLM CHAPMAN

PETER METCALF, *A Borneo Journey into Death: Berawan Eschatology from its Rituals*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1982. xxi, 264pp., Bibliography, Index, Plates, Maps, Figures. £17.25.

When a Berawan dies, the body is dressed lavishly and enthroned. Communal festivities are held for some days. Then it is inserted into a jar or coffin, taken to a graveyard, and there entombed.. For a privileged few, a second 'funeral' is held a few years later. Again there is a series of public festivals, now centred around the exhumed remains of the dead. The celebrations close with the placing of the bones in a mausoleum, often of elaborate

design. This skeleton of Berawan mortuary rituals, the core of their ceremonial life, is fully fleshed out in Metcalf's ethnography, in which he skilfully extricates the eschatology of this Bornese people. Building on Hertz's insights but letting the ethnography command what analysis is needed, he reveals, in his cautious step-by-step interpretations, what we can, and cannot, say about Berawan notions of death, the soul, spirits, and ancestors. Stimulated, not embarrassed, by uncertainty and vagueness, he delineates precisely the definiteness (or lack of it) in different domains of Berawan ideology. To pervert one of his comments into one on his own work, 'the power of the performance to move the audience is only enhanced by this indeterminateness'. Berawan ideology, we learn, is orderly in just those areas that are ritually elaborated. The Berawan say little about the close, but problematic, relation between the living body and the soul, and are inconsistent about the location of the land of the dead. About the process of death, however, they are explicit and exact: at first the soul is detached from the body with which, though, it shares a common destiny; as the last remnants of the corpse decompose, the soul fades into pure spirit and so joins the mainly anonymous category of the ancestors. Along the way, Metcalf makes interesting (though sometimes inconclusive) observations about food, hair, noise, and the mockery of animals within *rites de passage*, and about *rites de passage* themselves - the process of 'secondary funeral' reverses the direction of Van Gennep's classical tripartite division.

Metcalf, co-author of the praised 'Celebrations of Death', gives his account with lucidity and much care: rather a more apposite word than a clever turn of phrase; detail does not mean drabness. Eschewing wide generalisations, he notes the extension of certain beliefs and the individuality of others. We know on what grounds his interpretations stand. He is explicit, if not fulsome, about the nature of his fieldwork, about the way he elicited information, and (occasionally) about the very questions he asked. The anthropologist thus becomes one of the book's central characters: an attractive procedure since it, in turn, highlights the personality of several Berawan. The author does not let us forget the status of ethnography as cross-cultural artefact, his assiduous, discursive analyses laying bare his method of approach - a rare, but welcomed, uncovering in the genre.

His closing vignette serves as vivid reminder that though people may play their lives out according to rules, they are not compelled by them: at one funeral, a prominent lady unexpectedly sings a song of praise, not the usual dirge, to her deceased friend. The audience cries helplessly.

JEREMY MacCLANCY

P.E.DE JOSSELIN DE JONG and ERIK SCHWIMMER, (eds.), *Symbolic Anthropology in the Netherlands*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1982 [Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 95]. vi, 221pp. Dfl.50.00.

Nearly all social anthropologists can be presumed to be more or less familiar with the work of Lévi-Strauss and of Victor Turner. These men are leaders in the work on symbolic anthropology and come from 'the major world schools' of anthropology located in France and in the United States. Fewer, perhaps, are aware of the kind of work which is being done in places such as Denmark, Brazil, the Soviet Union, and the Netherlands. Such is the way that one of the editors of *Symbolic Anthropology in the Netherlands*, Schwimmer, sees the institutional aspect of symbolic anthropology, and this led him to plan collections of work being done in these places (one of which was to be this volume). In the event the project unfortunately proved 'too difficult', but the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde in Leiden came to the rescue of what was to be the Dutch collection which now takes its place among the distinguished *Verhandelingen* of the Institute as the 95th volume in the series.

The text consists of an 'Introduction' written by Schwimmer and of the twelve other articles in the book, all of which are more or less theoretical; one is by de Josselin de Jong, the senior editor. Most of the chapters are about 20 pages long; the shortest - 'The Social Meaning of White, Red and Black Among the *Ahonan* of Ivory Coast (West Africa)' by Visser - runs to just 9 pages, which may strike professional critics as somewhat brief given the enormous amount which has already been written about these colours. (Visser's 'Bibliography', incidentally, refers to very little of the literature which we could have reasonably expected to be cited in a paper on this topic.) The book has no index, but as we know books published for the KITLV by Nijhoffs are always very well produced and this volume is no exception. (Proof-reading has not, however, always been as careful as it might.)

Moyer - a Canadian who studied at Leiden - explains that 'Dutch structuralism' (*Nederlands structuralisme*) is an expression which is rarely used; instead people more usually refer to the *Leidse richting* which means something like 'the Leiden way of doing it'. So we should not perhaps be misled by the title of the collection into thinking that it is a comprehensive exhibition of Dutch symbolic anthropology. The book indeed is heavily biased in favour of the *Leidse richting*.

Moyer further contends that there are not 'any major theoretical differences between the Leiden and the Paris approaches'; rather, the *Leidse richting* prefers to concentrate almost exclusively on Indonesian material and not to seek out cultural universals (although these 'undoubtedly exist') as the Parisians have done because they feel that it is more practical to begin with a 'clearly defined' field of anthropological study (*studieveld*).

In fact, a recent symposium held in Leiden on this topic showed that it would be going a little far to say that any '*studieveld*' has yet been clearly defined, but this is perhaps of little importance because 'the concept...is broadly consistent with the structuralist method' according to Schwimmer.

Later, Schwimmer shows that there is really no method which could satisfactorily be shown to be *the* structuralist method and, indeed, the papers in this book follow a Leiden tradition of eclecticism and of balance by refusing to identify with any foreign school. Another feature which unites the papers in this book (in Schwimmer's view) is that 'by and large' they try to resolve some of the 'contradictions' between the phenomenological approach of Turner and the structural (rationalistic) approach of Lévi-Strauss. This can only be welcomed, of course, for the best social anthropology has always been done by those who have denied themselves nothing (so far as they could) in coming to terms with exotic ways of life, and this includes the insights, if such they are found to be, of different theoretical approaches. But readers of *JASO* will undoubtedly want to know how this helps, first, to make the questions which the papers confront resolvable and how it can help, second, to make specific social facts intelligible (or more so). That is, how do these papers contribute to advance in social anthropology? This question is particularly germane for Schwimmer takes the view that the 'smaller anthropological centres...offer solutions' which have been 'underestimated' in the centres where 'the basic theories' have been formulated.

'Advance' can conveniently be considered from the point of view of ethnography and from the point of view of theory, not because the two are practically separable but because they are distinctions which are often made and with which (it is judged) Schwimmer might agree (though he refers to ethnography and to the semiotic). Each will be dealt with in turn.

The papers deal with some interesting ethnographical topics, such as the meaning of some notions of the Khroumirian concerning the symbolism of the body and the way the status of blacksmiths (*rerhE*) is symbolised in Kapsiki notions of what is edible and what is not and by whom. The ideologies considered range from the Kwakiutl to the Biak-Numforese (Irian), and from Scotland to the Cameroons.

The papers are not all equally concerned with ethnography, so that in some papers the ethnographical content is detailed and precise, while in others it is sketchier, but this is often because the papers in question are more roundly theoretical. The question whether ethnography adduced by an author can support the conclusions to which that author comes is not one we have space to address here. The last paper in the collection deserves special mention though: 'Spirit and Matter in the Cosmology of Chassidic Judaism', by Meijers and Tennekes, contains well-ordered data which is detailed and clear and which admirably supports the authors' contention that Douglas's views about 'the relationship between cosmology and social structure' advanced in *Natural Symbols* are, if not wrong, then exceedingly problematical. Any

comparativist, though, will find something to interest him in this book.

Whether he will be similarly interested by the theoretical content of the papers is another matter. We cannot here go into the relative merits of the approach of Lévi-Strauss as compared with that of Turner (or, any other) or into the different theoretical conclusions to which different authors come. We can, however, make a number of general points about this aspect of the papers.

It is not always clear, first, what is indigenous ideology and what has been imputed to social facts by authors on the basis of some theoretical predisposition. Perhaps the contributors do not see this as worrying for Schwimmer argues that social anthropology is in certain cases deductive and that in some conditions deductive argumentation is 'indispensable', while van Loopik (in 'Social Structure in Mangili') writes that he takes the position of Pouwer, 'that a model by definition never is part of the data, and that there is no difference between a paradigm extracted from the data and a model superimposed on the data....' Readers better versed in making methodological arguments will have to judge these views, but it can perhaps be remarked that, *pace* Pouwer, there clearly is a difference between the two. The former can help us advance because it allows us to make discoveries; the latter cannot for it necessarily leads to the constant application of particular theories to data. In the study of Balinese ideology, for example, the imputation of theory to the four great classes (*warna*) into which all Balinese fall would probably result in the distortion of a hierarchical system which cannot regularly be correlated with theoretical views about the nature of inequality. The point is this: by applying 'theoretical models' to these facts of Balinese life, the *warna* represent a system of inequality; induction leads to quite another view, and one which appears to be of some theoretical interest. Why accept the former when the latter has so much more basis in fact and when it is more interesting?

