

BOOK REVIEWS

MARILYN STRATHERN, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* [Studies in Melanesian Anthropology 6; gen. eds. Gilbert Herdt, Fitzjohn Porter Poole and Donald F. Tuzin], Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1988. xv, 383 pp., Bibliography, Indexes, Figures. £31.00.

This book contains some sharp lessons for any anthropologists complacent enough to consider themselves completely free from the bugbear of Eurocentrism. In her preface, the author intimates that what started out as an attempt to trace the influence of feminist writings on the anthropology of New Guinea became a disquisition on the much wider issue of the failure of all Western modes of thought to get to grips with the realities of just what it means to be a Melanesian. Thus feminism became the conduit for the argument, for this is not a book about the failure of feminist anthropology as a matter of actual record, as a situation that has actually arisen: the corpus of such anthropology in relation to New Guinea was found to be very small, the expected influence virtually non-existent. Instead, feminism is taken as an emblem or exemplar of the inadequacy of Western thought categories generally when faced with non-Western societies—hardly a novel notion in itself, one might think, but then a great deal of anthropological writing is concerned to challenge Eurocentrism wherever it continues to lurk, and this book has certainly found a great many more dark corners to illuminate.

This exegesis of feminist writings is more than exemplary, however. The core of the book is about gender, one implication throughout being that however useful the 'special-subject' approach to women's studies may have been in the last twenty years or so—a situation forced on it as a sort of compensation, one lying alongside but essentially divorced from the mainstream—it is now time to end this separation and reintegrate the two. This is, of course, partly a methodological point, and does nothing in itself to deny the separation of male and female viewpoints where appropriate. In Melanesia, however, evidence for the existence of such viewpoints is weak. In fact, one can readily see how Melanesia specifically challenges the usual 'compensatory' approach, how that approach can seriously distort understanding through its very identification of separate domains. So in place of the Western view of gender as having essential, irreducible attributes, no matter what conventions culture piles on top of it, we are here offered the Melanesian view of persons as 'dividual' beings varying in their capacities, which may entail a predomination of maleness or femaleness, according to time and occasion. This is not simply (or necessarily) an embryological view according to which husband and wife contribute equally to the child's creation and development—men have female attributes, can feminize their activities, and vice versa. Personhood itself is thus divisible between maleness and femaleness.

A second problem is the ready assumption of male domination as a worldwide characteristic which women in all societies are faced with. In Melanesia,

personhood is the outcome of relationships with others that work on oneself, relationships involving exchange; not, however, always of specific gifts—the ‘mediated’ exchange of Mauss—but also the ‘unmediated’, giftless exchange of domestic situations involving husband and wife. The problem is that Western ideas of commodity, and specifically the attitude that the expropriation of another’s production constitutes that person’s oppression, do not fit the Melanesian case, especially when applied to gender, which in the ethnography of New Guinea has all too often automatically been seen as the exploitation of women’s individual labour for men’s social use. In fact, the public/private dichotomy, like male/female, is itself another cultural artefact, conventional, not essential. But also, the uniting of these two dichotomies within a framework of domination relies too much on the Western notion of the boundedness of the individual, whose integrity is threatened by his or her treatment as a thing or object by another acting as subject. In Melanesia, it is rather that things are personified, and people act on each other as subjects to produce an object consisting of their own relationship. Extraction is as much a part of relationships as giving, and is just as expectable, though this extraction does not compromise the extractee’s integrity: for instance, men do not purloin women’s ‘natural’ fertility so much as ensure that they yield up the children whose birth is ever to be anticipated. If we can talk of domination at all here, it is certainly not one-sided.

Much of the lability involved is seen as aesthetic, the same image being penis or breast, semen or milk, penile bleeding or menstruation, according to situation. Ritual is certainly an occasion for such transformations, yet it neither creates nor ensures them, is not a performative instrument, does not ‘do things’ in the way that the usual anthropological account tells us. Everything is contingent, uncertain, hence the finicality of ritual displays and the importance placed on impressing their audience. Where the Western anthropologist sees symbolic representation during ritual, the Melanesian sees the actualization of knowledge through social action; where the Westerner sees the socialization of nature’s children, the Melanesian sees the drawing-out of characteristic capacities through the stimulus of the transformed ‘appearances’ of others. Agency is similarly conditional, and it does not necessarily identify the agent as doer or exploiter. In fact, it may equally signify being dominated, since it reflects the demands of others: ‘An agent appears as the turning point of relations, able to metamorphose one kind of person into another, a transformer’ (p. 272), though at the same time agency is ‘caused’ by others, and depends on pre-existing relationships in its efforts to continue them. Moreover, ‘it is agents, not systems, who act’ (p. 328), signifying that society itself may not be seen as constraining by the individuals who compose it, as a mantle falling from the skies forcing them to conform to its dictates. Indeed, society may not be cognized at all, but rather the varied capacities for action on others that all potentially carry within them.

Thus for Melanesians the idea of the passive female is paradoxical—neither male nor female is simply active or passive, subject or object, dominator or dominated, and the usual anthropological contrast between the masculinity of

society and the asociality of women falls to pieces. In fact, the very opposition between male and female is seen by the author as in many ways less appropriate than that between same sex and opposite sex, an opposition long significant in the formal analysis of kinship. Her argument has adverse implications for the whole question of dual symbolic classification, especially in its Dumontian revision: the distinction of male and female domains does not necessarily imply an asymmetry of status or value; the relationship may be tropic, homologous or analogic rather than hierarchical, or one of alternation rather than dominance; and the route to a particular unitary value may lie in the expulsion rather than the encompassment of an opposite. It also has implications for the usual anthropological treatment of the person, deriving from Maine and Mauss and continuing through functionalists such as Fortes: that of roles or statuses varying only with the life cycle rather than varied capacities for action actualized only in specific situations. It has implications, finally, for feminism, and for all those Western or Westernized radicalisms that depend on the identification of inherent, culturally neutral attributes against which to measure the oppressiveness of ideology. This, of course, is to emphasize ideology as an instrument of power rather than of understanding. In fact, it would seem that despite their differences, neither feminists nor Melanesians see gender as purely culturally constructed, if at all. This book shows how even anthropologists have only begun to do so very recently, despite their own particular sensibilities. It is a persuasive demonstration which the poverty of a review can barely begin to touch upon.

ROBERT PARKIN

SIMON HARRISON, *Stealing People's Names: History and Politics in a Sepik River Cosmology* [Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 71; eds. Jack Goody *et al.*], Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990. xv, 204 pp., Bibliography, Index, Plates, Maps, Figures, Tables. £27.50 / \$47.50.

For the Manambu people of Avatip, a community of Sepik River horticulturalists closely related to and neighbours of the Iatmul, "to see things as they really are" is an experience the villagers fear, because they assume it signifies one's death' (p. 46). Here lies, for them, the metaphysical dilemma of everyday political life and history. The power of fertility magic is an effect of knowledge of totemic cosmology and is demonstrated through the knowledge of secret names of totemic clan ancestors. Yet men seek to obtain control of names from other clans and pass them on to their own children. The resulting disputes over ownership of these names can be resolved only in a public debate in which the disputants must ultimately reveal their knowledge of secret, true names in order to validate their

claim to ownership. The revelation of true names is then indeed fatal—at least for the political aspirations of some Manambu men.

In this compellingly argued and well-crafted study, Simon Harrison explores the ramifications of these totemic disputes, examining the history of the changing fortunes of Manambu clans through his records of these debates, both personally witnessed and reconstructed from past accounts. His focus is primarily on the attainment of status, the playing out of inequality within a nominally egalitarian society, and the relationship between political and affinal—one could almost call it reproductive—alliance.

