

BOOK REVIEWS

ANTHONY JACKSON (ed.), *Anthropology at Home* [ASA Monographs, no. 25], London and New York: Tavistock Publications 1987. x, 212 pp., Indexes. £12.95.

The thirteen contributions from the 1985 ASA conference selected for publication in this volume extend the concept of 'at home' in a number of different directions. For the majority of contributors 'anthropology at home' refers to working within the geographical limits of the country in which they were brought up, or in a neighbouring and broadly similar cultural area. The task of distancing oneself from the subject of research, a recurrent theme among the papers, is tackled in most cases by seeking the unfamiliar within the 'home' area (Travellers for Judith Okely, the Hebrides for Edwin Ardener, Icelanders for Kirsten Hastrup and Bretons for Maryon McDonald). In other cases 'home' is taken literally to mean 'the place in which one has taken up residence'. Both Stella Mascarenhas-Keyes in Goa (India) and Shalva Weil in Israel explore the problems of living in a place as an anthropologist who has cultural links with but is not a native of the area of research. The situation of those who work 'at home' for reasons of political or financial necessity is touched on by Chris Hann (in socialist Eastern Europe), Tamara Dragadze (the Soviet Union) and Angela Cheater (the Third World). In a minority of cases 'home' is the socially and culturally familiar background of the anthropologist. Marilyn Strathern discusses the problem of familiarity and the production of text from fieldwork in an Essex village, Martine Segalen and Françoise Zonabend address the question of over-familiarity in researching French kinship patterns and Orvar Löfgren describes a project exploring 'culture building' in Swedish society.

Certain themes recur in many of the papers, stimulated by familiarity with the subject areas, such as the relationship between objective and subjective modes of perception, the use of Self as informant, the generation of categories, and the construction and interpretation of reality. The majority of contributors have found that the methodological skills of fieldwork 'abroad' have proved their ability to yield results 'at home'. Only Segalen and Zonabend's study of French kinship patterns stands outside the tradition of participant observation. Despite Cheater's citation from Bailey's *Morality and Experience* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1977) referring to an anthropological tradition of 'concealing a void of ideas behind a screen of exotic and bizarre fact, helped out by an appropriate selection of photographs' (p. 176), the mood of those anthropologists who have worked at home is confident and optimistic, provoking useful reflection on the nature of anthropological research and the interpretation of culture.

In his introductory paper Anthony Jackson traces the development of interest in anthropology 'at home' in the British context.

Historical sketches of ethnographic traditions are also provided by Löfgren for Sweden, Segalen and Zonabend for France, Hann for Hungary and Dragadze for the Soviet Union. The main interest in each of these papers lies, however, in the writers' reflections on the theoretical and practical implications of their own research experience. Strathern, for example, compares the perceptions of Melanesians and Essex villagers with the anthropologist's acquisition of knowledge and explores the limits of what she terms 'auto-anthropology'. This refers not to doing anthropology within one's own society but to the relationship between the ethnographic text and the society's own interpretations of knowledge.

Edwin Ardener's paper on 'remote areas', drawing on fieldwork experience in Nigeria, Cameroon and the west of Scotland, is a bit of an odd man out, the location of part of the fieldwork 'at home' being largely irrelevant. His contribution is nevertheless welcome for the light it throws on his main theoretical interest in identity. Ardener develops the concept of 'event-density' or 'event-richness' associated with areas considered by outsiders to be 'remote'. Although geographical distance from centres of power and topography help in the designation of a 'remote area', this is not a restatement of the centre/periphery phenomenon. How and why such classifications arise and for whom they are valid deserve further exploration, but with an amusingly light touch the paradoxes of life in a remote area are documented by Ardener and, for me at least, their subjective validity ring true. It is not remote areas in their own right which primarily interest Ardener, but the light that they throw on the construction of identity, and it is here that the main contribution of the paper lies. According to Ardener, an intermittent consciousness of the defining process of others turns 'remote area' into 'very crucibles of the creation of identity' (p. 50).

