# EDWIN ARDENER

## 21 September 1927 - 4 July 1987

Edwin Ardener died suddenly, peacefully, on 4th July 1987.  It
came to us all as a shock.  JASO, in particular, has lost its
Editorial Adviser, who was not only the person principally respon-
sible for founding this Journal eighteen years ago but who re-
mained throughout deeply concerned for its welfare, its profile
and indeed its commitment to publish.

During the past weeks memories of his wit, insight and sense
of purpose have crowded into our minds; and we heard on October
31st the Memorial Address at the University Church here in Oxford,
which well conveyed our deep sense of loss.  We therefore begin
this issue of the Journal with the publication of this Address,
together with some of the appreciations of Edwin's accomplishments
that we have received over this summer.  One of these is from a
colleague, one from a former student, and one from a group of
anthropologists overseas to whom Edwin gave strong encouragement.
It is our sad duty to praise the departed; we do so here with an
awareness of the various sides of his anthropological persona, as
well as our own strong sense of debt to his support throughout the
years.

Edwin repeatedly chose *JASO* as the vehicle for articulating
his ideas.  Several seminal articles of his were first published
in these pages, for instance his often-quoted 'Language, Ethnicity
and Population', which first appeared here in 1972.  The Journal
was founded in the heady days prior to the publication, in *Man*,
of 'The New Anthropology and Its Critics' (1971), and he felt -
rightly - that the group of research students around him deserved
wider recognition for the advances in the field that were being
made at that time.  *JASO* has changed a good deal since then, as
has the 'Anthropological Society of Oxford' that the Journal was
deemed to reflect.  It has remained in close contact with its
student roots, but at the same time it has not attempted to retain
the stencil-duplicated samizdat-like quality of those early days.
Edwin accepted these changes, and for example gladly encouraged
the launching of the Occasional Papers series five years ago.
There is a sadness  symbolising however a certain completeness,
that Edwin's last published work was a paper on Edward Sapir that
he offered to *JASO* and that was in fact in press on the day he
died, as readers of our last issue will recall.  We had looked
forward, of course, to publishing in two years from now his evalu-
ation of the Journal on its first twenty years - but those who

wish to follow through Edwin's conception of the aims and purpose
of *JASO* will unfortunately have now to content themselves with the
statement on its first ten years, which we published in 1980.

We had looked forward, indeed, to many more years of collab-
oration with him; JASO will now sorely miss his wise counsel, his
encouragement, his anthropological learning and sense of direc-
tion.  In due course we hope to publish a memorial volume that
will collect together more of the work of those anthropologists
who came under Edwin's influence; but in the meantime we are
grateful to those contributors whose notices about Edwin that
appear below both jointly and severally stand in tribute to his
life's work.  A select bibliography has also been included, and
can be found on pp. 121-3 below.

To Shirley Ardener, who for many years kindly took upon her-
self much of the administrative burden of looking after the Jour-
nal, we offer our condolences.

The Editors

1

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

We are here today to commemorate the life of Edwin Ardener.*  The
feeling we all share of sadness at his sudden and too early death
is combined with admiration and respect for his achievements and
the very real sense of the permanence of his influence in so many
fields.  Edwin was a person of vision, who showed a willingness
to look beyond immediate aims.  All of us who knew Edwin benefited
from his selflessness, his kindness and his guidance.  I still
remember vividly the welcome he gave me, on my own arrival as a
Fellow at St John's, and the pains he took to help a newcomer to
feel at home.  This concern for the needs and welfare of others
was evident in all his actions, and extended beyond individuals
to the institutions of which he was a part.

Edwin Ardener's academic reputation is as a distinguished
social anthropologist.  His interests, which developed while he
was still at school, in philology, archaeology and comparative
religion first led to his desire to study anthropology.  As he
learnt more of the subject, he became determined to study at the
London School of Economics in Malinowski's former department.

* Text of the Memorial Address delivered at the Memorial Service
for Edwin Ardener, held at the University Church of St Mary the
Virgin, Oxford, on 31 October 1987.

When he entered in 1945, he was the only undergraduate to special-
ise in social anthropology and most of his companions were grad-
uates.  He soon developed that breadth of interests which  was  so
characteristic of him and which  was to enrich his later contribu-
tions to social anthropology, and which came to underlie his sup-
port for the inter-disciplinary degree in Human Sciences at Oxford.

    After graduating, Edwin was awarded a Colonial Social Science
Research Council Fellowship, and began his long and fruitful
association with Africa.  After a brief research mission in East-
ern Nigeria, he was appointed as a Research Fellow of the West
African (later the Nigerian) Institute of Social and Economic Re-
search.  It was through this Institute, set up as part of a colon-
ial strategy to study the ethnicity, social, economic and politic-
al structures of Nigerian communities, that he became involved
with Cameroon.  His special responsibility was to undertake
anthropological research on the coastal peoples of Cameroon and
the plantations.  His investigations covered an extensive region
and depth of time, and involved not only his own discipline but
also demographic studies, ethnography and history.  He and Shirley
Ardener became well-known and well-respected members of Cameroon-
ian communities, all the more so because of their fluency with
local languages.  Indeed they were treated as full members of loc-
al cults.  Edwin spent more than ten years in Cameroon and after
he came to Oxford, he and Shirley maintained their links with
annual visits.  During this long association with Cameroon, Edwin
endeared himself to many Cameroonians in all walks of life.  When
he began his academic career, Cameroon was a virgin field for re-
search and he made full use of the opportunity.  Edwin was con-
scious of the fact that Europeans had a limited stay in Africa
and at a time when few had thought of it, he encouraged local
intellectuals to take up research as a profession.  He is remem-
bered by many friends in Africa not only for his academic achieve-
ments but for his many personal qualities.  They speak and write
of him as one of the very few Englishmen  who fully integrated
himself among Cameroonians with a sense of humanity, free from
racial or class bigotry.  At a time of conflicting political views
on the future of Cameroon, Edwin's writings, through their force
and evident sincerity, attracted respectability and credibility on
all sides.  His reputation is secure as one of the fathers of
modern academic studies in Cameroon.

