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FORMAT

The journal is published three times per year. Articles are welcome from students of anthropology and from people in other disciplines. Papers should be as short as is necessary to get the point over. As a general rule they should not exceed 5,000 words. We welcome comments and replies to published articles. All papers should follow the conventions for citations, notes and references used in the A.S.A. monographs. Communications should be addressed to the Journal Editors, Institute of Social Anthropology, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Due to rising production costs, our prices are to be raised as follows: the cover charge for the next issue will be 40 pence; the subscription rate will be - single issues: 70 pence or $2 for individuals, £1.20 or $3 for institutions; for one year: £2.00 or $4 for individuals, £3.50 or $8 for institutions. All prices cover postage. Vol. II no. 1 and Vol. III no. 2, Vol. IV, Vol. V no. 1, Vol. VI no. 1 and Vol. VII no. 3 are no longer in print. Other back issues are available at the prices quoted above.

THE DEATH OF MARX: A MEDIA EVENT

The 'new philosophers' have enjoyed a recent intense vogue in France,[1] and have even provoked interest in the English speaking press - I have read articles on them in The Sunday Times, The Observer, Encounter and Time magazine. On examination, they appear to be saying very little, so it is interesting to ask what their value is for the foreign press. It will be seen that I too treat them in a 'journalistic' rather than a serious academic fashion, and that this is, in fact, unavoidable.

Nevertheless, whilst of little intrinsic interest, the new philosophers are illustrative of two problems, both of which are of some import. The first is that in French political and cultural thought all problems and debates exist within a framework marked by two reference points - the legislative elections in March 1978, and May 1968. These points are not symmetrical; however, they do mark the beginning and the end of the present 'epoch'. The new philosophers are only possible within this framework. The second is of a different order, and concerns the relations of intellectuals to journalism, and the changes that these relations have been undergoing. I shall return to these problems at the end, but first shall give an outline description of the phenomenon.

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The new philosophy consists primarily of publicity. The publicity has been ferocious - in magazines, journals, newspapers, public discussions, as well as on radio and television. It has been centred on personalities - on the new philosophers rather than the new philosophy - and in the articles, interviews and so on the original books published seem of little importance. We will see this is not by chance. The effect has been somewhat frenzied. To describe the phenomenon I shall have to mention names repeatedly.

Is it right to group these writers together? Labelling is an old and dishonourable polemical tactic, lumping together a disparate group of intellectuals for the purpose of disparaging them better.

The publicity campaign could, however, to those who think in such terms, look like a conspiracy. To start with, almost all the books have been published by a single publisher, Grasset, in one or other of three series, Figures, Théoriciens or Enjeux, all of which are edited by the same man, B.H. Lévy. The label then is self-given. It is one Lévy launched in an article entitled Les nouveaux philosophes in Les Nouvelles Littéraires (10th June '76), and an advertisement appeared in Le Magazine Littéraire (October '76) which read: 'The new philosophers publish in the collections Figures and Théoriciens directed by Bernard-Henri Lévy.' Lévy has since said he does not accept the label 'new philosophers'.

Then again, there has been a very detailed back-up campaign, not only with 'new philosophers' interviewing each other, but also from the weekly Le Nouvel Observateur for whom Lévy has done a lot of work, and for whom Maurice Clavel, who associates himself with the new philosophers, writes a weekly column. In July '76 Le Nouvel Observateur (hereafter abbreviated as NO) published an article entitled The New Gurus (Gérald Petitjean, NO 611, 12th July '76), and then in May of this year a series of reviews: Foucault on Glucksmann, Desanti on Clavel, Enthoven on Lévy. This was

followed by some twelve or so articles on the new philosophy from June
to August, launched under the title of Objectif '78, with the following
rubric from Jean Daniel, the editor, to the first article:

> Conceiving our role as a permanent link between institution and
> opposition, organization and spontaneity, politics and culture,
> we have naturally welcomed and defended in Le Nouvel Observateur
> the representatives of the 'New philosophy', who have undertaken
> a revision of marxism after the discovery of the 'Gulag'. We
> think that the left has the greatest interest in allowing itself
> to be questioned by this rich movement, including its excesses
> (NO 665, 30th May '77, introduction to Poulantzas).

However, NO is not the new philosophers' only friend. The journal Tel
Quel, formerly of a maoist tendency, allows various new philosophers to
review each other's books in its columns. Further, its founder, Phillipe
Sollers, published a very favourable review of Lévy's book La barbarie
à visage humaine in Le Monde 13th May '77. Le Monde devoted two full
pages of Le Monde des livres to the new philosophers at the end of May
(27th May) and one full page a week for the two following weeks (3rd
and 10th June) - twelve articles in all.

Other magazines took up the story - Playboy, Elle and Le Point. There
was a number of radio interviews (on the programme La génération perdue,
France-Culture), and a debate on the television programme Apostrophes.
Also a book entitled Contre la nouvelle philosophie by Aubral and Delcourt
appeared, and a pamphlet by G. Deleuze, which we shall come back to.
This list is not exhaustive.

The intellectual world in Paris is very small, and practically everyone
has something to say. Nevertheless, the noise was remarkable. From a
dead start in June 1976, the whole business took off in Spring this year,
and appears to have burnt out by August.

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Who then are the new philosophers, and what do they say? As already
pointed out, the articles, reviews, interviews etc. are of much greater
importance than the books themselves. The article in Le Point illustrates
this. Here the 'key' books are classified under two headings - 'easy'
and 'difficult'. The books I have read, L'Ange by Lardreau and Jambet,
and La barbarie à visage humaine by Lévy, are not argued in any sense,
and to suggest that this is a failing would be to miss the point. This
is not an 'academic' argument.

So what characteristics do we look for? As the individuals are important,
so are their biographies. Guérin, Jambet, Lardreau, Lévy, Némo and others
were Althusser's students between 1966 and '68. There, to varying extents,
they came into contact with the psychoanalyst Lacan, whom Althusser
introduced to the rue d'Ulm, and with the maoism of the Jeunesses marxistes-
léninistes, founded in the rue d'Ulm. A number of them wrote for the
journals of the period - J'Accuse, L'idiot international and the maoist
La Cause du Peuple; there, for example, Jambet and Lardreau met Dollé and
later Glucksmann (see R.P. Droit Le Monde 27th May '77).

From a common radicalism (Dollé and Glucksmann had both been C.P. militants before becoming maoist, and those althusserians who were not activists were rigorous theoreticians) they have derived a common disillusion, and reaction against marxism, in which they are joined by Benoist, author of Marx is dead (1970).

A third characteristic derived from this period, according to Droit, is a reverence for Lacan - or, more particularly, for Lacan's reading of Hegel. From Lacan the image of the 'Master' is borrowed which allows the getting-rid of Marx, or even the emptying of history.

> In his name /‾Lacan's‾/ the hopes of a 'sexual liberation' are
> condemned as lures and the left wing lampooned, as well as
> Deleuze and Lyotard, the 'philosophers of desire'. In short,
> everything happens almost as if Lacanism has gone a fair way
> to becoming the philosophie indépassable - of all time, this
> time, since the truths he enunciates would be eternal
> (Droit: op.cit.).

Around these young philosophers have gathered a variety of 'fellow-travellers' (Benoist's term - Le Monde 3, 4th July '77) - Clavel, Dollé, Benoist, Glucksmann, Sollers. It is worth nothing that Glucksmann's work, at least, merits serious attention. However, he deserves inclusion on the original criterion of 'publicity'; indeed, much of it starts with him.

The real starting point, however, is Solzhenitsyn. The whole spectrum of the French left's intelligentsia took to him: Pierre Daix, then a communist and editor of Les Lettres Françaises; Jean Daniel, editor of Le Nouvel Observateur; Clavel; Claude Lefort, editor (with Castioradis) of Socialisme ou barbarie, wrote Un homme fort, reflections on the Gulag Archipelago; in Esprit, the catholic journal, Marcel Gauchat wrote The Totalitarian Experience and political Thought (July - Aug. 1976).

The new philosophers too were enthused by reading Solzhenitsyn, and by the tales of the Gulag. 'The Dante of our time', Lévy calls him, and Clavel wrote: 'I will not hide that I breathe better to know that he still exists...' (NO 479, 14th Jan. '74). Sollers too claims to be one of those whom a reading of Solzhenitsyn has slowly, deeply changed (Le Monde 13th May '77). But they make a very special use of their reading, a rejection of marxism, from this central idea: 'Solzhenitsyn's Gulag is no "accident" but the proper consequence of marxist premisses' (Droit: op.cit.). This idea is first developed by Glucksmann in La Cuisinière et le mangeur d'homme (The Cook and The Maneater) subtitled 'An essay on the State, Marxism and the Concentration Camps', and more recently in Les Maîtres penseurs. The idea is taken up by Lardreau and Jambet, and reappears in Lévy. The Gulag Archipelago serves as a demonstration of this truth - Marx equals the Gulag. For Clavel, this is the Marx 'to whom Proudhon wrote, in 1844: "Your thought makes me fear for the freedom of men"...' (art.cit.).

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Marxism is taken as the ultimate form of rationality, of 'discourse'.
Listen to Lévy, for example:

> The problem of our time...is that of this strange cultural
> object, this political tradition which the modern age has
> invented and baptized socialism. Why blame socialism?
> Because, like all optimism, it lies when it promises, and
> terrorizes when it happens; because, starting from a radical
> critique of the 'reactionary idea of progress' I think we can
> see its most crass incarnation in socialism; finally, because
> I fear that its recent 'marxization' makes it the ultimate
> thought of order, the most fearful police of minds that the West
> has produced. Stalin was not only marxist, he was truly
> socialist. Solzhenitsyn does not only speak of the Gulag,
> but again of socialism. Here is an enigma it is useless to
> avoid (Le Monde 27th May '77).

Marxism has become rationality, and socialism has become rationality
embodied in the state. The Gulag is the logical consequence of marxist
premisses. Yet did not the Young Hegelians expect Reason to take the
throne, and were they not disappointed? The major step in this reduction
is the notion 'All is only discourse' Clavel, for example, tells us that
'...as Jambet and Lardreau say in L'Ange: in the end, there is no world,
but only discourse' (Clavel, interview in La Croix 11th June '76). The
real and history are only discourse.

The consequences of this step extend further than marxism. 'Desire,
history, and language are always already the nets of control for the
subject who expresses himself therein' (Enthoven's review of Levy, NO
16th May 77). Politics in any form then can only lead back to the same
slavery.

> To the extent that a project of revolt passes via discourse,
> it is the Master's discourse which will necessarily prolong
> it... To the extent that a project of revolt will touch on
> what is called power, the power it installs will lead back
> to the forms of mastery. That is, to the extent that
> revolutionaries project their dreams in the forms of this
> world, they will only ever produce imitations of revolution
> (Lévy, La folie-Maurice Clavel, NO 598, 29th April '76).

In this world, right is left. Lévy explains: 'Fascism did not come out
of the light... Reason is totalitarianism' (Le Matin 27th May '77); hence
'for us it's not a matter of defeating the right, because it's not certain
we want a master from the left' (Jambet and Lardreau, interview in Le
Magazine Littéraire 112, May '76). However, the left (or their former
selves) bear the brunt of the attack: 'Socialists? Impostors!' Lévy
declares (La folie-Maurice-Clavel), and Jambet and Lardreau explain:
'The left is no longer precisely political, it is enlisted in technocracy.
And the ultimate form of all that, the truth of the left, is, as Glucksmann
has seen, the Gulag Archipelago' (interview cit.).

*   *   *

There is no way out, not in this world. 'Clavel simply says it is necessary to despair of this world, effectively we must try to wager on another world; that if the Prince rules this world without division, we must escape it to thwart the Prince's schemes; that if there is no rebellion other than illusory in the order of the possible, then we must bet on the impossible to go beyond this illusion' (Lévy: La folie-Maurice-Clavel). Clavel concludes: 'The authors of L'Ange recognise, from their own experience and thought - both profound - that nothing in this world can change the order of the world, that subversion needs a point of attachment [that is] absolutely outside this world' (NO 594, 29th March '76). A pessimistic point of view indeed.

Not surprisingly, given this despair, the new philosophers turn to a series of personal solutions, becoming, as Lévy puts it, '...metaphysician, artist, moralist' (La barbarie à visage humaine). They represent a renewal of metaphysics. 'For the first time in a long while simple questions are being asked again, the questions of traditional metaphysics' (Lévy, radio interview La génération perdue). Lardreau states in L'Ange 'I speak here as a metaphysician'.

Dollé, speaking as a 'contemporary to genocides, death camps and torture raised into a system of government', turns to poetry. He concludes 'So I will take the 'Holzwege", the mountain paths which snake across the forests to the clearing. These are not •paths that lead nowhere•. These are the •pathways" of becoming. We are the ones to take them' (Le Monde 27th May '77). Nemo turns to the spiritual values of the 'God of Job'; Lardreau and Jambet to those of the 'Angel'; Lévy to pessimism and...the only tenable position for a pessimist philosophy is probably that of anarchism' (Lévy, Le Monde 27th May '77).

These themes are not new; the questions raised, and the authors turned to, recall, for instance, Camus, Popper and Guy Debord, as critics have pointed out. Nor is the handling of the themes particularly noteworthy or subtle. So the new philosophy is not new. But is it even philosophy, despite the appeal to a variety of 'classical' authors?

These 'metaphysicians, artists,moralists' draw their authority from a common disillusionment with May 1968, as former militants who have learnt a valuable lesson. It is from the failure of militancy that they derive the authority to reject the C.P., the maoists, the masses, the revolution and science. 'It's necessary to have contemplated the Master sufficiently long to be able to begin to think' (Lardreau and Jambet, Magazine Littéraire 112, May '76). So despite their rejection of this world the new philosophers speak, more than anything else, about what will happen if the Union of the left wins in March 1978, and the Communist Party comes to power.

The terms under discussion slide, as did those we considered above. For example, Jambet and Lardreau:

> What is the P.C.F.? A part of the State's apparatus, which may become the whole State apparatus. Whether the same 'class' domination is to continue through it, or whether it 'represents' another is of little importance... What is important, on the other hand, is that the P.C.F. carries within itself the possibility of a more constraining State apparatus than any known up to now in France: the very ideal of the modern State, in a sense, Marxism

precisely allows the removal of the contradictions to which
the bourgeoisie is subject, since the State is not owner of
the means of production. These contradictions allow interstices
which, however small, let the people breathe sometimes (Le
Monde 27th May '77).

The P.C.F. becomes a potential Gulag. There is no discussion of the
conditions specific to Russia, or to France. They are, strictly speaking,
irrelevant. Benoist states that it is the duty of philosophy to prevent
'a formerly critical thought, marxism, becoming a monopoly and State
religion, barbarous and more bloody than the Christianity of the Inquisition'
(Le Monde 3, 4th July '77). This is not argued, indeed it would be hard to
do so. Glucksmann plays the same game in a recent interview, proclaiming
the need for open discussion between the leaders of the left; 'if not, it's
the Kremlin, the wall of silence, hidden disagreements, palace intrigues,
the mysteries of Brezhnev illness and of his succession' (Le Matin 30th
Sept. '77). 'Communism' becomes a catch-all, a scare-word in a new cold
war, which matches the return to an 'end of ideology' very well.

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The authority of the individual to speak is matched by an individual vanity,
which not unexpectedly takes form in the new philosophers themselves
becoming dissidents. Sollers writes: 'It is the dissidence of our times,
and it is both old and new, like all resistance,to the Prince, who claims,
thanks to our resignation, to reign forever in this world' (Le Monde 13th
May '77). Lévy takes up the theme: 'You speak of "elections": it is
necessary to keep quiet because the hour of power approaches? You speak
of "rallying": I believe that the dignity of the intellectual is precisely
in never rallying' (Le Monde 27th May '77). Jambet and Lardreau become
rather distasteful.

> Does it take the left being sure of being master of our minds
> and bodies tomorrow for it to consider that to defend people
> against the powers is right-wing! We claim the right to laugh
> at the illusory threatre where the left and the right share out
> the roles between themselves..But, an old right-wing trick, they
> say! We must be of the right, for then, not only does no-one
> have to listen to us any longer, but they will know how to make
> us shut up. The Gulag - not material certainly, not yet, but
> spiritual - is already here (Le Monde 27th May '77).

It is from this spiritual Gulag that Lévy wrote his reply to his critics -
Réponse aux maîtres censeurs (NO 559, 27th June '77) - but how do you reply
to a censor? With the amount Lévy publishes, the irony is striking.

The new philosophers play a double game with their critics, which corresponds
to their two roles of metaphysician and dissident. Lévy's article (Reponse...)
illustrates it well, as does Benoist's defence of Lévy (Le Monde 3, 4th
July '77). On the other hand, Lévy suggests that no one has developed a
critique of the new philosophers' work, that all that is opposed to them
is polemic; on the other hand, he dismisses the claims of scholarship,
pleading the urgency of the case.

*   *   *

When we turn to the political positions these metaphysicians, artists and
moralists occupy, we find a complete spectrum. 'Glucksmann is encouraged
by signs of a growing archipelago of dissidents in France and elsewhere -
protestors against nuclear plants, operators of pirate radios, resurgent
minorities claiming more autonomy - all acting without the need for an
all-encompasing ideology' (Time 5th Sept. '77). Levy too speaks of the
'new resistants' - feminists, ecologists and minority groups - 'people
who depend not on ideology but on personal, moral power.' For Time
magazine Lévy chooses capitalism rather than socialism, but in France
votes socialist (Le Monde 27th May '77). Lardreau and Jambet align
themselves with 'the simple people, those without knowledge and without
power, the humiliated and the injured...' (Le Monde 27th May '77), whilst
Benoist places himself firmly in a gaullist tradition:

> It remains to be said that it will be in the country's interest
> that one day a collection of men from both (political) camps
> will govern, that they are made to link up - because their
> attachment to liberties, their vow to construct a France and a
> Europe independent of hegemonies, joins them beyond the night-
> mare of mutual excommunication   (Le Monde 27th May '77).

If the new philosophers' thought is empty of content (if not of vanity),
and they fill a conventional political spectrum from ecologist to Chirac-
style gaullism via socialism, what are we left with, other than the
publicity with which we started? The new philosophers are of no importance
in the political sphere, although Castioradis (NO 658, 20th June '77) points
out their function as a 'decoy', distracting from the real problems that
this election period holds. Certainly they may stop a number of important
questions being talked about simply by the way they have posed them.
Julliard (NO 656, 6th June '77) suggests that whilst the left is successful
electorally, it is increasingly in a state of crisis intellectually. The
new philsophers, indeed, might be seen as a symptom of the end of the
ambiguous relation between the intellectuals and a left in opposition - a
relation based on being morally right but politically powerless. But a
crisis in bad faith is scarcely a sufficient explanation.

                *   *   *

Let us return to our first impression, that the phenomenon is one of
publicity, and seek an explanation in the context of publicity and writing,
rather than politics. The new philosophy is the introduction of a new
process, that of 'intellectual marketing', to use Deleuze's term (G. Deleuze,
suppl. to Minuit 24, May '77; partly republished in Le Monde 19, 20th June
'77. What follows owes a lot to Deleuze's argument). Marketing, according
to Deleuze, has two principles. First, rather than a book having anything
to say, one must speak of it, and make it spoken about, At the limit, the
multitude of articles, interviews, broadcasts etc. could replace the book
altogether. This is why the books written by the new philosophers are,
in the end, unimportant. This is a striking change for the academic world.
It is an activity, Deleuze observes, which seems to be outside philosophy,
even to exclude it.