Space does not allow a detailed discussion of all of the contributions in this volume but overall it is an impressive collection which deserves to be taken seriously. Three in particular might be mentioned. Judith Okely's paper on policy-related fieldwork in Britain, outlining the pitfalls and potential value of such work, provides timely advice for the increasing number of anthropologists employed in policy-related research. It should also be read by all university-based anthropologists making occasional forays outside academia. Orvar Löfgren describes a long-term project looking at the central definitions of Swedish culture. A historical focus is chosen as a means of distancing the researcher from the material. The work is distinguished from that of historians and sociologists by an anthropological perspective which 'consists of a painstaking ethnography of the trivialities of everyday life' (p. 89). A patchwork approach of case-studies drawing on topics such as boundary maintenance, ritualised behaviour as seen through ideas relating to hygiene, table manners, childhood memories and a focus on particular groups (domestic servants, lumberjacks) provides a validation of a qualitative anthropological approach to the study of one's own society. Kirsten Hastrup, a Dane working in Iceland, looks at the influence of gender and at differing notions of time when relating her own fieldwork experience. Hastrup describes ways

in which a historical knowledge of ethnography can make the field-worker deaf to the proper meaning of signs. Thus, thinking that she knew the meaning of the term *draugar* ('ghost'), and deciding that she didn't believe in their existence, Hastrup was unprepared for a change in meaning (and the inclusion of a half-wit with a reputation as a sexual pervert in this category) 'and so ran a real risk of colliding with a living signifier' (p. 103).

The cumulative effect of this collection is to impress upon the reader the need for sensitivity to the nuances of the fieldwork situation and subsequent production of text. Questions relating to the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge, the construction of identity and interpretation of 'reality' are discussed with a welcome honesty and provide a timely demystification of the anthropological enterprise.

FIONA BOWIE

ALAN MACFARLANE, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300-1840*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986. xi, 344pp., Bibliography, Index. £19.50.

Despite its deceptively straightforward title, this book opens up for review some fairly firmly held notions about the wider social and economic development of Western Europe during the period under consideration. An excellent example of the contribution possible when an anthropologist attacks macro-problems usually the preserve of sociologists, historians and demographers, it sets out not only to challenge commonly accepted ideas about the relationship between industrialisation, urbanisation and the family, but also to question some of the even more sacred theories of Marx and Engels about the rise of capitalism and individualism, at least in England. It is also eminently readable and moves in such a satisfactory way through the various strands of its argument that it almost seems unfair on the reader to divulge its conclusion.

The book opens by quoting the deliberations of Charles Darwin who, at the age of 29, set out on a scrap of paper the pros and cons of marriage. Though Darwin did indeed marry early the following year, this cost-benefit analysis remains, and Macfarlane points out that in worldwide perspective the act of writing it is quite extraordinary, partly because of the individual choice that it implies, and also because of the ripe age at which the choice was being made. In the same year, 1838, Darwin satisfied himself that he had solved the problem of how species evolved through natural selection, influenced considerably by Thomas Malthus's *Essay on Population*. Macfarlane suggests that this work may also have influenced the cost-benefit analysis, for he describes Malthus's essay as 'an elegant theoretical model of the marriage system in England

in the early nineteenth century, of which Darwin's ruminations are such an enlightening illustration' (p. 5).

Macfarlane goes on to outline the elements of Malthusian theory and to demonstrate its importance, in his view, particularly in the light of recent reconsiderations of the causes and conditions of industrial and colonial expansion in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England (and also in explaining the easing of population problems in Third World countries in the last ten years). A spurt in population growth in England in the middle of the eighteenth century has for some time been largely associated with improvements in health and the disappearance of plague, but new research seems to suggest that about three-quarters of the acceleration in population growth may well be attributable to an increase in fertility associated with a decline in the age of marriage and a greater proportion of the population marrying. In other words, importance is being assigned to social factors which may earlier have been neglected. This has opened up questions about the system of family and marriage which was already in operation in England and which seems to have been rather different from those in other European countries.