Harrison is adept at drawing out different economic perspectives on this discursive political complex. On the one hand he can describe the competition for totemic names in terms of a 'political economy of magic', where knowledge plays the same role in Avatip as shell and animal wealth play in New Guinea Highlands' societies: names and magical formulae thus constitute a scarce commodity, the primary valued items in Manambu society. At the same time, he notes that Avatip subclans are encouraged to reproduce so that their totemic names do not fall into disuse, when they become prey to appropriation by other groups: 'if a subclan is to remain the unchallenged owner of all its names, it must be capable of having most of them—particularly the mythologically more important ones—occupied at least once every two or three generations. If it is declining in size and cannot do this, reproductively more successful subclans will try to appropriate its vacant names' (p. 59).

This sociobiological argument is underlined by the social structural framework within which political alliances are cast. The secret names of a subclan's totemic ancestors are the operative efficacious part of that group's fertility magic. To be efficacious, the spell must contain the names of both maternal and paternal ancestors. Thus, subclans linked in marriage are implicated in each other's fund of names. Agnatically related subclans, on the other hand, compete with each other for names, and 'most conflicts over ceremonial rights take place within the clan-pair' (p. 58): 'The principle that agnates compete and challenge each other's status, while marriageables are interdependent and support one another in these disputes, expresses itself in Avatip social organisation in many different forms' (*ibid.*).

This leads to the nexus of Harrison's analysis in Chapter 6, 'Treading Elder Brothers Underfoot', where he deftly explicates the conjunction of alliance, agnation, sibblingship and leadership in Manambu society. In this and the succeeding two chapters, he effectively demonstrates that this nexus is above all a historical one, and that the significance of ritual and cosmological themes is always an effect of the uses to which they are put in the struggle of Manambu subclans for political ascendancy.

Any criticism of Harrison's project must argue for an alternative approach, since his own technique is impressively carried out and squarely located within current theoretical concerns in Melanesian studies. There is every reason for Harrison to be concerned with the political and tactical uses to which men put secret magical and mythical knowledge, rather than the knowledge or mythology

itself. In his own words, the people of Avatip are 'operating a kind of reified economy of meaning' (p. 172). However, I was tantalized by the possibility that *Stealing People's Names* could also provide support for a discursive theory that depends on selective, restricted communication; conveying the 'not' of a message, rather than its positive residues of transactable information. The dilemma facing the Manambu I suggest is how *not* to reveal names, the solution to which is not necessarily exhausted by delineating their ceremonial or exchange value.

JAMES F. WEINER

PETER METCALF, *Where are You, Spirits: Style and Theme in Berawan Prayer*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press 1989. xv, 318 pp., Tables, Figures, Appendix, Bibliography, Index, Glossary. \$37.95.

The Berawan are some 1,600 people living on the Baram River in Sarawak, northern Borneo. The author has already published an account of their funeral practices, *A Borneo Journey into Death: Berawan Eschatology from its Rituals* (1982). In this book Metcalf transcribes seven prayers of differing qualities and purposes taken from different contexts of Berawan life. Unlike Carol Rubinstein's recent compilation of poems and chants from different peoples of Sarawak (*The Honey Tree Song*, 1985), this collection is presented with the procedures and techniques of linguistic and social anthropology.

It is much influenced by the attempts of American Indian linguistics to codify performative aspects of delivery, and it intentionally contributes to a recently developing literature of mostly eastern Indonesian studies of parallel verse. Above all, its ambition is to contribute to a relatively underdeveloped topic, namely the anthropology of prayer.

Then prayers are set out in numbered lines with the original Berawan and the English translations facing each other on opposite pages. Small symbols (squares or diamonds) preceding each Berawan line indicate whether it was spoken loudly, audibly, mumbled or spoken rapidly. The author introduces each prayer with a general description of the circumstances and occasion in which it was made, the name of the speaker, the time taken, a summary, and observations on style. He describes the speakers, their motives, their relative skills, and the effects these skills or weaknesses have on their stylistic choices.

Women as well as men participate in a variety of kinds of verbal performances, but only men pray. They do so in a style of language called *plat*. *Plat* combines a series of features, including parallelism, segmentation into tone groups, alliteration, and additional rhythmic devices. Though these prayers are short, they often reveal an important key to the rite which they accompany. They are at once

formulaic, expressive of the prescribed forms of the rite, and reflective, summarizing and justifying the rite.

Berawan prayers do not require the use of prescribed dyadic sets as in Rotinese oral performances and are thus less formal, although parallelism is present. Metcalf makes further comparisons with and, in particular, contrasts to eastern Indonesian ritual language, but in fact these are with the highly developed Rotinese examples, from which many other eastern Indonesian languages deviate as markedly as does that of the Berawan.

Among stylistic features are parallel lines and parallel words, tone groups, dyadic sets, loanwords, invented words, nonce words, rhyme, alliteration, formulae, figures, lists, intonation and versification. Ritual acts in conjunction with prayer include supplication, offerings, sacrifice and divination. Metcalf's examples are drawn from rituals of traditional religion and from a new Bungan cult, which has grown up as an alternative, perhaps of only temporary effect, to conversion to Christianity.

The performances are as various as the contexts. Above all, the Berawan recognize that some are skilled performers, while others are moderately effective or even incompetent. In his final chapter, Metcalf employs tables in an attempt to demonstrate variations in individual competence, by displaying differences in use of metrical devices, themes, verses and so on. He concludes that from Berawan resources, individual speakers shape their own prayers. All men pray with equal frequency, though some make more of a public performance of their efforts. There are many ways of praying, and much room for choice, spontaneity and drama: '*Piat* is as individualistic as the Berawan themselves'.

This is a very thoughtfully produced work, with many interesting observations on anthropological interpretation of ritual, prayer and symbols. Not least to be appreciated are the many careful comparisons within Indonesia, which have the effect not so much of demonstrating the distinctiveness of the Berawan pattern, as of the variability within the range of Indonesian ritual languages. The author has gone to lengths to make the texts accessible, and the publishers have helped by producing an attractive book.

R. H. BARNES

E. DOUGLAS LEWIS, *People of the Source: The Social and Ceremonial Order of Tana Wai Brama on Flores* [Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 135], Dordrecht: Foris 1988. xvii, 310 pp., Appendixes, Glossary, Figures, Illustrations, Maps. Dfl. 75.

People of the Source is the first ethnography of the Ata Tana 'Ai of east central Flores. It is the latest in a series of studies of eastern Indonesian societies, and comes up to the high standard set by Lewis's predecessors. Students of this region

now have an unrivalled range of twenty or so detailed ethnographies of closely related societies on which to exercise their comparativist skills. Most of these studies are informed by a similar approach and common aim, which derive partly from the pioneering work of F. A. E. van Wouden in *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (The Hague, 1968), and partly from a holistic style of conceptual and symbolic analysis developed by Mauss and his colleagues. The problems Lewis addresses are shaped almost exclusively by this hybrid tradition and its distinctive brand of structuralism, and there are few references to other areas of current concern in anthropology generally (e.g. on the nature of ritual, which is so prominent in the ethnography). This is both a strength and a weakness. Indonesianists will know immediately where they stand; others may find some of the discussion occasionally arcane. However, on several counts *People of the Source* can be recommended to a wider readership: notably for its contribution to alliance theory and for its state-of-the-art demonstration of structural analysis.