Second, from the point of view of marketing, the same book or product must
have several versions, to suit everyone. So we have pious, atheistic,
heideggerian, leftist, centrist, and chiraquian versions. Whence also the
distribution of roles according to taste - metaphysician, artist, moralist,
dissident. Here variety is no guarantee of difference; it is the label
'New philosophers' that is all-important.

The success now of this marketing is due to two factors, which wo mentionod at the start. The historical epoch 1968-78 we will come to in a moment. The other factor is a certain reversal in the relations between journalists and intellectuals, or between the press and the book.

We are in a period when journalism, together with the radio and television has become increasingly aware of its ability to create the 'event' - for example, by enquiries, polls, 'investigative journalism',controlled leaks, discussions - and so has become less dependent on analyses outside journalism, and has less need of people like intellectuals and writers. Journalism, indeed, has discovered an autonomous and self-sufficient thought within itself. That is why, at the extreme, a book is worth less than the article in a journal written about it, or the interview it gives rise to. Consequently, intellectuals and writers are having to conform to this new kind of 'short duration' thought, based on interviews, discussion and so on.

The relation of forces between journalists and intellectuals has then completely changed. One could imagine a book bearing on an article in a journal, and not the other way round. The new philosophy is very close to this. The magazine no longer has any need of the book. Interestingly, the central function of 'author', of 'personality', has moved to the journalist, and writers who still want to be 'authors' have to go through journalists, or, better, become their own journalists. It is this change that has made the enterprise of intellectual marketing possible.

The second factor is that France is in a long electoral period, and this acts as a grill, a value-giving system, that affects ways of understanding, and even of perceiving. All events and problems are hammered onto this grill. It is on this grill that the whole project of the new philosophers has been incribed from the beginning, and it explains why their project has succeeded now. Some of the new philosophers are against the Union of the left, others hope to provide a brains trust for Mitterand, as we have seen. What they all have to sell, which produces a homogenization of the two tendencies, is a hatred of '68. Whatever their attitude to the election, they declare that the Revolution is impossible, uniformly and for all time. That is why all the concepts which began by functioning in a very differentiated fashion (powers, resistances, desires, even the 'pleb') are made global, reunited in a series of empty unities - Power, the Law, the State, the Master, the Prince etc..

That is also why the thinking subject, or vain subject, can reappear on the scene, the correlate of the meaninglessness of the concepts, for the only possibility of Revolution for the new philosophers is in the pure act of the thinker who thinks the impossible. Along with this function of author returns the function of witness: hence the martyrology of the Gulag and the victims of history.

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The new philosophers, by recreating the 'author' function, the creative subject, are thoroughly reactionary in a wide rather than a political sense: the negation both of any politics and of any experimentation. New, certainly, but utterly conformist. Their work represents the submission of any thought to the media - and to the worst side of the media at that; any intellectual caution is forsaken and the media define all criteria.

The English-speaking reactionary press has taken to the new philosophers then, for they are extremely modern. It is this that makes them so acceptable to America, rather than simply their anti-marxism. Time magazine states 'These young intellectuals are on the same wave-length as many people'in the U.S., Jimmy Carter, Jerry Brown, Carlos Castaneda and a host of anti-war and civil rights activists'. American publishers are reported to be fighting over translation rights (NO 669). It is scarcely surprising.

Tim Jenkins

NOTES

1. This article was written in September this year in Paris, where Tim Jenkins has been resident for the past nine months. Translations from the French are the author's thoughout. (Eds.).

LAWS AND FLAWS IN THE CONSTITUTION OF

THE ICELANDIC FREESTATE

This paper deals with a society of the Middle Ages. It is an anthropological analysis of the constituent elements that built up this society and defined it as politically autonomous and culturally unique. The paper is also an attempt to explain why this social formation could not persist, by exposing its inherent structural weaknesses.

The point is that from the very settlement of Iceland, at least two sets of contradictions were latent in the social system, but it was only as time passed and certain external and internal pressures increased that these contradictions and their mutual interaction became fatal to the Freestate. One contradiction was primarily related to a pattern of action and consisted in the opposition between self-help and law. Another was primarily a matter of thought-systems and related to the distinction between Christianity and paganism. When the state came into being these oppositions did not interfere with one another, but they soon collided and the resulting social and conceptual conflicts undermined the autonomy of the state from within, so to speak, and laid it open to the intrusion of a foreign colonial power.

The actual course of the argument is as follows: first, we make a short excursion into the historical origin of the Icelandic Freestate, and then proceed to an outline of the actual formation of the state. Subsequently we describe the major points in the development of the law, which is seen to be a dominant category in the defining parameters that enclosed the reality of the state. Finally we give a short account of the decline and fall of the Freestate, and conclude with some remarks of a more general nature.

Historical origin.

Iceland was first discovered by Irish hermits in the eighth century, as far as is known from archaeological and contemporary literary evidence. Apart from the evidence of archaeology and place names, it is difficult to tell how important the Celtic element became to Icelandic society, through the monks and through Celtic slaves captured by the Norsemen. The majority of the monks left Iceland to escape the heathen Norsemen, just as many Norsemen had left the Nordic countries to escape a spreading Christianity. In such movements we can see the conflict between Christianity and more traditional world-views that loomed large in Europe in the middle-ages, and that posed, in Iceland, a latent cultural dilemma, marking the rise and fall of the Freestate and impinging itself upon the social lives of the Icelanders for centuries. The dilemma was not solved, but rather deepened, by the official legislative introduction of Christianity in the year 1000.[1]

Even as late as 1527 we find an example of the deep-rootedness of this opposition: the two bishops (and they were the last Catholic ones) could not reach an agreement upon a certain point and they agreed to let it be decided finally by single combat (holmgang), which is a heathen practice par excellence. Even though the bishops took care to let the actual fight be conducted by substitutes, the fact remains that the highest religious office-holders had to resort to a heathen practice, which had officially been abandoned in 1006. Although clearly illegal, their action still had a kind of legitimacy when need arose. When

other legal means failed holmgang was institutionalized as the means
of laying the solution in the hands of the pagan gods that gave people
their strength.

In this small case, we have also an example of the other inherent
contradiction in Icelandic society, that between self-help and law, of
which further evidence will be given later. At this point I will
confine myself to a warning against taking paganism as a representative
of anti-law, and Christianity as law in any general sense. This would
be wrong, and distorting to the argument.

The Norsemen came to Iceland in the 860's, originally by chance en
route for the previously discovered Faroe Islands, and then, in the
voyage of the Norwegian viking Floki, with the intention of establishing
a settlement. Floki only stayed for one winter, and left discouraged
by the severity of the climate, naming the land Iceland in recollection
of his troubles. After this the first true settlers arrived, and the
time of the landtakings began. The settlement is described in the
Land namabok, the book of the landtakings, which is one of the oldest
documents from this early period. There were definite rules as to how
much land could be claimed by each settler, with both men and women,
providing they were free born, having the right to do so. Men, however,
could claim as much land as they could go around on horseback in a day,
while women could only claim as much as they could drive a heifer around
in the same time.

The motives of the Norse aristocracy for settling in Iceland were
various, but prominent among them was a desire to escape the growing
authority of the Norwegian monarchy. First among the settlers was
Ingolf, who settled where Reykjavik is today. The time of the land-
takings is normally considered to be the period from 860 till 930, when
the Althing came into being.

The formation of the state.

The prime marker of the Freestate is the Althing. It is not only the
political event which made it a state, it also forms a prime symbol of
cultural identification, the potency of which can hardly be overestimated.
The constitution of the Althing is, then, both an event and an ideological
charter, and this dual character corresponds to the ambiguity inherent
in the concept of the 'formation of the state'. In the following pages
we shall explore these two issues, broadly described as concerning events
and structural relationships respectively. The interrelationship of these
elements is crucial to the argument throughout the paper.

When the settlers first came to Iceland, they were primarily defined
by their home of origin. From the literature, - the historical documents
as well as the sagas - we know how important it was to establish personal
identities by recording both the genealogical and geographical origin
of the man or woman concerned. We may surmise that this concern with
origin for the first generations of immigrants resulted in a pattern of
fragmentation as a charter for conceiving of Iceland, but there was
also a certain unifying principle in the fact that the settlers, or most
of them, shared a set of religious categories derived from a common
Scandinavian paganism.

An important set of symbols deriving from this is found in the temples
that were established throughout Iceland. The temples were all built
as a result of private initiative and for private means, and obviously
only the wealthier among the immigrants could afford this. Wealth was

a prerequisite, not only for the actual building of the temple, but also because the founders automatically became temple-priests and needed a continuing income for celebrating the religious feasts. On the other hand there was a kind of tax to be paid by the less wealthy people who attended the temple. As a consequence of this pattern of religious adherence the people were divided into two categories: first, the religious leaders, the godar, and second, a group of followers, connected to the leaders by bonds of religious and economic interest. These bonds created political units, defined not by borders but by centres.

The godar soon became pivotal to the social life in general, and while the religious institution upon which their power was based was in one sense an expression on the ideological level of a shared and unifying principle, it soon became a further means of fragmentation, because each of the godar and the units they represented were small kingdoms of their own, and conflicts between them resulted in frequent fights between the congregations. As there were no boundaries, there was also a latent power-game between the godar, who wanted to attract as many followers as possible, since the outcome of conflicts was to a large extent dependent on the number of armed men that belonged to the unit.

This situation was untenable. The settlers who had come to Iceland to escape fighting in their homeland soon found themselves engaged in permanent struggles with their next-door neighbours. It was decided, then, to establish a set of laws applying all over Iceland to put an end once and for all to the expedient of taking the law into one's own hands. It is not clear who actually took the initiative, but apparently it was a kind of collective demand, and the thoroughness and care involved in the project leaves no doubt as to the long-term policy which it expressed.

A man by the name of Ulfljotr was appointed legal comissioner and, as such, he spent three years in his native country of Norway, where he studied the Gulathinglaw, and consulted with the legal experts there. Ulfljotr returned with the first Icelandic constitution, often named the 'law of Ulfljotr', of which the most important element was the institution of the Althing, or general assembly.

Before the Althing could start work, the Icelanders had to decide on a convenient locality for its annual meetings, and to this end the foster-brother of Ulfljotr, Grim Geitsko, was sent travelling around the island to explore the possibilities. After three years he chose a certain place within the boundaries of the original landnam of Ingolf, later named as the plain of Thingvellir[2]. It was indeed an appropriate choice: favoured by history as the land of the first settler, and extremely favoured by geography in its topographical features, being a sunken plain, enclosed by steep mountain slopes, and entered through gorges. Furthermore it was enriched by a running river that meant grass for the horses, and in it an islet (a holmr) fit for single combat. History and topography thus favoured the choice but contingency also played a part. For a certain period, the land in question had been owned by a man who had murdered a freed slave. The slave's name, Col, survives in the place name of Colsgjá - Col's gorge - which according to the legend was where his body was first found. For this deed the landowner was outlawed by the community, and his land became common property, since the slave had no free relations who could inherit it (cf. Kålund 1877:94). In this social contingency we can detect a strong symbol of the Althing: lawlessness turned into law, self-help subordinated to common judgement. As we shall see later, the contradictions inherent in this were not solved by the constitution of the Althing, but for

the moment and as the constitutive event in the history of the Icelandic
Freestate, the emergence of the Althing in 930 A.D. is of singular
importance.

According to the constitution the island,   that from now on
we may call a country or nation, was to be divided into 12 Thinglag,
each consisting of three godidoms or temple units. The priests
attached to the chosen temples were to be chief-godar, and, by
contrast to the original godar, the three chief-godar of each thinglag
were to be given clearly defined political rights and obligations. One
particular obligation involved presiding over a Spring Thing and a Harvest
Thing to take place 8 weeks before the Althing and 'not later than 8
weeks before winter', respectively. At the Spring Thing, a court was
settled to deal with law suits of various kinds. The court consisted
of 36 members, appointed by the three chief-godar of the thinglag,
12 by each. The Harvest Thing appears to have had a less formal
character, since no courts were established here. Hence, no law suits
could be dealt with, and on the whole the main function of the Harvest
Thing seems to have been to provide a setting where the news from the
latest Althing could be spread among the inhabitants of the thinglag.

Supreme to the twelve thinglag and the Spring Things was the Althing,
which was to be held every year at midsummer. The three godar were
under obligation to go there, and with them every ninth farmer of each of
the three godi-doms. The remaining farmers (still counted among the
wealthy ones) were to contribute a certain fee for the journey of the
group. In this way the obligations were spread out in a relatively
just manner, and, in theory at least, it was only once in every nine
years that a man had to go to Althing, apart from the godi who had to
go every year. From the literature we know, however, that in certain
circumstances the godi might ask more thing-men to go with him than
he was entitled to. Despite the law, it was still looked upon as an
advantage to be able to back specific claims by force.

Clearly the chief-godar were now conceived of as representatives
of larger units, but they were also still their own masters,and - since
the godi-doms were still defined by centres and not boundaries - any
farmer or peasant could change his affiliation with the godi, as he
wished, though only once a year. In this way it was possible for a godi
to attract a larger number of thing-men than his fellow godar and since
the godar could claim no more than every ninth of the farmers of his unit
to go with him to the Althing, the relative importance of any single godi
could easily be seen from the number of his followers at the Althing.

The institution of the Althing comprised two main bodies, a
legislature and a judiciary. In this the Icelandic constitution was
unique both in relation to the Norwegian law upon which it was modelled,
and in relation to the law in general in Medieval Europe. The refinement
of the law to this degree is a matter of specific Icelandic achievement,
and the singularity of the Icelandic Freestate was partly defined by the
uniqueness of its law.

The judicial power was in the hands of 36 men, appointed by the
36 chief-godar. They were to deal with the lawsuits which it was not
possible to settle at the Spring Thing. The legislative power, on the
other hand, was solely in the hands of the Althing, or rather of the
Logretta, the institution which was responsible for the making and
refining of the laws. The Logretta consisted of the 36 chief-godar
themselves and a chairman appointed by them, usually chosen from thier
own number. The chairman was called the Law-speaker, because he had to

declare the laws from the lawmountain; but also in another respect he
was indeed the speaker of the law, having to memorise the laws over the
years, since they were not written down until 1117. It goes without
saying that the Law-speaker gave his personal imprint to the laws,
even though he was only considered to be repeating them. The
Logretta not only had to do the legislative work, it also had to
administer certain grants, dispensations and, apparently, clemencies
for convicts sentenced by the judicial authority. No matter what the
case, the decision made by the Logretta, as well as by the court, had
to be unanimous to be valid.

The division of state functions into legislative and judicial power
was, indeed, a political achievement without parallel in contemporary
Europe. However, once the power had been split up and was no longer
encompassed by a single structure, the very bounding of the discrete
domains left one domain completely absent - that of the executive. It
was left to the plaintiffs themselves to execute the verdicts, and in this
sense the very opposition between self-help and law was built into the
law itself. No sentence could be enforced unless it could be backed by
some kind of physical force. If a certain godi was sentenced to pay,
say, blood money to the kin of a victim of his, he could in fact choose
not to do so if he was powerful enough. In the beginning the anarchical
tendencies inherent in this were not directly disruptive to the society,
since a man was always subject to common judgement also, and the power
of any godi was still dependent on his ability to attract followers.
These might well choose to leave him if they found his behaviour too
much in conflict with common values.

This short outline of the first constitution of the Icelandic
Freestate gives rise to the question of whether it was a state, properly
speaking. This matter of terminology is really of secondary importance,
however, for what stands out is a well-defined political system which
forms a coherent whole and which acts and reacts within a specific
environment. The Freestate, through its institutions, set a frame for
conceiving of the collectivity as a unit in opposition to other units
of the same logical type. It was a self-contained political system,
whose prime symbol and political centre was the Althing.

The Althing was the centre of the state in many ways. We have
already discussed it as a political centre, whose creation was the
constitutive event in the history of the Freestate. Socially, however,
it was also the definite focus of the community that once a year found
itself attracted to the Althing, which then was the nation for a couple
of weeks. In general terms, the Althing was on top of the hierarchy
of political institutions. From the moment of the political event that
made the Althing emerge, the people of Iceland were no longer just
Norwegians once or twice removed, they were Icelanders.

From the viewpoint of information theory, the Althing was
certainly also the centre of information, and as such it represented
the main cohesive factor in the society, when loosely employing the
terms of argument advanced by Deutsch (1966). From the literature,
whether 'true' historical documents or not, we know that the informative
element of the Things was very important on many levels. We also know
that the true culture heroes of the Freestate were the men who knew how
to use the information available at the Althing. First, of course,
among the loci of information was the office of the Lawspeaker, who
theoretically might have been the only one who knew the laws in their
entirety. But the laws did not constitute the only relevant body of
information. There was also much personal, social, economic and

political information to be gathered from the structure and events of the Althing. 'Leaders' were the men (and sometimes women) capable of manipulating the symbols that were created at the emergence of the Freestate, by using the information on various levels and tying it down to a more fundamental ideological charter so that their manipulations seemed 'right'. Symbols are means of communication, and to communicate the specific Icelandic reality a new set of symbols was created simultaneously with the political institutions, and corresponding to these. This then was the basis of the Icelandic autonomy: a particular way of treating information through a whole set of self-referring symbols (cf. Deutsch 1966:214-15). Again the Althing was the most inclusive symbol in a hierarchy of symbols. It was a dominant symbol, to use the terms of Turner (1964), and in this sense the national ideology was vested in the Althing.

We are now employing the term ideology as a deep-structural fact. It is here conceived of as a p-structure[3] for cultural identification, seen as a continuous process of self-definition, expressed in a variety of s-structures. In this sense the notion of cultural identification is closely linked to the concept of ethnicity as understood by Ardener (1972). And this is where the actual label-state, nation or whatever- we choose to attach to the Icelandic Freestate becomes of minor importance. What matters is that Iceland was a self-defining unit, from the very moment of its first constitution, the law of Úlfljótr. It was a definition-space (cf. Ardener 1975), where geographical, historical, political and social parameters encompassed a specific Icelandic Reality.

Later developments of the law.

As we now take the point of view that the Althing, and the law connected with it, was the dominant element in the Icelandic Freestate, the later developments of this law will now be outlined in brief. Through this procedure we may gain some insight into the structural weaknesses of the constitution, weaknesses that were later to lead to its fall. The constitution of Úlfljótr remained unchanged for some thirty years only, till 963, when a chief-godi from the Westlands, named Tord Gelle, suggested a new law, or rather, as it turned out, a new constitution. The change was advocated mainly with a view to the difficulties in dealing with cases of murder within the framework of the old law, but it also radically affected the composition of the total set of constitutive laws. This indicates that killing was a main source of disintegration, not only of the small local communities but of the society at large.

According to the old legal rules, homicide was always a matter to be dealt with, in the first place, by the Spring Thing. It had also to be the particular Spring Thing out of the 12 Spring Things of the country that was closest to the scene of the crime. The reason for this practice was that proximity would facilitate obtaining the truth from witnesses and others able to give information. But as Gelle himself had experienced, this procedure, although possibly true in an ideal world, had some unintended and unpleasant consequences in the real world. The plaintiff of a foreign thinglag did not have a fair chance of getting justice if the defendant was powerful within his own thinglag. Once more we get an impression of the anarchical tendencies that were from the outset part of the law, and we see the contradiction between self-help and law forcefully expressed in cases of killing and subsequent actions, legal and otherwise.