Theoretical predisposition, second, seems to have blinded authors to indigenous ideology: Schefold, for instance, in the only paper in which some influence of Marx can be discerned, does not stop to ask what it is about cash which makes it a suitable item of exchange for corn in the ideology of the Khmir but unsuitable as such for milk. The meaning of 'cash' is on the face of it, after all, as variable from ideology to ideology as are corn and milk, and attitudes to it are equally variable. Such variability renders it wholly unlikely that it can serve as an analytical concept. (The same may be said of 'power'.)

Theory, next, seems to have blinded some to logic. Let us take van Loopik's paper again. We cannot here go into any great detail; one example must suffice. Unity, he says, reigns in nature. Culture arises through the incest prohibition so that society is created through separation. An awareness of own and other however exists in nature. But this implies separation in nature, so that a fundamental point in van Loopik's argument is

flawed. There are other points of similar logical inconsistency. Such flaws can be discerned in *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* also, and neither can be accepted as explanations of the way that society emerged. As it happens Andrew Lang (for one) had a far more plausible view, that society arose not through separation but through alliance in search of life and of peace. Society may involve the recognition of self and other (as Rousseau recognised) but it cannot be said to rest on it nor can it be said that other institutions derive from it causally. (There is a strong streak of outmoded causal reasoning in many of the papers, perhaps because many of the authors think that it can explain things.)

A final general comment: theoretically, there is (it is very much regretted) nothing which I have found useful in trying to understand Balinese ideology. Indeed, one finds oneself being increasingly baffled that in a book in which in the 'Introduction' we are enjoined to 'an unrelenting preoccupation with the mysteries of phenomenal reality' the main preoccupation of the papers appears to be to move away from that reality as described in social facts to a world (departments of social anthropology, of all places) where what is taken to be of interest is theorising. This, though, often relies so heavily upon terms which are definitional that it is open to endless objection, so that definition of concepts and of terms and not phenomenal reality and its mysteries become the focus for attention.

This interest in theory is well illustrated by de Rijter in 'Lévi-Strauss and Symbolic Anthropology'. Discussing Levi-Strauss's views of indigenous ideology - which it may surprise some to know hold that it is always important, be it 'true' or 'false' - de Rijter writes that 'the crucial question' is how an analyst knows when he has reached 'real reality', i.e., when his analysis can stop. So the crucial question is what understanding might consist in - or look like, since it so often seems to need diagrams. But how can this question be answered without reference to particular puzzles which need resolution and which (perhaps) require different kinds of resolution?

Understanding will be enhanced, de Rijter thinks, if we 'return to the pre-*Mythologiques* phase of structuralism' for this was when 'a double aim still appeared to full advantage in the actual research process: on the one hand the description and uncovering of various patterns of socio-cultural phenomena and on the other hand the demonstration that these systems of signification are expressions of the human mind adapted to specific environments.' But this means that we have to collect and to analyse social facts; a return to what de Rijter admires, that is, would be best achieved by contributing to 'the actual research process', rather than theorising about it.

Moyer writes that 'the continuation of progress in the analysis of myths of social rationalization would best be served by a combined approach by anthropologists, historians, historiographers, and literary scholars', and this, we might add, naturally goes for all branches of social anthropology. Indeed, nothing which might be useful in analysis is likely to be knowingly over-

looked by anyone really trying to make sense of social facts, especially if the analyst has collected them himself.

Oxford is not mentioned in the text. One could concoct likely reasons and possible motives for this but it would be impertinent to attribute these to the contributors to the book. Still, the omission is odd and can be put down only to a regrettable ignorance, regrettable because what is theorised about in this book is most often what is, after many years, still being put to use in Oxford and in other places by people who were educated there in making sense of social facts, as used to be done in Leiden. It is up to the reader to decide which he considers more likely to contribute to real understanding and to substantial theoretical progress.

ANDREW DUFF-COOPER

EDMUND LEACH, *Social Anthropology*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press and Glasgow: Fontana 1982 [Masterguides, gen. ed. F. Kermode]. 224pp., Bibliography, Index. £9.50 (cloth), £2.50 (paper).

Edmund Leach has produced a revelatory introduction to the interests and aims of a working social anthropologist. And yet, since this book was published it has met with a constantly critical response, especially from social anthropologists. The received wisdom appears to be that the book is too idiosyncratic to be a useful introduction to the general subject areas and methodological issues of the discipline. Hopefully, neither students nor interested general readers will feel disinclined to read Leach's volume. To that end this review will briefly indicate some of the book's main achievements and theses.

The first chapter demonstrates the diversity of approaches within the broadly defined subject of 'anthropology'. These differences, Leach claims, reflect two polarities: first, the contrasting problematics of social anthropology (mainly British) and cultural anthropology (mainly American); second, the dichotomy between empiricists, who see anthropology as a natural science akin to zoology, and rational idealists, who seek to uncover the unconscious structures of the human mind. Of course, these contrasts relate to enormous areas of comparative ethnography and theoretical discourse; and it is one of the achievements of the author that he has condensed his vast erudition in these areas to compact proportions. He succinctly reconstructs the intellectual history of such influential credos as 'functionalism', 'structural functionalism' and 'structuralism'. Having done this, and having declared

the functionalist and structuralist strands in his own work, he considers what sorts of epistemological corollaries follow from his conspectus.

To the present reviewer's mind, the most interesting of the personal dogmas which Leach deduces is that social anthropology belongs to the humanities and not the natural sciences. This assertion is nothing new. But it rests upon Leach's considerable grasp of the Popperian view of the contents of scientific knowledge. Social anthropological knowledge, Leach argues, is not scientific (in Popper's sense). It has to do with interpretative understanding. Anthropologists seek to gain insight into the varying forms and underlying principles of social behaviour, rather than to assert falsifiable propositions about conjectured universally-valid truths. This is a fundamental point; for it is important that working social anthropologists as well as general readers should reflect on just what anthropological understanding is.

Leach touches on important questions about the nature of power, asymmetry and exchange in human relationships throughout this volume. For example, his concern with analysing the hierarchical dimension of most human relationships (Chapter 2, pp.58-60) appears again when he later discusses the relation between power and hierarchy (Chapter 5, pp.156-159). He relates these questions to his central thesis which he states in the fifth chapter; namely

> that it is only when we come to understand that relationships between man and man and man and god are, at least in a metaphorical sense, the equivalent of economic indebtedness, that we can really appreciate how this transformation of economics into ideology through the mediation of kinship actually occurs.

In support of this fascinating thesis comparative ethnographic materials on marriage exchanges are assembled in the sixth chapter.

In the sixth chapter Leach also expresses scepticism about the universal applicability of technical categories, such as 'family' and 'marriage', which social anthropologists customarily employ. This point about categorical uncertainty and ambiguity echoes a similar concern which has been persistently expressed by Needham (see, e.g., *Belief, Language and Experience* and the papers on 'inner states' and 'religion' in *Circumstantial Deliveries*). The important point which such scepticism raises is whether social anthropologists, as the translators of cultures, can feel confident about the general denotative force of categories which have been formed within a particular society with particular institutional arrangements. This perspective, hopefully, should prompt greater sensitivity both to the observer's own concepts (which he or she uses before, during and after conducting field research) and to the actors' own vernacular categories (which may denote inner states, attitudes and institutions for

which there are no corresponding terms in our Western vocabularies).

One might conclude by saying that most general introductions to the discipline are inevitably idiosyncratic in some way; moreover, they invariably have to skip over large areas of interest. So Leach's volume need not appear any different on these counts. His book is an honest and pleasurable introduction to the 'study of man' (as the etymology of 'anthropology' implies). In debunking the sexism inscribed in the English language which anthropologists use, and in teasing out the common themes in their sundry approaches, Leach has helped to communicate the sorts of values and humanistic concerns which anthropological understanding is based on and engenders.

SCOTT K. PHILLIPS

BABIKR BEDRI, *Memoirs*, Volume II (translated and edited by Yusuf Bedri and Peter Hogg), London: Ithaca Press 1980. 367pp., Index. £11.50.

The remarkable Shaykh Babikr Bedri died at the age of 94 years in 1954. He wrote three volumes of memoirs, published in Arabic, of which two have been translated into English. The first covers that period of his life which ended with the final suppression of the Mahdist revolt, a movement in which he had been an inconspicuous activist. He became comfortably well-off from his dealings in trade, at this time, but at the end of it, he spent nearly two years in Egypt as a prisoner of war. This second volume covers the 31 years of the middle period of his life from 1898, years during which he won renown as an educationist, until his retirement from Government service in 1929, at the age of 68 years - although he continued his educational activities long after that.