Within this particularly English context, Macfarlane goes on to examine some of the assumptions made by Malthus about the nature and purposes of marriage, very different from, at times even the opposite of, those which would have been made by his contemporaries in China, India, Africa, Eastern Europe and South America. These include the ideas demonstrated by Darwin of seeing marriage as an individual choice and as an expense, in contrast to the situation common elsewhere in which marriage was seen as an inevitable part of life and a source of wealth for the future. This difference has of course been documented as characteristic of 'familistic' as opposed to 'individualistic' society, with the 'conjugal' or 'nuclear' family developing in the latter case, 'along with other features of industrialism' (Davis, quoted on p. 37). There are still various views about when and how this nuclear family system became the norm in England, and the rest of this book is devoted to demonstrating (and reiterating Macfarlane's thesis in his previous work on individualism) that it goes back a lot further than industrialism.

There follows a wealth of detail about marriage and associated aspects of English life 'roughly from Chaucer to Malthus' (p. 45). There are three chapters on the role of children and why and how they were perceived as a cost rather than a benefit; another three chapters cover the main purposes of marriage, and a final four discuss the rules involved. We are treated to intimate descriptions of customs concerning courtship and consummation, a plethora of examples of the economic arrangements necessary and the status differences considered, and are given various reasons why the age of marriage was so much later than that found in other parts of the world. On the way through all this ethnography, Macfarlane provides comparisons with marriage systems found elsewhere, incidentally dealing a crushing blow to Engels' 'mid-European, and almost universal view' that children were valuables, 'returning more than was invested in them', as well as disposing of the prevalent idea

that 'love' developed from the behaviour of Provençal knights in the twelfth century. He also offers a reasonable economic argument about why the age of marriage declined in the mid-eighteenth century (causing the increase in fertility, mentioned above).

At the end of all this, we emerge with a small number of characteristics of English marriage which have apparently endured throughout the period. They accord perfectly with Malthusian theory. They also fit with urbanisation and industrialisation, but Macfarlane emphasises that there is no necessary connection between them, and the same type of marriage can now be found in areas which are neither urbanised nor industrialised. They fit particularly well with capitalism, indeed 'the accumulative ethic' forms an important component of the system, as Malthus himself realised (and so indeed did Marx, when he criticised Darwin for 'recognising among among brutes and plants his English society'). Those who know the Marx-Engels chronology will see at once that there is a temporal problem with the completion of this jigsaw, and I will refrain from pre-empting the reader's satisfaction by putting in the last few pieces before you have done more than glance at the picture.

There are, of course, problems with trying to cover such a broad area of society over such a long period, and the evidence is drawn from a wide variety of sources of a most inconsistent quality: diaries and autobiographies, parish records and the proceedings of the ecclesiastical courts, literature, ballads and letters. Macfarlane concedes the 'homogenization' which has been necessary over time, levels of society, regions, including urban / rural differences, and religious and political differences. He also admits that there is a male bias. He points out, however, that what he attempts is 'to distil ... some of the quintessential structures and sentiments' (p. 48), and his success with regard to particular periods and regions he leaves to the qualified reader to judge.

For myself, whose speciality lies away in a completely different system, recently firmly capitalist, but as yet showing some considerable resistance to 'Western' family arrangements, I cannot help concluding that although the book presents a convincing picture of 'quintessential' English structures, its author is as bound by a Western view of the world as were some of the great names whose theories he examines. For although he demonstrates considerable knowledge of other marital arrangements and uses anthropological rather than statistical techniques for illustrating his structural principles, Macfarlane does not appear to question at all the validity of applying general evolutionary schemes to the subject of family and marriage. Or perhaps he does in the end, implicitly, for he closes the book with a tantalising question still unanswered. I shall leave that piece of the jigsaw out too, for I enjoyed the book, and I dare say others who agree with all the assumptions will share my view, especially if they are allowed to retain the element of surprise.

R.D. GRILLO, *Ideologies and Institutions in Urban France: The Representation of Immigrants*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1985. xv, 301pp., Appendix, Bibliography, Index, Tables, Figures, Maps. £27.50.

