

MYTH, HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY:  
SOME RECENT BOOKS

I

MARCEL DETIENNE, *Dionysos Slain* (translated by Leonard and Mireille Muellner), Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1979. xiii, 130 pp., Illustrations. £6.50.

This is the third book by M. Detienne to receive an English translation since 1977. The other two volumes, *The Gardens of Adonis: Spices in Greek Mythology* and *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Society and Culture* with J-P. Vernant have both appeared in England in translations by Janet Lloyd. It should be noted that *Dionysos Slain* is a bargain next to these two texts which sell for upwards of £20 each.

In addition to considerations of value, *Dionysos Slain* - well translated by the Muellners from the 1977 original (*Dionysos Mis à Mort*) - will no doubt receive wide circulation for its creative approach to Greek mythology. Of course classicists have long been familiar with the work of Detienne and his colleagues Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Nacquet. Together these three guide a team of researchers/students at the Centre of Comparative Research on Ancient Societies in Paris (in fact they occupy the old house of Auguste de Comte in Rue Monsieur Le Prince). This *équipe*, founded in 1965, is unique in the divisive world of Classical Studies for its relaxed and co-operative attitude toward research. Tribute to this is a long string of publications ranging from *Problèmes de la Guerre*, edited in 1968 by J-P. Vernant, to Vernant and Detienne's recent *La Cuisine du Sacrifice* of 1979, with more works planned or in press.

In recent years the popularity of their approach has been spreading to other fields including anthropology. A small sign of this was the Huxley Memorial Lecture of 1980 in which Sir Edmund Leach (always swift to seize a new idea) included a laudatory reference to Detienne's work on the symbolism of spices in antiquity. For all this, it is not simply a matter of anthropologists finding the research of classicists to be of interest. The reverse seems to be the case and Detienne has entered our discourse through his own interest in anthropology, especially the structural analysis of myth as formulated by Lévi-Strauss.

It is heartening to see anthropologists and classicists once again collaborating and exchanging ideas. This has occurred at intervals in the past and has always given rise to lasting contributions such as Fustel's *La Cité Antique* (which stands at the origins of anthropology proper), Jane Harrison's *Themis* and E.R. Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational*.

Detienne's extension of structural analysis to the study of Greek myths has been particularly gratifying since literate Greece had in the past proved a sticking-point for Lévi-Strauss. Not only had the master been unable to answer the criticisms of Ricoeur ('Structure et Hermeneutique' in *Esprit*, 1963), who defied him to apply his methods to the texts of classical antiquity, but his own analysis of the Oedipus myth was fundamentally unsatisfying. This latter study, which the author admits was 'an example treated in arbitrary fashion', in fact, ignored primary sources and borrowed from Marie Delcourt's sociological interpretation made ten years earlier. Detienne critically points this out in his polemical first chapter entitled 'The Greeks Aren't Like the Others'. The analysis of the Oedipus myth was a failure precisely because the author neglected to take into account alternative versions of the myth as well as the ethnographic context of Ancient Greece. These oversights when corrected produced the highly convincing analysis of the 'Geste d'Asdiwal' and served as basic principles in the *Mythologiques*.

It was left to Hellenists such as Detienne and Vernant to apply structuralism more or less systematically to the corpus of Greek myths. Their particular method has had the advantage of developing in Paris and in dialogue with Lévi-Strauss himself (cf. L-S's review of *Les Jardins d'Adonis* in *L'Homme*, Vol. XII, pp. 100-2). Other attempts to apply structural analysis to ancient texts seem to distort the original ideas (in this regard cf. Momigliano's review of Kirk in *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1971, p. 450). Detienne's harsh criticism of work along these lines in Britain reveals that the Anglo-Gallic split over these matters has not yet been resolved:

... the English anthropologist Edmund Leach came to the extravagant conclusion that the mediating aspect of myth was its only function. This functionalist misunderstanding, which made myth a logical tool designed to assure mediation between two contrary terms or situations, led the same anthropologist and several others in his train to propagate a certain number of analyses of Greek or Biblical myths whose least deniable originality is to prove that one can call oneself structuralist while continuing to ignore the procedures and means elaborated by structural analysis for a decade or more.