If this English translation faithfully reflects the prose of the Arabic original, it is commendably clear, and the descriptive passages are all the more effective because his style of writing is to the point, without any signs of being contrivedly elaborate. Thus, when he happened to spend a night in a village where the plague was raging, he relates how a man, who was assisting in burying the dead, collapsed over the grave: 'He was carried to his house and shortly afterwards we heard that he had died. So the burier was buried.' - a more telling way of conveying the effects of the plague than any amount of lurid description. Or, again, when a married daughter tells him that she knows she is going to die but she wanted to tell him how much she loved him. He took her in his arms and told her to repeat 'I ask pardon of God', which he did '...until her voice died away and I laid her

down. So she departed this life.' - nothing more.

Misfortune of one sort or another dogged him throughout his life. On a tour of inspection of schools, at the age of 61 years, he happened to be without transport at a certain place, so he borrowed a camel. It was a most wayward beast, which, just after he had mounted it, ran away with him. His attempts to control it merely led to it turning rapidly in circles, until he was thrown out of the saddle. The Shaykh fell on to a rock, on his back, severely damaging his spinal column. Alone with only an unreliable policeman as a companion, he lay where he fell, unable to move, wondering what to do. After a while he caught sight of a few people some distance away, and dispatched the policeman to bring them to him. It almost goes without saying that he knew one of them well, for he made a point of getting to know people wherever he went, and to do them good turns whenever he could. He was taken immediately to the nearest hamlet. While there he was given a 'fire bath' (a trough heated with burning wood, the embers of which are removed before the patient is laid on the hot earth, spread all over with leaves, and then to be covered with sand up to his chin), but he had to be removed from the bath in great haste because some still smouldering embers burned through his cloak. Weakened further, unable to eat, and feeling that his pulse-rate was dropping, he requested an elderly woman, who had been tending him, to send for her daughters to entertain him, 'to liven up my circulation'. It alarmed him that the woman, her husband, and others thought his reference to entertainment meant sex, but after he fulsomely explained what he had in mind, the two young girls were fetched. Five diversionary days in their company and he was well enough to be carried on the long journey to Haifa. There he was treated by a doctor, who forced his displaced vertebra back into its place. About a week later he was back at work. In less than a year he was beset by another major misfortune. To his brother Yusaf he had always been devoted, and when, on a tour of inspection again, he heard that his brother was in financial straits, he decided on a detour to visit him. Before reaching his brother's village, he was given the news that Yusaf had shot himself that very morning. It lit a 'flame of grief' in his heart. Within a month of this disaster, the son-in-law he favoured most died at the age of 25 years. The Shaykh faced all these, and other reverses stoically, producing an appropriate epigrammatic sentiment for each one: 'The wise man is he who draws value from misfortunes, not he who is fettered by them.'

Bedri's energy was prodigious, and when an Inspector of Schools - the first Sudanese to occupy the post - the amount of travelling he did, over a wide area, is truly amazing. Out of choice, he eschewed the more comfortable and quicker forms of transport, preferring to travel by donkey - he composed a charming poem for the donkey that was 'very dear' to him. He admits that he was able to save a little in adopting this form of transport, to help him pay off his chronic debts (accumulated in giving loans and other sorts of help to friends and relatives), but donkey travel also allowed him to indulge in lengthy sessions of

conversation with notables and others wherever he went, from whom he learned 'the history of their tribes', and for this reason his works are still invaluable ethnographically for any anthropologist working in the area. The other aspect of this mode of travel is that he was not ambitious in terms of acceding to power; for the first step along this path is to control one's relations with others, free of any dependence on them for a night's lodgings and a meal, a control made quite impossible by slow-moving donkey travel, stopping in practically every village and staying in most.

The Shaykh's ambition was to carry education to as many places as possible. His enthusiasm was not shared by all Sudanese, many of whom, especially the local religious notables, who, on the whole, were opposed to anything other than Quranic education. He was equally determined that some amount of elementary secular education should be given to children as well. Much of his time he spent in persuading local people of this necessity, successfully on the whole. To do this, he adopted a number of ruses. Football had become a popular game in one of his areas; he sent to Khartoum for some footballs, but would not allow boys to play unless they first registered as pupils in a newly established school which had been boycotted: he soon had more than the quota of pupils originally planned. On another occasion, he persuaded an official to threaten a man with jail if he took his fatherless nephew away from school, and when he happened to see another pupil, who should have been at school, following a donkey carrying fertilizers to his uncle's fields, he whacked the donkey to send it on its way, took the boy to market to buy him a new suit of clothes, and sent him back to school.

In furtherance of his aim to spread education as widely as possible, the Shaykh encouraged local people to contribute to the up-keep of their school. This self-help approach was encouraged by the administration, which would provide a building free of rent. Bedri, some three years after negotiating this arrangement, went further when he decided to start schools for girls. Administrative officials, thinking that the opposition from traditionalists would be unbeatable, were very sceptical, but they did not impede him. In 1907 he opened the first girls' school. When it became evident that it would prosper, he was given a small grant by the administration to assist him in this new venture. Indeed, he got along so well with officials at the Department of Education, that he was thought by many to be committedly pro-British, and an unbeliever to boot. In fact, he admired much about the British, the wise and just ways (to use his own words) in which he was treated by them, but, as he told one of the officials for whom he had deep respect '...the Sharia law forbids me to love you because you are an infidel'. As he saw things, government by foreign powers was temporary, and that education - albeit of value in itself - would hasten the day of independence. Devoted to the advancement of education for his own people, he was Sudanese through and through, many of the trials and tribulations hesuffered stemming from these sentiments.

What has been said about Bedri's Memoirs here is by way of

an aperitif. Delightful touches light up his account on almost every page: the old man of over 80 years who did not dismount from his donkey when he was approached by an officious Englishman, explained, when reproached ,that he had refrained because the official would also have had to dismount to lift him back on to his donkey; or when the Shaykh drew a local notable into a circle of eminent people, first discreetly tucking his undergarment out of sight. His dealings with people of all sorts are a delight to read, as petty as the next when necessary, magnanimous in his forgiveness even when suffering personal loss at the hands of law-breakers, and always with an eye for that ethnographic pearl of behaviour. It is a very satisfying book to read. The pity is that the third volume of Memoirs is unlikely to be translated.

E.L. PETERS

RECENT BOOKS ON LATIN AMERICA

PAUL HENLEY, *The Panare: Tradition and Change on the Amazonian Frontier*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1982. xxii, 247pp., Diagrams, Bibliography, Index. £15.00.

The organisation of this work and its overall theoretical approach arise from the author's long interest in the nature of articulation between the indigenous peoples of Amazonia and the fast-expanding national fronts. The Panare present an excellent opportunity for such a study. They are a small group (under 2,000) living south of the Orinoco in the valleys of the Cuchivero, Guaniamo, Suapure and Manapiare, and are more or less typical of those acephalous tropical forest societies which live by shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing and collecting, in a dispersed settlement pattern. However, in one respect at least they are unusual: at some time during the 19th century they began a northward migration from the upper Cuchivero, gravitating towards a colonizing front of Venezuelan non-Indians (*criollos*) who were at the same time expanding southwards. Most Panare settlements today are within no more than a short walk from a *criollo* residence.

This migration was probably due to a desire for easy access to trade goods, especially the much prized metal tools, which sent other Guiana Caribs, such as the Ye'kuana (Makiritare) on lengthy trade journeys lasting for months. Today, Panare live in a close relationship with *criollos*, exchanging their basketry for industrial goods. *Criollo* pastoralists depend on their basketry moulds for cheese-making whilst their patterned round baskets have become a favourite item in Venezuelan artisania. Despite a long association of a century or more, the Panare have so far retained their distinctive social and cultural traditions, their remarkable

resilience contrasting with the weak resistance to acculturation of many Amazonian Indians after only brief contact. They therefore constitute a success story worthy of investigation, so that the question which arises is: why have the Panare apparently escaped the ravages of contact which many others have not?

The book begins with a description and analysis of the nature of their internal relationships. The exposition in this part seems to be based on the 'layer-cake model of society' (as set out by M.D. Sahlins and E.R. Service in *Evolution and Culture*). In this, economy and technology are sandwiched between the physical environmental base and an overarching superstructure which is the political system and ideology. An interpenetration occurs from one layer to the next which consequently adjust to each other. Henley uses the model perspicaciously and from the interrelationships extrapolates a series of underlying principles.