This work is based upon fieldwork in the French city of Lyons. Grillo describes how he began his project hoping to study Italian immigrants who, like many others from Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, have come to Lyons in the post-war period to find work. He homed in, however, on those 'French' institutions whose business it is to deal, socially and politically, with immigrants, and his work became a study of these institutions, of their rhetoric, their organisation, their perceptions of the immigrants, and their relationship to one another and to the 'state'.

After a general introduction, there are chapters on the different language employed by different varieties of political organisation (in particular the two main union groups, the CGT and the CFDT) in their description of immigrants, on housing problems, on the problems peculiar to immigrant women, on the schooling situation, on language, on the workplace, and on industrial disputes. It must be stressed that in dealing with these topics, Grillo's emphasis is very heavily upon how these things are perceived by 'French' organisations. Highly educated, predominantly left-wing, middle-class professional French nationals and French speakers are our main informants - social workers, union officials, and *fonctionnaires* of various kinds, working in housing, planning, medical and educational services and the like. We do not hear the views of immigrants, and neither do we hear the views of the ordinary French natives of Lyons. Rather, we hear the voices of French bureaucrats, professional pedagogues, social workers, union officials and students.

Grillo is aware, given the nature of his study and of his informants, that this is not properly speaking a social anthropology of immigrants in Lyons. It is, rather, only "'about" immigrants' (p. 24), and 'immigrants as such ceased to be the centre of interest' (p. 24). The terms that are employed are those of Grillo himself, and of his informants, who are of a particular type: 'social workers, hostel directors, teachers' (p. 273), who 'translate their information into an idiom (leftish, social scientific)' (p. 276).

In Western European life, the self-presentation of the institutions of social intervention and of the parties and organisations of the political left, with their abundant and articulate self-diagnosis, are a gift for the social-scientific thesis writer already fluent in their idiom. Grillo has accepted this gift and organised it to his purpose. The categories of common understanding, however, in both the immigrant and the native French context, are casualties of this procedure. We are not told of immigrant life in its own terms, and we are not told of ordinary native French life in its own terms either. We are given some fascinating material from a Spanish immigrant on the characteristics of the different varieties of immigrant, but this is unexploited (p. 42). The immigrant community is, in its own eyes, extremely and importantly

diverse, but Grillo is prepared to subsume this diversity under categories of his own (like 'subproletariat', p. 50). The distinction between the European Christian immigrants (Italians, Spanish, Portuguese) and the North African Muslims (Tunisians, Algerians, Moroccans) is of the greatest importance for everybody concerned, but Grillo is prepared to 'reserve judgement' on whether this distinction is 'analytically important' (p. 34). In a book about immigrants, where racism and prejudice on the part of the host society are assumed by the author, we might expect a serious discussion of what the natives of Lyons (outside the concerned bureaucracies and organisations already mentioned) thought of the immigrants, and of why they thought these things. Such discussion is strikingly absent, however. The perceptions of the French people of Lyons are dismissed as follows: 'insofar as ordinary French people are hostile to immigrants, that is to say express racist attitudes' (p. 138) - and little more is accorded them. It should perhaps be noted that this collapse of definitions ('hostility' = 'racism') is by no means as self-evident as Grillo implies. Social anthropology has achieved much through a sensitivity to native terminologies, and it is strange therefore that the vernacular terminology of the people of Lyons should be dismissed, with disapproval, as irrelevant to the task in hand (as 'a variety of abusive words and phrases', p. 63).

As Grillo says, 'In effect, the research was set to become a study of the "community" of immigrants from within. The end result was very different' (p. 15). The main defect of the book, I think, is that Grillo fails to recognise that the end result is smaller, not larger, than the original ambition. He defends the limitations of this work in very positive terms, dismissing the rest of European ethnography as 'irrelevant' (p. 3). He says that his approach, which began with the intention of studying how immigrants saw their world, 'broadened to become an analysis of institutional arrangements and ideological structures in an advanced industrial society' (p. 290). In the context, this comes perilously close to meaning that, rather than talk to immigrants, he talked about immigrants to social workers and union officials. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is very far from being a 'broadening'. The decisive limitations of his work, which are transparently dictated by problems of time, language and access (and no harm there) he refers to as 'coming down on one side in this dispute by giving methodological priority to the institutions of the receiving society' (p. 282). His work, he says, 'became what my basic theoretical position had demanded all along' (p. 23).