    In 1960 Edwin Ardener was appointed to an Oppenheimer Student-
ship, attached to Queen Elizabeth House at Oxford, and was invited
by Professor Evans-Pritchard and his colleagues to join the Insti-
tute of Social Anthropology.  In 1963 he was appointed to a Uni-
versity Lectureship in Social Anthropology.  Although Edwin con-
tinued to maintain his personal and academic links with Africa
and African studies, his interests and inspiration became increas-
ingly focused on regions closer to home and he was responsible for
a distinguished group of students turning their attention
to areas of north-western Europe.  He introduced into social
anthropology the findings and methods of a variety of neighbouring
disciplines, in particular those of demography, history, linguist-
ics, genetics and animal ethology.  Much of his own later work was

directed towards the derivation of an empirical approach in which
full account could be taken of the semantic as well as the stat-
istical nature of the social world.  The Association of Social
Anthropologists' conference on 'Social Anthropology and Language',
which he convened in 1969, secured the place of linguistic concerns
in British social anthropology.  He fostered academic and personal
links and exchanges with Eastern Europe and I know how greatly he
valued the opportunities to visit Eastern Europe, particularly his
invitation to Poland in 1984 for the Malinowski Centennial Sympos-
ium.  With Shirley Ardener he introduced into social anthropology
a concern with cross-cultural research on women.  The results of
this work provide one example among many of the fruits of their
academic partnership, expressed in joint scholarship and in the
inspiration that has resulted from their joint teaching.

Many professional organizations and scholarly bodies benefit-
ed from Edwin's energy and farsightedness.  He was chairman of the
Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth from
1981 to 1985, and was a regular attender, with Shirley, of the
annual ASA meetings.  I know how much he enjoyed the sense of oc-
casion both in the open conference hall and in the closed commit-
tee room.  In Oxford he quickly established himself as one of the
leading members of the Institute of Social Anthropology, helping
to maintain it as a first-rank department with a world-wide reput-
ation.  He played an important part in the administration of the
Institute and in the sub-Faculty of Anthropology, as Chairman of
the Management Committee of the Institute and as a member of the
Board of the Faculty of Anthropology and Geography.  He was keenly
involved in the discussions concerning the reorganization of the
units within the sub-Faculty of Anthropology and warmly welcomed
the proposals, now under consideration, for the establishment of
a more integrated structure for anthropology at Oxford.

The inauguration, in 1970, of the Honour School of Human
Sciences was the result of many years of planning, and Edwin
played a major part in its formulation, and ensured the fullest
contribution of social anthropology to the degree.  The proposal
to establish the degree was a controversial one.  In spite of the
support of Council it was initially opposed in Congregation and
the first use of a postal vote was needed to enable the wider view
to prevail.  The degree is a bold and imaginative attempt to com-
bine the approaches of the natural and the social sciences to the
study of human beings, and Human Sciences has always depended on
the involvement of people willing to combine their subject spec-
ializations with a commitment to the aims of an inter-disciplinary
course.  Few people have contributed more than Edwin.  In part
this was through the structural apparatus of Committees, Faculty
Boards, Examinations, but even more through his personal commit-
ment to the undergraduate community in Human Sciences.  He was
Chairman of the interviewing panel established to allocate the
university quota places for entry.  Many generations of applicants
will remember the combination of gentleness and discernment which
he showed in his questions, and his eagerness to ensure an aware-
ness of the importance of social anthropology without wishing to
see that subject dominate the school, notwithstanding what he

sometimes saw as a strange fascination with 'furry mammals' on the part of his biological colleagues.  It was through our joint involvement in Human Sciences that I came to know Edwin well.  His teaching insisted on intellectual rigour and professionalism.  To the newcomer his remarks in tutorials and discussion often seemed perplexing, even impenetrable, but in many students, particularly the best, he awakened a fascination with the discipline of social anthropology and made Human Sciences an important introduction to graduate studies in anthropology.  He saw Human Sciences as a major focus for the different interests of social, cultural and biological anthropologists and he took particular pride in the reference, in the University's reply to the UGC on planning for the late 1980s, to the value the University attaches to inter-disciplinary activity, and which cites as one example, the Human Sciences degree - a reference based on his submission to the University while Chairman of the Standing Committee for Human Sciences.

Edwin was elected to a Fellowship at St John's in 1969 and began an association which he deeply valued and to which he and Shirley contributed so greatly.  Edwin was a marvellous college man - to any social gathering he brought a mixture of wit and erudition few could match.  At college meetings his interventions were not frequent.  When they were made they were courteous but trenchant.  They combined a use of metaphor and an obliqueness which made them all the more memorable and effective.  Edwin undertook his duties as Vice-President with a fine sense of occasion and responsibility.  He particularly enjoyed his appointment as Steward of Common Room and he is remembered by many visitors for the trouble he took to inform himself about them and to integrate them into the life of the common room.  He was in many ways the keeper of the college conscience, and believed very strongly in college as an organic educational, corporate and symbolic unit.  He endeared himself to his undergraduates, and I see him now as he sat after a dinner for our pupils, cigar in hand (perhaps still wearing the galoshes of which he was so fond, doing duty as patent leather evening shoes), entertaining us with his stories and witticisms.