The atomistic nature of Panare production, centred on the hearth group (conjugal family) with its complementary division of labour by sex, is contrasted with the predominantly collective nature of distribution and consumption, mainly via communal evening meals in times of abundance. From this Henley deduces the disruption of the economic infrastructure of the residential group in conditions under which the principle of food sharing is discontinued for long periods - that is, when each hearth group keeps its food for its own members who eat in isolation. This occurs when Panare live on the plains near the *criollos*, since this is a more impoverished habitat. Although he himself does not make this point, the mode of production and consumption which he describes is the exact opposite of the popular ideal of the co-operative folk society, Amerindians often being quoted as an example, in which members are thought to possess and to work in common and then to divide up the proceeds for private consumption. Henley does discuss another ideal, that of the indigenous, conservationist society, and he finds the Panare make a rational, but also prodigal, use of their resources. However, through their pattern of extensive resource exploitation they are aptly described as 'conservationist in consequence' and not 'conservationist by intention'. Unfortunately he does not tell us whether there are inherent constraints in the conceptual system; if not through the notion of spirit masters of the natural resources then of environmental forces which are denoted by shamans as exacting revenge by inflicting sickness and misfortune on greedy humans.

The analysis of Panare marriage and kinship brings fresh air to a number of controversies as to the nature and performance of a dominant system of prescribed bilateral cross-cousin marriage. For example, there is the recognition that affines and blood kin do not form discrete groups or have separate terminologies. I was pleased to see the system firmly categorised as cognatic with information given to show that the development of a two-line or two-section system could not occur. The exposition of the unusual alternate generation marriage is an exciting scoop for marriage-type fanciers. Henley claims that, like proximate

generation marriage (the avunculate) it is a response to the situation of uxorilocal residence and son-in-law service, also permitting a higher degree of local endogamy. Certainly in these societies the problem is to avoid the departure of a son and yet be able to claim the services of a son-in-law, so that manipulation of the dependant female kin resource is to be expected in such circumstances. However, it seems to me that the rarity of MF-DD and MF-ZDD marriages counts against their being a numerically effective device of this kind, and they may simply provide an extra means for consolidating relationships between men of adjacent generations who are, nevertheless, of a similar age group. Effectively, cross-cousin marriage allows for an exchange of sisters to be followed by an exchange of daughters and then, among the Panare, the alliance can be extended into a third generation via DD marriage. The whole concept of endogamy in these cognatic systems needs careful investigation, particularly in view of a wide variety of different settlement groupings such as exists among Caribs.

The theoretical model used in the second part of the book derives from the work of the Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, *Os índios e a civilização: a integração das populaçoes indígenas no Brasil moderno* (Rio de Janeiro 1970) which Henley had carefully reviewed in English ('Os índios e a civilização: a critical appreciation', *Cambridge Anthropology*, Vol. IV, 1978) and found stimulating. Ribeiro argued that, provided the members of an indigenous society physically survive contact, the social and economic relations are more important in determining the outcome than is the predisposition of the people to adopt, adapt or reject incoming ideas and experiences. Since cultural traits pass by means of the relations between people and these operate within specific economic systems, then it is to the dominant sphere of the national society and culture that we must look for explanation, and to their effects on the numerically weaker and politically powerless indigenous group.

In testing this hypothesis, Henley considers Panare external relations and systematically examines the effects of national expansion on them. He reviews the extractive industries (collection of sarrapia and mining), pastoralism, agriculture and trade, and also the recent intervention of protectionist agencies of government and missions. He notes a recently more destructive phase beginning in Panare-*criollo* relations and he considers factors such as the numbers and intensity of contact, the problem of the 'outsider', of competition for natural resources and the damaging effects of selling surplus food instead of sharing it. This part of the book offers an extensive field for comparative research.

Whether the Panare can stand apart indefinitely from the mainstream culture of the national society, even given their land rights as Henley proposes, is another matter. A materialist reasoning is not sufficient, for Panare values, as he recognises, may determine the outcome. The Panare may themselves choose to enter into *criollo* economy and society to the degree that they

will bring about profound changes in their culture and society. The Wayana of Surinam and French Guiana are another resilient group of Caribs who might be investigated along similar lines to those used for the Panare. Certainly they have in common an unusual institution, which is a series of special public and group ceremonies for the initiation of boys. In both cases these are attended and served by members outside the settlement and an affective relationship with the total ethnic group seems to be stressed. This does not occur in most Carib societies which instead have a piecemeal infliction of hunting charms, taking place individually within the immediate family group. It may be that this practice of group initiation with its attendant values provides another important reason for Panare and Wayana success in maintaining an ethnic identity. Outside the South American area, the *molimo* ritual of the Ituri forest pygmies in Central Africa is another such instance. Clearly, the effects of mass initiation on the unity of the wider ethnic group is an important topic for comparative research.

Encapsulating the results of nearly two years of field research in Venezuela, Paul Henley's monograph is a valuable addition to Carib literature. The ethnography is of high standard; the analysis of both the traditional system of the Panare and of their external relations is systematic and the argument closely integrated. It is moreover, an intelligent and sophisticated work, taking us a long stride forward in our attempts to understand situations in which indigenous peoples are having to cope with expanding national interests and development.

Should another edition be forthcoming, then one might express the hope that Yale University Press will not only correct typescript errors but also somehow manage to arrange that the footnotes invariably get printed at the bottom of the appropriate page of reference. The presentation would then be in line with the high quality of scholarship which the book displays.

AUDREY BUTT COLSON

DAVID JOHN THOMAS, *Order Without Government: The Society of the Pemon Indians of Venezuela*, Urbana etc.: University of Illinois Press 1982 [Illinois Studies in Anthropology no.13]. 249pp., References, Index. £21.88.

'Pemon' is the self-designation of a number of closely-related Amerindian groups who live on the high savannas that form the water-shed between the Orinoco and the Amazon as well as the frontier of southeastern Venezuela with Guyana and Brazil. In the ethnographic literature, the Pemon are frequently divided up

into the Kamarakoto, Arekuna and Taulipan of Venezuela and the Makuschi of Brazil and Guyana. However both linguistically and culturally they are all very similar, not only to one another but also to the Akawaio, Ingarikó and Patamona who live slightly further east, mostly in Guyana. Although the latter groups designate themselves as 'Kapon', their language was reported to be easily intelligible to the Pemon by the nineteenth-century traveller Im Thurn, a judgement more recently corroborated by Audrey Colson (personal communication). Taken altogether, the Pemon-Kapon number about 25,000 people, making them comparable in numbers to the Yanoama groups living further west on the Orinoco-Amazon watershed and the Ashanika (Campa) of Peruvian Amazonas, both of which have been described as 'the largest contemporary Amerindian group of Amazonia'.

Order Without Government represents the first full-length monograph in English about this most important group of Amerindian peoples, and for this reason is a most welcome addition to the literature. It deals with the Venezuelan Pemon amongst whom the author carried out Ph.D. fieldwork in 1970-1, followed by a shorter spell in 1975. In contrast to many books based on doctoral research, it is written in a clear and readable style (although some might find it just a little 'folksy' at times), testifying to the intellectual confidence that the author has acquired in the years since he completed his thesis (1973). Furthermore, although the analysis of social organisation plays a central part in the book, just as it did in his thesis, this has been supplemented with additional material on the Pemon belief system, including a discussion of the syncretic cults that have flourished amongst the Pemon-Kapon since the nineteenth century, as well as an interesting analysis of a short corpus of myths selected to demonstrate the Pemon's preoccupation about certain kinds of interpersonal relationship.

However, as the title suggests, the central problematic of the book is the so-called 'problem of order', represented by an egalitarian society lacking any form of institutionalised leadership roles associated with coercive powers, and yet in which disputes and interpersonal violence are rare. Thomas begins by acknowledging the conventional arguments to the effect that order in societies of this general kind is maintained by tight networks of reciprocity, reinforced by informal moral sanctions, operating between closely-related people who spend most of their lives living in close geographical proximity to one another. In the first half of the book he gives a good account of how such kinship-based networks regulate everyday life amongst the Pemon. However, Thomas argues that a preoccupation with 'what kind of social "glue" holds people together... has rendered our understanding of societies like the Pemon somewhat myopic, at best'. Instead he proposes that the decentralised and politically anarchic character of Pemon society be viewed as an 'enabling device' for the preservation of individual autonomy. It is precisely the refusal of the Pemon to allow any permanent denial of such autonomy that provides the moral order underpinning their

society. The individual may be bound to others by a variety of reciprocal rights and duties, but this 'mutuality' has its limits. As the Pemon put it: 'When we get too close together, there are fights'.