Grillo tells us, early on in his work, that he 'would maintain that an interest in beliefs and attitudes expressed by informants must remain part of the anthropological project' (p. 8). The audience for this contention cannot be Grillo's fellow social anthropologists, for many of whom an 'interest in beliefs and attitudes expressed by informants' comes very close to being a definition of the subject of social anthropology. It is clear, however, that Grillo moves within an intellectual world where such an interest is not imperative and even demands prior apology to the serious-minded. This accounts for the sustained indifference to native categories and for the rather unhappy ambiguity of the book's purpose: it is

both '"about" immigrants' and 'about immigrants' - conceived as the latter, doubtless to be shelved as the latter, but researched as the former, and written up somewhere between the two.

MALCOLM CHAPMAN

CAROLINE B. BRETTELL, *Men Who Migrate, Women Who Wait: Population and History in a Portuguese Parish*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986. xv, 268 pp., Appendices, Notes, Bibliography, Index, Figures, Map, Plates, Tables. £26.70.

If demography needs anthropology (which it does), then Brettell's book is a welcome contribution. Instead of relating demographic variables to single factors, as though the study of populations was a form of social scientific algebra, Brettell proposes a 'cultural-ecological approach', (i.e. a consideration of the total social and cultural environment).

Her geographical focus is Lanheses, a northwestern Portuguese village where she had already worked as an anthropologist. Using a variety of historical records and the memories of villagers, she situates the meaning and evolution of emigration from Lanheses since 1700 in its changing ethnographical contexts. Emigration helped perpetuate the traditional way of life, otherwise threatened by limited resources and constant population pressure; it provided, and continues to provide, the possibility of social and economic mobility. Both cultural sentiment and socially determined strategy pursued by groups of individuals in particular historical circumstances, this predominantly male emigration is closely related (though not always causally) with late marriage, high illegitimacy rates, moderated fertility, and frequency of female celibacy. In Lanheses men are lacking; women work in the fields and can inherit property in their own right. On marriage, they are not usually obliged to join a corporate kin group but can establish an independent household. Thus women have some autonomy. They become partners with, not inferiors to, the male household head, and 'their labour is valued by both the family of orientation (hence delayed marriages) and the family of procreation (hence proven productivity may be more esteemed than virginity)'. A resolute comparativist, Brettell concludes by proposing *matricentric* regions of Western Europe as a productive frame for comparison.

Though Brettell wishes to combine ethnography and demography, I wonder if she had exploited her anthropology to the full. In many instances, when discussing the possible motivations for certain strategies by historical agents, she makes 'educated guesses', i.e. a mix between her knowledge of village ways and her own conception of human nature. These important sections of her book might have been less speculative if she had studied more intensively villagers'

reasons for actions, whether contemporary or historical. Novels, articles by columnists in local newspapers, statements in legal proceedings in local courts could all help here. She mentions a novel about the region written in the 1940s but makes no use of it. This seems a pity, for it suggests a gap in her otherwise very well-researched book.

JEREMY MACCLANCY

KENNETH E. READ, *Return to the High Valley: Coming Full Circle* [Studies in Melanesian Anthropology], Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1986. xxi, 259 pp., Illustrations, Index. £15.95.

The 'high valley' to which Read returns is the Asaro Valley in Papua New Guinea's Eastern Highlands Province. Read's record of his earlier trip to the area, itself entitled simply *The High Valley* (1965), was remarkable on three counts. First, rather than focusing directly on Gahuku social structure, Read allowed its character to emerge through portraits of particular Gahuku individuals as they operated within it. In doing this, Read emphasised - well before it was *de rigueur* to do so - the irretrievably personal and subjective dimension to fieldwork. Finally, the elegance and intensity of Read's writing gave that earlier book a currency well beyond professional anthropology.