Gelle's suggested solution to this, one which was agreed upon by

the Logretta and hence acknowledged as a new defining parameter of the state, was firstly that the Freestate should be subdivided into Four Quarters, with specified geographical boundaries. Each Quarter was divided into three thinglag with the exception of the Northern Quarter which, because of its peculiar topographical features, claimed four. Moreover, now that the principle of bounding had been introduced through the division of the country into Quarters the thinglag also tended to become established with fixed boundaries. Since the number of godar was now 39 instead of the original 36, due to the establishment of a fourth thinglag in the Northern quarter, the Icelanders were threatened with a breach of the duodecimal system to which they felt committed through their cultural heritage. They solved this by restricting the Northern Quarter to only 9 members at the court, regardless of the presence of 12 godar each entitled to elect a representative. In the case of the Logretta, of which all the godar had to be members, the problem was solved by raising the number of members to 48 instead of the original 36, allowing a further three members each to the Southern, Western and Eastern Quarters.

The new institution of the Quarter Thing did not exist for long, but the principle was maintained through a division of the Althing into Quarter Things. The intermediary level of the Quarter Thing was maintained in all lawsuits, although it did not take place at a specific time and locality outside the Althing. The Quarter Courts, subordinate to the Althing in respect of time and space as well as in judicial practice, were to consist of 9 members, precisely one quarter of the 36 members of the Althing court. The importance of unanimity of decision, enshrined in the first constitution, was slackened in the case of the Quarter court, since it was decided that six out of the nine members could pass valid judgement.

We might summarize the new elements in the Icelandic constitution as follows: The country was divided into four Quarters, and this introduced a principle of boundaries where a principle of centres had been prevalent before. Due to this principle the Quarter Thing could persist as an institution even when transposed to the plain of the Althing. The Quarter Thing was not defined as a centre in the same way as the Spring Thing had been. One consequence of this, or maybe even the reason for the introduction of this new principle, was that at the level of the Quarter Thing it was no longer the principle of most power to the fittest that reigned supreme, but a principle of some kind of equal representation irrespective of the number of armed men that could be mobilised by each godi. The new legal practices were manifestations of changes in the conception of law, and its relation to the ever more frequent conflicts. It probably does not, however, reflect any fundamental change in the structural relationships that constitute the ideological charter behind the law, since it was still a matter of adjustment, not real transformation. The contradictions persisted in the structure of the law, although a more elaborate legal practice may have made it easier to cope with specific events, at least for a time.

At the beginning of this paper we mentioned two sets of contradiction that seem to have been operative in the Freestate. One of these was a matter of action, consisting in the contradiction between self-help and law; when the first Icelandic constitution was established (Ulfljotr's law) we saw how this contradiction was maintained through the failure to institutionalize an executive power alongside the judicial and the legislative power. Gelle's law, originally conceived to cope with homicide, exposes the same inherent weakness: it introduced an intermediate level

of judicial power, but no executive one. It was still left to the parties
concerned to execute the sentences between themselves. In 1004 a third
law (Nial's law[4]) was introduced, which introduced the principle of
majority in the final decision where previously the principle of
unanimity had been unquestioned - a recognition that justice might indeed
be ambiguous.

Before proceeding any further, we must note that Christianity had
been accepted as the state religion in the year 1000. Any belief that
this formal introduction of a new religion would terminate the conflicts
that arose out of this ideological discrepancy was doomed to disappointment.
The adoption of Christianity was, in fact, a major display of the art of
compromise, but even though it was very skilfully undertaken by the
political personalities involved, the compromise turned out unsatisfactorily
for both parties, as ever. We cannot here go into details about the
chain of events which eventually led to the adoption of Christianity,
involving as it did all the ingredients of a political drama, including
the taking of hostages by the Norwegian King. The case was brought
before the Althing in the year 1000. At a certain point it looked as if
no compromise was possible, the Christians and the heathens being opposed
to each other to the point at which the state was splitting into two. In
fact, the two parties were convinced that no solution was possible, and
two Lawspeakers were appointed by the two parties, to represent and
reproduce the two divergent sets of laws that were to obtain in Iceland.
The outcome of this would have been two states with distinctive laws and
with distinctive heads, the two Lawspeakers, but without distinctive
boundaries. This solution seemed untenable, however; the ideological
'either/or' would have reflected only the views of the extremists on both
sides and would, in any case, have threatened the unity upon which the
nation was founded. As it happened, however, the 'both/and' solution,
which was the final outcome of the dramatic incidents at the Althing of
that year, threw the autonomy of the Freestate into jeopardy, though perhaps
in a more subtle way. What happened was that the Lawspeaker appointed by
the Christians negotiated with the Lawspeaker elected by the Heathens, and
they reached an agreement that the latter was to make a compromise, since
none of them liked the idea of creating two states within the same
boundaries. The mediator, Thorgeirr, then had to produce a solution
that would satisfy both parties, and considering the degree of excitement
that prevailed at the meeting, and the amount of violence already involved,
it was no easy task for him. Strangely enough he did succeed. From the
sources we know that he first convinced the people that splitting the
state into two would be disastrous. Then he suggested that Christianity
should be generally accepted with only one or two exceptions: the
practices of exposing newborn babies and of eating horsemeat should be
allowed; sacrificing to heathen gods was also permissable, provided it
was not witnessed by anyone prepared to testify in court.

In this extraordinary way the ideological contradiction between the
two systems of thought was finally acknowledged as part of the Icelandic
reality, but this did not put an end to the conflicts that arose from
it. On the contrary, the cases of conflict seemed to increase. This
was also partly the outcome of certain demographic and economic features
in the country. The population had increased rapidly over the years and
was now nearing a maximum, given the amount of land available. The whole
of the island was now under plough. In fact, in the period of the
Freestate, much more of the land was under cultivation than later on.
Even today the land is not exploited to the same extent as it was in the
Freestate. In later periods people tended to keep closer to the coastal
area instead of fighting the hard winters of the central lands. Because

of the increase in population and the increase in amount of land under
plough more and more wealthy men were without formal political influence.
This seemed so much more unjust because they were defined as Icelanders,
and owed their position to their work within this society, whereas the
earlier office holders who were still reigning were originally defined
by their social origin and rank in Norway. In addition the political
offices were originally heathen offices (the godar) and this now seemed
somewhat inappropriate to many. Hence the social conflicts seemed to
result from more deep-rooted problems than was realised before, and as
a result of this a new legal institution came into being.

The invention was the Fifth Court, created in 1004. It was a kind
of supreme court to which were deferred such cases as could not be
unanimously decided upon by the Quarter Courts. The Fifth Court
consisted of 48 members but only 36 were to take part in the verdicts of
specific cases. To bring the number up to 48, another 12 godi-doms were
created, and the new godar were to elect 12 members of the Fifth Court,
while the old godar were to appoint the same number of men as they
did to the other courts, namely 36. This meant that some of the new
godar obtained an office, which distributed the power among more people.
Even more significant was the decision that still only 36 were to take part
in the voting in specific cases. It was decided that each party,
plaintiff and accused alike, should have the right, and indeed the
obligation, to exclude 6 members from the assembly. In that way the
persons most involved could always be excluded from the final decision,
an acknowledgement of some kind of conflict between private and public
interests that had hitherto been negated ideologically. Also, it was
decided that the decision of the Fifth Court should be valid if held
by a simple majority of its members. The law now overtly points to
the latent conflicts within the society, and it is admitted that there
can be no single justice.

As for the Logretta, the newly appointed godar were not to be
members, as the old godar automatically were. Hence, the legislative
power was still in the hands of the office-holders who had obtained their
office through ascription (the offices were normally inherited from
father to son), while the judicial power was delegated to men who had
obtained office by personal achievement (the 12 new godar were elected
from among influential and wealthy men who were renowned for political
skill). This difference between legislative and judicial power points
to a conception of the law as by definition anchored in tradition,
whereas judgement must be a more pragmatic device for dealing with cases
of conflicting interests. This point is worth noting because it
illustrates the idea held by Crick (1976) that any legal system is
characterised by a dual dimensionality: it consists of a primary set of
rules that relates to different types of actions and deals with particular
events, and a secondary set of rules that belongs to a different
logical type and concerns questions of precedent, interpretation and
changes in the law (Crick 1976:99). In terms of levels, the first set
of rules expresses a deep-structural, generative and semantic relationship.
In these terms, we find the judicial power in the Freestate to be
mainly administering the first set of rules, while the legislative power,
the Logretta, is a prominent expression of the second set of rules.

The Logretta did not remain totally unchanged, however, since a
principle of advisers was introduced. Each godi was given the right
to bring with him two advisers, so that the number of men partaking in
the sessions of the Logretta now amounted to 144, 48 original members
and 96 by-sitters. But it was still only the original 48 members who
had franchise, and even though some authors want to see in this the

principle of democracy finally entering the Icelandic constitution
(e.g. Gudmundson: 1924), that would still be far too generous a
conclusion. The power was still exclusively in the hands of a few
wealthy people, and all the common people were at the mercy of the big
land-owners, as they had always been. When the last major change in
the Icelandic law took place the total population was about 75,000
people, which is no small number compared to the 200,000 inhabitants
of Denmark at the time. Even though the members of the Althing were
in a sense elected as representatives, it was still only the interests
of a certain class that were directly represented.

After this only one more change in the legal system remains to be
mentioned, the recruitment of the bishops as members by ascription of
the Althing when the two dioceses were established in 1056 in 1106,
respectively. This was no major change in the constitution, but can be
seen as the last of a series of events, generated by the structural
contradiction between two sets of ideological relationships, leading
finally to the fall of the Freestate. Also we should note that the
practice of holmgang was finally forbidden in 1006. Until then
holmgang had, in fact, fulfilled the function of a supreme court and
had been a legitimate way of deciding the cases that the Quarter Thing
could not decide unanimously. But whereas with holmgang the supremacy
derived from the pagan gods, the Fifth Court was decidedly human.
holmgang was considered superfluous after the establishment of the
Fifth Court, but as we know, the practice continued for many hundred
years.

The laws were first put into writing in 1117-18 and from then on
it became apparent that there was inconsistency in their interpretation.
We know from later sources that many versions of the law existed, and
even though this is a feature of a state in a steady process of
disintegration, we may also see it as an expression of the inherent
contradictions that had had other reflections in the society before
their written codification. Obviously, when the rendering of the laws
had been solely a matter of the memory of one man, the Lawspeaker, and
the recollection of his annual speech at the law-mountain by a number of
godar with thier own interests to defend, there must have been wide
variations in the actual legal practice from one Spring Thing to the
next as well as from case to case within the same Thing. The principle
of unity could still be maintained in theory, but once the laws had
been written down, and the discrepancies were there for all to read,
the belief in a common practice and one supreme justice received a
severe blow. Before, the reality had been characterised by a unified
ideal view and a diversified practice, but now the situation was wholly
fragmented. Even the basic legal rules became a matter of personal
interests, since interpretation was obviously a matter of choice. In
the existing balance of power the emphasis was now on power, where
previously balance had been stressed.

The law as a dominant conceptual category.

We have referred to a conception of law as basically consisting of two
sets of rules relating to two different levels of reality, and referring
to two different logical types. We shall now elaborate this point, with
an eye to the effects of law in other parts of the social setting. By
way of introducing the matter we shall start inquiring into the
reverse of law - lawlessness.

Lawlessness obtains at two levels, as does law. First, at the

level of the social surface, it refers to the actions that are considered
illegal by common standards. These are acts that are met with negative
sanctions, or general moral condemnations. With elaboration of the laws
and the enforcing of common standards, law-breaking becomes increasingly
common as a matter of definition. In that sense the process of
elaborating on the laws points to an increasing lawlessness in a double
fashion, and the whole process becomes one of self-reinforcement, while
the basic contradictions remain unsolved. The strongest possible negative
sanction on behalf of the community was outlawing, which was usually
done in serious cases of murder[5]. The outlawed person lost all civil
rights, all property, and could be killed by anybody. A slightly
milder form of outlawing was expatriation. Even though outlawing and
expatriation in effect seemed much the same for the convicts, the two
practices entailed different conceptual connotations, outlawing being
based upon a stronger feeling of cultural defence than expatiation,
which latter was largely a matter of protecting personal and social
interests. Those of the expatriated who either did not leave the
country or came back while they were still under sentence of expat-
riation[6], and the outlaws who managed to save themselves by fleeing to
uninhabited places, were collectively labelled 'outlying men' (udliggermand),
and as time went on the category came to include runaway slaves and
various kinds of supernatural beings, trolls, elves, etc. This
category looms large in folk tales of a slightly more recent date
(cf. e.g. Jørgensen 1924), as well as in the contemporary writings. In
the old days, the main load of the semantic category of 'outlyers' seems
to have been one of real persons.

However this may be, the emerging category of lawlessness by itself
points to the existence of the deeper of the two levels of law. That
the possibility of outlawing people existed at all indicates that there
was a strong feeling of the law as providing a basic charter for con-
ceiving of the society. We see, therefore, that law and non-law alike
contain elements at two levels.

In the present context it is worth noting that the category of
lawlessness came to be associated with a particular region, later named
Udadslavamarken ('the lava field of misdeeds'). This is a rather large
area of wasteland in 'the middle of the island', which belongs neither
to one nor to the other Quarter, but lies on the borders of the Northern,
Southern and Eastern Quarters. Strictly speaking Udadslavamarken might
be placed within the thought-of boundaries of the Northern Quarter, but
as it was merely wasteland the boundaries were never sharply drawn.
The outlaws could find some kind of refuge there because they were left
alone. Of course it was difficult to survive on wasteland without any
livestock, but there seem to have been tracts of less arid land in which
they could live, and according to the literature, whether sagas or
folk-tales, there was quite a community of outlaws. This may have been
a product of imagination, since many outlaws seem to have found refuge
with distant relatives, or with friends. They could do this and remain
safe, as long as they were not discovered. Due to the difficulties of
communication in those days the odds were not so bad as they would now
seem. But socially, at least, they did disappear, and it was said
of them that they lived in the lava field of misdeeds. In this way, the
'wild' of the Icelanders became a matter of spatial specificity, just as
'lawlessness' is a well-bounded conceptual category. The 'wild' is
essentially anti-social and when it merges with the supernatural in the
shape of all those uncontrolled spirits and trolls (opposed to the pagan
and Christian pantheons alike) we get an impression of a powerful symbol
of the non-cultural which by mere opposition acted as a defining parameter

in the Icelandic definition-space.

If the absolute centre of this definition-space is the Althing, we find in the Udadslavamark a kind of anti-centre, where all the evil and disintegrative forces are located. In this way 'law' becomes opposed to the 'wild', as society to non-society, and this is the major evidence for the law being a dominant category in the self-definition or cultural identification of the Icelanders.

In another way, too, the law is reflected in the spatial organization of Iceland. Where the picture of centre/anti-centre is mainly related to the basic semantic category of law, the spatial reflections which we are now to point out relate to the law in a slightly different way, being mainly an expression of the organization of the legal institutions. Haugen (1969) has analyzed the use of the directional terms east, west and so on, and found that they are not mere reflections of the directions as defined by the compass. We shall not repeat his analysis here but point to the fact that the directional terms are used as reflections of the Quarters. This tendency is sufficiently clear to allow us to maintain that the division of the country into Quarters had far reaching implications for the conception of space of ordinary people. In this sense the Althing may been seen as a kind of micro-cosmos, reflecting the larger country.

Significant in the organization of the Althing, too, was the relationship between the place of the old law-mountain, and the oxararholmr where holmgang took place. It is tempting to see here a parallel to the centre/anti-centre relationship that seems to have obtained for Iceland as a whole, expressed in the relationship between the Althing and the field of misdeeds. Of course, the topographical features of the plain of Thingvellir were given by nature at least in rough outline (though apparently the river was artificially led through at a place where it had not been originally, according to Jønsson (1922:8)), but it is certain that one reason for choosing this plain in the first place was that it displayed an extraordinary fitness with the cultural models in force. Even though the basic features of space are given by nature, once it is used by man it becomes loaded with culture and the 'semantics of space' becomes an object of social anthropology.

In respect of the division of time, the law also enters as a dominant category, in that the Icelanders always conceived of the years as 'winters', that is the period in between two sessions at the Althing. This may also be related to the practice of using the moon instead of the sun as basic time-divider (cf. Gudmundson 1924:88-89). Clearly, the law was reflected in many social and cultural categories, and was indeed a dominant conceptual category within the Icelandic Freestate.

The Fall of the Freestate.
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As already indicated, despite a steady process of refinement, general respect for the law seemed to decline considerably as time went by. In the second half of the twelfth century the dissolution reached a point of no return. The disintegrative forces were internally of two kinds, and there was an increasing pressure on the state from external systems. We shall briefly explore these sets of disintegrative factors, starting with the internal ones.

From the outset we can loosely divide the internal problems in two:

first, there was the contradiction between the Church and the trad-
itional chiefs, and the gradual out-weighing of the latter by the former;
second, there was continuous strife between the chiefs themselves,
a veritable power-game between particular kin-groups which was partly a
reaction to the increasing power of the Church. First of all the bishops
became members of the Althing, thereby driving a wedge into a system
which was at least theoretically in balance. Through this wedge, the
Church gradually gained more and more influence by constantly putting
traditional values under question. In the beginning the bishops seem
to have held back, but as time went by they could no longer passively
watch the moral deficiencies of their fellow-Icelanders, and they
started to condemn certain practices. First among the deeds now
banned by the Church was the frequent practice of taking mistresses
or 'wives to the left hand'. From unions of this kind a considerable
number of illegitimate children were produced and there was no social
stigma attached to the fact of being born out of wedlock. Illegitimate
children were full members of the household, and even in cases where
the mother was a slave, a child received full membership of the paternal
household and was considered to be equal to legitimate children. They
were not 'the same' however, because they were distinguished by the
fact of having different mothers. We know for instance from Nial's
saga that among the sons of Nial was one who was born of Nial's
mistress, a thrall-woman, but in every case which later on involved the
sons of Nial, he was in a sense first among the brothers. Furthermore,
there appears to have been a very harmonic relationship between the wife
and the mistress in this particular case, and from this saga, as well
as from other evidence, we get an impression of a totally unproblematic
social practice. Even the christened _godar_ took advantage of this
'right', which suddenly became one of the main targets for the priests.
We should note here that once Christianity had been introduced priestly
services gradually bacame a function of religious specialists, where
they had formerly been in the hands of the _godar_, who also held the
political power. The priests now bacame more and more numerous, and as
they took over the religious functions, one cornerstone of the power
of the _godar_ disappeared and a split between religious and secular affairs
was introduced. This split, which had in some sense already been a
latent contradiction, now became a direct source of conflict because
it received a very tangible expression: there were now two groups of
people that could actually fight each other. The very fact of the
increasing intrusion of the church in the affairs of the _godar_ led to
considerable strain between the two groups, and this in turn induced the
second set of internal problems that eventually led to the fall of the
Freestate.

This second factor in the disintegrative process is found in the
increasing frequency of fights between the _godar_ themselves. They
fought mainly to gain absolute power within a region, and once more we
can blame the law itself for making it possible at all to concentrate
the power in a few hands. From the beginning the _godi_-offices had
been subject to inheritance, but as a democratic principle it had
always been possible to achieve a _godi_-office by different means,
whether by being appointed as the successor of a particular man without
appropriate heirs, or simply by buying it. Now the chiefs started to
expel one another and to buy or steal all possible _godi_-offices so
that they might gain more power. By holding the offices they were the
ones to appoint the members of the courts, and they had to concentrate
their efforts if they were not to be outmanoeuvred, by each other or
by the church. The result of this 'armament race' was that towards the

end of the Freestate each Quarter was ruled by one or two families,
who were legally able to take the law into their own hands.