Yet although one may sympathise with Thomas' view that an excessive preoccupation with the maintenance of social solidarity could blind one to the fact that some peoples may live in egalitarian societies by choice rather than merely by default, it is difficult to accept the importance he attributes to Pemon ideology (or rather his own idealised synthesis of the same) in explaining the order of their social life. Particularly in the latter part of the book, Thomas tends to write as if this order were little more than the epiphenomenon of a series of highly abstract notions of power, presented in a succinct typology following his analysis of Pemon myths. Personally, I do not find this discussion of 'power types' (the emic justification for which seems to me to be slight) at all convincing.

But whatever one might think about the author's more abstract theorising, one cannot deny that *Order Without Government*, considered as a work of basic descriptive sociology, is thorough, competent and a most valuable contribution to the field. Thomas' discussion of Pemon social organisation is one of the best so far produced for a Guianese society, though it is somewhat strange that he does not refer to Rivière's very well-known study of the Trio, especially given the sociological similarities between the two groups, most notably their common custom of ZD marriage. Also, I would have liked to have learnt more about the syncretic cults of the Pemon, even though to deal with these exhaustively would require a complete book in itself. It is a great pity that the desperate state of the 'job market' has obliged David Thomas to leave academic life since there is clearly much still to be written about the Pemon and their neighbours.

PAUL HENLEY

ROBERTO DA MATTA, *A Divided World: Apinayé Social Structure*, (trans. Alan Campbell), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press 1982 [Harvard Studies in Cultural Anthropology no.6]. xiv, 176pp., Maps, References, Index. £28.00.

The Apinayé are Gê-speaking Brazilian Indians who live in two small villages in the extreme north of the state of Goias. The 'Apinayé anomaly', a mistaken account of their elaborate moiety system, made the Apinayé famous and was considered an anthropological oddity since it first arose in the 1930s from a minor error

in Nimuendaju's field observations. In earlier articles ('A Reconsideration of Apinayé Social Morphology', in D. Gross (ed.), *Peoples and Cultures of Native South America*, Garden City 1973; 'The Apinayé Relationship System', in D. Maybury-Lewis (ed.), *Dialectical Societies*, Cambridge 1979), Roberto da Matta laid the 'Apinayé anomaly' to rest with the results of his fieldwork. His more comprehensive published account of Apinayé social life was then available only in Portuguese under the title *Um mundo dividido*. Now there is good news for the general reader: Alan Campbell's clear, readable translation, *A Divided World*, has just appeared, and it adds considerably to the English-language literature on lowland South America.

Da Matta, a Brazilian anthropologist, undertook his study of the Apinayé in collaboration with David Maybury-Lewis and the Harvard Central Brazil Research Project of the 1960s. One aim of that project was to explain the apparently contradictory juxtaposition, within Gê society, of complex social organisations and primitive forms of technology. The clarification of Apinayé moieties fell clearly within the scope of the project's ambitions. Da Matta, along with other project members focusing on analyses of Gê social structure, sought to collect accurate descriptions of social institutions, especially moieties and age sets, marriage and residence patterns, and relationship terminologies.

This, indeed, is Da Matta's greatest strength: his exposition of Apinayé kinship and ceremonial relations is informative and detailed, although it is difficult to extract the basic data from the theoretical framework. In brief, there are two pairs of moieties, neither regulating marriage. The *Kolti* and *Kolre* moieties are associated with the naming system. An adoptive parent arranges for a close blood relative, ideally the child's FZ or MB, to bestow names and moiety membership on the newborn child. In practice, Da Matta finds that the name giver and the adoptive parent are somewhat distant relatives brought into the family circle and given closer terms of reference through this name-giving process. Apinayé notions of 'blood' and 'blood relation' are critical to understanding relations among adoptive parents, name givers, parents, and children. A man's blood turns to semen and combines with woman's menstrual blood to make a child. The transmission of blood from parents to child is at once both a physical and a metaphorical process. Da Matta gives us some rich and fascinating information here, suggesting that the Apinayé believe vital substances to be transferred from parent to child long after childbirth. As more children and grandchildren are born, blood becomes dispersed and 'blood relations' become decreasingly close and binding. A continuum of blood relation results, but Da Matta implies that naming is the institution by which distant relatives, transformed into close ones, are made equal, thus overcoming the potentially hierarchical nature of this continuum. Thus, the *Kolti* and *Kolre* moieties are complementary, and Da Matta calls this moiety structure an instance of 'diametric dualism' (cf. C. Lévi-Strauss, 'Do Dual Organizations Exist?' in *Structural Anthropology*).

The other pair of moieties is based on the system of formal friendship, which Da Matta contrasts to the system of blood relation. 'Non-relatives' form bonds that reproduce the formal friendships of their adoptive parents. The younger friend gains membership in the moiety of his or her older mentor. Da Matta says, for reasons that are unclear, that these two moieties, the *Ipognotxoine* ('people of the centre/village square') and *Krenotxoine* ('people of the periphery/houses') are ranked, the former being the superior moiety. Furthermore, there is an asymmetric relationship, within both moieties, between the older and the younger formal friend. Unfortunately, Da Matta does not directly address the interplay between these two levels of asymmetry; nevertheless he associates this hierarchical moiety structure with Lévi-Strauss's 'concentric dualism'.

The major portion of Da Matta's book is devoted to the description of these moiety structures and the relationship system, including a thorough treatment of kinship terminology with special consideration given to cross-cousin terms. Throughout, Da Matta develops a contrast between blood relations and ceremonial relations, diametric and concentric dualism. 'The Apinayé relationship system', he finds, 'is based on a dichotomy between a private, domestic sphere and a public, ceremonial sphere.... [I]f one looks at the system as a whole, it becomes apparent that all these [cross-cousin] categories establish links that integrate the two basic domains of Apinayé society.'

Having laid out the ethnographic details of domestic life (Chapter Two), ceremonial life (Chapter Three), and the relationship system (Chapter Four), Da Matta turns to the political system (Chapter Five) and concludes with a more formal, abstract analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of Apinayé social life. On the latter score, Da Matta's book can be seen as a response to Lévi-Strauss's work, attempting to attribute dualism to other principles than those that regulate marriage. These principles appear to be grounded in the opposition between the pre-eminent 'natural' importance of undiluted, shared substance, and the 'cultural' propriety of breaking the bonds of the nuclear family in favour of establishing the widest net of social relations. In operation, these principles lead to a conflict in Apinayé society between domestic, private, and exclusive institutions (e.g. the nuclear family) and ceremonial, unifying institutions (e.g. name giving). Da Matta concludes: '...[I]nstead of thinking of dualism as the result of a division of one into two, I think it is more fruitful to see it as a technique that can unite two into one'.

It is in this philosophical argument that *A Divided World* falls somewhat short of its promise. Specifically, Da Matta fails to make a clear and direct statement about the interplay of structural principles on the interpersonal, domestic group, moiety, village, and purely abstract levels. Thus, he appears to contradict the bulk of his argument when, in the last few pages, he concludes, 'The moieties are seen as symmetrical and as having the same social weight'. It should not be the task of the reader

to sort out this conundrum: if Da Matta means to apply the blood tie/social tie distinction separately on different levels of analysis, he does not make this explicit.

Despite this, Da Matta's work is worthwhile and interesting reading for the Crow/Omaha enthusiast as well as for the specialist in lowland South America. Da Matta's attention to the present status of the Apinayé, repeated references to comparative Gê data, and valuable general information on social organisation, make this new translation a welcome addition to the literature on Amazonia.

N.E.FRIED

PETER G. ROE, *The Cosmic Zygote: Cosmology in the Amazon Basin*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1982. xvi, 309pp., References, Index. $40.00.

This book has been hatched from a metaphor of the cosmic zygote - 'the fertilized egg, a biologic perpetual-motion machine of vast pansexual import organised about dualistically defined male-female categories'. The author attempts to perceive the mythology of lowland South America and the prehistoric Andean and Mesoamerican cultures within the same shell. Selvatic features from the iconography of Chavin, Olmec art, San Augustine stone sculptures in Colombia, Mochica and Chimu cultures in Peru are all yoked to images in contemporary lowland mythology and treated as if they were all part of one conceptual system.

The method behind his work is a somewhat 'scrambled zygote' of archaeological and anthropological techniques. Roe spent time working with the Shipibo of eastern Peru both as an archaeologist and an anthropologist. When the Shipibo failed to provide him with the wealth of data such as had previously been found among the neighbouring Campa, he decided to compensate for the lacunae by reconstructing the basic elements of Shipibo cosmology using comparative data. By looking at all the similar features in lowland South American societies and putting them all together, he constructs a total model which although not applicable in any one society is applicable to all in some degree.

It is not easy to know on what level this book should be best appreciated. Without any doubt this is the anthropologist's 'curate's egg', but the extent to which it is 'good in parts' depends on whether it has been addled by an indiscriminate use of archaeological and anthropological techniques, or whether the enthusiasm generated by such a *tour de force* can make it digestible. The book's Dedication refers to its author as having a predilection for mind games. It can surely be no accident that a book entitled

Cosmic Zygote has been written by a man named 'Roe'. The figure on page 270 summarises the whole model by encircling a list of almost 100 natural features common to Amazon mythologies in tiny balloons. The effect is a vast 'Cosmic Roe' whereby the author becomes a metaphor for his book.