In addition to his participation in academic life and scholarship, Edwin always maintained his links with the wider community in which he lived.  His home in Jericho  became a focus for support and action directed towards the needs of the community.  Edwin was at once a well-loved member, in the fullest sense, of the community in which he lived, and a natural champion of local needs.  He believed in anticipation rather than reaction, an approach which made him for many years a most effective Chairman of the Jericho Residents' Association.  He was able both to communicate with the less articulate of his constituents  and to deal effectively with the professional bureaucracy of town planners, often less conscious than he of the strength and feeling of local communities, and the need to support and preserve them.

There is inevitably a poignant sense of abruptness and incompleteness in the ending of Edwin Ardener's life.  In my last conversation with him I was conscious of his many plans for the

future, of his active concerns in the numerous fields in which he
was involved.  A generation of graduate students benefited from
his inspiration and teaching, and they will carry on where he left
off, not only in their own work, but in the further publication
and exposition of his own contributions.  And to us all he remains
an example as a man of great charity; we remember his wisdom  and
his guidance, with respect and with gratitude.


A.J. BOYCE


2


OBITUARY NOTICE


Edwin William Ardener was born on 21 September 1927.  After an
adolescence spent in wartime England, Edwin went to the LSE in
October 1945, to study anthropology in Malinowski's former depart-
ment.  He was the first student of the post-war intake to the
department to specialise in social anthropology, and was alone in
this status until joined by Wilfred Whiteley a year later.  In
London, he came into contact with many of the senior figures of
the subject - Raymond Firth, Audrey Richards, Edmund Leach, Daryll
Forde.  He was, beginning in 1945 at the age of eighteen, one of
the very youngest of the post-war recruitment to the anthropo-
logical profession.  Many of his colleagues were some years older,
having had their training postponed or interrupted by the war.
Some significance can, perhaps, be attached to this in considering
later developments in his thinking.  When the 'post-war consensus'
of British social anthropology began to fragment in the 1960s,
Edwin was less committed to that consensus, merely as a fact of
biography, than many of his older colleagues.
     After graduating in 1948, Edwin went to Nigeria, thus begin-
ning a lifelong involvement with West Africa.  He spent two and a
half years carrying out fieldwork in Nigeria, among the Ibo.  Fol-
lowing this, in 1952, he became a research fellow (later senior
research fellow) of the West African (later Nigerian) Institute
of Social and Economic Research.  This appointment took him to
Cameroon, where he spent nearly all of the next eleven years.  He
was involved in a variety of research projects, which often re-
flected concerns of government and administration, and had strong
empirical and demographic components.  Much of this work he car-
ried out in collaboration with other anthropologists, particularly
with his wife Shirley.  From this work, a variety of reports and
publications appeared, prominent among them being *Plantation and
Village Life in the Cameroons* (1960), written with Shirley

Ardener and W. Warmington, and *Divorce and Fertility* (1962b).*

Over such a long period of involvement with Cameroon, Edwin had contacts and interests in many aspects of its life. His works on the history, politics and ethnography of Cameroon are recognised to be of the first importance by indigenous scholars and students of the area. His interest in language found a variety of published expressions: see, for example, his introduction and commentary to J. Clarke's *Specimens of Dialects* of 1848 (1972c). Some of his most characteristic and interesting work on Cameroon brings together historical, linguistic, political, demographic and 'ethnic' material, in studies which have little respect for the conventional boundaries of academic life, for example: 'The Nature of the Reunification of Cameroon' (1967); 'Documentary and Linguistic Evidence for the Rise of the Trading Polities between Rio del Rey and Cameroons, 1500-1650' (1968); 'Witchcraft, Economics, and the Continuity of Belief' (1970b); 'Language, Ethnicity and Population' (1972a); and 'Social Anthropology and Population' (1974).

A major achievement of the Ardeners in Cameroon was the establishment and organisation, by invitation of the government of what was then West Cameroon, of the West Cameroon archives. Edwin and Shirley gathered together an abundant chaos of material from previous periods, and organised and preserved it for the use of later scholars and students. They also planned the administration, staffing and housing of the archives. The Archive Office was officially opened during Edwin's last visit to Cameroon in 1969. Edwin was also Adviser on Antiquities to the West Cameroon Government, and established and edited a small series of government publications relating to West Cameroon, one of which he wrote, entitled *Historical Notes on the Scheduled Monuments of West Cameroon* (1965).†

In 1963 Edwin took up a lectureship in social anthropology in Oxford, at the invitation of Evans-Pritchard, then Professor. He returned to the Cameroons, however, for the three months of the long vacation, every summer (with the exception of 1967) until his last visit in 1969. In this year, he became a supernumerary fellow of St John's College, Oxford, and he held both college fellowship and university lectureship until his death. He was 36 when he came to the appointment as lecturer in Oxford, and the intellectual upheavals of the 1960s were pending. It has been noted that Edwin was too young to be fully a part of what he later came to call 'the post-war consensus' (and, indeed, he spent most of the consensual period in the Cameroons). He was, however, too old to be entirely swept along by 1960s' enthusiasms. Certainly, he became closely associated, in works like 'The New Anthropology and Its Critics' (1971a) and *Social Anthropology and Language* (1971b) with a modern critique of earlier thought and practice.

---

* Details of works cited can be found in the Select Bibliography of Edwin Ardener's work at pp. 121-3 below.

† Edwin Ardener's achievements as a pioneer in Cameroon studies have been usefully set out in an obituary notice by Martin Z. Njeuma in *West Africa* (no. 3660, 5 October 1987, pp. 1963-5).