The novelty of Detienne's approach is that it studies the Greeks as if they were no different from any other small-scale society. This has met with criticism from classical scholars who believe that the Greeks were the privileged literate inventors of philosophy. An extremely historical approach has also long held the field - one which trusts that there is an authentic and original version of a text to which later variants owe paternity. In his *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Societies*, Geoffrey Kirk, Professor of Classics at Cambridge, has argued that Greek myths

are quite heavily polluted in the form in which we know them. They show many marks of progressive remodelling and in particular of the exaggeration of folktale elements at the expense of speculative or explanatory elements.

In another context he has asserted that human idiosyncrasy, chance historical events or local perceptions are bound to have a determining influence (*Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1972, pp. 568 ff.).

Detienne, coming from a Durkheimian perspective, responds that the relation between myth and social structure is *not* one of representation which literacy or local variation could easily destroy. The meaning of a myth will only emerge after variations as well as 'the totality of information about all facts of social, spiritual and material life of the human group' have been considered. There is no version which is a priori more authentic than any other.

One realizes that Detienne has taken a strong stance counter to the status quo in the conservative field of Classical Studies. At times the going has been rough for the Belgian scholar and the acceptance of his ideas far from automatic. His thesis for the degree of Docteur de Recherche (III<sup>e</sup> cycle) studied two systems of thought in conflict. Entitled *La Notion de Daimon dans le Pythagorisme Ancien: De La Pensée Religieuse à la Pensée Philosophique* (Liège- Paris 1963), its publication was held up for four years. This non-appearance in print made it difficult for him to find a university post and subsequently caused him to cross the Belgian border in favour of a position at L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (VI section).

His recent articles return to this early thesis by once again examining the shift in meaning of the Greek word *muthos* from its original sense as 'speech' to its later meaning as 'untrue speech', 'fable', or 'tale'. This development occurred precisely as a competing term *logos* ('accurate expression' or 'reason') took hold. Myth took on form as opposed to or described by *logos*. In this sense it was a *discours de l'altérité* as Detienne puts it; the speech of one's opponents or of a past age. We should note that to label something as myth, no matter how innocuously done, is to take a very definite position toward it.

One of the consummate achievements of Ancient Greece - already in evidence by the time of Plato - was the construction of the term *mythologia*. Here the two discourses met and *logos* sought to describe *muthos*.

The Greek ethnographers were both the emulators and precursors of structural anthropology. Their exemplary culture thought up the vivid *pensée mythique* which in surpassing itself gave rise to a logic of forms.

Building on this the Greek undertook to think his own mythology by way of interpretation (Lévi-Strauss, in Bellour and Clément (eds.), *Textes de et sur Claude Lévi-Strauss*, Paris 1979, pp. 175-6).

Yet the emergence of reason did not wholly destroy the alternative discourse of *muthos*. Like E-P's Azande who possess an elaborate pharmacopoeia and procedures for classifying and treating illness but still persist with the use of magic, the Greeks preserved a similar duality. *Muthos* alternates quite happily with *logos* even through the philosophical texts of Plato and Aristotle. In Greece, then, we receive quite literal substantiation for the structuralist claim that myth is an alternative form to philosophy.

Detienne's methodological introduction gives way to a second chapter ('The Wind Rose') which plunges directly into an analysis of the hunter as represented by Adonis and Atalanta. As he unravels the myths, one is impressed by his control over primary and secondary sources. He carefully develops the theme of the hunter as someone who spends long hours in the wilds, assimilating him/herself to a beast of prey. This entails neglect for the institutions of the city, especially marriage.

On the one hand there was the seductive hunter, the youthful Adonis who only hunted animals which fled before him - hares, stags or does. He was associated in Greek art with the panther - an animal which was domesticated in ancient Cyrene and used as a hunting dog. Yet Detienne does not stop here. He discovers that the panther was thought to be unique by the ancient Greeks in that it emitted a fragrant, perfume-like smell which helped it to seduce its prey. This animal was the perfect emblem for Adonis himself. Born from Myrrh (a spice plant) and beloved of both Aphrodite and Persephone, he represented too highly-tuned a sexuality to be suitable for marriage.

At the opposite extreme was the figure of Atalanta. In childhood she excelled in running and hunting to the point of throwing her very femininity into doubt. She refused to take a husband and in fact devised a contest to challenge all suitors. She would give each one a start of a few paces and while the man was naked she pursued him armed with a sword. She thus inverted the usual marriage contest which pitted man against man for the hand of the bride. Atalanta turned the contest into a hunt where the suitor was the quarry.