Similar concerns and qualities are in evidence in the present book, which is based on short return visits to the valley in the summers of 1981 and 1982. The brevity of the visits did not permit systematic fieldwork: Read refers to the process as consisting 'principally in being "brought up-to-date" by relatives at a family reunion' (p. xvi), and to the resulting volume as 'more a memoir than an analysis' (p. 9) of the changes since his first trip to the area thirty years earlier. These changes are particularly striking, as the community in which Read had originally done his fieldwork less than two decades after 'first contact' had, by 1981, become virtually a suburb of Goroka, the province's capital, which has a population of 10,000.

The Gahuku society which Read had known was cross-cut with sharp divisions between the sexes, and by an age-grade system. Read sketches the attenuation of both these central divisions in the face of the suppression of pre-contact warfare, the diversification of employment opportunities, mission activity etc. These and other changes are illuminated through Read's reflections both on the lives and life-chances of his Gahuku friends, and on the pragmatism and flexibility of their world-view, which Read sees as having allowed most of them to ride the extraordinary transformations they have seen. However, Makis - Read's charismatic sponsor on his first visit - is dead, a casualty of the changes, having been knocked

down by a vehicle on the Highlands Highway while drunk. Makis's presence nevertheless looms over this book as it did his predecessor. In some of the most interesting sections, Read describes how, following Makis's death, the political confederation that he had forged collapsed. The aftermath reveals what had previously been hidden from Read: that his own sponsor's clan membership was other than it seemed. Makis's presence looms over the book in another sense: as the ghostly cause of the noises which disturbed Read's sleep during the nights preceding his departure from the valley. "He [Makis] knows you are going and wants to fasten you to your land and people", Read's friends told him - an explanation that may, incidentally, surprise readers who recall the author's statement made in a much earlier paper (see *Oceania*, Vol. XXV, 1955, p. 269) that the dead do not generally concern themselves with the conduct of the living in Gahuku society, particularly when that statement was itself a correction of a yet earlier statement that the dead *are* so concerned.

This ethnographic query aside, this book is a notably well-written personal account. Its undeniable power makes it a worthy successor to its predecessor and, like *The High Valley*, it is certain to prompt lay readers towards both anthropology and field-work.

MICHAEL O'HANLON

KARL JETTMAR, *The Religions of the Hindu Kush, Volume I, The Religion of the Kafirs: The Pre-Islamic Heritage of Afghan Nuristan* (transl. Adam Nayyar, with contributions from Schuyler Jones and Max Klimburg, and a Glossary by Peter Parkes), Warminster: Aris & Phillips 1986. ix, 147 pp., Glossary, Bibliography, Plates, Maps. £18.00.

Professor Jettmar's *magnum opus*, *Die Religionen des Hindu Kusch* (1975), being in German, is less well known than it ought to be. The author, who has just retired from heading the Ethnology Department of the great Südasien-Institut at Heidelberg, here presents an updated version of one-third of his major work; the other two volumes will concentrate on mountain peoples living to the east of Afghanistan. Jettmar has travelled extensively in Northern Pakistan, where he has recently discovered large numbers of ancient rock engravings and inscriptions, but the present volume is primarily a library study.

The Kafir ('pagan') tribes of Northeast Afghanistan became known as Nuristanis after their conquest and forcible conversion in 1895-6. However, the pre-Islamic heritage did not disappear overnight, and in spite of difficulties of access there has been a good deal of subsequent 'salvage' ethnography. Jettmar refers to well over a hundred sources immediately relevant to the area, as well as drawing

on work still in process of publication. A certain period flavour is added by illustrations reproduced from the classic pre-conversion monography by Sir George Robertson, a brave man and a pioneer ethnographer who lived among these warlike peoples for a year at the beginning of the 1890s.

The languages of Nuristan, relatively uninfluenced by neighbouring literate cultures, are of considerable interest to Indo-Iranianists and (enlarging the range of genetic comparison) Indo-Europeanists. This linguistic literature is drawn on usefully by Peter Parkes, who has worked with the still non-Islamised Kalash Kafirs just across the border, and who here provides an etymological glossary of the religious terminology.