His was never an uncritical enthusiasm, however.  His Oxford ap-
pointment occurred just before the decade of the Robbins expansion
in higher education.  Many of those coming to university appoint-
ments, in all subjects, in this period, were relatively young, and
their experience of living was entirely post-war.  These people
*were* of an age to be swept up by the '60s (indeed, they were one
of its most characteristic, and finally most enduring, features).
They were also able to think, or at least to *feel*, that the opin-
ions and ambitions of the '60s were entirely new and unambiguously
virtuous.  Edwin was not of this group, however, and within the
intellectual history of social anthropology he looked both ways,
ready to criticise what he considered to be the unreflective empi-
ricism of the past, but always concerned to stress the virtues of
the past tradition - its ambition for, and pursuit of, empirical
rigour.  You could not, he would say, criticise empiricism, with-
out having made a determined effort to be empirical.  He was, in
this sense, slightly 'out of phase' with the dominant wave-
patterns of intellectual and demographic life in social anthropo-
logy.  This may account, to some degree at least, for what seems
to have been a common feeling in the profession, that Edwin was
difficult to keep up with, and nearly impossible to catch.

Edwin had been interested, even as a schoolboy, in subjects
that led him to anthropology - in the history of society, religion
and language.  The subtle and erudite pleasure in the social life
of words, one of the most striking features of the man, seems to
have been present from very early days.  In the course of field-
work, Edwin had pursued this interest in linguistics, and in all
the associated symbolism of social life.  He had, however, also
attempted, in the course of demographic research, to put to work
formal and statistical processes in the analysis of social pheno-
mena.  He retained throughout his life a serious interest in the
use of formal models in social analysis.  These two approaches to
the social, from demography and from linguistics, were not obvious-
ly compatible, at least in their common social anthropological
forms.  Demography was a matter of objective measurement, of head
counts and statistical analyses.  Language, on the contrary, came
into social anthropology associated with an interest in symbolism,
ritual and subjective ideas.  It was Edwin's achievement to have
reconciled the apparently objective, mensurational approaches to
society (those associated with demography) with approaches that
concerned the human and social capacity for definition evident in
language.  Measurement and definition were not, in his formulation,
alternative procedures.  They were, rather, simultaneous features
of entities of the kind that we call social.  These ideas, diffi-
cult of expression as they are, he pursued in his main series of
theoretical papers, for example, apart from those already cited:
'Some Outstanding Problems in the Analysis of Events' (1978);
'The Voice of Prophecy: Further Problems in the Analysis of
Events' (1975b); and 'Social Anthropology, Language and Reality'
(1982).  These papers in part arose from, and fed back into, the
lectures that he gave every year in Oxford.  These lectures pro-
vided an ever-developing series of reflections on theoretical
issues in social anthropology.  Edwin's oral deliveries, in these

and other lectures and seminars, in discussion and conversation, were often of the very highest quality, both challenging and entertaining. They were not, however, fully represented in his published work, a fact of which he was aware. He was not an enthusiastic publisher of his own work, preferring to keep his own papers 'provisional', and taking much more pleasure in the publications of his students that he did in his own. A collection of his major recent papers was in preparation at the time of his death, and this will shortly appear, containing more than one previously unpublished paper. A collection of his African papers is also in preparation, and this too will include substantial papers not previously published.

In 1972, he published a piece entitled 'Belief and the Problem of Women' (1972b). This was in the mainstream of his work, but it came to assume something rather like an independent life. Along with a subsequent piece, 'The "Problem" Revisited' (1975a), it helped to crystallise an interest in previously neglected areas, in 'muted groups'. Both in relation to concern about the place of women in anthropology (as objects, subjects, and so on), and in relation to the broader intellectual context of the 1970s, these papers represented ideas whose time had come. In consequence, a large body of valuable work has followed from the impetus provided by Edwin and Shirley Ardener in this area, for example, the two volumes edited by Shirley Ardener, *Perceiving Women* (London: Malaby Press 1975) and *Defining Females* (London: Croom Helm 1978).

In the last dozen or so years, some of Edwin's students, following a general trend in British social anthropology, had begun to turn their attention to European material. Edwin had a mature interest in questions concerning the relationship between 'history' and 'ethnicity' in the African context. He had also established a long-running seminar series in Oxford in which this relationship was explored. He had a long-standing interest in the Indo-European languages, and in the demographic and ethnographic questions inevitably raised by a study of the history of these languages. He had made a particular study of Welsh. All these interests and enthusiasms made him well-prepared for the shift of interest to Europe. He had recently begun making regular fieldtrips to the Outer Hebrides, in furtherance of his Celtic interests. Unfortunately, only one of his papers, '"Remote Areas": Some Theoretical Considerations' (1987), expresses the Hebridean connection. The fruits of these aspects of his thinking are manifest rather in the works of others, and in the ASA conference of 1987 on 'History and Ethnicity', which owed its inspiration, in part at least, to him.

Some found Edwin's conversation and story-telling baffling, and sometimes they were. It is true that he did not give away the key to a good story until the very last line, and that he took pleasure in the suspense. Similarly, some have found his written work difficult to understand, and complained of obscurity. There is less justification for this. Obscurities there doubtless are, as in all truly original writing. Edwin's prose was, however, for the most part, both concentrated and luminous. At the same time, he was not necessarily concerned to make things easy for the

reader.  He did not repeat himself, or say the same thing over
again in different ways, in different paragraphs, different arti-
cles, and different books.  His published works were not a great
weight of paper, but he could make a terse article do where others
might produce a book and say less.  He was also dealing with dif-
ficult matters, and always attempting to advance, clearly and
self-consciously, on his previous work.  His prose was sometimes
taxing, certainly, but this should not be mistaken for obscurity.
It was, rather, the result of an unusual combination of original-
ity, density of argument, and economy of expression.