Adonis and Atalanta stood to either side of the sociable compromise of marriage and Detienne isolates this question of marriage as the central speculation of these myths. Adonis met his end gored to death by the tusks of a wild boar. His body was found in a lettuce patch, a plant symbolically opposite to the hot, perfumed ethereal world of spices. The lettuce was associated with moisture, impotence and decomposition. The blood of Adonis was transformed into the anemone or wind rose, an odourless plant with an exceptionally short blooming season. Atalanta in turn was finally outdistanced by a suitor known as The Black Hunter. Part of the reason for her defeat, according to several versions, was that Aphrodite offered her a gift of apples after the chase had begun. Forced to gather up the fruits as they rolled off the path Atalanta was outrun. Apples of course were bound up with the idea of marriage in Ancient

Greek thought (in fact this association of apples, quinces and pomegranates with each other and with marriage has persisted into the folklore of modern Greece, where pomegranates are still thrown at weddings). Here is a typical example of how Detienne is able to fill out the ethnographic context to determine which role each culture attributes to a plant or animal within a conceptual system.

In any case, the moment the contest is over, Atalanta and her *de facto* husband are seized by desire and copulate wildly in the sacred space of a temple. For this they are punished by being turned into lions, predators *par excellence*, which were believed to have no sex life. As Detienne concludes, it is 'as if with one sweep of the hands the Greek imagination were exorcising spectres subverting the dominant model of male-female relations'.

Forgive me for having given away a part of the book's plot. This analysis deserves to be read in its entirety; particularly the final two chapters which explore the question of sacrifice via the Orphic myth of Dionysos slain.

If there is any one question or objection which one could have with M. Detienne's work it has to do with his sources and how he chooses to limit his field. The enquiry is almost certainly into Greek culture and society. Even though Latin authors were heirs to the Greek tradition one must ask if their accounts were not modifications of material in a way similar to that in which the Adonis myth was modified from a Semitic myth about vegetation to a Greek speculation on sexuality and marriage. Within the confines of Greek culture itself it is perhaps possible to rely on sources through Byzantine literature all the way to contemporary folklore and anthropological studies. Reportedly the most recent effort of the Centre of Comparative Research on Ancient Societies, a volume entitled *La Cuisine du Sacrifice*, includes an essay on contemporary Greek practices. This might also be the place to register an observation made by Evans-Pritchard some twenty years ago:

An anthropological training, including fieldwork would be especially valuable in the investigation of earlier periods of history in which institutions and modes of thought resemble in many respects those of the simpler people we study. For such periods the historian struggles to determine a people's mentality from a few texts and anthropologists can not help wondering whether the conclusions he draws from them truly represent their thought (from 'Anthropology and History' in his *Essays in Social Anthropology*).

True enough, owing to the absence of any 5th-century Athenian informants we have no assurance that our formulations are correct. Furthermore, save for the occasional archaeological discovery, the field of enquiry and the sources of data are closed. In light of this classical philologists such as the reviewer of *Dionysos Mis à Mort* in *Revue des Etudes Grecques* (1978, pp. 201-3) prefer to shy away from any conclusions beyond what is preserved in writing or other solid forms of representation.

Detienne's enterprise consists, as he says, in treating the Greeks no differently than 'the Tsimshian, those salmon fishermen'. As this is the case one wonders in what ways a fieldwork period, perhaps in the Middle East or Mediterranean (especially Greece) would benefit Detienne or others attempting similar approaches to Ancient History. The one agreed privilege of fieldwork is that it grants the researcher a holistic perspective. This would indeed be an antidote for periods where the arbitrariness of the evidence would otherwise present a narrow or distorted picture of the way things were.

CHARLES STEWART

MYTH, HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

II

M.P.K. SORRENSON, *Maori Origins and Migrations: The Genesis of Some Pakeha Myths and Legends*, [n.p.]: Auckland University Press and Oxford University Press 1979. 95 pp., Illustrations, Index. £4.50 (Paper).

It is easy to be enthusiastic about *Maori Origins and Migrations*. This book of revised lectures is both witty and delightfully brief. At times it is humorous, yet its message is frequently profound.