Roe comes perilously close to the fate of Humpty Dumpty in his comparison of archaeological and anthropological material. That highland and lowland societies, particularly those of Peru and Bolivia, have had interrelations for thousands of years is well established. Roe, however, gives a twist to this argument. He claims that the stylistic change which took place in Chavin and other cultures from representation of purely animal forms to more anthropomorphic human designs did not take place in lowland societies which in their myths still retain naturalistic images found in early Chavin iconography. There are two implications here. One is that at some point in prehistory contact between highlands and lowlands became sterile as one 'developed' while the other did not, and secondly that there is little or no anthropomorphic orientation in lowland mythology. From data on the Amarakaeri of southeastern Peru I would disagree with both these implications.

To a large extent this book attempts to apply archaeological techniques to anthropological data. Roe reconstructs by means of comparative evidence. Many archaeologists process and organise their data by comparing cultures in terms of trends and similar features thereby suggesting hypotheses for temporal continuity and relative dating. Anthropologists usually take such similarities for granted and concentrate on differences in order to define some form of cultural identity. Roe's method of looking at similarities need not be condemned. His five important topics comparing Time and Space, The World Tree, the Wet and Dry worlds and the Denizens of the Sky do reappear in various guises throughout lowland South America. However he avoids in his anthropological data the most important archaeological technique. Any find must always be described in its full context. However in this book most of the mythological data has been taken right out of its original context.

One of the reasons for postulating a similarity of meaning for so many animal species in mythology is their consistent behaviour. However the Amarakaeri put this axiom into question. Roe in his general model contrasts two aspects of the jaguar. It can be 'yellow' and potentially beneficial or 'black' and harmful. It lives on the dry land but spends much of its time in water, and so it is a mediator. The Amarakaeri, on the other hand, say that jaguars of all kinds are manifestations of harmful spirits. They belong to the forest and never go near water. They even have stories telling of people escaping from jaguars by leaping into the water. We know that this is contrary to the facts of animal behaviour and yet the Amarakaeri say that this is the case. This would go to show that animal behaviour may not be a 'given' but can be reinforced by cultural preconceptions of what that animal behaviour ought to be.

Anthropologically Roe's thesis is the direct opposite of the structuralist canon. Whereas Lévi-Strauss, with only a few exceptions, says that content is nebulous and forever changing while structural relations remain more or less constant, Roe puts forward the idea that relationships are always changing but that these only cause semantic shifts around a central core of a symbol which remains constant. He describes in Chapter One a 'style cycle' through which dyadic relationships semantically pass from metonym to simile to metaphor to synonym. The relationship between these two approaches is very much that of the capon and the egg.

Roe says that there is a basic principle to the model which justifies and explains the myths. It lies in the social organisation of lowland societies and consists of the complementarity and antagonism between the sexes. Men and women are sexually dependent on each other. Men are the positive half of the dyadic relationship whereas women are negative or they represent both *eros* and *thanatos*. This duality, says Roe, is the central core of all South American cultures and all their mythology is a commentary on or elaboration of this theme. However women are not always negative nor men positive. For the Amarakaeri one of the most feared images is that of a good-looking young man intent on seducing their women.

Without doubt same and opposite sex distinctions are crucially important in lowland societies as are sexual relations or their absence, but there are other factors in social organisation such as relationships of age, residence, marriage or reciprocity, to name only a few. In linking mythology to social organisation, a discussion on mythology as ideology and as instrumental in power relations would have been very illuminating.

Finally, Roe sees the endless succession of mythological characters as resulting from the desire for metaphorical novelty. He likens this to the images in our culture such as Superman and Batman who 'do fairly much the same thing'. The Amarakaeri too have heard of Superman and Batman and they would talk of them in stories sometimes as representatives of some harmful multinational company, sometimes as champions of native rights. The characters all had similarities but what they meant altered according to the context of the story.

There are some useful points to be gained from reading *The Cosmic Zygote*. Looking at similarities can be fruitful, provided one takes context into consideration. The notion of relationships shifting andconsisting of a dynamic relativity is very interesting, provided that one realises that content is not really going to present a particularly reliable constant. In spite of many reservations it could be that there is more to the book than meets the eye and that it is in fact 'caviar for the general'.

ANDREW GRAY

ANNE CHAPMAN, *Drama and Power in a Hunting Society: The Selk'nam of Tierra del Fuego*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1982. xiv, 183pp., Bibliography, Index, Photographs. £19.50.

The research upon which this book is based could no longer be done. The last few descendants of the Selk'nam and Haush Amerindians of Tierra del Fuego, who were Anne Chapman's informants over a fifteen-year period, have been dying one after the other in old age. Her ethnographic reconstruction of these hunters and gatherers' society and culture, decades after they were abruptly destroyed by genocide with the advent of White sheep-farmers at the turn of the century, is a tribute to the resilience of a culture effectively 'extinct' as much as to the author's sensitivity and skills.

Long-term research has conferred elegance and lightness to this monograph rather than the cumbersome development of ideas associated with life works. It is scholarly in that testimonies are checked both against each other and against available sources, particularly Gusinde's major ethnography of the Selk'nam, but sources and references are aptly quoted in extensive notes rather than in the text. A direct style, a clear presentation and the use of photographs induce in the reader an immediate familiarity with the Selk'nam. Best of all, the book conveys the unmistakable vigour and the enjoyment of their way of life described among pristine Amerindians in both old and recent sources. In this hunting society, women's perceptions are deliberately brought to the fore through the memories of Lola, the only remaining shaman, and Angela, who became Anne Chapman's friends.

The central subject of the book is the Hain, the Selk'nam initiation ceremony. Given the nature of her material, the author's approach to this ceremony, the last of which was performed in 1937, is particularly challenging: she is intent to show that the Hain, besides being a periodic symbolic expression of Selk'nam social structure, is also a drama where amusement and theatrical performance intertwine with ritual.

A concise but illuminating account of the history, ecology and socio-economic structure of the Selk'nam and their Haush neighbours on the Great Island of Tierra del Fuego provides a background to the description and the interpretation of the Hain. Accepted views of the Fuegians as marginal primitives with a recessive culture in a refuge area characterized by hardship are disproved. Evidence shows that animal resources were plentiful and diversified:guanaco hunters supplemented their diet with birds, sea mammals, shellfish and plant-foods. They alternated between coastal and inland sites within territories, and, as other hunters, between dispersed residence and social gatherings according to seasons and particular events such as the Hain or the finding of a dead whale on the shore.

Rejecting both Steward's notion of the 'patrilineal band' and the more recent bilateral egalitarian model advocated for hunting societies, Anne Chapman convincingly shows that the Selk'nam were 'at once patriarchal, keen on land-rights, status-conscious, individualistic, competitive, egalitarian and flexible'. She

describes an Australian section-like system in which, however, units are classificatory rather than kinship ones. Bilaterally exogamic localised lineages, occupying recognized territories associated with three cosmic divisions, were the main units of organisation. Her main focus of interest is the nature of this 'patriarchy' rather than organisation in general. Among the Selk'nam, the sexual division of labour was the only power cleavage since the differentiated statuses of shamans, sages, prophets or statuses conferred by excellence in a particular activity brought prestige but little or no economic prerogatives.

The Hain, while initiating boys to manhood as hunters,enacted the rule of men over women as a stratum. The existing social order was opposed to its antithesis, matriarchy in a mythical past. Both the men, impersonating spirits in the cosmic womb-Hain hut, and the women, who camped outside, were confronted with man-eating female monsters: both had to oppose them, since there can be no society without men. Mythology was thus an ideology reinforcing the status quo. The main question then is that of the 'secret' or the 'hoax' as Gusinde put it: were men manipulating their power and play-acting to deceive the women, or did they believe in the spirits? Did the women themselves believe in the spirits?

The answer to this question is encompassed in the interpretation of the Hain as ritual and theatre. In the words of Angela, 'spirits did not look like men, you could never tell they were'. The description of the daily scenes of the Hain is gripping by the display of creativity in the variety of forms and colours, the highly developed personalities of the spirits, the roles, the range of tones and moods in the scenes from horror to grotesque and comic. The women participated in the ambiguity of the drama, with awe and respect on the one hand, caricature and fun on the other.