These two sets of internal constitutional problems relate to the
contradictions that were mentioned in the introduction. The conflict
between the Church and the chiefs personalized the contradiction
between Christianity and paganism in an unexpected way. Until this
time it was principally a matter for philosophically minded individuals.
The second set of destructive forces relates to the opposition between
self-help and law, but this opposition was now concentrated in single
persons, who could legally take the law into their own hands. Since
these persons were also the ones to fight the church, we can see an
increasing convergence of the two sets of contradictions. When
external factors were allowed to play their part the internal inter-
ference was fatal.

In respect of the relationship between the Freestate and those
social systems outside it, two points should be noted. First, the
Norwegian king was increasingly annoyed by the independence of Iceland,
partly due to his own problems in balancing the Church. We should note
here that within the organization of the Church, the Icelandic religious
offices were under the supervision of the bishop in Nidaros, who thus
had a larger 'people' than had the king. And it was mainly through
the Church that the king gradually gained influence on Iceland, where
the conflicts made the weaker among the inhabitants look among them-
selves for a leader.

However, this might not have been destructive to the same degree
had it not been for another reason that concerned the means of
communication. When the settlers first came to Iceland they came by
boat, of course, and for the first century, at least, big cruises
and merchant expeditions were still part of life in Iceland. It was
considered to be an important element in the training of young men, to
let them go, say, to Norway. At least one member of each generation
was supposed to go abroad. In the beginning the goal was often to see
relatives or to administer inherited land in the country of origin,
but also the mere adventure, and the possible fights that might
result, were considered to be of educational value. As time passed,
however, the original fleet wore out. As there was no timber available
on Iceland it was impossible to restore the fleet on home ground, and
few men were wealthy enough to be able to go to Norway and see to the
building of a new boat. This decline in the possibilities for Icelanders
to communicate out of the country at their own wish had consequences
at many levels. The commerce now came into Norwegian hands, to the
extent that in sources from the thirteenth century, no references to
Icelandic-owned boats are found at all, while they had been few even in
the twelfth century (Jones 1964:38).

In the first century of the Freestate the Icelanders themselves had
been the out-going people, and the definition space created was maintained
partly through this monopoly of communication, which allowed them to
define and readjust their reality as conceptual problems emerged. But
when they were gradually closed off and when extra-societal communication
became a privilege and a power of Norwegian merchants, their fate was
sealed. It became impossible to receive information from outside which
could outbalance the 'noise' generated within the system.

Even if autonomy is based upon a set of self-referring symbols,
independence is not sustained by isolation.

The result of the interplay of these different factors was a

vulnerability to foreign powers, and in 1262 the Norwegian king took over the rulership with the help of traitors who saw some short-term benefits for themselves in securing the power for the king. In the first place it was only the Southern and Western Quarters that gave in, but in 1264 the more stubborn Eastern and Northern Quarters were overcome as well.

After a few hundred years of existence the Icelandic nation became subject to foreign power, and so it remained until this century. Within its short lifespan the Icelandic state exposed a series of different social situations, but essentially they were variations based upon a unique cultural theme, which through the transmitted literature is a powerful symbol of Icelandic identification even today.

In this paper I have focussed upon a single important theme in the Icelandic Freestate, that of law. I have tried to demonstrate how inherent contradictions threatened the nation from its very constitution. Not much need be added here, since history itself provided the conclusion: the fall of the Freestate.

This sketchy analysis is by no means exhaustive. It cannot alone explain the fall of the Freestate. I am convinced, however, that by studying the law and extracting from it some general points we gain an important insight into some of the structural weaknesses that influenced the course of history. Different analyses would yield different answers, and together they would complete the picture.

The point is that anthropology, being related to its subject in both a metaphoric and a metonymic way (Crick 1976:169), is as complex as the reality it seeks to understand and sometimes even explain. As metaphors anthropological models yield understanding by translating cultural features into anthropological discourse. As metonyms the models are themselves to be described by reference to the nature of their content; like any other cultural practice they are part of the human discourse about humanity.

In this sense no analysis can ever be 'the last' - but given a specific reality some analyses would seem to present themselves as among the most urgent. In the case of the Icelandic Freestate an analysis in terms of law seemed to be of prime importance.

<div align="right">Kirsten Hastrup.</div>

NOTES

1. A general orthographical note should be made here. For a rendering in English of Old Norse categories, I rely mainly on Jones (1964). As for the native terms used in the text, I must admit that they are

to some extent Danish versions, partly due to the limitations of a Danish typewriter.

2. The number 'three' appears to be of symbolic importance, rather than of necessary historical truth. Most of the significant events in the history of the Freestate seem to have been a matter of 'three years', as for instance also the landnám of Ingolf.

3. The conception of p-structures, as paradigmatic structural relationships, and s-structures, as syntagmatic chains of events, derives from Ardener (1973).

4. It is so named since, according to Nial's saga (98; 1970:6-8), Nial was the one who originally conceived of the Fifth Court. This is, however, a matter of dispute.

5. There was a distinction between 'murder' and 'killing' in Iceland. Murder was illegal and always considered appalling, whereas killing was a legitimate act in various cases, as for instance in the killing of new-born children prior to their 'naming', after which killing them would be considered as murder. (Gudmundson 1924: 99). Also in cases of blood-revenge killing was legitimate. In all cases of killing, the killer had to cover up the victim; failure to do this would make his deed classifiable as murder, and outlawing would ensue, indicating that the uncovered corpse was a threat to the whole of the society (ibid.:119).

6. Expatriation need. not be for life; it could be a matter of, say, 'three winters'. (Gudmundsson 1924:62).

Editors' Note: This paper has been cut considerably by the editors, with the author's permission, in order to shorten it for the Journal. Any misrepresentations thereby introduced are of course the editors' responsibility.

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THE SCIENTIST, THE QUESTER, AND THE WRITER : TRISTES TROPIQUES
AND LEVI-STRAUSS

Lévi-Strauss has spoken of a 'Copernican revolution' in the field, and whatever else this may entail, it surely describes our feeling of weightlessness in the face of our subject societies; as in the cosmos of the new astronomers, our own place has been set adrift. Within an older, geocentric conception of anthropology, the anthropologist himself occupied the Archimedian point on which to fix the analysis of societies. The scientific rationality of his society had emancipated him from the conditions of the social; his very discipline signified a transcendence of the objects of his discipline. The objectivity of his language enabled him to become the ground upon which all other social languages could be charted. His own utterances were transparent; they supplied nothing. The understanding of alien cultures, therefore, presumed a total self-understanding.

The 'Copernican revolution' changed all this by 'rationalizing' the culturescape. The anthropologist has lost his privileged sense of being able to ground in his own code all the categories of the social; now he merely stands upon that ground like everyone else; he is of the same magnitude as his subject societies. These societies have made themselves felt as resistant to being subsumed by his rationality. To understand them, he must find them first, in a place distant from his own. Being merely a part of the landscape, he must travel across it, leaving his own locale behind. This is what we mean by mapping out intelligible relations between us and them. But if subject societies are opaque to us as anthropologists, we are opaque to ourselves as well. Having only a relative vantage-point on alien societies, a particular locale, we can understand where they are in the landscape only by understanding where we are, distinct from them. We cannot presume an immediate self-understanding, such as positivism takes for granted, since the one thing a perspective does not supply is a view of itself. What then is our project? What is our place in the larger society from which we seem interested in disengaging ourselves? What sort of disengagement is possible? To ask such questions is not to make anthropology effete or self-contained; it is to turn it out upon its subject in the only possible way, to let it finally get on with the job: the job of making sense of boundaries, and of crossing them. Fieldwork, like charity, begins at home.

I use here Lévi-Strauss' Tristes Tropiques (1973) as one of the few texts which raises the issue of what constitutes the figure of the anthropologist, and raises it in particularly rich and complex ways. For Lévi-Strauss presents us with two competing images of himself as anthropologist. One, the figure we meet in The Savage Mind, the Mythologiques, and Structural Anthropology, is the anthropologist as structural scientist and decultured man. The other, implicit in the narrative stance of the fieldwork memoir, is the anthropologist as quest-hero. It will be clear to anyone who knows Lévi-Strauss' work that he has chosen the scientist over the quester as the model for his vocation; Tristes Tropiques sketches out for us the moments and motives of that choice. But if we pay attention to the way this duel plays itself out, we will see the figure of the scientist - and the structural anthropology he espouses - not as a response to the problems of being an anthropologist such as are raised in the memoir, but rather as an evasion of them.

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Lévi-Strauss' intellectual project is a Kantian one. He seeks to elucidate the fundamental structures of the human mind. These, he claims, must ground the range of social forms: 'In allowing myself to be guided by the search for the constraining structures of the mind', he writes in the Overture to The Raw and the Cooked, 'I am proceeding in the manner of Kantian philosophy, although along different lines leading to different conclusions' (1969 : 10). By 'different lines' he means that, while Kant was interested in the way these structures of mind constitute a transcendental subject, Lévi-Strauss seeks structures which are unbound by subjectivity, which are manifest only socially, in the 'forms of objectified thought'. This 'Kantianism without a transcendental subject' leads to a method not of philosophical introspection, but of investigation into external consensual forms - a Kantian science. The anthropologist seeks to formulate laws about outward, social phenomena which mediate between the diversity of societies themselves and any 'constraining structure of the mind' (see, in general, Lévi-Strauss, 1969 : 1 - 14).

The figure of the scientist is central to Lévi-Strauss' self-presentation in Tristes Tropiques. He begins the famous analysis of Caduveo face-painting:

> The customs of a community, taken as a whole, always have a
> particular style and are reducible to systems. I am of the
> opinion that the number of such systems is not unlimited and
> that ... human societies ... never create absolutely, but
> merely choose certain combinations from an ideal repertoire
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> of all recorded customs, ... one could arrive at a sort of
> table, like that of the chemical elements, in which all actual
> or hypothetical customs would be grouped in families ...
> (1973 : 178).

What does it say about being an anthropologist that he would make such a periodic table his project? First of all, he claims to be free of the terms in which each particular society presents itself to him, for he claims a way of generalizing beneath those terms. The possibility of his arriving at an 'ideal repertoire' means that his language of analysis can subsume all other social forms under his own code; societies as they are given have no autonomy. The anthropologist's goal is to reduce the diversity of visible phenomena into a unified domain of constituent elements - a trans-social domain accessible only through his particular structuralist language.

The difficulty here is not so much with the idea of a deep structure itself as with the issue of how the anthropologist gains access to it. As a scientist of the 'ideal repertoire', he must be able to jump levels, as it were, from ordinary social discourse to a deep analytical discourse which grounds the terms of the social as given. He must be able to describe his 'periodic table' at this deep level, since his everyday location in discourse will itself be contained by the table. Thus his mind must already contain individually the 'constraining structure' whose objectified forms he is investigating. His access to the 'ideal repertoire' depends on an isomorphism between his mind and society:

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objectified forms he is investigating. His access to the 'ideal repertoire'
depends on an isomorphism between his mind and society:

> Knowledge ... consists ... in selecting true aspects, that
> is, those coinciding with the properties of my thought.
> Not, as the Neo-Kantians claimed, because my thought exer-
> cises an inevitable influence over things, but because it
> is itself an object. Being 'of this world', it partakes of
> the same nature as the world (1973 : 56).

The anthropologist jumps levels of discourse by jumping levels within
himself; he confirms the generalizations of his science by recourse
to a deep interiority. The way down into the categories of thought is
the way out into social categories. The anthropologist's personal
movement is not horizontal then, movement across the landscape towards
strangeness, but vertical, the geological delving into the substrata of
the landscape itself: 'Exploration is not so much a covering of surface
distance', Lévi-Strauss writes in Tristes Tropiques, 'as a study in
depth' (1973 : 47-8).

> Such a 'vertical' project requires the anthropologist to extricate
himself from any particular locale in the landscape itself; he must
free himself of commitments to any single community, since his vocation
is to reduce all communities to a common ground:

> While remaining human himself, the anthropologist tries to
> study and judge mankind from a point of view sufficiently
> lofty and remote to allow him to disregard the particular
> circumstances of a given society or civilisation. The con-
> ditions in which he lives and works cut him off from his
> group for long periods; through being exposed to such com-
> plete and sudden changes of environment, he acquires a kind
> of chronic rootlessness; eventually, he comes to feel at
> home nowhere ... (1973 : 55).

It is central to Tristes Tropiques that these hardships of the task are
also its great strengths. Lévi-Strauss constitutes the anthropologist
as a figure utterly dégagé, a decultured man. His deracination is a
liberation:

> In proposing the study of mankind, anthropology frees me from
> doubt, since it examines those differences and changes in man-
> kind which have a meaning for all men, and excludes those
> peculiar to a single civilisation, which dissolve into nothing-
> ness under the gaze of the outside observer (ibid : 58).

'Anthropology frees me from doubt': nowhere are Lévi-Strauss' scientistic
ambitions made clearer. Being free of Cartesian doubt, the anthropologist
is free as well of Cartesian subjectivity. He becomes a new kind of man,
an 'outside observer' pretending to an infinite extensiveness liberated
from perspective. He exchanges the humanity of belonging to the group for
the humanity of seeing what it is to belong to the group, and so he conceives
anthropology not as the relating of us and them, but as the identification
of us and them. This disengagement is exactly what is meant by the anthro-
pologist's 'recourse to interiority': his study in depth is a leap into
solitude. In identifying us and them, Lévi-Strauss permits the anthropolo-
gist to inhabit at once the locale of his ordinary social discourse and the
deep structure of fundamental categories which he presumes to embody. As
Lévi-Strauss says about myths, the anthropologist is both langue and parole,
both the ground and the grounded.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

This figure of the decultured scientist is the protagonist of
Tristes Tropiques. He is also the figure that we meet elsewhere in
Lévi-Strauss' work, as in his injunction in The Savage Mind 'to study
men as if they were ants, ... not to constitute, but to dissolve man'
(1966 : 246-7). But when we read the memoir attentively, we notice
a second figure 1 king near the scientist, a rival anthropologist.
Far from celebrating his outsider's autonomy and solitude, this
anthropologist writes in the final pages of Tristes Tropiques:

> The self is not only hateful: there is no place for it
> between us and nothing. And if, in the last resort, I
> opt for us, even though it is no more than a semblance,
> the reason is that ... I have only one possible choice
> between this semblance and nothing. I have only to choose
> for the choice itself to signify my unreserved acceptance
> of the human condition   (1973 : 414).

This putting-on of the conditions of us is totally removed from the
liberating disengagement where 'anthropology frees me from doubt'.
On the contrary, the second figure presents himself as committed to a
particular locale, a perspective around which the world extends
indefinitely:

> I have a duty to men, just as I have a duty to knowledge.
> History, politics, the economic and social world, the
> physical world and even the sky surround me with concentric
> circles, from which I cannot escape in thought without ceding
> a fragment of my person to each one of them. Like a pebble
> striking water and making rings on the surface as it cuts
> through, in order to reach the bottom I too must take the
> plunge   (ibid : 413).

According to this anthropologist, the abstraction into an 'ideal
repertoire' of one's real encounters in social life will bring disin-
tegration of the person. Far from a 'point of view sufficiently lofty
and remote', he falls into his particular situation and accepts the
concentricities that surround him. Rather than treating men as if they
were ants, Lévi-Strauss ends his book by identifying himself in worship
at a Buddhist kyong.

If the scientist is the hero of Tristes Tropiques, this other
figure is its narrator; and we learn what anthropology is for him not
so much in the tale told as in the manner of its telling. For Tristes
Tropiques is told as a quest, that is, as a movement from a homeworld
across boundaries to an otherworld of strangeness. This movement is
not vertical but horizontal, not a delving into the landscape but a
journey across it. Access to deep structure is not so much at issue as
access to them in the first place. Indeed, despite the Archimedian
pretensions of the scientist to view society as an abstracted whole,
Tristes Tropiques concerns nothing if not the difficulties of relating
us and them in the most particular ways. Lévi-Strauss symbolizes these
problems in the ongoing encounter between Old World and New World; thus
he ruminates as he crosses the South Atlantic:

> The inky sky of the Doldrums and the oppressive atmosphere
> ... epitomize the moral climate in which the two worlds
> have come face to face. This cheerless sea between them,
> and the calmness of the weather whose only purpose seems
> to be to allow evil forces to gather fresh strength, are the
> last mystical barrier between two regions so diametrically
> opposed to each other through their different conditions that
> the first people to become aware of the fact could not believe
> that they were both equally human (1973 : 330).

In this hostility between worlds, where can we find 'those differences and changes which have a meaning for all men'? Unlike the easy, wandering analyses of the Mythologiques and The Elementary Structures of Kinship, Tristes Tropiques is full of borders and difficult crossings, which is why its interminable descriptions of trekking and transportation are so central to the narrative stance.

Nor does the narrator claim to have extricated himself from the limitations imposed by the mystical barrier between Old World and New. Just as he is held down by the jungle and the marshland he slogs through, he is rooted in a particular corner of the cultural landscape. Unlike the lofty figure who is freed from doubt, this second man remains unextended and local; he cannot claim privileged access to the ideal repertoire of social customs. At the climax of his expeditions, coming on an utterly unstudied, undiscovered Indian people, he writes:

> I had wanted to reach the extreme limits of the savage; it
> might be thought that my wish had been granted, now that I
> found myself among these charming Indians whom no other white
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> a reflection in a mirror; I could touch them, but I could not
> understand them. I had been given, at one and the same time, my
> reward and my punishment (1973 : 332-3).

The Kantian science must fail here: there is no truly generalizing language, no easy isomorphism between mind and social structure.

This second figure refuses to admit the possibility of deculturing himself. Where the scientist seeks to disengage himself from any ground, any local language, the other anthropologist disengages himself from his own locale only to re-engage himself in another. The conditions of locality itself, of inhabiting a perspective, never change. Where the scientist seeks generalizations, the second figure, who is the anthropologist as quest-hero, seeks particularities, since strangeness only resides in the particular. As opposed to the 'outside observer', but like the narrator of Tristes Tropiques, the figure of the quest-hero is always on the way. The scientist attempts to assimilate us and them; the questor tries to go the distance between.

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As the model for his vocation, Lévi-Strauss raises up the questor only to dismiss him: 'Adventure has no place in the anthropologist's profession', he writes on the first page of the memoir, 'it is merely one of those unavoidable drawbacks, which detract from his effective work ... The fact that so much effort and expenditure has to be wasted

on reaching the object of our studies bestows no value on that aspect
of our profession, and should be seen rather as its negative side'
(1973 : 17). This contempt for the value of strangeness and of cross-
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hardships of travel, who confesses 'I wanted to reach the extreme
limits of the savage'. Why the rejection of the quest-project?

Because the quest is one that must fail, Levi-Strauss is hard on the
allure of anthropology as quest:

> Is mine the only voice that bears witness to the impossibility
> of escapism? Like the Indian in the myth, I went as far as the
> earth allows one to go, and when I arrived at the world's end,
> I questioned the people, the creatures and things I found there
> and met with the same disappointment: He stood still, weeping
> bitterly, praying and moaning. And yet no mysterious sound
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> ported, as he slept, to the temple of the magic animals. For
> him there could no longer be the slightest doubt: no power,
> from anyone, had been granted him ... (1973 : 41-2).