Edwin fought the corner for social anthropology, both in the
University and in the country, recognising that if the interests
of the profession were not fought by those involved in it, they
would be fought by no one.  The job was not always a pleasant or
a rewarding one, and its victories tended to be unglamorous and
unsung.  In various capacities in the Oxford Institute of Social
Anthropology, in the ASA, on SSRC committees, on the executive
committee of ALSISS (the Association of Learned Societies in the
Social Sciences), and in connection with the Human Sciences degree
in Oxford, he brought insight, wit and commitment to the profes-
sional life and interests of social anthropology.  His achievement
in establishing social anthropology as a major part of the Human
Sciences undergraduate degree, making it for the first time a
subject seriously available in Oxford at this level, may well
prove to be of particular and lasting significance.

This Journal, *JASO*, has had Edwin as its 'editorial adviser'
from its first issue in 1970.  As Edwin noted, in a decennial note
to *JASO* (1980), his advisership was more often than not entirely
nominal, and the editors went their own way.  The Journal, however,
exemplifies an important aspect of Edwin's approach to the subject.
He liked life, and the life of the intellect, however they mani-
fested themselves.  He encouraged all forms of writing and inquiry,
and never suppressed or discouraged enthusiasm in the interests of
conformity or safety.  He gave people room to be what they would
be, and the larger it was, the better he was pleased.  He was no
exponent of weary sophistication or of the tepid half-smile, and
no stranger to the joys of hilarity.  He often took as much pleas-
ure in approaches that were gloriously off-target, or determinedly
idiosyncratic, as he did in the subtle and fastidiously correct.
He laid down no party line, and excluded no lines of enquiry.  If
*JASO* has imitated him in these qualities, this can only have
served to open it to variety and enthusiasm.

Edwin had a great deal still to write and to say.  Many of
those that knew him will, perhaps, feel that his written work did
not capture the essence of their relationship to him, or the
essence of what he communicated to them.  He had a twenty-year
involvement in fieldwork in West Africa.  He was intimately
acquainted with Cameroon society at all levels.  He knew the con-
cerns of government and administration, and the life of the vil-
lage and plantation.  He had long experience of the empirical
rigours of demographic research, and the conceptual rigours of
inquiry into language and symbolism.  He was at ease in historical
and structural linguistics.  He knew the skills of classical

social anthropology, and at the same time took a great part in the
last period of significant modernization of the subject as can be
seen in his 'Social Anthropology and the Decline of Modernism'
(1985).  He was perennially interested in currents of thought
among those that he called 'the thinking classes', in their poli-
tics, literature, literary criticism and morality.  He was widely
read in the history and philology of the British Isles, with a
particular interest in its Celtic elements.  He took active part
in debate with biologists and ethologists about the nature of
human society.  Social anthropology, by its nature, often produces
unusual and interesting combinations of knowledge and experience
among those who practise it.  By any standards, however, the com-
bination of erudition, and conceptual and empirical expertise,
that Edwin brought to his thought and writings, was rare and
thrilling.  If we add to these a truly original mind, a fast-
moving and unconventional intellect, a happy wit, and a fundamental
kindliness, then the loss is grave indeed.  Edwin died, suddenly
and unexpectedly, on 4 July 1987, at the age of 59.  To all those
associated with him, people and institutions, he is truly
irreplaceable.

MALCOLM CHAPMAN

3

EDWIN ARDENER

Mine is perhaps a curious perspective: to claim to know something
of the feel of Edwin Ardener's work and to have talked about it
with him a little, but not really to have known the man himself
as much as I would have liked nor that of his main working con-
text, the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology.  This view
from afar therefore both qualifies and justifies what I have to
say: it is limited by igorance of the most intimate cut and thrust
of debate at the Institute and of the personalities involved, but it
is  also unbeholden to such institutional interests and characters.
    Like many, perhaps, I had been puzzled at the apparent hiatus
in thinking between Ardener's early work during his period of some
years as a research fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Social and
Economic Research and that dating from, say, his Malinowski Lect-
ure of 1970 (1971a).*  His work on Cameroonian plantations,

---

* Details of works cited can be found in the Select Bibliography
of Edwin Ardener's work at pp. 121-3  below.