The heart of the book—the section on alliance—follows a long and complicated explication of social and cultural categories, elucidated through myths of origin, spatial classification and rituals. The emphasis is consistently on ideology and the structural concordance of myth, ritual, and society—as envisaged in van Wouden's programme. Typical eastern Indonesian themes—diarchy, a preoccupation with origins, asymmetric alliance, the notion of alliance as a 'flow of life'—appear in a novel configuration in the Tana 'Ai system of matrilineal, house-based descent. In Tana 'Ai there is a division of jural and mystical authority between men and women, such that women own and inherit property and transmit descent-group membership; men, as their delegates, organize ritual and transmit knowledge of ritual matters. The sexual division is exemplified in the separation of brother from sister through house exogamy: an archetypal division which becomes emblematic of division in the world according to a scheme of analogical classification reminiscent of neighbouring societies. In the 'idiom of blood' through which kinship is expressed, clan brothers, given away in marriage, are 'lost blood' which is owed to the maternal clan. Ideally, in the next generation, the brother's daughter is transferred to his clan and marries her FZS, thus returning her father's blood and vicariously reuniting the sibling pair. The resulting form of asymmetric matrilineal marriage is not governed by a categorical prescription, but exhibits a cultural logic similar to the well-known prescriptive systems of eastern Indonesia, and provides a new perspective on alliance.

A particular focus of the study is the way in which the process of alliance governs the developmental cycle of the descent group and the internal hierarchy of the clan. Since the 'house' is exogamous, the woman transferred to her father's clan as the 'return of his blood' establishes within the clan a new and junior house. She herself is its head and founder. This transfer is reciprocated by the exchange of valuables, and it initiates a cycle of exchanges that leads to further fission. 'Source' houses at the top of the hierarchy become depleted of women and die out, while new houses move from the periphery of the system to its centre through the

'return of blood' marriages, and thus move up the hierarchy. This centre-periphery movement is replicated in other semantic fields.

If the implications of the 'economy of blood' are skilfully worked out, there remain certain minor puzzles. The rationale of MBD/FZS marriage is the 'return of father's blood'; but if an MBD is not available, a generation later an MMBDD can be transferred to the clan of her MF instead (pp. 212-13). However, since a man only 'carries' blood but does not pass it on beyond his children, marriage to MMBDD would not achieve the same end as MBD marriage, since the bride's father does not necessarily come from the same clan as her MF—the person whose 'blood' is supposed to be returned. The delayed exchange only makes sense if the notion of the return of blood is regarded as an idiom for indebtedness rather than a genuine folk model of consanguinity, as Lewis seems to contend (p. 188). Both kinds of union are effective as a return *for* the 'lost blood' but only MBD marriage brings about a return *of* the blood.

A second doubt concerns the notion of 'closeness' in blood relation (pp. 188-96). Consanguineal links through women are 'closer' than those mediated by a male link because the female contribution is more 'important' or 'heavy', or (a different type of explanation) because links through females are more 'direct'. (The native explanations here were given in Indonesian rather than the local language, which may suggest an improvised theory rather than a traditional one.) Consequently a woman's sister's children are 'by blood, more fully her own than are her brother's children'. A simpler explanation would be that since the house is the 'primary reference group' it might be expected that members of a woman's own house, including her jural descendants, are 'closer' than cognatic kin of another house. Both explanations are valid, but which is primary? Is the 'idiom of blood' really an idiom, referring to, or expressing conventionally, another order of reality, or is it a theory of being, or a kind of folk biology? In Lewis's diagrams male blood appears to function as a kind of recessive gene, but is he not oversystematizing the flexibility of idiomatic usage?

Likewise, the concluding essay on Ata Tana 'Ai metaphysics perhaps overstretches the idea of a 'botanic idiom' of social relations, even invoking proto-Austronesian etymologies to supply contemporary meanings (p. 307). In general, though, the argument is very careful, the ethnographic detail is precise, and the concluding comments offer important insights into the nature of alliance. Two minor editorial criticisms: it would be helpful to the reader if the number of vernacular words were greatly reduced and English glosses were used where possible; foreign words could be italicized or at least distinguished by inverted commas to relieve the eye.

Lewis's book, the first of three projected volumes, is the fruit of three years' fieldwork. It should provoke much debate, and that is a measure of its quality.

ANDREW BEATTY

MICHAEL JACKSON, *Barawa and the Ways Birds Fly in the Sky* [Smithsonian Series in Ethnographic Enquiry; ser. eds. William L. Merrill and Ivan Karp], Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press 1986. 208 pp., Bibliography, Glossary. \$21.95.

MICHAEL JACKSON, *Paths Towards a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Enquiry* [African Systems of Thought; gen eds. Charles S. Bird, Ivan Karp], Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1989. xi, 217 pp., Bibliography, Index. No price given.

These two books represent two different responses to 'reflexive anthropology'. The earlier book, *Barawa*, poses some interesting questions as to how it should be read. Michael Jackson is the well-known ethnographer of the Kuranko in Sierra Leone. He has also published several volumes of poetry. *Barawa* is described on the title-page as an 'ethnographic novel', and it is as a novel that he refers to it in his subsequent work. However, it is published in the Smithsonian Series in Ethnographic Enquiry, not noted for its fiction list. Worse still, the book describes the history of an ethnic group, the Kuranko, and a prominent family among them, and in the second part of the book one of the members of this family becomes the principal research assistant and friend to an anthropologist from New Zealand who shares the same surname as the author. Few novels have notes, bibliography and glossary. Unlike the references given by Flann O'Brien these are not spurious. The relation of writer, book and its subject to actual people is, of course, precisely what Jackson wishes us to question. No firm answer may be forthcoming, but the process of questioning changes the stance of the reader. We can no longer take it for granted that we are reading 'an objective description of reality'.

Jackson has always written well, and *Barawa* is particularly lucid and easy to read. He has used the genre of the novel to free himself from some of the rigours of 'academic' book production. Poems and personal narrative are combined with ethnohistory. He has used this format to publish some of the material which accumulates in fieldwork but may otherwise never be published. This is to say that, with the caveat to be recorded, I treat it as an enjoyable and useful piece of ethnography. I do this only because I equate novelist with ethnographer, and the Kuranko of the book with the Kuranko of Sierra Leone. It is reminiscent of *Return to Laughter*, without the modest use of pseudonyms. No one familiar with the ethnography of the Tiv can fail to recognize the group described in *Return to Laughter*. Jackson recognizes this and does not resort to pseudonyms, but insists that *Barawa* is a novel. That this is so may be seen in several passages that raise my hackles in exactly the same way that I was disenchanted by Len Deighton many years ago. Long before I knew the meaning of 'positivism' I found myself disliking *Bomber* when Deighton tells us the number of pieces into which an anti-aircraft shell exploded. I have a similar dislike of being told someone's dying thoughts. Jackson does this for the Victorian explorer Laing (p. 21) and for the Kuranko leader Manti Kamara Kulifa (p. 40).

Paths to a Clearing won the 1989 Amaury Talbot Prize for African Anthropology. It is a more philosophical book and sums up Jackson's reaction to the 'new ethnography'. *Barawa* may be seen as an initial reaction to those ideas, *Paths to a Clearing* his more considered response. In particular, this reviewer is in total agreement with Jackson when he says that 'replacing "reason" with the notion of "meaning", anthropologists such as Geertz invoke hermeneutics and rhetoric to blur the distinctions between science and art, a move which, in anthropology, risks encouraging the production of bad science and bad art' (p. 177).

I venture to guess that few of us can write as enjoyable a novel as *Barawa*. If ethnography really is fiction then few of us deserve membership of the Guild of Authors. Jackson retains a narrative style for the more ethnographic chapters of *Paths to a Clearing* which present us with the summarized biographies of some Kuranko people and the chronology of his own involvement with a man who once claimed to be able to transform into an elephant and later retracted the claim. Chapters typically begin with a page or two of autobiographical fragments—experience of bereavement, the learning of hatha yoga—which lead into discussions of Kuranko experience of the same or similar. The conclusion of each chapter then discusses how Jackson's experiences helped, hindered or otherwise mediated the understanding of Kuranko which he has been writing about. In Chapter 4, 'How to do Things with Stones', Jackson returns to the topic of divination which he discussed earlier in an article in *Human Relations* (Vol. 31, no. 2). To a large extent he reiterates his previous argument. Divination allows people to solve the problems of the aleatory. Decisions are externalized: we stop dithering and act! In the earlier article he argued for a processual approach to divination. In 1989 he argues for the psychological efficacy of such an approach: 'The lesson I take from my experience of consulting Kuranko diviners is that one does not have to believe in the truth claims of the system for it to work in a practical and psychological sense' (p. 66). Such a stance echoes Evans-Pritchard in *Witchcraft Oracles and Magic* as well as other functionalist approaches to divination. My own critique of such views of divination is that they leave the role of the diviner hopelessly under-examined. Jackson's earlier processual view seemed to encourage detailed examination of what really happens during divination. This must, of course, discuss how the diviner produces results which are satisfying to both client and diviner themselves. Thus the intellectual operations of the diviner enter the analysis. Sadly, they drop out of sight in Jackson's new concern with psychological efficacy.