*Maori Origins and Migrations* is not, as might be supposed from this short title, a final answer to the age-old question of when, from where, and how the Maori came to New Zealand. Rather, Sorrenson's book is about the nature and history of the question itself: what accounts for the fascination with Maori demography, what forms the study has assumed, and how prevailing social theories have influenced the question of Maori origins at different times in history. These are a few of the topics which the author covers in a mere ninety-five pages.

Why has so much attention been given to the question of Maori origins, and why have the Maori been the focus of so much intellectual debate from the eighteenth century onwards? Part of the answer rests in the fact that Maori society was both complex and alien; so developed was its social order that a surprising number of travellers willingly drew direct structural analogies between Maori and European customs. From the time of Captain James Cook, complex Maori institutions were periodically used by cultural relativists to illustrate the social meaning of exotic practices. More often, however, the Maori became the leading example in a number of grand social theories,

the contradictions among which certainly support Sorrenson's main argument: 'ethnographers,' in his own words, 'nearly always found in Maori culture what they expected to find ... the ethnographic record on the Maori is a fairly faithful reproduction of changing fashions in anthropology.' Thus, while the Maori played an important part in the romanticization of exotic peoples from the time of Rousseau and the *philosophes*, they were also proof for Rousseau's enemies that reason without culture, in Crozet's words, 'is but a brutal instinct'. As Sorrenson amply shows, the history of Maori studies is often one of blind enthusiasm for a variety of intellectual vogues, resulting more often than not in a renewed misunderstanding of Maori society.

How much has enthusiasm for intellectual fashion actually governed the history of Maori studies? To Sorrenson, the evidence that it has done so is clear. Some of the examples he recalls are particularly instructive. Especially abhorrent was the use of social Darwinism to support fascist arguments about the so-called primitivism of the Maori. Here the Maori were used to illustrate the inferior stages of social order. Other examples of theoretical excess cannot today but seem absurd. Among these one must certainly include the practitioners of craniometry such as A.S. Thompson who, in true Swiftian fashion, attempted to determine the capacities of the Maori mind by measuring the quantity of millet seed a Maori skull could hold. But the most compelling evidence for the controlling influence of intellectual fashion on Maori history comes by way of negative example: ironically, it was the unschooled Cook who remains to this day among the keenest known observers of the Maori. The fact that he did not visit the Maori in search of answers to this or that sociological question cannot be easily overlooked as a factor in his level-headed account.

Sorrenson however does stop short of stating that Cook's perceptiveness and his lack of formal training are actually connected phenomena, and it is to the author's credit that the main point of *Maori Origins and Migrations* - that enthusiasm distorts our perceptions - is made in a way which is not heavy-handed. Rather than being dragged off to new, and yet more abstract, horizons, the reader finds Sorrenson's message to be remarkably open-minded. One look at the stunning illustrations (if only there were more) of Maori canoes sliding gracefully in front of Arcadian landscapes, or being tossed mercilessly by a furious sea, reminds us of the romanticizing which both inspires great achievements and often makes our own cultural history look rather odd in retrospect.

Fortunately, there are occasions when the debunking of an absurd intellectual contrivance need not wait for the sobering influence of time. One of the most amusing examples that Sorrenson recalls is a spoof written by A.S. Atkinson, a late nineteenth-century lawyer and linguist. In his parody, Atkinson inverted philological convention by using Maori words to illuminate Aryan ways. To show how his new method worked, he proceeded to explain the origin of the phrase, 'a cock and bull story':

The Maori word which explained it was *kakapo*, the ground parrot. *Kaka* was the Sanskrit for cock and *po* was bull: *kakapo* would thus mean 'the bull-like *kaka* or cock'. All of this proved, Atkinson said, that the Aryans had once visited New Zealand, seen the terrifying *kakapo*, 'a cock just like a bull', and returned home to tell the tale to those who had stayed behind ....

As with the rest of the book's humour, the message here, however, is quite serious: 'if they are not careful,' Sorrenson reminds us, 'scholars will find what they are looking for.'

DAVID NAPIER

MYTH, HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

III

JOSEPH C. MILLER (ed.), *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*, Folkestone: Wm. Dawson & Sons Ltd., and Hamden: Archon Books 1980. xii, 279 pp., Index, Maps, Illustrations. £17.00.