To conceive of anthropology as a quest is misguided for two reasons.
First, to the extent that the subject society remains separate from the
Old World (which is what makes it a fit quest-object), the fieldworker
cannot understand it; this is what occurs with those Indians mentioned
above. Conversely, if the anthropologist claims to understand such people,
he can only have assimilated their customs to a pre-existing code; he has
not learned from them, only domesticated their New World into the terms of
his Old:

> I reject the vast landscape, I circumscribe it ... : there
> is nothing to prove that my eye, if it broadened its view of
> the scene, would not recognise the Bois de Meudon around
> this insignificant fragment, which is trodden daily by the
> most authentic savages but from which, however, Man Friday's
> footprint is missing   (ibid : 334-5).

Against the crisis of such insufficiencies, Levi-Strauss offers the
rival image of the scientist. The scientist is freed of the task of under-
standing alien societies in their strangeness, their particularity; indeed
his whole purpose is to reduce social life out of its given terms to that
'ideal repertoire' of universally valid elements. A respect for locality
gives way to the desire for totality:

> The study of these savages leads to something other than
> the revelation of a Utopian state of nature or the dis-
> covery of the perfect society in the depths of the forest;
> it helps us to build a theoretical model of human society,
> which does not correspond to any observable reality ...
> (ibid : 392).

At the same time, claims Lévi-Strauss, this reduction will not be mere
ethnocentrism, the domestication of the New World by the Old. The terms
of scientific discourse will be free of any single locale, because they
will reach that level where ordinary local discourse is grounded. The
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terms which will be knowable to all men, while belonging to none in
particular: '... after demolishing all forms of social organization, we

can ... discover the principles which will allow us to construct a new form' (ibid : 390). To put it in Lévi-Strauss' own vocabulary, the anthropologist escapes the contradictions of being a quester by becoming a bricoleur, a scientist of the concrete: he reveals the principles of social life by demolishing and revising it.

****

This is an elegant formula. Unhappily it does not solve the problem. For the problems raised by the failure of the quest-idea are not really answered in the figure of the scientist. If the old World's domestication of the New were imply epistemological, simply a failure of imagination, then the scientist might be sufficient; his reconstitution of the alien world through its fragments might supply the conditions for understanding. But Lévi-Strauss makes clear that the anthropologist's projection of his own locale into his subject's is not innocent, is more active than just a failure of imagination. Even when he carries the Old World with him in the most trivial ways, as when he hums over and over a Chopin melody while marching through the bush, a darker and more potent intrusion is implicit ; for his problem as a quester is not that so much remains inaccessible to him, but that so much has already been destroyed. Lévi-Strauss litters his memoir with stories of pathetic and perverse sorts of ethnocentrism and exploitation - on the part of adventurers,missionaries, cowboys, bureaucrats, and even anthropologists. In questing to leave his own world behind and to encounter social life in its strangeness, the ethnographer is only another contaminator, a cultural analogue to the seventeenth century traveller who remarked how free of disease the Tupi Indians were at the same time that he was helping to infect them. The whole idea of a quest into their world presupposes our having undermined it already. Anthropology arises in a situation where its project of crossing borders is nostalgic and inauthentic. The boundaries have already been trespassed upon, and we find only second-hand versions of ourselves:

> Journeys, those magic caskets full of dream-like promises, will never again yield up their treasures untarnished. A proliferating and over-excited civilization has broken the silence ... what else can the so-called escapism of travelling do than confront us with the more unfortunate aspects of our history? ... The first thing we see as we travel round the world is our own filth, thrown into the face of mankind (ibid : 37-8).

In the face of such problems, the figure of the scientist is not a sufficient response. Since the quest fails for particular historical reasons, as well as for general methodological ones, it is not only a new epistemological stance that is called for but also the anthropologist's acknowledgement of his personal place in the events that led to his crisis. And appropriately it is on these historical grounds, rather than epistemological ones, that Lévi-Strauss seems to make his most important defence against the failures of the quest-project:

> What has happened is that time has passed. Forgetfulness, by rolling any memories along in its tide, has done more than merely wear them down or consign them to oblivion. The profound structure it has created out of the fragments allows me to achieve a more stable equilibrium and to see a

clearer pattern. One order has been replaced by another.
Between these two cliffs, which preserve the distance between
my gaze and its object, time, the destroyer, has begun to
pile up rubble ... Events without apparent connection, and
originating from incongruous periods and places, slide one
over the other and suddenly crystallize into a sort of edi-
fice which seems to have been conceived by an architect wiser
than my personal history (ibid : 43-4).

Lévi-Strauss defends his project here in exactly the realm which had
failed him, the realm of history. Here is an attempt to make 'time, the
destroyer' of Indians into 'time, the provider' for anthropologists.
Notice how the narrator shifts time's destruction from the New World to
his own memories of it; what lies in fragments is not the culture of
Brazilian Indians, but his ideas about them; and this shift allows him
to build them up again. One order has indeed been replaced by another --
not a new and whole social order for those who have been exploited, but
a new conceptual order for the anthropologist. And it is the fact that
the New World has been fragmented by the Old which gives the anthropolo-
gist the elbow-room to develop his own way of building the fragments up
again.

As the idea of the passage intimates - an idiom of 'fragments',
'piling up rubble', and 'one order replacing another' - Lévi-Strauss
defends his anthropologist from the accusations of history by constitu-
ting him as a bricoleur; for bricolage is exactly this process of trans-
muting time from a destroyer to a provider. In making this transmutation,
however, Lévi-Strauss evades the very issue we require him to answer: the
issue of particular historical responsibility. The idea of bricolage
cannot resolve that issue, because it subsumes the particular instance of
destruction under the general process of understanding; it subsumes the
content of history under the method of science, a science of the concrete.
But this is just what Tristes Tropiques has led us to judge indefensible.
There is no necessary conceptual significance to the rubble of his Brazi-
lian memories, only a necessary political significance. The passage is
dishonest in asserting that 'a profound structure is being created out of
the fragments', since the structure might only be a way of evading the
acknowledgement that the fragments are one's own. When a world has dis-
integrated to the point of being unable to resist or falsify an observer's
claims about it, it will not do to call that observer disengaged or
scientific. What results is not so much fundamental structures as imagina-
tive ones - not an isomorphism between mind and society, but an encounter
between a particularly fertile mind and particular societies unable to
answer back to it.

A good example in Tristes Tropiques of the errors of such a scientism
is Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the Nambikwara political system and his claim
to have illustrated through them an elementary structure of politics (ibid
: 305-317). The Nambikwara live in small, loose-knit nomadic bands, each
led by a chief. The chief has no hereditary power, and as families can
leave the bands and join others whenever they want, Lévi-Strauss shrewdly
points out how political authority and stability depends on consent and
contract rather than on a traditional order made up of prescriptive rela-
tions. He takes this as an affirmation of the position of the Enlighten-
ment philosophes, especially Rousseau, in their definition of political
authority in terms of contractual association and consent.

Why should we take the Nambikwara bands to illustrate the elementary forms of the political life? It is much more likely that their instability, and consequent reliance on individual acts of consent, come from historical conditions which Lévi-Strauss has earlier spoken of: their population has been decimated by white-carried diseases over the previous century so that the bands are only a tiny fraction of their former size. It seems likely that the older bands would have had more stability and a more hierarchical distribution of authority. Whatever the case, Lévi-Strauss errs in attributing general significance to what might be better explained within a specific, historical context. Out of the fragments of Nambikwara life, the bricoleur builds up a personal myth about political origins and then attributes it to the world.

What is odious in such instances is not structuralism per se or the notion of depth analysis, but rather the claim to a structuralist science. When the anthropologist respects the idea of borders and grants social forms enough integrity to resist easy classification, then structural analysis is unobjectionable. I take Lévi-Strauss' analysis of Caduveo face-painting and Bororo social classes as good examples of this. To claim the capacity to universalize through depth analysis, however, is to presume the autonomy of each society to be no more than superficial; it begs the question of relating us and them by simply identifying them. If we discover, as does Lévi-Strauss in Tristes Tropiques, that our original sense of this relation is naive, our project should be to redraw the relation with more subtlety, not abandon its terms. The failure of the quest to engage a world of strangeness does not emancipate us from the necessity of engaging at all; it does not free us to become scientists. For we have seen how the figure of the scientist depends on backhanded commitments to the very locality from which he claims to have extricated himself; he receives from his own history the fragments with which he imagines his freedom from history. The new figure of the anthropologist must avoid both the presumption of the scientist and the naivete of the quester. On the one hand, he must acknowledge the problem of us and them in all its difficulty; nothing, not even imperialism, will free him from the burdens of being local and present. On the other hand, he must not fetishize strangeness into the purpose of his work; he must realize that the New World is new not because it is pristine and exotic, but because it is not yet born. Here, as usual, it is Lévi-Strauss who is his (our) own best and most eloquent critic:

> Being human signifies, for each one of us, belonging to a
> class, a society, a country, a continent, and a civilization;
> and for us European earth-dwellers, the adventure played out
> in the heart of the New World signifies in the first place that
> it was not our world and that we are responsible for its destruc-
> tion; and secondly, that there will never be another New World:
> since the confrontation between the Old World and the New makes
> us thus conscious of ourselves, let us at least express it in its
> primary terms - in the place where ... our world missed the
> opportunity offered to it of choosing between its various missions
> (ibid : 393).

David Scobie

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'BIOGENETIC STRUCTURALISM' AND THE LOCATION OF STRUCTURES*

In the heyday of 'high' structuralism it was sometimes argued, explicitly or implicitly, that the ultimate 'explanation' of cultural structures was to be found in the properties of 'the human mind'. This argument, it was perhaps felt, shifted the problem of explanation to the realm of philosophy, which many anthropologists considered outside their concern. It was not surprising, therefore, that sceptics of a more materialist persuasion would criticize structuralist analysis for being an essentially idealist or mentalist undertaking. Even so, the analytical value of the notion of structures (in the Lévi-Straussian sense) has been increasingly recognized, even by anthropologists of a materialist stance (e.g. in the 'structural marxism' of Maurice Godelier (1973) and Jonathan Friedman (1974)), to the extent that nowadays only the most ardent 'vulgar materialists' feel they can do without it. This development has not, however, done away with the problem of the location of structures; the problem has only been pushed into the background, because other problems were felt by most to be of more immediate concern.

But whether or not we have been bothered by the location problem we should all welcome the pioneering work of two authors, Charles Laughlin, an anthropologist, and Eugene d' Aquili, a psychiatrist, in which they lay the foundations of a new structural approach, 'biogenetic structuralism'. In the introduction to the book they state:

> The major ontological assumption upon which biogenetic structuralism is founded is that <u>there exists no reality intervening between the central nervous system and the environment</u>. The corollary is that all other presumed levels of reality have analytic status only. Thus, when philosophers speak of 'mind', psychologists speak of 'personality', American anthropologists speak of 'culture', and sociologists and social anthropologists speak of 'society', they are referring to patterns abstracted from behavioral (or introspective) equivalents of internal brain processes. Behavior viewed from our perspective is the synthesis derived from the dialectic between the brain as thesis and environment as antithesis (11; emphasis original).

And faced with these two realities there is no doubt in their minds (sorry, brains) as to the location of structures:

> The strength of biogenetic structuralist theory ... lies in its capacity to explain much of the cognitive and structural aspects of classical structuralism by lodging structures squarely in specific cerebral structures and functions (14-15).

* This article was written as a consideration of <u>Biogenetic Structuralism</u> by Charles D. Laughlin Jr. and Eugene G. d' Aquili. 1974, New York: Columbia University Press. All page references, unless otherwise stated, are to this work (eds).

And they go on:

> It furthermore combines this strength with an evolutionary
> perspective that allows one to consider the evolution of
> cerebral structures in light of the sweep of hominid
> evolution and the probable adaptive consequences of each
> major structure (15).

The evolutionary perspective is emphasized throughout the
book. Chapter 2 deals with the transition from the pre-
hominid level to the level of Homo Sapiens in terms of the
relation between brain size and intelligence, defined in the
evolutionary sense as 'the capacity of a species in relation to
any other species to differentiate and integrate perceptual
information into adaptive neural models of their environment'
(20). Besides brain size, intelligence is also a matter of the
neural organisation of the brain. Some have argued in favour
of size, others of organisation as the important factor in the
evolution of intelligence. The authors adopt a position
between the two extremes, and as the focus is on adaptation,
or adaptive behaviour, the long-term increase of intelligence
is seen as a systemic causality comprising increasing brain
size, neural reorganisation and behavioral changes. It is
argued that the interaction between those factors at a certain
stage resulted in the critical shift in the functioning of the
brain. 'That is, the quantitative buildup of neural complexity
created by the time of australopithecines resulted in an
ultimate qualitative change in the associative capabilities
of the hominid brain' (35; emphasis original).

Having thus reached humanity, chapter 3 addresses the subject
of 'cerebral adaptation and hominid evolution'. It does so
at some length, describing the different cerebral subsystems,
their structure and function, and a short review cannot do
justice to the complex and detailed, but very well present-
ed and easily readable, exposition. The same applies to
chapter 4 on 'cognitive extension of prehension', a notion
which refers to the critical shift just mentioned and denotes,
roughly, the ability to associate events and objects other
than those completely present in the sensory field. Most of
the content of these two chapters is likely to be novel to
the average social anthropologist; but I shall only mention a
couple of points that I find particularly intriguing.

One point relates to the debate between localizationists
and generalists, i.e. between those who hold that a specific
area of the brain corresponds to, or controls, a specific
function and those who hold that the brain is to be regarded
as functionally one single organ. Both sides can bring
experimental results as evidence for their position, and the
authors once again take a middle position. Having listed the
cerebral subsystems in a rather localizationist manner they
go on to describe a quite fascinating analogy, or model, of
the brain. That model agrees very well with the generalist
position, the analogy being that of the holograph.
(Holography is a kind of photography in which light from
every point of the scene is distributed to many points

on the film, forming an interference pattern instead of a
picture. Holography is three-dimensional, and the whole
interference pattern is recorded simultaneously on all parts
of the film so that a whole scene may be reproduced from
just a fragment of the film. Furthermore, a large number of
different scenes may be recorded on the same film with the
result that billions of bits of information may be stored in
a single square inch of film). Applying the holographic analogy
to the brain 'would explain the enormous storage and retrieval
capacity of our memory circuitry' (80). It is, however, only an
analogy, and instead of being carried away by the marvels of
technology the authors offer the following sobering observation:
'It is an interesting fact in the history of the neurological
sciences that, at every stage, the brain has been likened to
the most complex technology available at the time' (80).
Previous analogies include clocks, switchboards, and com-
puters, and by going on to holography 'we are continuing
a time-honored, but limited, tradition'.

Another interesting theme is that of the adaptive value
of certain 'behavioral' traits. As with increasing brain
size a similar evolutionary systemic causality is proposed
as a replacement for earlier cause-and-effect theories. The
'behavioral' traits in question are bipedalism, use of tools
and use of language. To put it briefly, once the neural
complexity of the brain had become sufficient to make such
traits possible their superior adaptive value made individuals
who possessed them favoured by selection. But at this point
it seems that a certain automatism took over the selection
for adaptive intelligence, with the result that 'behavioral'
models emerged whose adaptive value was nil; '... the
process of model building and elaboration continues and
results in adaptively superfluous behavioral patterns, many
of which we have learned to call "culture"' (97). A case in
point is the transition from 'elementary' to 'complex'
structures (Lévi-Strauss). This is not to be taken to
mean that the transition from nature to culture is shifted
from the emergence of the incest taboo to the emergence of
Crow and Omaha systems; it only means that many of the
phenomena which form the subject matter of social anthropology
are to be regarded, from an adaptational point of view, as
pure luxury.

In chapter 5 on 'neurognostic models' we are again reminded
of the location axiom; '... we contend that models of reality
and the channels through which they are judged for "fit"
with the world are all comprised of real neuroanatomical
material, and only such material ' (100; emphasis original).
Such models are, furthermore, inherited and universal, but
to some extent species-specific; evidence for this proposition
is deduced from the existence of archetypes (Jung), social
organisation based on binary opposition (Lévi-Strauss) and
deep structures of language (Chomsky). Additional evidence
is derived from the fields of ethology and learning theory.
Since cognition is regarded as man's primary adaptive mechanism,
a main function of neurognostic models is to satisfy the
'cognitive imperative', i.e. 'man's universal compulsion to
order chaotic stimuli into meaningful patterns' (114).

Fear of the unknown is seen as a reaction to the frustration of this imperative, and 'thus "powers", spirits, gods, etc., come into being, partly at least, to satisfy the cognitive imperative by supplying first causes to strips of observed reality' (117).

Chapter 6 on 'evolution and empiricism' is in my view one of the least interesting. The authors contend that theorizing, or 'sciencing', is a universal human proclivity based on inherited neurognostic models, and that it is done in the same fashion all over the world, namely by an 'inductive-deductive alternation', because man is 'genetically pre-determined to do so' (142). It appears, however, that some (anthropologists) tend to violate this genetic predisposition by being pure inductivists (Lévi-Strauss,Elman Service) or pure deductivists (Radcliffe-Brown, Boas). They are criticized accordingly, and the Lévi-Strauss-Homans & Schneider-Needham-and-so-on controversy is depicted as one of induction versus deduction.

Chapter 7, allegedly on 'structuralism and language acquisi-tion', contains a number of scattered observations which were not accommodated in the previous chapters. The biogenetic view of the nature of structures is stressed; structures are not ideal constructs, they are 'as "real" as the left ventricle or cornea. In short, they are the neurognostic models dis-cussed at length earlier in this book'(153). Lévi-Strauss is taken to task for not subscribing to evolutionary biological explanations: 'he might have seen that prehominid group members whose brain circuitry allowed for, or compelled, a tendency toward organized intergroup exchange gave their groups survival advantage over groups not developing such circuitry' (151), but instead he resorts to 'metaphysics' in his attempt to account for structures. As for language acquisition, similarily, the problem ceases to exist once we are prepared to go beyond the level of the linguistic fact to the level of brain circuitry; the authors fully agree with Lenneberg's propositions in his Biological Foundations of Language. The chapter ends by urging anthropologists to study sleep as a universal biological phenomenon.

As will be evident by now, biogenetic structuralism is geared to the study of human universals to the almost total exclusion of cultural particulars. Or, to be more precise, cultural particulars can be taken into account only as mani-festations of underlying universals. This is a consequence of the heavy emphasis on the view that all structures are inherit-ed and exist only as real, material, neuroanatomical configurations in the brain. It is thus with growing apprehension that one turns to the two final chapters of the book, chapter 8 on 'psychopathology and evolutionary structuralism' and chapter 9 on 'implications for social science'. Under 'psychopathology' we find considerations of 'schizophrenia', 'depression', 'alcoholism', 'phobia', and 'obsessive-compulsive traits'. Among those, 'schizophrenia' is most elaborately dealt with and I shall, accordingly, restrict myself to that case.