This account of the richness and complexity of the Hain is a remarkable contribution to the understanding of ritual and organisation in hunting societies in relation to material culture. Anne Chapman's materialist functionalist explanation, in terms of a sexual stratification of the relations of production, is given with a light hand and is relatively jargon-free (although one may lament some stylistic errors - 'phallogyny' is a strange neologism if it makes any sense). Whilst theoretical issues are raised but not really taken up, the author could have been expected to show some awareness of comparative material in the subarctic and particularly in Amazonia: Stephen Hugh-Jones's study of He rituals in the North-west Amazon is listed in the bibliography but is not significantly referred to. With these limitations, this book is a fine monograph which, sadly enough, sets an example for future paleo-ethnography in South America.

FRANCOISE BARBIRA-FREEDMAN

CHRISTINE A. LOVELAND and FRANKLIN O. LOVELAND (eds.), *Sex Roles and Social Change in Native Lower Central American Societies*, Urbana etc.: University of Illinois Press 1982. xix, 173pp., Index. £9.50.

This collection of essays is an attempt to describe the complementary roles of men and women in the less-intensively studied, indigenous societies of Central America. In concentrating on this region, the editors hope to provide a significant and novel contribution to the ethnographic literature and one which will provide a basis for comparison with Mesoamerica proper. Since many of the societies share a common historical experience as well as a common tropical forest environment, factors which are seen as important in structuring sex roles, it is hoped that the comparison of the impact of social change on sex roles, in this particular cultural area, will prove fruitful.

In her introduction, Christine Loveland claims that these studies show that there has been a decline in female status in all these societies in relation to the increasing economic power of males which derives from the change in traditional male occupations, hunting, fishing and subsistence farming, to increasing participation in the national economies as wage labourers. As cash incomes are used to purchase items formerly produced by women, there is a decline in the need for female skills. In all these societies, men are preoccupied with the public, outside domain and are politically dominant while women remain identified with the inside, domestic sphere. Women are more handicapped than in the past because they lack the new mobility and skills which men are acquiring with regard to negotiating with the outside world. Women remain entrenched in the conservative smaller societies. They are less able to influence or make decisions and more dependent economically on their menfolk. Where, however, these societies become more urbanized and educational levels become more similar for boys and girls, change is rapid and radical.

A careful reading of the eight essays does not support these assertions. Loveland demonstrates an ethnocentric bias in measuring women's status in these societies, using a standard derived from Western values. In Chapter One, her own account of a Rama Indian community located on the Rama Cay of Nicaragua, she seeks a theory which would link economics to status. Franklin O. Loveland's more perceptive description of the same community (Chapter Seven) shows, through an analysis of two current Rama myths, that women play an important role in Rama society, not only because they produce new individuals to carry on Rama culture, but because it is women who are responsible for conserving and passing on knowledge. Franklin Loveland sees a parallel between Rama concepts of male-female role reciprocity and those described by Rivière as characterising Trio relationships. He denies that there is any simple female-nature versus male-culture dichotomy and posits instead a paradigm where males as food producers (crop-growers) are closer to culture while as takers of life (hunters) they are closer to nature. Women as

food processors are closer to culture; as givers of life, closer to nature. Sexuality is the mediator between culture and nature. Disappointingly, he concludes that while Rama women are subordinate to Rama men 'in reality', in the symbolic world Rama conceptualise equality between the sexes. There is no attempt to justify the assumption that economic values (presumably) are more 'real' than ideological ones. It is also unfortunate that this chapter does not follow directly after Chapter One, since together they give a more balanced view of Rama society.

Virginia Kern describes the sexual division of labour among the Black Carib (Garifuna) as do Sheila Cosminsky and Mary Scrimshaw in part of their chapter. The Garifuna were forcibly removed from the island of St.Vincent in the eighteenth century and settled along the coast of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, where they have maintained their 'traditional' roles for the last 200 years. The men at home are involved in agriculture, clearing land, planting, weeding and harvesting, fishing and trading - but land is scarce and they are forced to migrate, to seek seasonal work on the *latifundias* developed for agricultural export. The women are 'keepers of tradition', stay at home, are day-to-day cultivators and maintainers of subsistence agricultural plots. They carefully cultivate and maintain relations with kith and kin, and they actively promote a morality that centres on the display of generosity and gratitude to kin. While there are no cultural constraints against women migrating as wage labourers, there is no demand for their labour in the Central American region, where agricultural work is seen (by Europeans and Ladinos) as male activity. Where there is a demand, such as in the USA, Black Carib women do migrate - as domestics for example. Many have, in fact, spent some period of their lives working away from their villages. Cosminsky and Scrimshaw point out that these women gain more respect and exert more influence with age, irrespective of their income-generating capacities. This they claim is true also of the Quiché-speaking Mayan communities they studied, both in the rural western highlands of Guatemala, and the mixed Mayan and Mestizo, coffee-producing, *finca* population on the Guatemalan coast. In all three communities, a woman's status is validated by becoming a mother. Children are not only valued economically, but are essential for a woman to gain respect and influence within a community.

Chapters Four and Six, (again irritatingly separated) by Richard Costello and Margaret Byrne Swain respectively, deal with sex roles in two Cuna communities. Among the Cuna Indians of the San Blas archipelago, off the northeastern coast of Panama, males, historically, were agriculturalists primarily and fishermen secondarily. Women were totally involved in the domestic sphere. A system of female inheritance and uxorilocality enabled women to maintain some control over households although it was the male head of household who organised labour for subsistence. In Rio Azucar, increasing labour migration of men, since 1900, has resulted in a shift to neolocal residence patterns and male ownership of homes. Cash remittances also now go more often to the

man's parents and siblings than to his wife's. However, higher female academic achievement now enables women to enter the labour market, and in urban neolocal households adult members expect to contribute and pool their incomes. Where men and women are both active in the labour market, older children assist in household tasks and child care. In the other Cuna village, Ailigandi, a strong all-male authority, the *congreso*, enforces traditional norms. Women appear to be more conservative, although they are more aspiring, than men. Ailigandi women can earn more money from their *molars* (embroidery work) than from unskilled labour and there is less incentive for them to migrate unless they are highly skilled. A hospital on the island provides an opportunity for skilled, well-paid work within the community, and women employed there often retain their traditional values. Margaret Swain's description of the Ailigandi Cuna community illustrates the complexity of assigning values to gender roles and the fallacies generated by using a single denominator, such as income.

In another essay, John Bort and Philip Young assess changes in male roles in Guaymí society, the largest group of Amerindians in Panama. They describe a growing dichotomy between the men who stay behind as subsistence farmers and those who leave to become wage labourers. For the women who remain, there appears to be little role change; men dominate and control relationships and transactions between households and the outside world but, with the disappearance of the 'Edabli Ritual Complex' and the associated goal of surplus production, there is less cooperation among kinsmen and less security against subsistence shortages.

In the final chapter Buzzali de Wille describes symbolic aspects of sex-role differentiation among the Bribri Indians of southern Costa Rica, where pregnant women and male buriers are subject to numerous behavioural restrictions and obligations. De Wille is not at all concerned with social change. Her interpretation of the significance of the rituals associated with birth and death is characterised by the female-nature male-culture opposition. Concepts of pollution associated with liminal events also colour her analysis. While it is difficult to assess the adequacy of her interpretation in this brief account, the ethnographic evidence that de Wille presents of this little-known society does serve to whet the reader's appetite. A collection of such essays cannot expect to do more.

ANN ELIZABETH FINK

VICTORIA REIFLER BRICKER, *The Indian Christ, The Indian King : The Historical Substitute of Maya Myth and Ritual*, Austin: University of Texas Press 1981. xiv, 181pp., Appendices, Bibliography, Illustrations. £29.25.

Bricker attempts to interpret inter-ethnic relations in the Maya provinces of southern Mexico and Guatemala by recourse to the consciousness of the structure of events a) according to the Ladinos' historical view and b) by the cyclical and prophetical historiography of the indigenous Maya. Bricker's most interesting point is that the Maya prophetic tradition, which interprets events as essentially repetitive occurrences of a finite and ancient corpus of archetypes arranged in cycles, appears to have had a direct influence in determining historical events. The primary evidence is drawn from Ralph Roy's notes accompanying his translation of the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, in which he states that the successful conquest of the Itza Maya was achieved only as late as 1696, when they invited Spanish missionaries to spread Christianity among them and suddenly withdrew all resistance. Previously they had told the Spanish that they were not then ready to receive Christianity as the time foretold in their prophecies had not yet arrived. Despite the conquest of Guatemala being achieved in 1525 and the conquest of Yucatan in 1541, the Itza fought off all attempts at conquest and spiritual domination. Then in 1696, the completion of the cycle prompted a delegation of Itza to request the governor of the province to send missionaries in order to effect their conversion to the new religion.

The second instance is that of the 1847 Caste War of Yucatan, the most successful Maya uprising of post-conquest history. Bricker points to the prophecy of the second coming of Christ foretold in the Book of Chilam Balam for the cycle katun 9 Ahua. She contends that the form of the actual uprising and also its timing corresponded to the description and period of the prophecy.