The study of African history is sometimes viewed with scepticism by anthropologists. Historians were slow to recognize the value of oral traditions, but when they did they embraced them with almost religious fervour. Structural anthropologists in particular have criticized the historians' use of oral material, and the tone of their criticism has sometimes resembled that of an irritated old hunter trying to protect his preserve from the poaching of inexperienced newcomers. This book is a serious attempt to answer, without rancour, the objections of anthropologists. It is not a defence of the naïve euhemerism of an earlier generation of African historians, but it is a reaffirmation of the value of myths and other oral literature as historical evidence.

To acknowledge the validity of some anthropological criticisms is not to accept that oral traditions are useless as historical documents. The anthropologist who has tended to regard myth itself as the object of study has done so by ignoring the historical data embedded in the structure of the myth, or the evidence from parallel sources that can corroborate inferences drawn from the myths. Too often this arises from the anthropologist's limited view of history. Miller points out that Leach's dismissal of oral traditions as historical sources



because they cannot provide 'a complete and accurate reconstruction of the past, as it really is', is based on an assumption that the vast majority of historians have long ceased to hold as a working definition of history. For historians, history is 'the study of the remnants of the past that happen to survive into the present, which they can use as bases for drawing probabilistic inferences about what the past may have been like'. In this respect myths and oral traditions are very much a part of the evidence of the past, and the essays in the book demonstrate just what can be extracted from them.

The greatest value of Miller's introduction is his emphasis on the role of the 'oral' historian in structuring and interpreting the remnants of the past for his own society. The oral historian is not a passive transmitter, he is the creator of a coherent explanation of what the past means to the present. Almost all of the contributors demonstrate an awareness of the craft of the oral historian, and by examining the materials at his disposal they are able to discover just what remnants of the past can be found in the structure of his narratives.

Four of the contributors, Yoder, Schecter, Sigwalt and Packard, examine the work of oral historians in constructing and relating origin myths for various kingdoms in Zaïre. All of the authors make some use of the structural analysis of myth, but they do so mainly to identify the models that oral historians have used for their narratives. Each finds historical data within the myths. Changes in interpretation still leave traces of earlier interpretations. Data found in a myth need not be ahistorical merely because they are presented in cliché form. Using evidence from written, linguistic, genealogical and other nontestimonial sources the historian can construct a general outline of the history of a society which can then be used to study the myths themselves. The myths do not 'prove' the historical construct, but they can give a firmer outline to the past. The clichés of the local world-view may be applied to historical events to emphasise the lessons a society has learned from its own past, and while myths might not be able to give us a chronology of real events, they can give us a summary of the broad trends in a society's past.

This approach is revealing. Yoder shows how the Luba hunter-king motif, which was used by earlier Kanyok chiefdoms to legitimize claims to authority, was given a twist at the time the Kanyok broke away from the Luba. In the Citend myth the elements of the hunter-king story are used not to bind the Kanyok to the Luba, as the earlier uses of the motif had done, but to express Kanyok identity in the face of Luba oppression. Schecter demonstrates that the Luba-Lunda 'drunken king' cycle of myths is not just a philosophical discourse about the 'natural' vs. the 'cultural' order. They refer also to the establishment of political relationships, a shift of political power that can be corroborated by other evidence. Sigwalt finds certain word and sound clusters in the Bushi myths of the origin of kingship which have survived all the numerous alterations of the myths and

provide linguistic evidence of external influence on the development of Bushi politics. Packard gives a convincing picture of Bashu myths as 'a distillation of Bashu historical experience', depicting the gradual move from the plains up the mountains, becoming more closely tied with mountain cultivators than with the plains pastoralists. Packard in fact takes the other three essays to their logical conclusion. If clichéd tales, as Schecter observes, can reveal a world-view and historical events at the same time, Packard points out that the world-view is not born *sui generis*. A people's cosmology can be a product of their historical experience; thus historical experience helps to create the very structure of myths.

The only stateless society included in this collection is Bobangi, and Bob Harms demonstrates how evidence for intellectual history can be elucidated by focusing on the variations of and incongruities within traditions which are neither cultural charters nor historical chronicles. It is Harms' contention that if traditions are changing commentaries, their internal changes can document intellectual, social and political history. The documents document change as they change. Bobangi traditions cannot give the historian a chronological account, but they do define 'what it means to be Bobangi in an area where ethnic identity is particularly vague and fluid'. Being Bobangi defines who can trade on the river, and Bobangi stories are a collection of tales of inclusion and exclusion, of contracts made and contracts broken. The inferences made from these tales are supported by evidence from a variety of other sources.