Observing that a multitude of symptoms may be taken to indicate
schizophrenia the authors list four major 'cardinal signs' of
the illness (briefly, blurring of subject-object differentiation,
difficulty with abstraction, looseness of associations, and
disorder of affect control), and they note that 'all schizophrenic
patients manifest almost all these symptoms if they are assiduously
searched out' (171). They then go on to relate each of those
symptoms to specific cerebral subsystems which were described
earlier. They observe that even though damage to one or more of
these subsystems, or areas, may produce any single symptom of
schizophrenia, all necessary symptoms are produced only by
schizophrenia. On this basis, and in accordance with their
middle position between localizationists and generalists, they
conclude that schizophrenia represents ' a partial deficit of
all the cerebral adaptive mechanisms described earlier' (173;
emphasis original). They then examine the evidence that exists
in support of the hypothesis that the symptoms of schizophrenia
are genetically determined and review the theories about how
those symptoms are genetically transmitted. On that basis they
construct a model which I) takes account of the great variation
in the relative proportions in which the different symptoms of
schizophrenia are found and 2) at the same time supports the
view that schizophrenia is to be regarded, nevertheless, as one
isolable cerebral condition of malfunctioning of various
cerebral subsystems, and 3) emphasizes the genetic interrelation-
ship of those multiple cerebral subsystems. The argument is pre-
sented with admirable logic and clarity, a model case of
'inductive-deductive alternation', and the model has implications,
as the authors point out, that reach far beyond schizophrenia
as such. The ultimate implication is that 'we can cease speak-
ing of multiple adaptive mechanisms and refer to the entire
human neocortex as the basis for man's primary and unique
adaptation to his physical environment' (181). This may well
have been a layman's starting assumption, but Laughlin &
d' Aquili have presented the evidence and the reasoning for
why that should be.

Let me preface my comments on the authors' treatment of
schizophrenia by emphasizing that I have nothing but admiration
for the way they state their case; I am prepared to accept
that every bit is scientifically true. But just as the wave
theory and the particle theory of light are, scientifically
speaking, equally true, there exists likewise a complementary
view of schizophrenia which to my mind carries equal conviction,
and which I find just as relevant from an anthropological point
of view. I am referring, of course, to the 'double bind'
theory of Gregory Bateson and associates (Bateson 1972) which
is completely ignored by Laughlin & d' Aquili. Suffice it
here to note that the 'double bind' theory does exist. As to
my own reservations about the biogenetic approach to schizo-
phrenia, I take as the point of departure the four 'cardinal
symptoms' allegedly found in all patients. They made me feel
a little uneasy, as I could well imagine that any psychiatrist
of sufficient assiduousness would be able to elicit them all
in any person (including myself) who is, for instance,
temporarily placed in a 'double bind' situation. The uneasiness
is not due to a concern for my own sanity but to the fact that
already (and especially) at the stage of the diagnosis 'illness'

is a question of definition. There are considerable variations
in respect to which patients would be diagnosed as 'schizophrenic'
in, say, Britain, USA, and Denmark, - let alone perhaps the USSR -
but even if we restrict ourselves to 'American schizophrenia',
defined by the manifestation of the four cardinal symptoms mentioned,
the principle still stands, namely the anthropological principle
that diagnosis of schizophrenia is a matter of cultural classifi-
cation. My initial misgivings are precisely due to the ease
with which cultural classification may be represented as scienti-
fic truth: if the cardinal symptoms of schizophrenia can be
scientifically proved to rest on cerebral malfunctioning, the
implications for therapy could well be some kind of 'cerebral
engineering', the consequences of which are far from pleasing
to contemplate.

Be that as it may, the principal issue is that of scientific
truth versus cultural classification. In social anthropology we
must take account of both sides. The work of Laughlin &
d' Aquili is invaluable in that it presents us, for the first
time, with a coherent theoretical exposition of the biological
foundations of structures. But if we have to do the biology,
we must also do the 'semantics of biology' (Hastrup 1977).
If we concede that 'schizophrenia' can be scientifically
defined as a specific biological condition, and even if we are
prepared to accept that that condition can be diagnosed in a
completely objective way, we are still faced with the
anthropologically relevant fact that a person who is, clinically
speaking, quite insane may still function as normal, if somewhat
eccentric, in the community. However, as Mary Douglas (1970:
118) has pointed out, once the person is admitted to a mental
hospital, the tolerance of the community is withdrawn and the
person is classified as abnormal. This classification is
likely to persist after the person has left hospital having
become, clinically speaking, 'better', even 'cured'. (Another
point is that the effectiveness of the cure may well wear off
if the cured person finds himself in another kind of 'double
bind' situation in that he receives the message that 'you are
a normal person' simultaneously with the metamessage that 'we
treat you as a normal person though we know perfectly well
that you are mad because you have been to hospital').

In the final short chapter of the book, 'implications for
social science', the authors, not surprisingly, undertake
the demolition of 'culturology' and end up by envisaging the
emergence of an all-embracing nomothetic science of man, which
may be called anthropology, sociology, or whatever (205). One
would have thought that 'biology' might have been listed as a
candidate as well, but, paradoxically, I believe that precisely
thanks to the pioneering effort of Laughlin & d' Aquili we
may find also biological reasons for the necessity of incor-
porating and at the same time going beyond biology. Granted
that humans all over the world theorize in much the same way,
the salient point is that the similarity depends on whether
they theorize about the same kind of phenomena with the same
kind of purpose (cf. Crick 1976: 157-58). (And I believe
that we can safely say that the 'schizophrenias' of bio-
genetic theory and of 'double bind' theory do not refer to
the same kind of phenomenon). Thanks to the revolution that

occurred as a consequence of the biologically based capacity for
cognitive extension of prehension,man may be viewed as a self-defining
and reality-generating species (Crick 1976). So if there exists no
reality intervening between the brain and the environment, we might as
well generate one, or rather, we should envisage one total reality
which comprises the brain and the environment, as well as the synthesis
produced by the dialectical relationship between the two. Lévi-Strauss,
 in arguing against a view of the brain and the environment as mutually
irreducible entities, has put it this way: '... any attempt to set up the
mind and the world as separate entities would bring us back to meta-
physics. The world outside, that is ecology, can only be apprehended
through sensory perception and through the processing of sensory data
which takes place in the brain. All these phenomena must share some-
thing in common which might explain their collusion' (1974:20). This
statement I take as being not a refutation of biogenetic theory, but a
way of incorporating it and at the same time transcending it in its
present shape. 'This brief book', Laughlin & d'Aquili say, 'is not
meant as the last word. We hope it will only be the first' (16). I
sincerely share their hopes.

<div align="right">Jan Ovesen</div>

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SYMBOLIC INCEST AND SOCIAL INTERCOURSE: KULA AND COMMUNITY IN KIRIWINA

For Malinowski, kula exchange was an institution 'paramount in the tribal life of all the people that participate in it' (Malinowski 1968: 409). Mauss (1970) echoed this, treating the Kula Ring as the organising focus of Melanesian life. Such a perspective became dominant but involved a fetishization of the Kula Ring which effectively prevented its study as an integral part of particular social systems.

With the exception of Uberoi's _Politics of the Kula Ring_ (1962), anthropologists have concerned themselves more recently with the societies through which the kula _vaygu'a_ (valuables) pass. Unfortunately, they tend either to dissolve the ceremony into constituents easily studied as part of a particular social system or to pass over kula as irrelevant. Brunton (1975) concentrates of kula exchange in the Northern Trobriands or, more particularly, the Kiriwina District, on the assumption that this region 'somehow "plugged in"' to the Kula Ring rather late' (Brunton 1975:553). At the same time, in treating the _vaygu'a_ as 'scarce resources', he fails to see beyond their economic significance. Weiner and Powell dismiss kula as an inter-island phenomenon with no intra-district import. Weiner claims that her concern with the 'internal exchange structure' (Weiner 1976:24) of Kiriwina precludes the necessity of integrating kula transactions into her analysis. Powell sees kula merely as a means of emphasising 'the disjunction both political and economic between the various major districts' (1965:98) and of maintaining 'social intercourse between adjacent areas' (ibid).

Yet kula cannot be reduced to either an exchange of commodities or a means of communicating between societies. The ceremony penetrates deeply into social life. Children are named after _vaygu'a_ (cf. Malinowski 1922:504); kula and funeral ceremonies are closely linked (cf. ibid 489-493, 513-514); interaction with spirits is mediated by kula gifts (cf. ibid 512-513) and, as will be shown, _vaygu'a_ distribution is a function of political alliances.

This essay brings Malinowski's 'generalist' approach into accord with the careful fieldwork done in Kiriwina District by Powell and others. A Tabaluan ritual called _youlawada_ expresses such a synthesis. It is a ritual in which a Kiriwinan commits symbolic incest with his clan-sister on Kitava. In this way his matrilineage is able to use the inter-island kula mechanism as a means of consolidating authority and guaranteeing the perpetuity of its rule over its community.

The social system of Kiriwina District involves a distinction between biological and social paternity. The husband of a child's mother is not recognized as the father of that child. Instead, the child is said to be the product of a spiritual intercourse between the mother and a member of her matrilineage (Malinowski 1932: Ch.V11; Wilson 1969). The biological father is merely a member of another matrilineage who has contracted through marriage to raise his wife's kin's child in return for annual payments of _urigubu_ or tribute.

The attempt to 'shift' paternity from the biological father to the mother's brother necessitates an elaborate division between the natural and social aspects of a person. The continuity of Kiriwinan mat- rilineality depends on:1) the recognition that jural rights and status devolve from the mother's brother and not the father, and 2) a careful distinction between women who are marriageable and those of the mother's sub-clan who are _suvasova_ or taboo (Leach 1969; Powell 1969a). A violation of either tenet would result in a direct challenge to the hegemony of matrilineality and a major confusion of property rights, chieftain succession, and the like. In essence, the sub-clans which own certain villages would find themselves displaced by the sub-clans of their women's husbands.[1]

Trobriand cosmology defines people in terms of 'totemic nature':

> Humanity is divided into four clans (kumila).
> Totemic nature is conceived to be as deeply
> ingrained in the substance of the individual
> as sex, colour, and stature. It can never be
> changed, and it transcends the individual life,
> for it is carried over into the next world, and
> brought back unchanged into this world when the
> spirit returns by reincarnation. This four-fold
> divisinn is thought to be universal (Malinowski
> 1932:416).

Social standing and related jural powers are a function of spiritual consanguinity with the matriclan. Land, power and ritual status can only be shared or inherited by members of one's own matriclan.

Sexual intercourse, child-rearing, and other acts which focus on the physical rather than the social body are tabooed for members of the same clan group and are relegated to the domain of inter-clan activity. 'Neither the begetting nor the bearing of children is part of the Kiriwinan marriage contract' (Powell 1969a:201). The only role the husband is seen to have in relation to his wife's child is that of training and cleaning its body until it is old enough to achieve full status as an adult member of its mother's brother's matrilineage.

Suvasova, the 'supreme taboo' (Malinowski 1932: 416-451), prevents the collapse of the distinction between a person's social and biological character. The act of incest, by asserting the dominance of the biological, profoundly threatens an order founded on the subordination of sex to politics.

Trobriand norms link incest with death. In 'The Incest Myth' (ibid: 456-474) the brother and sister die as soon as they copulate on their sub-clan's land (Malinowski 1932:465). The proper response of a couple when discovered in incest is immediate suicide (Malinowski 1926: 77-78; 1932:432, 435). To the child of an incestuous couple his father and his mother's brother would be the same person. Incestuos conception thus symbolically transfers the right to inherit name and status from the matriline to the patriline. The act of incest is an eminently political act. To counter it, tradition equates incest with death rather than with a new birth. The Tabula sub-clan, which rules Omarakana and several other Trobriand district capitals, understands its political power to be the result of mythical sibling incest. Suvasova prevents a new ascendency.

The separation of what Powell calls 'ontogenetic' (biological) and 'phylogenetic' (social) kinship relations is the most significant gesture in Trobriand culture, and Trobriand social practice is generated from the gap between the two poles of the individual's life. Leach (1958) maintains that a young man, in moving at marriage out of his father's village and into that of his mother's brother, extends his primary experiences of family into another context. This theory, however, does not take into account the complete discontinuity the Kiriwinan feels between the father's family and the mother's brother's sub-clan group. Initiation into the matriclan is characterized not so much by a physical movement from one village to another as by an experience of the radical disjunction of the self in its relation to the biological family and to the social family (Powell 1969a). The Trobriander does not, as Leach suggests, live between two villages within the same world; it seems much more appropriate to say that he lives in two worlds-- often within the same village.

> Thus the life of a Trobriander runs under a two-
> fold influence -- a duality which must not be imagined
> as a mere surface play of custom. It enters deeply
> into the experience of every individual, it produces
> strange complications of usage, it creates frequent
> tensions and difficulties, and not seldom gives rise
> to violent breaks in the continuity of tribal life.
> (Malinowski 1932: 6).

Anxiety about the nature/culture division is most pronounced
at those interstices in which the twospheresthreaten to merge. The
overdetermined character of this opposition is most pronounced when a
person has died and his spirit has abandoned his body to the process of
decomposition. Mortuary ceremonies, as Weiner (1976) has demonstrated,
restabilize the balance of power and status by providing for an elaborate
public reassessment of 'the strengths and parameters of each man and
woman's network of relationships' (ibid: 8).

While children maintain no jural ties with their father, they owe
him a debt for nursing them through that period of their lives in which
their biological selves had not yet given way to their social personae.
The debt is paid off in a repulsive, though symbolically efficacious,
way. The dead man's sons dig up his body after a few days of interment
and rip the bones out of the putrid flesh. With these bones they make
utensils and ornaments for themselves and their sisters to use in eating
and courting. While dividing flesh from bone the sons 'suck some of the
decaying matter' (Malinowski 1932: 133) from the bones and swallow it.
This act of cannibalism, and the subsequent employment of the remnants
for eating and courting are announced as compensation for the father's
earlier services: 'It is right that a child should suck the father's
ulna. For the father has held out his hand to its excrement and
allowed it to make water on his knee' (ibid). In the ceremony the
children, who have been cleansed and purged of their 'physical'
selves through the agency of their biological father, return the
service by disposing of the abandoned matter left behind by his released
spirit. In the process they mark the difference between their jural
status and that of their father, for by eating his flesh and using his
bones they are demonstrating that their relationship with him is purely
on the biological, non-jural plane. The sons' eating of the flesh of
their father is the strongest possible statement of the jural division
between their clan and that of the father. It is appropriate that they
should 'eat of ' the father's body while their sisters merely 'eat from'
it, since they stand to gain the most from renouncing matrilineal
transmission and claiming jural descent from their father.[2]

The matrilineal kin of the dead man relegate all duties of burial
and mourning to the wife and children, and pay them a great deal in the
way of valuables and food for their services (ibid:136). Both the
mortuary and the urigubu payments are rewards for acknowledging that
the only relation between father and children is non-social; urigubu
pays the father for treating his children as physical (hence non-kin)
beings, while mortuary payments compensate for the wife's and children's
renunciation of any right to inherit from the father's estate.

While the sons are being paid to eat and bury the dead man, his
matrilineal kin keep as far from the body as possible. They must avoid
bwaulo, 'a form of material exhalation, issuing from the corpse and
polluting the air.....innocuous to strangers, but dangerous to kinsmen'
(ibid:128). To inhale bwaulo or to touch the corpse of a matrilineal
kinsperson is to involve oneself with the corporeal remains of a spiritual
relationship. Like sleeping with one's own sister or eating one's own

excrement[3], bringing oneself into any immediate contact with the corpse
of a kinsperson is to subject one's own identity to the destructive
ascendency of the biological.

* * * * *

The careful coding of kinship relationships effected through taboos
and reciprocal payments would undoubtedly work quite well in maintaining
the dominance of matrilineality over patrilineality if everyone married
and resided according to the code. If such were the case, all males on
marriage would move into their matrilineage's village. There would be no
contention over the role of chief since its 'rank is fully shared by all
members of a guyau (ruling) sub-clan' (Powell 1960:129)[4].

However, a strict adherence to matrilineal, patrilateral, avunculocal
norms would, as Powell (1969b) suggests, lead to the eventual collapse of
exogamy and the development of isolated endogamous groups incapable of
'the dispersal of the total population to optimal advantage in relation
to resources' (ibid : 595). This is avoided. Despite the ideal of pre-
scriptive patrilateral exchange, there exists in practice a preferential
system (cf. Needham 1962 : 111-118; Maybury-Lewis 1965: 215ff) which
condones marriage with all but the women of one's own sub-clan. The conse-
quent wide range of real and potential marriages binds the multiple sub-
clan groups of Kiriwina into a closely-intertwined network of affines, and
hence allows inter-group participation in communal labour, warfare, and the
like. The 'openness' of the preferential rule makes for a proliferation of
sub-clans however, and with that proliferation comes a substantial increase
in the number of fields of possible inter-group status rivalry.

This rivalry centres on the inheritance of chieftainship, and is
particularly vehement between the traditional ruling sub-clan, the Tabalu,
and other sub-clans which, though subordinate to the Tabalu, are sufficiently
rich and powerful to own and control villages within the Kiriwina District.
The traditional mode of linking villages and sub-clans - chieftain polygamy -
means that a Tabalu chief raises the heirs of a rival matrilineage. The
struggle between sons and heirs over the power and land of a chief, which
is aggravated by the fact that sixty percent of Kiriwinan married men live
outside their sub-clan's village (and hence in the villages of their fathers -
Powell 1969a : 183), is a serious threat to both the dominance of the Tabalu
sub-clan and the system of matrilineality itself. A successful bid by a son
to usurp the inheritance of a nephew would mean that the continuity of
matrilineal transmission of land and rank would be broken.

If there were not a means of maintaining the sub-clan rivalries within
the parameters of the matrilineal kinship system, Kiriwina and the other
Trobriand districts would have discarded Tabalu superordination long ago.
Yet, there is nothing within the intra-district system which can explain the
power of the matrilineal mode of transmission to pass authority from one
Tabalu matriclan person to another. The suvasova taboo, based as it is on
a strict patrilateral marriage rule, could not prevent usurpation by for-
bidding kinswomen to the usurpers because of the large number of women
available from other sub-clans. Further, the divorces which break all
affinal ties between two feuding groups (Malinowski 1932 : 10-13) would
destroy the grounds of any charges of incest levied towards the successful
rebels; there would be no marital ties left between the two groups to

complicate matters. Urigubu and mortuary obligations would go the same
way as the oppositions on which they are based. The group taking power
would discard them along with all other markers of the old relationship
between itself and the Tabalu. The complexity of intra-district rela-
tions has made the direct application of social norms to the pragmatics
of social life problematic if not impossible. The power of the Tabalu
aristocracy, which depends on the maintenance of those norms for its
continuity, becomes equally problematic when viewed from within the
social order.

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The patrilateral asymmetry of the Trobriand marriage 'prescription'
is merely an ideal which is in fact undermined in social interaction by
the number of available alliances with different sub-clan groups. The
fact that Kiriwinan structures of inter-clan relationships are modelled
on that ideal forces us to look beyond the limits of those relation-
ships for an institution powerful enough to enforce the model. The
north-west branch of the kula exchange, which links Kiriwina with Kitava
to the east and with a number of villages and islands to the south and
south-west, provides Omarakana and its vassal Kiriwinan villages with a
pattern of the proper relation of kinship alliances and political
authority.

The position of Omarakana in the kula system enables its ruling sub-
clan to use kula exchange as both metaphor and means for the distribution
of authority and the gathering of allegiance. The group which controls
the kula exchange between Kiriwina and Kitava is provided with a multitude
of soulava (necklace)-giving partners within the district and a single
source of mwali (armshells) to the east. The chieftain of the Tabalu
sub-clan and his maternal kin, as toli (collective owners -- Malinowski
1922 : 117ff) of the only uvalaku canoes in their district, thus hold
control over the collection and distribution of vaygu'a in the district
they rule.