Unfortunately Bricker does not follow up the implications of her deductions, for she uses rather orthodox empiricist methods to account for other colonial and post-colonial indigenous rebellions, without further investigating the significance of her previous formulations. She herself notes that this evidence suggests that the Maya have shaped a peculiar 'historiographical' science which presents the structure of events as following and repeating certain archetypal acts. Such a view has shaped the Maya understanding of the world and has provided an interpretation by which contemporary inter-ethnic encounters are understood.

The Maya have been dominated by a distinct philosophy of time which has shaped their world view and by which their own actions in the 'face of history' have been orchestrated. The case of the Itza demonstrates the willingness of the Maya to intervene in history to secure the realization of prophecy, even when such intervention involves the consummation of their traditional life with eschatological implications. The prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ and the subsequent Caste War demonstrates an equal

ability to manipulate resistance struggles against colonial relations - in keeping with ancient prophecy. Cyclical conceptions of history are not necessarily conservative or static, as has been argued by many.

Guzman-Böckler and Herbert (*Guatemala : una interpretación histórico-social*, Mexico 1970; *Colonialismo y revolución*, Mexico 1975) have noted the tendency among contemporary Quiché communities of highland Guatemala to divide their history into two great ages, corresponding to pre-conquest and post-conquest history. The two are placed in mutual opposition and there is a tendency to collapse events involving inter-ethnic relations into archetypal structures by which the present is characterised. Contemporaneous with this is the vitality of the belief in the return of Tecun Uman, the last and heroic chief of the Quiché who was slain in battle by the Spaniards, and the re-opening of pre-Conquest history. Guzman-Böckler and Herbert have argued that the period from the Conquest up to the present is almost viewed as empty, as if the Maya think of themselves as without history - as a means of suppressing their consciousness of oppression. But this too has been foreseen as terminating within the prophetic cycles, which should thus be considered when trying to understand the massive incorporation of the Maya population within contemporary revolutionary movements in Guatemala.

Bricker's contention regarding the determinacy on action of the Maya conception of time is of extraordinary pertinence. The motivation of human action is variable, depending on the value system intrinsic to ideology. It is a gross error to interpret history according to any pre-conceived historiography.

The Huicholes, an isolated indigenous culture of northwestern Mexico, refer all their activities to a religious inspiration which often involves the direct courting of material deprivation to attain spiritual growth. The principle of Huichole life is the felt necessity to continue the work of the ancestors as creators. This is a profoundly spiritual endeavour, and the only suitable explanation of their actions is that derived from the structure of their value system and the logic it contains. History has meaning only in terms of its own particular logic. Anything greater than this can only be extrapolated from the former.

With few exceptions, Maya history has been subject to materialistic determinations in accounts of the civilization's rise, development, and fall. Explanations have assumed the existence of a natural logic of development in some way dependent on ecology. Perhaps, more than this, the explanation of the sudden desertion of the rich Maya cities, the intentional desecration of monumental art and the sudden loss of the classical Maya civilization is to be found in the logic which governed the Maya realm, and particularly in the calendrical prophecies as the principal religious thread of social activity.

ANTHONY SHELTON

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear JASO,

Who is this J.D.H.Collinson who claims to know me well? (JASO XIII:3, page 288). Could it be the John ('Basher') Collinson I saw last disappearing down a dark alleyway in Tabora, suitably escorted, one wild night in 1963? I had thought it sufficiently apparent that my little *jeu d'esprit* entitled 'Seeing Africa' was a spoof exercise in structural analysis à la Lévi-Strauss, spiced with a modicum of social satire. The binary wings of the albatross flap heavily indeed in the post-structuralist heaven.

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Dear JASO,

Perhaps I can provide ethnographic information relevant to the interpretation of two articles published in JASO by R.H.Barnes (Vol.XI,1980) and G.Forth (Vol.XIII, 1982). In western Rasanaé on the island of Sumbawa, Indonesia, the children play a game in which the fingers represent five different characters. The thumb and little finger are called 'old man' and 'small man' respectively, while the versatile index finger is the 'craftsman'. Because the Bima speakers of Rasanaé wear the ring on the fourth finger it is named the 'rich man'. If the hand is held upright, the middle finger is taller than the others and therefore it is termed 'leader' or 'lord'. Adults show children that should any finger wish to consult (i.e.touch) the thumb it must bow down, thereby demonstrating that all people, including leaders, defer to age in Biman society. Children go on to use this stock of characters to invent further entertainment for themselves and their friends.

In his article, Barnes showed that the fourth finger was unnamed both in Kédang and elsewhere. Forth observed this to be the case in parts of Sumba in eastern Indonesia and supposed that this might have something to do with the undistinguished nature of the fourth digit. But in north-central and the east of west Sumba, he tells us, it is the middle finger which is unnamed. Since the middle finger is not undistinguished, Forth felt that the explanation given for the unnamed fourth finger was insufficient, and therefore sought

connexions between the qualities of the middle finger and themes in other areas of Sumbanese symbolic thought. He suggested that since centres or middles are sacred in Sumba and divinity is unmentionable and the middle finger has both properties of mediality and profanity, then it is consistent that the finger should also be unnamed. My own fieldwork on Sumbawa, which lies just north of Sumba island, shows that there are difficulties in applying this kind of reasoning to explanations given by the people themselves. As was mentioned above, the middle finger is named 'leader' or 'lord' in the Biman children's finger game. Both adults and children say that the finger is so called because it is the tallest, and more particularly, its 'head' is higher than those of the other fingers, which in local terms, indicates social superiority. Now in Biman symbolic thought centrality is associated with political and spiritual power, and it occurred to me that this might also be the reasoning behind selecting the middle finger as the 'lord': but the mediality of the middle finger was not the significant feature, despite the fact that that characteristic also suits the explanation. Furthermore, the children's finger game makes much of the relative heights of heads, as in the case of bowing to the 'old man', while not considering the issue of centrality at all. The point is that the ethnographer's model, while providing explanations within the terms of that culture, might emphasize different features from those emphasized by the people themselves.

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Dear JASO,

As an anthropologist concerned with analysing the social patterns and practices of the so-called European 'Middle Ages', I feel obliged to offer a rejoinder to Dr Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's conceptions of 'medieval ethnography' put forward in the Michaelmas 1982 issue of JASO (Vol.XIII:3).

Dr Fernandez-Armesto seems to assume that historians can 'turn the table on anthropologists' by simply applying the methodology of historians to the 'matter' of anthropology. The inversion is, unfortunately, not such a simple process; anthropological 'looks at history' tend to be concerned with the way history (a social construct rather than an empirical series of events) is perceived and manipulated by its fabricators, whereas, as Dr Fernandez-Armesto seems to indicate, a historian's perception of the 'historical origins' of anthropology seems to focus on the development of an empiricism meaningless to peoples not nurtured on nineteenth-

century conceptions of scientific objectivity. Medieval travellers certainly had ethnocentric categorical pigeon-holes in which they stored the *exotica* collected on their journeys. It would, however, be similarly ethnocentric to label their conceptual frameworks as racialist or fantastic; those frameworks were organized around the central concerns of their societies (the Christian faith, a theocentric and feudalistic social organization, military power and defence, etc.), rather than around empiricist ideals which evolved centuries later under the influence of imperialistic and scientistic attitudes towards the 'outside world'. 'Disinterestedly curious motives' would not arise in such a cultural context, as Fernandez-Armesto himself acknowledges in noting William of Rubruck's 'missionary interest in native religion' and later 'closet ethnographers'' debts to the Llullian tradition of 'understanding thoroughly the culture in which one proposed to work as a missionary'. A traveller like Marco Polo, who was, in fact, closer to the sort of objectivity propounded by the historian because his interests in trade routes, rates of exchange and regional products were relatively non-valuational, was considered 'a travelling fable-monger' or *milono* (man of a million lies) because his experiences did not accord with popular conceptions of the world (cf. *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Henry Yule. ed., Vol. I, p.lxxxii) and actually did offer 'a radical challenge to prevailing notions about the nature and rights of man'. Fernando-Armesto's failure to see Marco Polo's *Travels* as a profound critique of the provincial inefficiency of a decentralized Europe, and the historian's willingness to classify Marco Polo among the 'cowards' who refused to look at the real world are results of his own inability to loose his perceptions from the bonds of 19th-century empiricism and look at the world the way medieval persons would have perceived it.

The lesson that anthropologists can teach historians is that a people's or a period's world is an intricately woven web of meanings and actions which derives its significance from the pattern of the whole. Particular designs or motifs, like the odd tales of travellers or the messages of missionaries, must be analysed by studying the way they are woven into the wider web of culture. To tear them out of the fabric and transport them off to a laboratory where they can be studied as empirical facts will only lead to their being rewoven into another period's web in which, for instance, medieval travel narratives are seen as expressions of 19th-century empiricist methodologies.

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