Both the books deserve a wider readership than that with particular interests in West African ethnography. *Paths to a Clearing* should obtain that by virtue of being an empirically based piece of 'new ethnography'.

DAVID ZEITLYN

PAUL SPENCER, *The Maasai of Matapato: A Study of Rituals of Rebellion*, Manchester: Manchester University Press for the International African Institute 1988. xiv, 278 pp., References, Index, Figures, Maps. £45.00.

This book deals with age-sets among the Maasai in the Matapato area of Kenya. It examines three central questions: how men and women are controlled by age-sets throughout most of their lives; how men and women produce age-sets and turn them into going concerns; and how age-sets are connected to the management of households, and especially the control of women, children and cattle. These themes have engaged Paul Spencer's mind for many years. In this book he has made the definitive statement we have been waiting for. It is a worthy counterpart to Audrey Richards' recently republished *Chisungu: A Girls' Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia* (1982; originally published 1956).

Spencer is a seasoned and painstaking fieldworker with an unrivalled knowledge of the region's peoples. So it was to be expected that the book would set out his rich store of information on the life cycle of Maasai men and women and their passage through age-sets. In spite of the wealth of data, the argument emerges clearly and persuasively, bearing evidence to years of diligent work on the text. One cannot but be impressed by the masterful exposition. Spencer adheres throughout the book to his chosen style of presentation: to observe the system of age-sets through the eyes of Maasai. He did not work with informants to construct an ideal and static picture of age-sets. Instead, he watched and listened to many participants in the activities, and combined their observations with his own to produce a very full, but standardized, account of Maasai praxis as it changed over the years. He obtained his information from a wide range of people, young and old, men and women, rich and poor, and tries to work out a synthesis of their experiences and views. One feels that his sympathies lie with the elders; their viewpoint often seems to prevail. But he also depicts the *morán* in such rich colours that one succumbs to their charm. He supports and varies the standardized account by some sixty 'cases', short descriptions of particular events. These add a further dimension to the ethnography.

The wider social context is not treated as fully as one would wish. Spencer occasionally discusses the Matapato Maasai as if they were living far away from the rest of the world. Early in the book he argues that 'the Matapato Maasai have probably had less close administration than any other tribal section, less contact with recent change and virtually no tourism. Apart from a fast main road for traffic speeding non-stop through their area, the Matapato are remote, wholly surrounded by other Maasai' (p. 3). There is no systematic treatment of the impact of the state, of market relations and demographic change. But several stray references bear clear evidence that the administration intervenes forcefully in Maasai affairs, suppresses warfare, encourages stock sales (p. 22), builds roads, provides medical care, etc. Spencer himself claims that the 'cash economy [is] a new sector that dominates all others', adding that this should have been reflected in the analysis, and one can only agree with him. Of course, pastoral nomads

everywhere have always been involved in a market economy and cannot survive without it. The cash economy cannot, therefore, be as new as Spencer implies.

The Matapato are, then, analysed as a closed social system whose members play their allotted roles in maintaining society. Admittedly, the older men are the main beneficiaries of the system which permits fathers indirectly to control their sons' fate for almost a decade of adulthood. During that time they herd cattle without being paid, do not establish families that could compete with the elders for power and property, and also serve as a standing army.

But the young people also have a vested interest in the system. During seven years or more of *moranhood* they live in a village of their own, away from their families, without being burdened by responsibilities for people and possessions, while experiencing intimate friendship, sexual love, and the strong taste of peer-group solidarity. And all the while they know that before long they will also enjoy the privileges of elders. Even in old age they nostalgically recall *moranhood* as the best time of their lives and as a precious gift from their fathers. The friendships and patterns of peer group collaboration formed in those years continue into old age and moderate the assertive individualism and arbitrariness of heads of households. This is a valid viewpoint, for fathers apparently make serious concessions to the demands of society when their sons become *moran*. They can no longer control the young men or exploit their labour in the household. Their wives may, in some cases, be pressed into service at the young men's villages. Their cattle are slaughtered at *moran* feasts. And the sons' peer groups set themselves up as moral arbiters on the one hand, and on the other cause strife and scandal with often severe consequences.

Even women appear to support the system wholeheartedly; perhaps they would rather defer to it than be coerced into submission. But when Spencer tells us that 'for younger wives especially, and ultimately all women, married life is bounded by the threat of violence' (p. 198), he may be going too far. There is some evidence that women are not so easily controlled. Women leave their husbands when maltreated; they take lovers with impunity; they retain control over their share of the herd; and their sons remain loyal to them through life, thus augmenting their power. At their fertility feasts women may even violate men. The fears do apparently not 'for a brief moment [upturn] the normal social order', as Spencer (p. 202) would have it. Instead, they seem to reflect women's position in real life: while women may be legally disenfranchised, they use their often considerable power to good effect. If necessary, they can mount collective actions. They can enlist the assistance of their agnates when confronted with difficulties in their households.

Evidently the Maasai cherish a number of complementary values. Spencer paid special attention to those of freedom and control, generosity and covetousness, and self-reliance and sociability. As Maasai move up the ladder of age-grades, they emphasize different values. While the *moran* pursue an adventurous and sociable way of life, with little interest in the accumulation of property, elders are more concerned with the control of their numerous women, children and cattle.

The age-set system allows men and women to realise different values at various stages in their lives, thus imbuing each stage with a meaningful content. Spencer shows that this is true not only for men but also for women, for while women are not formally incorporated into age-sets, they live side by side with the men and adhere to the same values.

Even for the very aged, life remains meaningful. As they relinquish control over their possessions and their peers die one by one, their interests become increasingly centred on the affairs of their household and their agnates. While they are alive, their sons tend to maintain a joint household. Only when they die, the sons 'should disperse' (p. 246), and then it is up to old women to hold together the households of their own sons. Only poor and childless people suffer neglect and may lose their hold on life.

Following Gluckman, Spencer gives prominence to 'rituals of rebellion'. In particular he treats activities related to the establishment of a new age-group as a 'ritualistic rebellion' (p. 99). Youths do not really need to organize local pressure groups in order to induce the preceding age-group to hand over its privileges. This process would have taken place anyway, under the direction of elders. Therefore, he argues, this is not a genuine rebellion, but a ritual one that serves 'to emphasize the legitimacy of the transfer [of privileges] to a group entering their prime' (p. 99). It is also a gesture of defiance against the domination of fathers, when the *moran* leave home in order to join youth villages and, in some instances, even to 'snatch away their mothers' (p. 99). As fathers have arranged for sons to enter *moranhood*, and the sons eventually return to the paternal household, again, one cannot treat this as rebellious behaviour.