The chief of the Kiriwina district (henceforth referred to as
To'uluwa, who was reigning chieftain during the period of Malinowski's
fieldwork) and a selected crew, consisting largely and probably exclusively[5]
of matrilineal kinsmen (ibid : 119-120), sail to Kitava where they collect
mwali from their kula partners. On return, the chief reciprocates for
gifts of soulava by distributing his share of the mwali to 'headmen from
all the dependent villages' (ibid : 472) and to commoners from both those
villages and his own.[6] In each instance, 'gifts are brought to the man
of superior by the man of inferior rank, and the latter has also to initiate
the exchange' (ibid : 473). The chief's son gives soulava to his father and
receives a pair of armshells in return; a chief of a subordinate village
offers a magnificent necklace and suggests tauntingly that To'uluwa has not
the wealth to return a mwali of equal value (ibid); and an elder wife whom
the chief has inherited from a brother is given a set of mwali gratis. It
is evident that the ceremonial exchange acknowledges a particular relation-
ship existing between the parties.

Recognition that the 'armshells are conceived as a female principle
and the necklaces as the male' (ibid : 356) and that 'when two of the
opposite valuables meet in the kula and are exchanged it is said that these
two have married' (ibid) illuminates the nature of the symbolic interaction.
By offering to marry their maleness to the female principle of the chief and
the sub-clan he represents, the rival chief and the physiological, though
not jural, son are entering into a relationship with the chief and his

matrilineage which not only cuts them off from the possibility of
inheritance, but also places them in a servile relationship to him and
to his matriclan. The debts arising from this rather undesirable wed-
ding are paid in the performance of the obligations owed to the chief's
sub-clan by its vassals; they are expected to provide the Tabalu sub-
clan with food, labour, and military support in return for:

> the tributes and services given to a chief by his vassals
> ... the small but frequent gifts he gives them, and the big
> and important contribution which he makes to all tribal
> enterprises (ibid : 193).

The marital nature of the kula transaction is reinforced by the fact
that the chief 'never receives a gift with his own hands' (ibid : 474).
The soulava given by the vassal is the quintessential expression of the
degrading role played by the husband in his relations with his wife's
kin, and consequently must not be allowed to pollute the distribution
of spiritual authority.

The chief's role as distributor of mwali effects an intriguing
reversal, arming him against a particular threat from rival sub-clans.
Since the chieftain enters into formal political relations with his
vassal sub-clans by engaging in polygamous marriages with their women,
he is placed in a subordinate relation to those groups by his role and
obligations as a sister's husband. However, his political function as
distributor of mwali minimizes the inferior status inherent in the role
as child-rearer by transforming him into the symbolic wife's brother of
all those who receive armshells from him. There would seem to be some
truth then in Lévi-Strauss' assertion that:

> in the Trobriand Islands ... who receives a wife from
> each of the sub-clans, is regarded as a sort of 'universal
> brother-in-law' (Lévi-Strauss 1969 : 44).

He is, however, right for the wrong reason. The continuation of his
statement effects a confusion of domains which, in its subversiveness,
would horrify the Trobriander:

> Political allegiance and the presentation of tribute are
> no more than just a particular case of that special rela-
> tionship which in this part of the world places the wife's
> brother under obligation to his sister's husband (ibid).

The wife's brother is, of course, under obligation to his sister's
husband because the latter has 'held his hand out to (the sister's child's)
excrement and allowed it to make water onto his knee'. The role of chief
is a highly revered and spiritual one which is diametrically opposed to
the degrading role for which urigubu payments are rendered. The chief is
the 'universal brother-in-law' through his political function as distributor
of mwali, which transforms him from a dabbler in child's excrement - the
sister's husband - into a guardian of spiritual concord - the mother's
brother.

The duality of the chief's role as both the individual who is husband
to his wives and the leader who is brother-in-law to his vassals is obvious
in his relations with his sons. His sons become his maternal nephews as
regards his political functions, of which kula leadership is the quintess-
ence. They are thus allowed to accompany him on trips to Kitava until they

come of age themselves to enter into kula partnerships. Then, whereas
all but the chief's sons receive their first soulava from their mother's
brother, the chief's son is given his by his father. Instead of using
the mwali that he receives for his soulava from a new partner as a means
of establishing another relationship with a southern partner, as would
a commoner's son, the chief's son gives his mwali back to his father
in return for a second soulava. Only then can he trade the soulava
for a mwali with which to engage a southern partner (ibid: 279-280).
The first soulava is given by the father in his political role as
mother's brother. Yet when the son returns the mwali he is not
returning it to the 'same' person, since to give a female to one's
own maternal uncle would be to suggest incest. Instead the son is
giving his physiological father a 'wife' in order to establish the
social difference between the two as members of different clan groups.

The dual position of the chief's son as both son and maternal
nephew is paralleled by the wife's roles as both wife and sister's
husband. We noticed earlier that the chief acknowledged his political
debt to his eldest wife by giving her a pair of armshells without first
having received soulava. This dual incongruity, the granting of mwali
to a woman and the giving of a vaygu'a without reciprocation, can only
be understood in light of the Janus-like position of the wife in her
familial and political roles. As ordinary wife, she links the chief
to her matrilineage as a husband and a rearer of children. However,
the chief's role as distributer of mwali radically alters her persona.
Since the chief is mother's brother to her clansmen, she, as a person
who affinally links the chief's sub-clan with her own, must be considered
politically to be in the relation of sister's husband to the chief. To-
'uluwa's gift to his inherited wife politically formalized the new
relationship; by giving his wife a 'wife', To'uluwa recognized her
role as sister's husband and gave her a political position in his
chieftainship. Her marriage with To'uluwa's mwali granted her full
status in the political kinship system.

The dualities and inversions which mark kinship relationships
with the district chief seem to centre on his role as distributor of
mwali and locus of inter-clan political relations. Kiriwinan politics
are calqued onto kinship relations, but the relationship between the
two domains is not one of direct analogy. Political organization is
ordered by a model of prescriptive patrilateral matrilineal marriage
rules which is embodied in the chief's role in collecting soulava
and distributing mwali. The degree of play evident in actual affinal
associations is countered by a ceremonial system in which all political
subordinates are married to 'women' of the ruling Tabalu sub-clan and
are hence bound to give basic service to the 'children' of the chief.
Thus the chief gives a sort of political urigubu (consisting of ritual
gifts and 'spiritual' or ceremonial maintenance) in return for tribute,
work, and military service. The kinship model operative in kula
ceremonials is actually opposed to that which regulates quotidian marriages.
This results in a dual set of kinship classifications affecting all those
brought into both marital and political relations with the chief; sons
are treated both as sons and nephews; wives as both wives and sister's
husband's; and wives' kin as both wives' kin and sisters' husband's
kin. The Kiriwinan kula succeeds in mediating between 'ideal' forms
of social interaction and actual practice and, because of this capacity
metaphorically to convert theory into praxis, becomes the locus of
political behaviour.

Whereas kula relations between the Tabalu chieftain and repre-
sentatives of subordinate clans are characterized by a rather formal
'marriage ceremony' in which reciprocity is immediate, the kula exchange
between the Tabalu and their partners on Kitava is marked by a violent
ceremony called the youlawada and a considerable delay between the
time when the soulava are given and that when mwali are returned.
When the Tabalu delegation reach Kitava they carry their soulava
inland to the village of their partners.

> On entering the village, the party march on briskly
> without looking to right or left, and, whilst the
> boy blows frantically the conch shell, and all the
> men in the party emit the ceremonial scream called
> tilaykiki, others throw stones and spears at the
> kavalapu, the ornamental carved and painted boards
> running in a Gothic arch round the eaves of a chief's
> house or yam house (Malinowski 1922: 486).

They then present the male vaygu'a, eat food which is tabooed on their
southern uvalaku, and visit friends and relatives in nearby villages.
Later, the Kitavans visit Omarakana, but they bring no mwali[7]. Instead,
To'uluwa and his toli sail back to Kitava where they collect mwali which
they pass on to their vassals (ibid: 280 and 471-472). Whereas the
Kiriwinan distribution takes place between members of different clans,
the Kiriwina-Kitava ceremony, like the Kiriwina-Sinaketa form, occurs
between members of the same clan, the Malasi.[8] Whether or not it can
be shown that the ruling sub-clan of the unnamed village with which To'uluwa
and his men engaged in kula exchanges was Tabalu, the act of exchanging
'women' with members of the same clan group is incestuous.[9] Further,
whereas all the groups who exchange vaygu'a in Kiriwina are linked into
a political unit, Kitava and Kiriwina have little in common besides
participation in the same quadripartite clan system and in the kula
ceremonial. There is virtually no trade (Malinowski 1922: 481), and
the marital alliances between the two districts seem limited to those
in which Tabalu women seek prestige (Malinowski 1932: 70; Brunton 1975:
551-553). The only political aspect of the chief's kula interaction with
his Kitavan partners would be that of an inter-district alliance
between ruling cliques. Brunton shows that the northwestern kula
links Kiriwina, Sinaketa, and Vakuna, district capitals ruled by Tabalu,
into a chain of kula alliances, (cf. Brunton 1975: 551 and map). Malinowski
implies in his description of Kitavan youlawada that the ceremony is
performed throughout Kiriwina (Malinowski 1922: 486). We can assume
therefore that there are two routes by which soulava come to Omarakana.
One, which we have already described, is through acknowledgements of
vassalage. The other, which is a correlate of the ceremony on Kitava,
is through interdistrict, 'endogamous' relations between Tabalu sub-clan
members. The mwali that 'leak' out of the system at Omarakana or
Sinaketa to Kavataria or the Amphletts would be those given by a Tabalu
to a partner of another sub-clen who would pass the vaygu'a on to non-
Tabaluan partners. The rest would pass from Tabalu to Tabalu, acknow-
ledging a community transcending district borders.

*   *   *   *   *

The fieldwork on the 'intra-Tabalu' kula is virtually non-existant;
Malinowski never attended a Kitavan youlawada, never went to Kitava with
To'ulawa to collect mwali, and never witnessed a youlawada ceremony in
Omarakana. Later fieldworkers have not treated the subject. A myth - 'The
Incest Song' - provides some clues, however. In this myth, (Malinowski:
1932: 454-474) a brother and a sister of the Malasi clan copulate with

each other on the beach of Kumilabwaga (Kiriwina Island) and die. After
their death a mint flower sprouts 'through their breasts' (ibid: 457).
A man of Iwa dreams of this couple and canoes to Kitava and Kumilabwaga
in search of them. When he finds their bodies he cuts the upper part of
the plant away, leaving its roots intertwined with the bodies of the
lovers. He then learns the magic which the brother had used to make his
sister lust after him, and takes both the plant and the magic back to
Iwa by way of Kitava. At Iwa he tells his people, from whom the Kitavans
get their mwali:

> I have brought here the point of magic, its eye
> ....The foundation, the lower part...remains in
> Kumilabwaga....If an outsider would come here for
> the sake of the magic, he would bring a magical
> payment in the form of a valuable....For this is
> the erotic payment of your magic....For you are
> the masters of the magic, and you may distribute
> it. You remain here, they may carry it away...
> for you are the foundation of this magic (ibid:
> 458-459).

Malinowski claims this myth relates the origin of the most important
systems of love magic operative in the Trobriand Islands. Although he
does not link the myth with mwasila, or kula magic, he does note the
parallel functions of the two (ibid: 336). The narrative, however,
clearly states that kula exchange sprang from the same violation of the
suvasova taboo which generated passion magic. The medium of kula magic
is the sulumwoya, or aromatic mint plant. These common features are
appropriate to the common function of the two forms of magic; love
magic produces an overwhelming passion which leads to intercourse and
marriage (ibid: 474) while mwasila 'makes the man beautiful, attractive,
and irresistible to his kula partner' (Malinowski 1922: 335-336). It
thus makes the partner soft, unsteady in mind, and eager to give kula
gifts' (Malinowski 1968: 407). Oddly, the Kiriwinans practice mwasila
before they leave Omarakana to give soulava to their Kitavan partners.
Evidently, they wish the recipients of their gifts to engage in some
sort of irrational act of passion.. During overseas kula expeditions
travellers are not allowed to eat a certain kind of red fish (ibid: 336-
339) which is seen as being somehow both inimical to and necessary for
the working of mwasila. Trobriand islanders paint themselves to look
like these fish when they travel to the Amphletts or to Dobu, yet they
believe that if they eat the fish they will become old and ugly.
Malinowski writes 'these ideas hang together somehow, but it would be
unwise and incorrect to put them into any logical order or sequence'
(ibid: 338). The Trobrianders explain the concatenation of mwasila,
red fish, passion, and taboos in 'The Incest Song'. The red fish swim
in the water in which the two siblings copulated. When young men

> ...come and bathe in the Bokaraywata and then return
> to the beach, they make a hole in the sand and say
> some magic. Later on in their sleep they dream of
> the fish. They dream that the fish spring and come
> into that pool. Nose to nose the fish swim....When
> there are two, one female, one male, the youth would
> wash in this water. Going to the village, he would
> get hold of a woman and sleep with her. He would go
> on sleeping with her and make arrangements with her
> family so that they might marry (Malinowski 1932: 458).

These fish cannot be eaten by the young. The dream of the red fish

swimming nose to nose is put to the same use by seekers of love magic
as is the dream of the two siblings committing incest by the man of
Iwa who discovered love magic. To link the male and female red fish with
the Malasi brother and sister is not gratuitous. Just as the plant which
springs from the bodies of the lovers must be separated from its roots
which lie in incest, so must the power to passion, which emanates from
the fish, be taken not from the fish themselves but from the water in
which they swam. To eat the fish is to involve the roots in love magic;
it is to commit incest. Yet these fish are not tabooed during youlawada
(ibid:487).

The youlawada presentation of the Kiriwinan soulava involves an
attack on the kavalapu of the chief's lisaga (house and yam huts). These
decorations mark the chief's status as collector of urigubu tribute from
matrilineages with which he has affinal bonds. The Tabaluan attack on
the kavalapu suggests an attack on the institution of marriage itself,
and the fact that the 'damage is not repaired as it is a mark of
distinction' (Malinowski 1922: 486) suggests that an aspect of Tabalu
status is derived from an opposition to inter-clan marriage.

The anomalies involved in the delivery of male soulava to the
Malasi of Kitava suggest that the youlawada is a ceremonial re-enactment
of the original act of sibling incest which enabled the Malasi to become
'masters of the magic.' The Kiriwinans act like 'husbands' to their
Kitavan partners, but they are not given 'wives' in return for their
sexual attentions. Instead they must wait until their soulava are
carried to Iwa and exchanged for mwali (Malinowski 1922: 480). Yet,
when they are given female vaygu'a the gifts are not given in the form
of 'marriages' as on Kiriwina. The mwali passed from clansman to
clansman are treated as 'sisters' that cannot be taken as wives but
must be given to men of other sub-clans in return for allegiance and
service. The kula path which leads from Iwa through Kitava to the
several Tabaluan villages on Trobriand Island unites all men of the
Malasi clan into a single family which distributes its vaygu'a
women in exchange for service and power. Kula between clansmen in
different districts cancels the distance between the Malasi villages
and transforms the 'here' of the myth to any place where the Malasi
exchange their mwali for 'a magical payment in the form of a valuable...
the erotic payment .. r magic'.

> For you are the masters of the magic, and you
> may distribute it. You remain here, they may
> carry it away...for you are the foundation of
> this magic.

The youlawada is more than just a manipulation of symbols which
allows the Tabalu to give their own kinsmen gifts emblematic of biological
involvment. The transformation of a kinship system, which, by definition,
revolves around sexual and physiological involvments between members of
different clans, into a political system capable of distributing status,
power, and authority, necessitates a moment at which lowly biological
alliances are converted into high status social alliances. The youlawada
presentation, in which the Tabaluan inserts his 'male principle' into
a myth which displaces incestuous passion and replaces it with a desirable
kula commodity, is the symbolic interface at which kinship as marital
alliance becomes kinship as a model for political behaviour. In symbol-
ically sublimating his desire to take a sister as wife and instead passing
er on to members of other matrilineages, the Malasi converts sex to
atus, passion to power.

* * * * * * *

In using the kula ceremonial as a means of transforming itself into the universal wife-giver of a political kinship system, the Kiriwinan Tabalu have turned a traditional activity which looms 'paramount in the tribal life of all the people that participate in it' into a powerful and virtually omnipresent means of maintaining its political hegemony. The kula system is understood by the Trobrianders through the same images with which they view their own models of kin relations. Violations of kula principles, particularly that of the uni-directional, opposed travel of the mwali and soulava, are expected to bring about the same results as violations of marriage rules. These violations are seen as integrally connected with the collapse of culture into nature. The Tabalu, by uniting the distribution of status and power with the exchange of vaygu'a, succeeds in mobilizing an already overdetermined set of traditions, practices and images in support of its clan superiority.

Both Leach and Powell recognize the traditional role of kinship systems as moderators of sub-clan rivalries. However, the inherent instability of a status-dependent, matrilineal social system, suggests that intra-district custom lacks the power to maintain the traditional system. The Kula Ring, however, flows through the district and carries with it not only objects of great veneration but also opportunities to struggle for individual prestige in an arena as old as time and (apparently) much greater than the cockpit of intra-district politics. Its politicisation assures the perpetuity of Tabaluan rule. It would be much easier for a Kiriwinan to kill a chieftain than it would for him to turn away vaygu'a and kula partners. Fortunately for the Tabalu, the Kiriwinan vassal finds great satisfaction in exchanging his freedom for the opportunity to carry the dung of his chieftain's children.

Glen Bowman.

NOTES

1. It is interesting to note that in the battle for superior position between the empowered Tabalu sub-clan and the underling Kwainama, the son of the Tabalu chief, himself a member of the latter sub-clan, attempted to degrade the chief's nephew and potential heir by accusing him of committing adultery with his wife. The son was consequently exiled from his father's village and relations were broken off between the two groups (Malinowski 1932: 10-13). Later, Powell, following up the still active feud, discovered that the sons of the exiled Kwainama man were claiming that their father should have inherited the chieftainship because, as missionaries had declared, patrilineal descent was the only proper mode of inheritance (Powell 1960: 130ff).

2. It should be noted that the only funeral Malinowski describes is that of 'a man of consequence' (ibid: 127). If this man had high political status, like chieftainship, to pass on to his heirs, the necessity of 'cutting off' his sons would be aggravated. The severity of the described ritual cannibalism could well be determined by the value of the status the sons were renouncing.

3. In an inter-clan dispute, Si'ulobubu told To'uluwa, a chief whose superordination he was renouncing, to 'kumkwam popu' ('eat your own excrement'). This insult was made more serious by the addition of To'uluwa's name to the epithet which resulted in the form in which the insult is deadliest' (ibid:377). This verbal dissolution of the chief's name in his biological processes was conside ed so serious that the feud could only be ended when Si'ulobubu's clan allowed To'uluwa's people to kill him for uttering it. Further information on the Trobriander's

extreme measures for keeping ingestion and excretion out of social
space is available in <u>Sexual Life of Savages</u> XIII, i. In this section
the smells of excrement, <u>bwaulo</u>, and the sea witches who threaten kula
transactions are linked (ibid: 379).