carried out in the mid-1950s and published with Shirley Ardener
and others in 1960, is for the most part a report on the problems
of labour supply and migration, complete with recommendations to
the Cameroonian Development Corporation.  The practical element is
apparent also in the book on the Bakweri of Cameroon, on the sub-
ject of divorce and fertility (1962b).  The many years spent in a
relatively small area of West Africa, mainly among the Nigerian
Ibo and the Cameroonian Bakweri, produced not the voluminous
ethnographies-for-their-own-sake additionally typical of many
other government-sponsored anthropologists of the time, but work
which clearly had an applied aspect.  But by 1970 and 1971, with
the Malinowski Lecture (1971a) and the introduction to *Social
Anthropology and Language* (1971c), the prose had taken on a life
and character of its own, not always easy to follow but with
thought-provoking assertions which could serve no immediate
utilitarian purpose.  Thereafter followed the papers on themes
which became widely known and discussed: ethnicity, population,
and language dialects as conceptual space (1971d; 1972a; 1974),
women as an example of muted social categories (1972b; 1975a),
social events and the classification of reality (1975b; 1978;
1982; 1985), social anthropology as a disciplinary genre in its
own right (1985), the merging of geographical and conceptual
topography (1987), and many others.
    Ardener had himself talked of the epistemological break
which came with Lévi-Strauss and structuralism, and the change in
his own work seems to have come with that more than through Evans-
Pritchard's own concern with the patterning of conceptual systems,
though this is clearly an influence on which Institute members may
be more able to comment.  Certainly Ardener's distinction between
paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures had echoes of Lévi-
Strauss's approach to myth as much as it did of de Saussure,
though at the same time Ardener did have considerable knowledge of
linguistic work arising out of this tradition and of the Prague
School.
    Ardener was perhaps the first to admit that the distinction
between p- and s-structures became a little heavy once it had
been digested, and it was a relief when he would use instead such
notions as 'template' or 'replication' (1970b), or 'language
shadow' (1978), to refer to the idea of underlying or p-structure.
But he did give the structuralist distinction between surface
(narrative) and deep (grammar) structures a locus in everyday be-
haviour rather than in exalted mythology.  And this is where we
can see the link between Ardener's early and later periods.
    In the final chapter of his co-authored book on Cameroonian
plantations (1960), he talks about the connection in Bakweri be-
liefs between witchcraft and personal wealth: when poverty
strikes, those who are wealthy must be the witches who drain the
resources of others.  They are assumed to be the *nyongo* zombies
who consume the corpses of those they kill.  They can be identi-
fied by the fact that only their huts have expensive tin roofs.
Further empirical associations are made in this way by the Bakweri
under adverse economic conditions.
    The image of this that Ardener conveyed was of conceptual,

linguistic, and behavioural connections which had no enduring
quality but which were captured moments, so to speak, with the
mob 'howling' outside the tin-roofed huts of frightened old men
(1970b). We were offered also the image of the space occupied
over time by chairs around a table, each describing innumerable
and unrepeated arcs yet all constituting a recognizable structure
(1971a). It was a quite different kind of underlying structure
from the more universalistic and enduring one of Lévi-Strauss's
myths. It was brought into being by a conjunction of events and
therefore not predictable, yet suggested inevitable interpretation.
Whether or not distant links with Foucault, the later Barthes, or
Lacan were involved, it is interesting to note that Ardener did
declare, at the ASA decennial conference held at Oxford in 1973,
that social anthropology had entered its post-structuralist phase.

The 1970 analysis of the *nyongo* beliefs appeared in the ASA
book on witchcraft but, as its title indicates, it is really a com-
mentary on how to look at other peoples' economic systems. The
Bakweri 'think' witchcraft where we might 'think' economics. For
Ardener the paper linked his interest in the 'hard facts' of live-
lihood and their recognition and mis-recognition in language and
events. It was an interest which was to recur in, for instance,
the claim that 'materiality' is not dependent on a sharp separa-
tion of the physical and conceptual-linguistic but is both at the
same time, a 'simultaneity' (1982: 11): for example, to understand
an ethnic group is not to isolate a set of people from their iden-
tity and call them the distinctive stuff of which ethnicity is
made, but to regard them as one and the same thing. Other Oxford
colleagues were also engaged in attempts at what we now call an-
alytical deconstruction, and while Ardener's successive efforts
to show that the material (i.e. interactive), social, and linguist-
ic are our own analytical part-glosses on reality, which we there-
fore distort, are swiftly becoming commonplace, they were quite
novel at the time in the empirical forms in which he presented
them.

The common empirical thread has increasingly been a semantic
concept, i.e. a word or phrase used in an expected context.
This is evident on the levels of the vocabulary of the 'other' -
for example *nyongo* (1970b) or *ji aka* (1982) - and on that of our
own everyday language - for example 'tribe' (1972a) or 'remote
areas' (1987). The task was to 'unpack' such terms and find along
which unexpected paths they lead. As well as discovering that to
talk of 'language' was to talk also of 'population' and then of
'ethnicity', with neither being a privileged term, the exercise
(it would be against the spirit to call it a methodology) dis-
solved such traditional distinctions as 'relativism' and
'universalism' (1982): that is to say, ideas are connected if you
trace their associations long enough, even across cultures, for
we are always engaged in a sifting process of translation, retain-
ing that which seems to fit our own categories; therefore concepts
in this way can be either found everywhere or particular to one
society or a designated type of society.

Does this mean that all reality is fiction? Here, Ardener
might say that reality is a constant flight either into zones of

thinking-acting for which there are no words to define and con-
strain (the dream-world of unarticulated images) or into those
which are hyper-articulate and which claim that all existence is
verbal (the literal and statistical profiles by which we are now-
adays constituted by authority). Perhaps reality is in this sense
a life of constant escape and movement rather than pre-existing
forces which direct and constrain. But it is a question which
Ardener opened up rather than definitively addressed. It could
have gone the way of phenomenology or existentialism but was pur-
sued through language.

While Ardener's work is clearly deconstructivist (a term he
would refrain from using if possible, though it does occur),
critics might claim that it suffers from the general problem of
deconstructionism, namely the inability to go beyond issues of
meaning and the creation of social categories and discuss those
of power. This may be, however, to take a somewhat 1960s view of
power as to do with the capacity of individuals to influence peo-
ple and events, a view which unquestioningly assumed that human
agents and the institutions they worked through were to a large
degree self-determining. A modern position might prefer to regard
power more broadly as the knock-on effect of events, so-identified,
on each other. Identifying a region as including people who are
henceforth to be known as the Bakweri or 'traditional' Shetlanders
may indeed be the act of a single person, but it is also a phase
in the making of a history of a region and of its relationship to
those who name it.