Spencer's use of the concept 'ritual of rebellion' for the series of rites described in his book may be misunderstood, if taken to imply that these rituals are not as meaningful as others. Rituals, we anthropologists never tire to assert, are acts pregnant with multiple meanings. Rituals that are said to refer merely to the enacting of social tensions, as in the work of Gluckman and some of his followers, probably differ from others only in that perhaps their multiple meanings have not been fully explored. The use of such a limiting theoretical framework is based on several unacceptable assumptions: that the rituals refer only to social tensions, that these tensions can be contained by ritual and, furthermore, that the rituals mean the same to every participant. This seems to be the case in this book, whenever Spencer refers to rituals of rebellion. These passages emphasize rebellion at the expense of other aspects of Matapato initiations, although these are described in rich detail throughout the book. The rituals refer to such things as submission to elders, who represent 'society', proof of physical courage, peer group solidarity, sharing all one's possessions with others, permission to engage in sexual relations and, at a later stage, to marry and establish a family and to own property, especially cattle. In order better to convey the understanding that these rituals deal with complex social processes, they might more suitably be described as 'rituals of transition' (a term with a wider scope than the overworked 'rites of passage'). For they are concerned with major conflicts, such as the struggles

between fathers and sons, rivalries between adjacent age-groups, and between men and women, as well as with the partial and delicate adjustments made by the various parties.

These critical remarks should not obscure Spencer's achievement. His book is the fullest account and interpretation of Maasai age-groups that we possess. It is destined to become a classic of African ethnography.

EMANUEL MARX

BRIGITTE STEINMANN, *Les Tamang du Népal: Usages et religion, religion de l'usage*, Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations 1987. 232 pp., Bibliography, Index, Glossary, Appendix, Figures, Plates, Maps, Tables. FF 159.

This is a detailed ethnography of the Tamangs living to the east of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Long ignored by anthropologists, the western Tamangs have recently been the subject of excellent studies by Höfer and Holmberg. Steinmann's is the first monograph on the eastern Tamangs. As such it will be an essential reference for Himalayan specialists, but I fear that it is too close to a doctoral thesis to have much wider appeal. In particular, the theoretical remarks which are scattered throughout the text are suggestive without being fully convincing. The rich material is not organized to exemplify them.

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with material culture. It presents it by means of a large, and ever more ramified, tree diagram which relates all the objects the Tamangs produce, wear, eat, and so on, as series of classificatory distinctions. This is ingenious, but a number of questions are not faced: for example, do the Tamangs themselves classify in this manner, or is it just a device for organizing the material?

The second part of the book describes life-cycle rituals, collective rituals, and relations with the supernatural. The third part deals with the various religious specialists of the Tamangs. As with the western Tamang, there are three main types: the lamas (practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism), a kind of priest of the local territory, here called *tamba*, and the shaman. Steinmann gives particular emphasis to the *tamba*, who is a kind of guardian of local lore. In the past he was the headman and tax collector. The book ends with a romantic elegy on the passing of the *tamba*'s ancient wisdom.

Steinmann sees the *tamba* as the guardian of Tamang ethnic identity, although she refers to the local Tamangs as already 'de-ethnicized'. Unfortunately we are told nothing about relations with the other groups found locally. It is bizarre, in view of the long epigraph from Lenin at the beginning of the book, that there is nothing about land tenure, about power, or about inter-ethnic relations. I found Holmberg's account (in *Order in Paradox: Myth, Ritual and Exchange Among*

Nepal's Tamang, 1989) of Tamang identity, as well as his explanation of the relationship between lama, *lambu* (the western Tamang equivalent of the *tamba*), and shaman, more convincing. None the less, Steinmann gives many fascinating details not provided by other researchers. Perhaps in future publications she will tie up ends left loose here, and give more a substantive and satisfying exposition of her unusual theoretical vision.

DAVID N. GELLNER

PASCALE DOLLFUS, *Lieu de neige et de genévriers: Organisation sociale et religieuse des communautés bouddhistes du Ladakh* [Études Himalayennes], Paris: Editions CNRS [no date]. 234 pp., Appendixes, Bibliography, Glossary, Index, Maps, Figures. FF 190.

Lieu de neige et de genévriers comes as a welcome relief from the general portrayal, in the popular literature and early ethnography, of Ladakh as little more than a 'little Tibet'. Pascale Dollfus wasted no time in her twenty-six months of fieldwork in the town of Hemis-Shukpa-Chan (meaning, as the title indicates, 'place of junipers and snow'). She offers a detailed and observant account of the history, social structures, conceptual organization, religion and economics of the inhabitants, who come to life through the comparison and contrast with the neighbouring Tibetans and Nepalis to the east, and the Kashmiris to the west and south.

The work is divided into three parts: a brief history of Ladakh, an exposition of Ladakhi cosmology, and an analysis of the system of descent and filiation. The myth of the five-part origin of man, from the union of a monkey to a 'demon of the rocks', is presented by Dollfus as a synchronic explanation of the (normative) distinction between the royal descendants, nobles, 'ordinary men' and 'inferior people' (travelling musicians and, as seems to be the case in so many parts of the world, blacksmiths). If this is the norm, it differs markedly from Dollfus's data, in which these separate classes are shown to interact freely and bonds of friendship between individuals of differing status are not unusual.

In Part Two, an analogy is drawn between the household, the town and the universe which serves as an exemplar for an elaborate system of reciprocal help groups which stand in opposition to the system of social stratification. The traditional household is not a building, nor is it the family, nor even an association of the two, but rather a flexible association for an agricultural or ceremonial task. This association is liable to change over time in its placement in the town as well as in its members.

The system of alliance to which the final section of the book is devoted continues this theme. Although the choice of partner is nominally set in a minefield of exogamous ascriptions and interdictions, the facts are rather different,

as Dollfus's subjects reveal themselves in the apt dictum: 'we get married as soon as we've forgotten our relationships' (p. 199). The peculiar form of Ladakhi Buddhism is analysed according to the duality of popular religion with its many spirits (protective, ambivalent or harmful) versus the monastic form, permanently represented in Hemis-Shukpa-Chan by one or two monks.

The various elements of the analysis are nicely interlinked in a causal self-supporting whole that represents the traditional Ladakhi way of life as an organic unit, fine-tuned to its ecological and socio-political environment. This environment, however, is rapidly and drastically changing, as Dollfus herself points out. Her account is sometimes reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, in which all change is deterioration from an originally utopian state. Indeed, Dollfus's presentation of the traditional way of life is so enticing that one could forget that Ladakh today is part of Jammu and Kashmir, where lamas wear Ray Ban sunglasses and Rolex watches and greet visitors to the *gompas* with wads of tickets in hand.

These changes need not all be seen as shots fired from the West at an otherwise inherently balanced entity. Likewise, the centre for traditional medicine initiated by the Save the Children Fund that Dollfus mentions (p. 233) need not be seen as evidence of a resurgent religious and cultural identity on the part of the Ladakhis, but rather as evidence of the continuing process of dynamic response to historically variable political powers in which the latest leader's jargon is adopted, viz. 'cultural identity' and 'national awareness'. These changes are really just beginning, though a book on the topic might make a good companion volume to *Lieu de neige et de genévriers*, once the ethnographic dust has cleared and the results of Indianization and tourism are clearly visible.

NICOLAS ARGENTI

ONKAR PRASAD, *Folk Music and Folk Dances of Banaras* [Anthropological Survey of India, Memoir no. 71], Calcutta: Government of India 1987. xi, 143 pp., Bibliography, Glossary, Appendix, Notation. No price given.