4. In fact, even in actual intra-sub-clan relations, the chieftainship
is very rarely contested. It is considered to be a difficult job with
little reward, and is hence as often refused by a chosen heir as it is
accepted (Powell 1960: 125-129). Rivalries over the chieftainship are
exclusively between sons and nephews of the chief; i.e. between sub-clans.

5. There is good reason to believe that the chief's companions are solely
members of his matrilineal clan. Aside from the assertion that <u>veyola</u>
(matrilineal kin)) have rights over all others to the use of the boat,
(Malinowski 1922: 120) Malinowski suggests matrilineal exclusiveness by
mentioning those persons who do not accompany the voyagers. While
discussing the taboo status of the village while its chief and his
companions are away delivering <u>soulava</u>, Malinowski mentions a sexual
indiscretion of 'one of the favourite sons of To'uluwa (the chief),
called Nabwasu'a, who had not gone on the expedition' (ibid: 484).
Such exclusion from a cherished activity of a 'favourite son' would
appear to be inexplicable were it not mandatory. He also mentions
that commoners, whom he distinguishes radically from chiefs and other
persons of authority (ibid: 52), join members of other villages in
requesting <u>mwali</u> from the Kiriwinan chief during a sort of status
distribution (ibid: 473) in which the other villagers, having accompanied
the chief on his collection voyage, don't have to participate.

6. The chief's companions also return with <u>mwali</u>, and it can be assumed
that, like their chief, they distribute some of it to members of other
sub-clans within the village and district and save some to give to
Tabalu partners and others in Sinaketa. There is not enough data to
confirm whether their distributions also function to assert sub-clan
status.

7. When Malinowski speaks of Kitavan <u>mwali</u> he always attributes its
presence in Kiriwina to a trip by To'uluwa and his crew to Kitava
(Malinowski 1922: 280, 471-472). He does not chronicle a single <u>mwali</u>
presentation by visiting Kitavans, and unless we assume that there is a
second sort of <u>mwali</u> exchange in Kitava which is not under the control
of the Tabalu (which seems unlikely) we will have to attribute Malinowski's
statement that the Kitavans are 'ambidextrous in the kula and have to fetch
and carry both articles overseas' (ibid: 488) to his oft-evinced wish
to make all kula transactions fit within a single all-encompassing pattern.

8. I assume that since there is a Malasi clan of Kitava there must also
be a Tabalu sub-clan which rules the main village. As I can find no
data to confirm this assumption, I will throughout the paper refer to the
Kitavan partners of the Kiriwinan Tabalu as Malasi.

9. The Malasi clan has 'the reputation of being the most persistent
exogamy breakers and committers of incest' (Malinowski 1932: 432).

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P. Bourdieu: Outline of a Theory of Practice.   Trans. R. Nice.
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      The peculiar style of Bourdieu's study betrays its unmistakeably
French origin. Although it is perhaps verbose in parts, its elegance
and unity make it rewarding reading. It is a significant contribution
to a critique of contemporary anthropological practice. In general
terms, it might be said to be an intervention of the same order as
Leach's Political Systems of Highland Burma.   Bourdieu uses his own
extensive and detailed ethnographic material on Kabylia (Algeria) in
order to demonstrate problems in anthropological interpretation. What
Leach's exposition achieved in the refinement of the discipline in
the 'fifties and 'sixties, Bourdieu's may well achieve in the 'seventies.

      Bourdieu's central problem is the relationship between the mode
of production of knowledge and the circumstances from which it arises.
Phenomenological knowledge and objectivist knowledge (structuralist
hermenentics) are said to be limited by the social and theoretical
possibilities necessary in, and for, their generation. We thus need
a 'theory of practice' and a 'theory of theory' which through reflexive
evaluation and self-criticism will be capable of transcending the
ideological relations inherent in objectivist knowledge, and placing
that knowledge firmly on its feet again.

      Bourdieu's critique of much contemporary anthropology is founded
on an evaluation of Saussurean linguistics. By positing the priority
of speech over language only as a chronological relation, and by inverting
the equation on entering the domain of the 'logical conditions of
deciphering', Saussurean linguistics is seen to produce an intellectualist
theory which only emphasises the relations between signs and reduces their
practical function to that of communication or knowledge. Questioning
the Saussurean assumption which sees the senders and receivers of
messages as indifferent, while emphasising the abstration based on the
structure of the message itself, Bourdieu writes:

            ....reception depends to a largedegree on the objective
            structure of the relations between the interacting agents'
            objective position in the social structure (e.g. relations
            of competition or objective antagonism, or relations of
            power and authority, etc.), which govern the form
            and content of the interactions observed in a particular
            conjuncture (25).

      From the position taken by structuralism, where the 'rule' sub-
stitutes for the study of strategy, a distortion arises involving
kinship, myth, ritual and calendrical systems. In eliciting a
genealogy, the anthropologist abstracts the domain of kinship from the
total social and economic configuration, and sets it aside as a closed
system. Bourdieu suggests that this often leads the anthropologist
of 'intellectualist' persuasion to reproduce ideological relations from
the particular standpoint of the representative of a particular lineage
group who acts as informer. What Bourdieu calls for is a widening of the
contextual field to include extra-kinship relations which fashion specific
expressions of kinship ideology in terms of particular interests and of

relations within, and between, lineage groups.

> Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle
> presented to an observer who takes up a point of view
> on the action, who stands back so as to observe
> it and, transferring into the object the principles of
> his relations to the object, conceives of it as a
> totality intended for cognition alone, in which all
> interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges (96).

Not only are kinship relations divorced from their contextual
reality, but a similar fate befalls classificatory systems and taxonomies
treated from the standpoint of a structural or cognitive anthropology of
the imagination. In the derivation of the agrarian calendar of a people,
the anthropologist constructs a 'synoptic calendar' in which he attempts
to correlate coherently the maximum amount of information derived from
his informants and from his own observations. Establishing a coherent
system of thought, he ignores contradiction in favour of ideal abstraction.
Again the fault stems from the particular methodological assumptions
inherent in Saussurean objectivism.

> Symbolic systems owe their practical coherence, that is,
> their regularities, and also their irregularities and even
> incoherencies (both equally necessary because inscribed
> in the logic of their genesis and functioning) to the fact
> that they are the product of practices which cannot
> perform their practical functions except insofar as
> they bring into play, in their practical state,
> principles which are not only coherent - i.e. capable
> of engendering coherent practices compatible with the
> objective conditions - but also practical in the
> sense of convenient, i.e. immediately mastered
> and manageable because obeying a poor
> and economical logic (109).

Whilst posing as a critique of Saussurean structuralism, cognitive
anthropology and phenomenology, and advocating a 'purified' and self-
critical empiricism, the book nevertheless fails to free itself from
structuralist jargon. It is possible, to a large degree, to sympathise
with Bourdieu's challenging critique of Saussurean objectivism and the
limitations he poses generally on the validity of human knowledge.
However, the sweeping generalisations which are at its foundations, and
the fact that he has tended to give us a picture, not of the practice
of anthropology, but of an abstracted theory of practice, leaves us
with some reservations.

Moreover, one central concept is unclear: through the use of 'habitus'
we are led to expect a radically new view or revelation of the human
condition. It would appear, at least on a first reading, that the notion
of habitus is only a means of filling the gap left after the expulsion
of 'structuralist hermenentics' with a category which merely re-draws
the boundary of closed-system analysis, and which continues to threaten
with obscurity the relations between ethnic groups and the metropolitan
structure - a shortcoming of much of Bourdieu's previous ethnographic work
on Kabylia. Finally, the concept of habitus appears to limit the bounds
of human freedom itself to the extent that we derive an almost static

and self-regulating system without any potential for change.

These misgivings do not detract from the importance of this work. Bourdieu has a rare aptitude for grasping and bringing to notice the relations and operations which lie just under the surface of 'stark reality', and which often evade our attention.

Anthony Shelton

John W. Connor. Tradition and Change in Three Generations of Japanese Americans 1977, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, xiv, 356pp. $18.

The Japanese Americans would seem to lend themselves(perhaps more than other ethnic groups in America) to the kind of ordered analysis exemplified by John Connor's study. Their own tidy classifications into first, second and third generations (the fourth are now being born) is a convenient preliminary to a comparative study of change, and Connor has made full use of it. The specific community under observation is that resident in Sacramento, California, and the author's stated aim is 'to determine the degree to which the various generations have retained certain characteristics which are distinctively Japanese or have replaced them with those which are distinctively American'.

To this purpose he compiles from appropriate literature lists of Japanese and American characteristics -- the former, as 'a base line', those which the first generation are supposed to have brought with them-- and orders them so that'they clearly and distinctly contrast with each other'. He then applies a variety of 'research instruments' to each generation in order to assess their expression of these characterstics, 'psychological and behaviorial', and thereby discover their 'degree of acculturation'. These instruments are of two types, designed to illustrate both overt and covert forms of acculturation: the first through biographical details, the second through four psychological tests.

Sometimes these tests are also administered to Caucasian 'control' groups, but the validity of the control, and indeed of the characteristics themselves, are brought into question by apparent evidence in the results from one group of anthropology students at Sacramento State College of a 'merging of the two value systems'. The Caucasion students, who appear to show a greater consideration of others and interest in collectivity than anticipated, have 'moved more toward some of the Japanese characteristics' while the Japanese are adopting American ones such as self-assertion and individualism. However, even the third generation Japanese, particularly the women, apparently remain quite traditionally Japanese in several respects, not least significant of which must be their methods of child care which apparently encourage a continuation of dependency needs. This and their propensity for intermarriage -- records for the decade preceding the work show over 70% endogamy -- would tend, as Connor points out, to preserve a Japanese identity for several generations to come.

A possible drawback of using the Japanese generation categories is the probable elimination of those Japanese who marry out and become too acculturated to remain within this classification, but this point is not raised. Certainly the sample was not random, nor intended to be. Interviews and tests were made only with'those who expressed a willingness to cooperate'. Even where one test -- The Ethnic Identity Questionnaire -- was mailed to a

random sample of Japanese names in the area no attempt was made to follow up those which were not returned. The results would therefore seem biassed in favour of those motivated to complete questionnaires -- possibly a Japanese characteristic in its own right. Similarly, a professed reliance throughout on the goodwill of the participants -- 'the guiding criterion...was one of simple availability'-- must have preselected a sample inclined to cooperate, and ethnographers in Japan have observed this trait in their subjects.

The whole investigation is shot through with personal overtones. The author's wife is Japanese, and the first participants were acquaintances of the family, who subsequently drew in their own acquaintances, where willing. To save time, and increase the size of the sample, a class of interested third generation students was enlisted to make further investigations. Another control group used was a working class sample in Western Pennsylvania 'accomplished by mailing copies of the test to our relatives, who in turn distributed them to friends in the region'. Control over this group must have been minimal.

The book appears at first sight to be written in the true spirit of the pseudo-scientific approach currently in vogue in American studies of society, and with limitations such as those mentioned above, it does nothing to convert the sceptic to this cause. However, if it fails to provide a convincing scientific exposition of an anyway elusive 'degree of acculturation', it nevertheless provides a good deal of solid and sympathetic information about the way the Japanese Americans are adapting to the society of their adoption.

Joy Hendry.

J. Kuper (ed.) The Anthropologists' Cookbook. 1977. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 230pp. £4.75.

In many ways Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's aphorism from La Physiologie du goût, published in 1825, 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are', is applicable to The Anthropologists' Cookbook. The values by which people order their lives take into account the way they view food, the manner in which they cook, and, of course, what they choose to eat.

The Anthropologists' Cookbook offers us insights into the varied culinary attitudes of selected societies around the world, as well as explaining different techniques used in these societies for procuring and preparing food.

Contributors include Claude Levi-Strauss and Mary Douglas, who wrote the introduction, and the accent is very heavily on anthropological material. About forty of the contributors are anthropologists and the rest includes a variety of writers of other persuasions, including a diplomat and a student of literature. Several articles in The Anthropologists' Cookbook are written in the style of the traditional popular cookery book, focussing on particular aspects of cookery (e.g. bread), particular countries or regions, or particular philosophies of cuisine. The contribution by Lorna J. Sass, an accomplished cookery book writer, is written very much to this order. Her 'Serve it Forth: Food and Feasting in Medieval England,' gives to the reader the flavour of a Medieval banquet, and supplies the historical background to Medieval feasting.

Strangely, in a cookbook, some of the contributors do not actually include a recipe, maintaining that there are no substitutes available for the ingredients used in the dishes of the societies they discuss.

While a chef respects their reasons on culinary grounds, it would be pleasant to be able to get some idea of the taste of the cuisine they describe. Some contributions are of help in understanding European cuisines - our food habits are too often taken for granted. In his article, 'On Strata in the Kitchen, or the Archaeology of Tasting' Joseph Rykwert shows that an understanding of the current fashions in eating 'natural foods' and the popular plastic haute cuisine can come only from an understanding of the social development of French and Italian cuisine.

As an example of the interest of anthropologists in the technology of simpler societies, the cookery-book gives us instructions for building an earth oven in which to roast a stray dog and other ethnic foodstuffs for a suburban garden party. The illustrations in The Anthropologists' Cookbook are by Joan Koster. They are attractive, informative line-drawings about the culinary subjects they depict, such as butchering a sow, milking ewes, or catching a puffin.

Nations tend to be conservative in their gastronomical habits. 'What is patriotism,' asked Lin Yutang, 'but the love of the good things we ate in our childhood?' This book is for the less conservative, those prepared to try some unusual cooking. At the same time, such a celebration of the joys of the table epitomises, in an unusually apt way, the great divide between the subsistence economies from which many of the recipes are drawn, and the society of those likely to buy the book and attempt its recipes.

<div style="text-align: right;">Scott Ewing</div>

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each other on the beach of Kumilabwaga (Kiriwina Island) and die. After
their death a mint flower sprouts 'through their breasts' (ibid: 457).
A man of Iwa dreams of this couple and canoes to Kitava and Kumilabwaga
in search of them. When he finds their bodies he cuts the upper part of
the plant away, leaving its roots intertwined with the bodies of the
lovers. He then learns the magic which the brother had used to make his
sister lust after him, and takes both the plant and the magic back to
Iwa by way of Kitava. At Iwa he tells his people, from whom the Kitavans
get their mwali:

> I have brought here the point of magic, its eye
> ....The foundation, the lower part...remains in
> Kumilabwaga....If an outsider would come here for
> the sake of the magic, he would bring a magical
> payment in the form of a valuable....For this is
> the erotic payment of your magic....For you are
> the masters of the magic, and you may distribute
> it. You remain here, they may carry it away...
> for you are the foundation of this magic (ibid:
> 458-459).

Malinowski claims this myth relates the origin of the most important
systems of love magic operative in the Trobriand Islands. Although he
does not link the myth with mwasila, or kula magic, he does note the
parallel functions of the two (ibid: 336). The narrative, however,
clearly states that kula exchange sprang from the same violation of the
suvasova taboo which generated passion magic. The medium of kula magic
is the sulumwoya, or aromatic mint plant. These common features are
appropriate to the common function of the two forms of magic; love
magic produces an overwhelming passion which leads to intercourse and
marriage (ibid: 474) while mwasila 'makes the man beautiful, attractive,
and irresistible to his kula partner' (Malinowski 1922: 335-336). It
thus makes the partner soft, unsteady in mind, and eager to give kula
gifts' (Malinowski 1968: 407). Oddly, the Kiriwinans practice mwasila
before they leave Omarakana to give soulava to their Kitavan partners.
Evidently, they wish the recipients of their gifts to engage in some
sort of irrational act of passion. During overseas kula expeditions
travellers are not allowed to eat a certain kind of red fish (ibid: 336-
339) which is seen as being somehow both inimical to and necessary for
the working of mwasila. Trobriand islanders paint themselves to look
like these fish when they travel to the Amphletts or to Dobu, yet they
believe that if they eat the fish they will become old and ugly.
Malinowski writes 'these ideas hang together somehow, but it would be
unwise and incorrect to put them into any logical order or sequence'
(ibid: 338). The Trobrianders explain the concatenation of mwasila,
red fish, passion, and taboos in 'The Incest Song'. The red fish swim
in the water in which the two siblings copulated. When young men

> ...come and bathe in the Bokaraywata and then return
> to the beach, they make a hole in the sand and say
> some magic. Later on in their sleep they dream of
> the fish. They dream that the fish spring and come
> into that pool. Nose to nose the fish swim....When
> there are two, one female, one male, the youth would
> wash in this water. Going to the village, he would
> get hold of a woman and sleep with her. He would go
> on sleeping with her and make arrangements with her
> family so that they might marry (Malinowski 1932: 458).

These fish cannot be eaten by the young. The dream of the red fish

swimming nose to nose is put to the same use by seekers of love magic
as is the dream of the two siblings committing incest by the man of
Iwa who discovered love magic. To link the male and female red fish with
the Malasi brother and sister is not gratuitous. Just as the plant which
springs from the bodies of the lovers must be separated from its roots
which lie in incest, so must the power to passion, which emanates from
the fish, be taken not from the fish themselves but from the water in
which they swam. To eat the fish is to involve the roots in love magic;
it is to commit incest. Yet these fish are not tabooed during youlawada
(ibid:487).

The youlawada presentation of the Kiriwinan soulava involves an
attack on the kavalapu of the chief's lisaga (house and yam huts). These
decorations mark the chief's status as collector of urigubu tribute from
matrilineages with which he has affinal bonds. The Tabaluan attack on
the kavalapu suggests an attack on the institution of marriage itself,
and the fact that the 'damage is not repaired as it is a mark of
distinction' (Malinowski 1922: 486) suggests that an aspect of Tabalu
status is derived from an opposition to inter-clan marriage.

The anomalies involved in the delivery of male soulava to the
Malasi of Kitava suggest that the youlawada is a ceremonial re-enactment
of the original act of sibling incest which enabled the Malasi to become
'masters of the magic.' The Kiriwinana act like 'husbands' to their
Kitavan partners, but they are not given 'wives' in return for their
sexual attentions. Instead they must wait until their soulava are
carried to Iwa and exchanged for mwali (Malinowski 1922: 480). Yet,
when they are given female vaygu'a the gifts are not given in the form
of 'marriages' as on Kiriwina. The mwali passed from clansman to
clansman are treated as 'sisters' that cannot be taken as wives but
must be given to men of other sub-clans in return for allegiance and
service. The kula path which leads from Iwa through Kitava to the
several Tabaluan villages on Trobriand Island unites all men of the
Malasi clan into a single family which distributes its vaygu'a
women in exchange for service and power. Kula between clansmen in
different districts cancels the distance between the Malasi villages
and transforms the 'here' of the myth to any place where the Malasi
exchange their mwali for 'a magical payment in the form of a valuable...
the erotic payment ..r magic'.

> For you are the masters of the magic, and you
> may distribute it. You remain here, they may
> carry it away...for you are the foundation of
> this magic.

The youlawada is more than just a manipulation of symbols which
allows the Tabalu to give their own kinsmen gifts emblematic of biological
involvment. The transformation of a kinship system, which, by definition,
revolves around sexual and physiological involvments between members of
different clans, into a political system capable of distributing status,
power, and authority, necessitates a moment at which lowly biological
alliances are converted into high status social alliances. The youlawada
presentation, in which the Tabaluan inserts his 'male principle' into
a myth which displaces incestuous passion and replaces it with a desirable
kula commodity, is the symbolic interface at which kinship as marital
alliance becomes kinship as a model for political behaviour. In symbol-
ically sublimating his desire to take a sister as wife and instead passing
her on to members of other matrilineages, the Malasi converts sex to
status, passion to power.

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