Agency and power are here inscribed in an indeterminate and
subtle manner. That said, it is interesting to speculate that,
had Ardener begun re-writing, so to speak, in the epistemological
atmosphere of the 1980s rather than the late '60s, more dynamic
components of Whorfism might have been sought. Certainly through-
out Ardener's work there is an abiding interest in humans as class-
ifiers of themselves and not just of their society and environment.
While that interest clearly looked back at structuralism and
modernism as benchmarks by which to gauge a future to be less
agonized by positivistic questions of 'good theory' (1985), it
still hinted at age-old problems of dominance and suppression,
though this is not what Ardener's critics would say. His charac-
terization of women as muted categories could, after all, be re-
garded as a political statement, a suggestion to which he acceded
with some pleasure. Similarly, his description of the creation
of tribally named 'hollow categories' into which peoples had to be
fitted (1972a) was a short step from asking who authorized the
hollow categories and why. It also questioned the so-called ob-
jectivity of measured populations, who did not after all exist as
such before they were classified as worthy of measurement. But
he would not have used that conventional political vocabulary,
and while these problems of authorization and entitlement, like
Foucault's 'governmentality', seem to me to have been left un-
attended, it was precisely this remarkable capacity to use his
own creative language to look at the language creations of others,
that makes Ardener's work so valuable. He did not, as far as I
know, use the word 'reflexivity' to describe aspects of his work

until very late (1987: 39), and he acknowledged that the term had now become fashionable. Yet, in the sense used early on by the linguist M.A.K. Halliday, it meant not simply how we reflect on ourselves and our work, but rather how language uses language to reflect on itself (e.g. 'This sentence is six words long.'). By analogy this is perhaps a fair summary of Ardener's approach: to express through our ethnographic accounts issues of human defini- tion which, being 'the linguistic in the social' (1978: 301), oblige us to question our own tendency in language to separate the linguistic from the social, the general from the particular, the material from the ideological, the statistical from the unmeasur- able, and of course the human from the non-human. The foundations for the project have been well laid and recent ethnographic stud- ies are all the better for it.

DAVID PARKIN


4


## EDWIN ARDENER AND POLISH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY


The news of the death of Edwin Ardener has shocked us here in the Department of Social Anthropology at Cracow. It was a sorrowful blow to us, all the greater for being unexpected. When the news first came, we realised that we had lost a friend and a scholar whom we all held in esteem for his knowledge, achievements and unique personality. It was only six months ago that we spent a week together in the snow-bound mountain town of Rabka discussing issues in social anthropology. We discussed themes of mutual interest, planned further contacts, and established the date of the next meeting for 1988, fully expecting that it would be in the autumn under the golden leaves of Rabka again.

Edwin's special attitude towards us and the relations we enjoyed with him went far beyond the contacts usual among scholars. As it often happens, everything began as routine cooperation. He was president of the Association of Social Anthropologists when the centenary of Malinowski's birth was approaching. Malinowski's alma mater wanted to commemorate that anniversary, and we approached Edwin to invite him as one of the honoured guests of the Jagiellonian University on that occasion. He came to Cracow and read a magnificent address on behalf of British anthropo- logists. There were, however, some latent aspects of his visit to Poland. His personality and attitude, his *esprit*, found their vent in endless discussions about Poland in Malinowski's time and nowadays, about science and its meaning for humanity, about social

anthropology - all full of wit so characteristic of him.  Before
that we had known him only from his publications, but now, during
a week of discussions and informal meetings, we came to know him
as a scholar whose deep ideas were fascinating and with a sense of
humour and an exceptional talent of observation and analysis of
events happening around him.

At that event we were talking a great deal about the need for
further collaboration between Polish and British anthropologists
since only one of us      had established contacts with Cambridge
and London.  Such conversations, quite frequent, often remain only
words and wishful thinking.  But Edwin Ardener, as it soon became
clear, took them seriously.  When the following year we started
to think of another meeting, that time not the celebration of the
memory of a founding father but a working seminar, Edwin accepted
our invitation, offered his strong support and gave our plans
wide publicity.  Then the idea was born of having regular informal
anthropological gatherings in the mountains at the foot of the
Tatras, which had played so specific a role in Polish culture and
which shaped some features of Malinowski's personality.  We called
them the Podhale School of Anthropology, and Edwin was a regular
participant at those meetings.  Whether playing the role of speak-
er or chairman of a session, or taking part in a private, informal
meeting, he gave all such occasions a special character owing to
the uniqueness of his personality.  We all knew that we could al-
ways count on him and that we had a true friend in him.

Our contacts with Edwin Ardener were not limited to his part-
icipation in our conference in Poland.  He actively supported the
Oxford Hospitality Scheme for Polish Scholars, and it was mainly
due to his efforts and goodwill that in two years two persons from
our anthropological team had a chance to visit St John's College,
of which he was a Fellow.  There is no doubt that in spite of the
excellent organization of the scheme and the great kindness of all
our Oxford hosts, for us those stays would not have been what they
were if we had not known Edwin Ardener.  From the beginning he
looked after us with exceptional hospitality and warmth, he
introduced us to Oxford academic customs and rituals, helped in
contacts with people, in participation in seminars, in presenting
and publishing our work.  He was doing much more than could have
been expected even from a friend.  We know that he was also very
kind to other Poles, non-anthropologists, who visited Oxford.  His
interests in our country, a deep and true understanding of its
culture, history, past and present problems, were thus expressed
in action.  On every occasion he showed these feelings which we
acknowledged with delight.