This book is a comprehensive survey of forms and performing conditions in the Banaras region of India. Prasad makes sociological and classificatory theory a main focus in the presentation of his material, and the results are uneven. At best, we are shown some of the musicians' insights into their creative and intellectual world. Prasad pays insufficient attention, however, to the possible contamination of these 'emic' notions by the established terminology of the *sastriya* (urban art-musical) traditions; thus, for example, his discussion of the *laukic* (folk) concept of *gharana* (artistic lineage or professional group) lacks some of the necessary perspective, since the term is commonly assumed to be derived from a fairly recent

period in the Hindustani (North Indian) art-music tradition. He is surely correct in rejecting the rigid dichotomy of 'folk' and 'classical' as stylistic and functional concepts, but his assumption of the way these concepts are used by Western musicologists is a little naïve, or perhaps is an Aunt Sally. At worst, the arid classification of forms occupies space which would have been better used for true analysis. There is a comprehensive alphabetical glossary, but the use of this is limited by the absence of page references. Indeed the whole book is drastically devalued by the lack of an index; Prasad has been extremely conscientious in his collecting of data, and his text contains hundreds of terms which even the most retentive reader will not absorb without such help. The analysis of notated music examples is brief and superficial, as is the discussion, in a final chapter, of local notions of artistic 'excellence' and some related issues.

Before ending on a positive note I should add that the editorial and proof-reading standards here—which have allowed too much imprecision in language and too many misprints, inconsistencies in spelling and simple errors of reference and alphabetization etc.—are low for a book which should, despite all, turn out to be a useful source for scholars. It is unlikely that all of Prasad's investigations will be repeated in the near future, and much of the raw data he has gathered—song texts, tunes, details of performers and performing conditions in the area, descriptions of instruments, transcripts of interviews etc.—when detached from his attempts to process his material, will be valuable information for anyone trying to construct a cultural map of Banaras.

JONATHAN KATZ

ALF HILTEBEITEL, *The Cult of Draupadī I: Mythologies: From Gingee to Kurukṣetra*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1988. xxvii, 448 pp., Appendixes, Bibliography, Index, Maps, Plates, Tables. £19.95.

This is a splendid book. It bears on a central topic in the study of a great religion, it argues a stimulating point of view, it illuminates ancient texts with copious new fieldwork, it shows an impressive command of the literature. What more could one want?

If we could rank the cultures of the world according to the richness of their mythology, Hindu India would be a leading competitor for first prize. Moreover, far from being mere entertainment, this mass of narrative has, as a self-respecting mythology ought to have, all sorts of profound links with everyday life. If one had been thinking of such issues thirty years ago, perhaps the mind would have turned first to the bits and pieces of mythology alluded to so obliquely and teasingly in the *Rig Veda*; but nowadays it becomes more and more apparent that the charter for Hinduism is the *Mahābhārata*. This vast document contains not

only its own miniature version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (the other classical Sanskrit epic), but also the *Bhagavad Gītā*, doubtless the best-known sacred text in the whole religion; and its appendix is the precursor to the *Gītā*'s nearest rival, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. And within the *Mahābhārata*, Draupadī, joint wife of the Pāṇḍava brother, is the heroine.

Hiltebeitel starts off with a sound background as a Sanskritist—his doctoral thesis was published by Cornell University Press in 1976 (*The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata*). Since then, in addition to publishing numerous articles and teaching at George Washington University, he has been studying the cult of Draupadī in Tamilnad, where it flourishes over a wide area. The cult seems to have originated at Gingee, a medieval capital which has now come down in the world; Kurukṣetra, in North India, is of course the site of the great battle in the Sanskrit epic. This volume is to be the first of three. The next will move from myth to ritual, and no doubt will have a lot to say about the fire-walking undertaken by Draupadī's devotees. The final volume will explore the implications of the new material for understanding the ancient text.

The Draupadī mythology (quite apart from the rituals) comes in a number of forms. As well as the Sanskrit we have Tamil texts from the ninth century onwards, there are recitations by contemporary itinerant professionals, there are 'street theatre' presentations by troupes of actors, and there are relevant parallel traditions from neighbouring parts of South India (not to mention Garhwal in the Western Himalayas). Hiltebeitel's synthesis draws on a range of methods apart from textual study and participant observation: he used archives, he posted questionnaires, he observed the iconography and layout of temples, and he sponsored special performances by the actors. But the mass of information is organized around a single theme, namely the role of Devī, the Goddess, in the Hindu mythological world. Thus he relates the narratives about Draupadī to the best known of the myths of the Goddess, the slaying of the Buffalo Demon as narrated in the *Devī Māhātmyam* (her 'Glorification'). The Buffalo Demon himself appears in the form of characters such as Pōttu Rāja, who is absent from the *Māhābhārata* but salient in the cult. The culminating volume of the trilogy will be a reinterpretation of the Sanskrit epic in the light of the centrality of the Goddess, an approach which (for reasons not confined to the Indian material) I think is likely to prove fruitful.

The modern study of the *Māhābhārata* really began when the Swedish scholar Stig Wikander proposed his Dumézilian interpretation of the Pāṇḍavas in 1947 (Hiltebeitel pays him a subtle compliment in the subtitle). The significance of this work was little recognized during the period when Dumont was studying India, and it was only with publication of the first volume of Dumézil's *Mythe et épopée* in 1968 that the situation began to change. Inspired by this, Madeleine Biardeau became the leading figure in the field, and it is pleasing to note Hiltebeitel's warm acknowledgement of her seminal insights and subsequent help. Already in the 1979 postscript to the fourth edition of his book, Dumézil was recognizing that it needs to be supplemented with regard to Draupadī, and even now we have

probably scarcely begun to glimpse the full picture. Hildebeitel himself does not here consider either the Indo-European resonances of his work, or its relevance to structuralist views of Hinduism such as Biardeau has been developing. But he has embarked on a major contribution to a field whose importance is likely to grow.

N. J. ALLEN

ALAN TORMAID CAMPBELL, *To Square with Genesis: Causal Statements and Shamanic Ideas in Wayāpí*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1989. viii, 178 pp., Appendixes, References, Index, Plates, Figures, Maps. £25.00.

Alan Campbell seems to have set himself a hard task in this book, which is about aspects of the lives of a particular group of people, who call themselves Wayāpí, he met in the Amazon forests and with whom he stayed over two years between 1974 and 1976. It is to write about these friends of his, to whom he owes so much more than thanks, whom he loves and admires and misses.

In doing so, he eschews 'analysis', 'model', 'structure', 'logic', 'symbol', 'fact', 'theory' and various other words which are 'examples of a more extensive idioticon widely used in human studies'—not because he wishes to pursue novelty as an end in itself (which he rightly remarks can be vulgar and competitive), but because 'giving up a word here and there can usefully clear away all sorts of tangled preconceptions' (p. 6); and because often such words render others, one's previous hosts, as objects to be contemplated or commodities to be trafficked in (p. 164), mainly in the interests of the anthropologist.

Well, one knows what Campbell is getting at here (even if a Balinese whose statement of love can be couched as 'I like looking at you' might not altogether appreciate what he is expressing); and one understands why later in the book (p. 168) he writes that he 'would be ashamed if they [his Wayāpí friends] became a name in anthropological debate'.

This possibility must have provided a bit of a dilemma for the author of *To Square With Genesis*, especially as it turns out that this book, which may or may not qualify as an ethnography (cf. p. 2), imaginably is going to provoke some debate. The three main areas where this is so, and which are related, are the notion of cause, shamanism, and kinship. Consideration of matters associated with these three topics occupies a little under two-thirds of the monograph, and results in findings that are bound to prove provocative to others concerned with them.

There is not room here to go into these findings, and a bare summary would hardly do them justice. But the reviewer urges readers of *JASO* who are at all interested in these matters to read the one hundred or so pages (pp. 61-163) that directly address them. But the rest of the book is well worth reading too, for it is an exercise in, and a demonstration of the benefits to be had from, what Alan

Campbell variously suggests (pp. 3, 109, 112, 113, 139) we should be doing when trying to make sense of such matters as Wayãpi ideas and practices connected with, for instance, childbirth, sickness, death, and relationship terminology. Instead of yoking these matters to the distinctions we are inclined to make, 'the imaginative effort required of us is to abandon various cherished distinctions: the logical distinction between 'is' and 'is not'; the grammatical distinction between onoma [that of which some action or condition is predicated] and rhema [what is predicated of it]; the semantic distinction between literal and metaphorical' (p. 139).