The work of oral historians is contrasted with that of literate historians by three other contributors. Henige on the Ganda and Nyoro kinglists, Berger on the Abacwezi of Uganda and Berg on Merina historical literature in Malagasy illustrate how a suspicious co-operation between 'oral' and 'literate' historians produced traditions which are neither completely oral in transmission nor traditional in their creation. Henige shows how Ganda and Nyoro lists started to lengthen once they were written down, which in the Ganda case was in the 1870s. Since a long list enhanced respectability in the eyes of colonial administration the lists of these rival kingdoms kept pace with each other, the Banyoro refusing to be outdone by the Baganda. Both the Abacwezi and the Merina myths were interpreted by Europeans and Africans during the colonial period as accounts of the racial origins of ruling dynasties. The Abacwezi were transformed by Sir Harry Johnston from the remnants of an indigenous population to deified light-skinned rulers of the past who were both a product and a proof of the Hamitic hypothesis. The kings of Bunyoro endorsed this interpretation of their origins when they learned that this enhanced their prestige in the colonial hierarchy. Conversely, in Madagascar European prejudices and *hova* interest combined to demote the mythical and spiritual *vazimba* to a dark-skinned savage race of indigenes who the *hova* were supposed to have conquered and supplanted.

Both the Abacwezi and the *vazimba* figure prominently in the religion of their areas, and their transformation into 'ethnic' groups in the nineteenth century is the origin of the disagreement between historians who have taken their historical existence too literally, and anthropologists who see in them only symbolic value. To criticise the earlier historical interpretations is not to deny the historicity of the legends, as Berger points out. Not only do the historiographic critiques that both she and Berg offer reveal some of the intellectual trends within African societies during the colonial period, but the legends themselves, once stripped of their colonial interpretations, can reveal something about the pre-colonial past. For Berger the existence or non-existence of the Abacwezi ceases to be important; it is the groups who recount the Abacwezi myths and the reasons for their telling that gives them their historical value. From a comparison of various Abacwezi myths Berger suggests that they document a major political and social shift, with certain clans resisting the establishment of a monarchy and then continuing to exert their own counter-influence during the life of the kingdom.

Finally, two of the contributors, Cohen and Vansina, offer some caution to those dealing with narratives. Cohen proposes that historians go beyond narrative texts to seek evidence from other kinds of sources such as marriage data, office-holding and toponyms. His use of marriage data to chronicle the continuity of local populations despite migrations and political changes offers the most fascinating prospect for studying the history of areas that have undergone recent shifts in population or changes of language or political institutions. Cohen almost stridently claims a new and revolutionary path, but all the other contributors have used non-narrative evidence, though perhaps not as extensively as Cohen. While one would like to think he is offering us a way out of the limitations inherent in oral traditions, some of his sources, especially toponyms, have been tried with less than resounding success in the past. Finally Vansina offers us some sound words of advice on memory which are applicable to all sorts of oral evidence, whether couched in the form of a narrative, a genealogy, or merely a list of who married whom and when.

The examples of these essays have been grouped around Bantu Africa, and particularly around the peoples of Zaïre and Uganda, but one can easily think of other parts of Africa where the approaches outlined in the book could be applied. The main danger inherent in these approaches is that the African historian's task may degenerate into an endless historiographic critique, chronicling only changes in the way the past is viewed. But the principal argument of the book is forcefully and effectively proved. None of the contributors would assert that oral traditions by themselves reveal the history of a society. Nor do they suggest that oral evidence by itself is sufficient to reconstruct the past. They rely on written as well as oral sources, myths as well as less structured tales and nontestimonial evidence.

It is only by comparing all of the sources that the historical value of myths becomes evident. The corollary of this argument is one that more anthropologists should be willing to admit, that the analysis of myth divorced from its historical context and from other sources of historical evidence is an inadequate approach to the understanding of African societies.

D.H. JOHNSON

---

**WORLD ON A GLASS PLATE**

by Elizabeth Edwards  
Lynne Williamson

Early Anthropological  
photographs from the  
archive collection of  
the Pitt Rivers Museum

48 pp. 40 pls. paperback  
ISBN 0 902793 15 2  
Price: £1.95  
from  
The Pitt Rivers Museum  
Oxford  
or booksellers