Edwin Ardener was the *spiritus movens* of the contacts we have
with British anthropologists and which are so important to us.  He
inspired some of our work, such as that on cultural identity in
modern societies, and on history and mythology.  It might be said
that he was an eye-witness of the development of Polish social
anthropology almost from the beginning, since the first university
department was founded in Cracow only seven years ago.  Last winter
it was agreed to offer him honorary membership of the department,

and when he was leaving in the frosty morning, none of us thought that we were then seeing him for the last time.

ZDZISŁAW MACH
ANDRZEJ K. PALUCH

5

EDWIN ARDENER: SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by Malcolm Chapman

1954a.  'The Kinship Terminology of a Group of Southern Ibo', *Africa*, Vol. XXIV, no. 2, pp. 85-99.

1954b.  'Some Ibo Attitudes to Skin Pigmentation', *Man*, Vol. LIV, (May), pp. 71-3.

1956.  *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons (The Kpe-Mboko, Duala-Limba and Tanga-Yasa Groups of the British and French Trusteeship Territories of the Cameroons)* [Ethnographic Survey of Africa, West Africa, Part XI], London: International African Institute.

1958.  'The "Kamerun" Idea', *West Africa*, nos. 2147 and 2148.

1960.  (with S. Ardener and W. Warmington; with a contribution by by M.J. Ruel), *Plantation and Village Life in the Cameroons*, London: Oxford University Press (for the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research).

1961.  'Social and Demographic Problems of the Southern Cameroons Plantation Area', in A. Southall (ed.), *Social Change in Modern Africa*, London: Oxford University Press (for the International African Institute).

1962a.  'The Political History of Cameroon', *The World Today*, Vol. XVIII, no. 8, pp. 341-50.

1962b.  *Divorce and Fertility: An African Study* [Nigerian Social and Economic Studies, no. 3], London: Oxford University Press.

1965.  *Historical Notes on the Scheduled Monuments of West Cameroon*, West Cameroon: Government Printer.

1967.  'The Nature of the Reunification of Cameroon', in A. Hazelwood (ed.), *African Integration and Disintegration: Case Studies in Economic and Political Union* , London: Oxford University Press.

1968.   'Documentary and Linguistic Evidence for the Rise of the
     Trading Polities between Rio del Rey and Cameroons, 1500-
     1650', in I.M. Lewis (ed.), *History and Social Anthropology*
     [ASA Monographs, no. 7], London: Tavistock.

1970a.   (to be published posthumously), *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon:
     Documents for the History of Buea, 1844-1898.*

1970b.   'Witchcraft, Economics and the Continuity of Belief', in
     M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*
     [ASA Monographs, no. 9], London: Tavistock.

1971a.   'The New Anthropology and Its Critics' (The Malinowski
     Lecture, 1970), *Man* n.s., Vol. VI, no. 3, pp. 449-67.

1971b.   (ed.), *Social Anthropology and Language* [ASA Monographs,
     no. 10], London: Tavistock.

1971c.   [Introductory Essay] 'Social Anthropology and Language',
     in E. Ardener (ed.), 1971b.

1971d.   'Social Anthropology and the Historicity of Historical
     Linguistics', in E. Ardener (ed.), 1971b.

1972a.   'Language, Ethnicity and Population', *JASO*, Vol. III, no.
     3, pp. 125-32; reprinted in J.H.M. Beattie and R.G. Lienhardt
     (eds.), *Studies in Social Anthropology: Essays in Memory of
     E.E. Evans-Pritchard by His Former Oxford Colleagues*, Oxford:
     Clarendon Press 1975.

1972b.   'Belief and the Problem of Women', in J. La Fontaine (ed.),
     *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A.I.
     Richards*, London: Tavistock; reprinted in S.G. Ardener (ed.),
     *Perceiving Women*, London: Malaby 1975.

1972c.   'Introduction' and 'Commentary' in J. Clarke [1848],
     *Specimens of Dialects: Short Vocabularies of Languages and
     Notes of Countries and Customs in Africa*, Farnham: Gregg
     International Publishers.

1973.   'Behaviour: A Social Anthropological Criticism', *JASO*, Vol.
     IV, no. 3, pp. 152-4.

1974.   'Social Anthropology and Population', in H.B. Parry (ed.),
     *Population and Its Problems: A Plain Man's Guide* [The Wolfson
     College Lectures 1973], Oxford: Clarendon Press.

1975a.   'The "Problem" Revisited', in S.G. Ardener (ed.), *Perceiving
     Women*, London: Malaby.

1975b.   (to be published posthumously), 'The Voice of Prophecy:
     Further Problems in the Analysis of Events' (The Munro Lecture).

1978.   'Some Outstanding Problems in the Analysis of Events' (con-
     ference paper first delivered in 1973), in  E. Schwimmer
     (ed.), *The Yearbook of Symbolic Anthropology I*, London: C.
     Hurst; reprinted in M. Foster and S. Brandes (eds.), *Symbol
     as Sense*, New York: Academic Press 1980.

1980.   'Ten Years of JASO', *JASO*, Vol. XI, no. 2, pp. 124-31.

1982.   'Social Anthropology, Language and Reality', in D. Parkin
        (ed.), *Semantic Anthropology* [ASA Monographs, no. 22], London:
        Academic Press; reprinted in R. Harris (ed.), *Approaches to
        Language*, Oxford: Pergamon Press 1983.

1985.   'Social Anthropology and the Decline of Modernism', in J.
        Overing (ed.), *Reason and Morality* [ASA Monographs, no. 24],
        London: Tavistock.

1987.   '"Remote Areas": Some Theoretical Considerations', in A.
        Jackson (ed.), *Anthropology at Home* [ASA Monographs, no. 25],
        London: Tavistock.