These difficult ('tricky') imaginative operations are exemplified, however, in our poetry and literature, and they are also carried out with aplomb, modesty, and passion in *To Square With Genesis*. At times this reviewer found the book irritating, at other times the high seriousness of the endeavour is somewhat tarnished by what seems to be a rather relaxed attitude to proof-reading. But the book is a most enjoyable, provocative, and instructive read, always beautifully written: as such it is to be wholeheartedly recommended, even at £25.00 for the hardback.

ANDREW DUFF-COOPER

EMMANUEL DÉSVEAUX, *Sous le signe de l'ours: Mythes et temporalité chez les Ojibwa septentrionaux*, Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme 1988. 291 pp., Bestiary, Bibliography, Index, Plates. FF 175.

Hocart once said that if 'we make a systematic cultural study of the region in which myth is found, it will explain itself'. Désveaux's approach is the opposite. He looks at the corpus of myths of the Ojibwa of Big Trout Lake in Ontario, Canada, in order to explain how they see their society and the natural order in which it finds itself. He argues that although myth and ethnography are parallel representations of the same reality, myth is the most authentic discourse about that reality. It is easy for the reader to have some sympathy for this position, considering that the small Big Trout Lake population of between 300 and 450 persons occupies an enormous area (with a density of from 0.005 to 0.075 persons per square kilometre) and spends eleven months a year in tiny social units of three to five families or ten to fifteen persons. Under such circumstances an ethnographer might elaborate yet another example of the theme of seasonal variation of social morphology, but he would have little opportunity to see major themes of social structure visibly displayed and validated in ways that are common in some other societies.

To a reasonable degree, Désveaux achieves his aims, which are not in the end all that different from Hocart's. He publishes over fifty myths and variations (only

a representative selection of those available) and provides a sufficient amount of ecological and social information to support his interpretations. The interpretations themselves are explicitly Lévi-Straussian and explicitly related by the author to themes in Bororo myth which initiated Lévi-Strauss's four-volume study of South and North American mythology. The result is more ethnographically well founded, less arbitrary, and less abstractly flamboyant than its model.

R. H. BARNES

H. DAVID BRUMBLE III, *American Indian Autobiography*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1988. xi, 183 pp., Appendix, Notes, Bibliographies, Index. \$35.00.

Brumble's main theme is that American Indian autobiography, as a unified discourse on how the self came to be as it is, only comes into being when the subject has been transformed by acculturation and education, or when he is persistently questioned about those things which modern Europeans deem appropriate to autobiography. Without these influences, pre-literate Indian personal histories have remained within the episodic conventions of oral narrative and have been concerned to demonstrate how credentials (such as war honours) were achieved, or else they have exemplified a purely indigenous confessional tradition. Many well-known Indian autobiographies conform to European norms, simply because their editor has imposed these norms. Others assume the expected shape because their authors have themselves been so greatly affected by European standards.

The author examines the many varieties of Indian autobiography and attempts to show the strains between the intentions of Indian authors and American editors in those cases where the work is the product of a partnership. He also reviews instances where the pre-literate Indian has been allowed to present his story exactly as he wished, and others where Indians who became literate late in life used their new medium according to preliterate conventions. The many kinds of intervention by editors, co-editors and ghost writers receive treatment, and the changing purposes and expectations of such autobiographies are reviewed.

Included here are the various uses and abuses of such material by anthropologists. Brumble exposes Lévi-Strauss's wilfully disguising the educated and anthropologically trained half-Scot George Hunt as the pre-scientific Kwakiutl sceptic Quesalid in 'The Sorcerer and His Magic'. He is acerbic about Ruth Underhill's heavy interventions in the Papago Chona's narrative. Most ludicrous is the 'Portrait of a Navaho' by a Chicago Ph.D. candidate based on only forty-seven days worth of field time, no skill in the Navajo language, and an inability to communicate on a personal level. The result is a demonstration of the

impossibility of objective knowledge of another culture and a self-glorification of the anthropologist which only masquerades as an account of an Indian life.

Although most Indian autobiographies involve mixtures of influences and purposes, Brumble is not hostile to this fact in itself, which of course is inevitable. He thinks quite highly of some books, such as John Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* or Leo Simmons's *Sun Chief*, despite their intentional blurring of editorial artifice. Rigorously separating Indian narrative from European literary traditions would be impossible if present-day Indians were to be permitted the option of recording their own lives as they are currently living them. Furthermore, for many persons of mixed ancestry being an Indian is a matter of choice, but it need not be one which entails a refusal to participate in other available cultural traditions. One of the contemporary writers Brumble most admires for his creative use of oral narrative forms in autobiography, N. Scott Momaday, holds a Stanford Ph.D. in literature and is the offspring of a mother only one-eighth Cherokee. Brumble would defend the very noticeable repetitiveness of his own writing as the conscious employment of a common feature of oral discourse.

R. H. BARNES

PAUL HOCKINGS (ed.), *Dimensions of Social Life: Essays in Honor of David G. Mandelbaum* [New Babylon: Studies in the Social Sciences No. 48], Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter 1987. xv, 698 pp., Index, Tables, Diagrams, Bibliographical Notes. DM 248.

Reviewing *Festschriften* is a difficult task. The main problem is trying to discover what it is that gives the collection of papers coherence as a volume, beyond the inference that they will all bring some pleasure to the honorand. In this particular case, the task is complicated by the fact that Mandelbaum must have died shortly before the volume appeared (he is referred to in the present tense in Paul Hocking's 'Foreword', for example, yet the frontispiece plate gives his date of death as well as date of birth) and thus I, for one, will never know if he was satisfied.

The major part of Mandelbaum's output was on India, particularly southern India, although he wrote occasionally on many other topics, including Jewish and Native American society. Twenty-three of the thirty-two articles in the volume are concerned wholly or in large part with India and/or South Asia and a further two discuss the extinction of a Native American tribe (Maurice Zigmond) and the transcendental and folk aspects of Judaism (Edgar Siskin). The remainder range from a discussion of Armenian godfathers (Harry Nelson), to an example of Dumont's latest work on Nazi Germany, by way of psychosis in Boston (Nancy

Scheper-Hughes) and the birth of a new Thai hill tribe (Lucien Hanks and Jane Richardson Hanks).

There is little to unify this diverse collection of papers. Hockings' 'Foreword' mentions that the thirty-three contributors (two of them are joint authors, hence thirty-two contributions) fall into the following categories: former students, colleagues of Mandelbaum's at Berkeley, specialists in Nilgiri studies, co-students of Mandelbaum's at Yale, and finally 'other friends and admirers' (p. viii). The influence of Mandelbaum can be seen in many of these contributions (and Agehananda Bharati, for example, in the introduction to his article on 'The Denial of Caste in Modern Urban Parlance', mentions that he finds Mandelbaum's classic two-volume synthesis, *Society in India*, invaluable as an undergraduate textbook).

The papers are divided into seven sections: Family, Kinship and Personhood; Old Tribes and New; Culture Areas and Cultural Themes; Investigating Health and Development; Caste in India; Stratification and Ethnicity; and The Integration of Civilizations. No explanation is given for this sectioning although there is certainly an accordance with Mandelbaum's own interests. I found some of the contributions disappointing—for example, William Noble's lengthy article, 'Houses with Centered Courtyards in Kerala and Elsewhere in India', which, while displaying much scholarly and textual research, was essentially descriptive and said almost nothing about the correspondences noted by many anthropologists in South and Southeast Asia (as well as elsewhere) between house structure and cosmology. Some of the others, however, more than compensate: for example, Nurit Bird-David's article, 'Single Persons and Social Cohesion in a Hunter-Gatherer Society', in which she takes up Mandelbaum's challenge to 'extend the knowledge gained [from Indianist studies] into wider theoretical spheres and [to] relate the findings to comparative cases from elsewhere' (p. 151). In her discussion of the forest-dwelling Naiken of South India, she draws attention to earlier literature on gatherer-hunter societies which dwells extensively on what they do *not* have (centralized political authority, 'load-bearing' kinship systems), and which seems at a loss to explain how they survive. Such societies seem 'socially deficient' to observers, and Bird-David quotes Lévi-Strauss: 'The society of the Nambikwara had been reduced to the point at which I found nothing but human beings' (p. 153). In contrast, Bird-David asserts that the free movement and choices of individuals in Naiken society is precisely the feature that the Naiken value and which, in Bird-David's opinion, allows them to be constituted as a group. That is to say, rather than starting an analysis with the notion of 'group' as given and then—perhaps inevitably—concluding that gatherer-hunter societies do not live up to the mark, a focus on what the members of such a society actually do and how they conduct their social affairs allows the analyst to see the idea of 'group' as an emergent and processual phenomenon.

Space precludes further lengthy discussion of the other papers, many of which are further stimulating examples of what their authors have come to be known for: Paul Hockings on tourism and the constituents of identity ('Corkaguiney and the Nilgiris'), Agehananda Bharati on the *denial* of caste by many urban Indians and

the implications this has for the vast number of books and articles on caste by Western sociologists (twelve hundred 'items' in English, French and German alone, known to Bharati; p. 507).

It is unlikely that any reader would find all articles in the volume equally interesting (although a South Asianist would have the best chance), and for the individual it is far too expensive to purchase for one or two articles alone. Nevertheless, it is a handsomely produced volume, as one has come to expect of Mouton, and the bibliographic detail is excellent (the names of all authors of works cited in full, for example). It is reassuring to be told that the paper is acid-free. For the introductory essay on Mandelbaum (by Milton Singer) and the exhaustive bibliography of his works, the book is undoubtedly valuable and should be purchased by every relevant library.

MARCUS BANKS

RAYMONDE CARROLL, *Cultural Misunderstandings: The French-American Experience* (transl. Carol Volk), Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1989. xiii, 147 pp. £15.95.

By her own admission, Carroll's book is essentially a guidebook on how to avoid making *faux pas* in 'heterocultural' relationships between French and American people. It is not a theoretical book; for theoretical guidance she refers readers to the work of Geertz, Bateson and Vern Carroll: 'For those who simply [!] want to avoid intercultural misunderstandings, I provide a recipe which is effective yet easy to follow' (p. 5). However, there are certain theoretical premises which she omits and which call into question the validity of her project. Some of her assumptions would merit rather fuller justification, such as the dismissive statement that translation is 'a difficult but fortunately far from impossible exercise' (p. 10). More important is her failure to identify fully the subjects of her investigation. A brief allusion to the possibility of a further comparison between black Americans and the French suggests that Carroll is aware that she has considered only one particular sector each of French and American society, but she does not go so far as to admit or explain that she has, in fact, only referred to white, middle-class academics in the respective countries. This is an assumption on my part, but one which is necessary in order to make sense of her observations.

To her credit, Carroll spends a great deal of the introduction and the conclusion disclaiming any universality or definitiveness to the work: 'This book has meaning only insofar as it is an opening. I wrote it only to invite others to try this path...'; 'This means that this book is by definition incomplete, is intentionally incomplete, assuming that it is even possible for it not to be so'; 'as the writer of this book, I must make a choice: either I share this "introduction" with all the incompleteness it, by definition, implies, or I wait to have analysed "everything" before it is

written. The choice I have made is no mystery'; etc. By presenting the book as a textbook of 'Cultural Misunderstanding' under the auspices of the University of Chicago Press, however, Carroll is setting herself up for just the criticisms she anticipates and tries to deflect.

All this said, however, it must be added that it is an entertaining read, lighthearted and amusing, and quite instructive in illuminating misunderstandings which might arise in particular scenarios. As a book of amusing anecdotes with advice for Americans in France or French people in America (or simply for those entering into cross-cultural relationships), it is successful in the limited sense of an introduction, as Carroll suggests (and which presumably accounts for the lack of any index or bibliography). I can, thus, recommend it to those who wish to begin to understand the cultural differences between French and American middle-class white academics and more specifically to those of the aforementioned who are looking for something to read on a transatlantic flight.

S. A. ABRAM

AXEL HONNETH and HANS JOAS, *Social Action and Human Nature* (transl. Raymond Meyer), Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1989. xii, 167 pp., Suggested Reading, Bibliography, Index. £27.50 / £8.95.

Anthropology in Germany is not what it is in the UK or the United States. It is not concerned with ethnography and ethnology, but with the human being's essential nature: German anthropology is philosophical anthropology. And *Social Action and Human Nature* as it explores issues of human nature is a work of philosophical anthropology.

It is necessary to explore such issues for, as Charles Taylor points out in his Foreword, 'psychology, politics, sociology, anthropology (in the narrow sense), linguistics, etc., lean on certain assumptions about what human beings are like, which are often highly questionable' (p. vii). *Social Action and Human Nature* is an attempt to survey the assumptions and presuppositions of human nature that are at the base of German anthropological theory. By doing this the authors hope to say something intelligible about 'the unchanging preconditions of human changeableness'.

The book is divided into three chapters. In the first, Honneth and Joas present the fundamentals of Feuerbach's anthropological materialism, Marx's critique of Feuerbach and, finally, Althusser's, Lucien Sève's, and Györky Márkus' interpretations of Marx's historical materialism. Chapter 2 deals with the philosophical anthropology of Arnold Gehlen, Helmuth Plessner, Agnes Heller and Klaus Holzkamp. In chapter 3 the authors are concerned with historical anthropology, discussing Norbert Elias's theory of the civilizing process, Michel

Foucault's structuralist analysis of history, and Jürgen Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution.

Originally published in German in 1980, the book has been revised for its English translation and is intended both as a challenge to French thought and as an introduction for the English speaker to the German tradition in philosophical anthropology. According to Charles Taylor, when it was originally published it knocked down barriers between the various theories on the German scene and between German and contemporary French thought. He hopes that the translation will knock down barriers of unfamiliarity in the English-speaking world. Such a book ought to be of interest and value not only to anthropologists but social scientists generally. It probably will not.

Any book that attempts to cover the ideas of so many people in less than two hundred pages can do so only superficially. Authors' ideas are presented as conclusions with little discussion as to how those ideas were derived or the assumptions underlying them, thus defeating their purpose. Furthermore, although intended as an introduction for the English speaker the book was originally written for a German audience, and as almost all texts referred to are in German it assumes a familiarity with an ancillary literature which most readers are unlikely to possess. But by far the greatest drawback to the book, and the one that will ensure it remains unread, is that it is an extremely poor translation. It is replete with incomplete and run-on sentences and statements such as: 'Sève rejects a psychologising concept of society that does not permit the conceiving of the autonomy of the objectifications, of the stabilised nexuses of action and expectational patterns, of the institutions and traditions.' (p. 34). I suspect that few readers will have the stamina or desire to decipher page after page of this stuff. *Social Action and Human Nature* is unlikely to knock down barriers of unfamiliarity because it says little that is intelligible about the 'underlying preconditions of human changeableness'.

CHRIS HOLDSWORTH

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

I should like to point out an unfortunate error in my article 'How a Foreigner Invented "Buddhendom" in Burmese: From *tha-tha-na* to *bok-da' ba-tha'* that appeared in *JASO*, Volume XXI, number 2 (Trinity 1990). In note 7 (pages 116-117) Spiro (1983: 5) is credited with the first use of 'Buddhendom'. It should, of course, have been Southwold (1983: 5).

Gustaaf Houtman

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