Like the languages, the tribal religions are no doubt akin to those of the pre-Vedic Indians and pre-Zoroastrian Iranians (not to mention pre-Christian Europeans), hence potentially of great interest to comparativists. This potential was emphasised by G. Fussman (recently elevated to an important chair of Sanskrit in Paris) in his stimulating reaction to the German edition of this book. Jettmar does respond to a few of Fussman's points but his real enthusiasm clearly lies in other directions. He belongs to that generation of German anthropologists whose approach to alien cultures was primarily via artefacts and material remains, and being an expert on Soviet archaeology, he tries hard to bring this knowledge to bear on Nuristani religion. Those who are sceptical of the resulting atomism and prefer to think in terms of functional and ideological structures will have to do some work for themselves. But they will find Jettmar's signposts to the original sources extremely helpful.

N.J. ALLEN

LOUIS DUMONT, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1986. x, 268 pp., Works Cited, Glossary, Index. £21.95.

In *Homo Hierarchicus* Dumont illustrated that an understanding of the hierarchically organised Indian caste system can only fully be achieved if the Western interpreter is aware of the nature of his own society, a kind of society which propagates 'equality' as one of its prime values. He spoke of 'the circuit which we have to travel, from ourselves to caste, and back again from caste to ourselves' (p. 3). In this sense Dumont's writings are a constant encouragement for those anthropologists who believe that the study of so-called 'other cultures' has something to teach us about ourselves and that a sociological self-awareness is a constitutive part of anthropology. As Dumont puts it in the present work: 'there are two ways of looking at any piece of knowledge, a superficial one that

leaves the knowing subject out of account, and a deeper one that includes him' (p. 5). Appropriately, after *Homo Hierarchicus* Dumont has dedicated less effort to the study of Indian society and has turned his attention towards the systematic study of topics concerning the Western history of thought.

The main topic of the various essays collected in the book under review here is that of 'individualism'. 'Individualism' is regarded as a typical modern phenomenon and is defined at the outset as follows: 'Where the individual is a paramount value I speak of individualism. In the opposite case, where the paramount value lies in society as a whole, I speak of holism' (p. 25). This definition or premise indicates Dumont's continual concern with the hierarchy of values which was so dominant in *Homo Hierarchicus*, and he makes clear that in the essays as well he wants to 'leave aside all considerations of cause and effect and consider only configurations of ideas and values, ideological networks, to try and reach the basic relations on which they are built' (p. 24).

The first three chapters are entitled 'Genesis I', 'Genesis II' and 'Genesis III'. 'Genesis I' focuses on the writings of the early fathers of the Church before it jumps, somewhat abruptly, to Calvin. The missing centuries from the thirteenth century onwards up to the French Revolution are discussed in 'Genesis II', while 'Genesis III' (which is taken from Dumont's study of the modern economic ideology published in English as *From Mandeville to Marx*) retraces the emergence of 'the economic category'. As the titles suggest, Dumont sees the origin of modern individualism in Christian ideas: 'something of modern individualism is present with the first Christians and in the surrounding world' (p. 24). Dumont refers here to Troeltsch, the great historian of the Christian Church, who observed that Christian man is an 'individual-in-relation-to-God'. Anthropologists of tribal societies, used to encountering networks of kinship and affinal relations and social groups based on such ties, will readily see the importance of this concept in Christ's social teachings. One could visualise it if one mentally erased all the traditional social ties of a given person and imagined a new vertical link from the single individual upwards to his God. If one then went downwards again and united all those who have such a link in the congregation of the Christian community and Church, one realises where Christianity really breaks through the traditional mould of the Ancient World and where it establishes an essentially new and cosmopolitan concept of society.

This Christian concept of man marks the intellectual starting-point for Dumont's journey through centuries of European thought, from the origins of individualism to its specifically modern form. But what is it that makes 'individualism' modern? Here Dumont applies another distinction, which has its root in Weber's sociology of religion: the distinction between an outwardly- and an inwardly-oriented individual. Dumont holds: 'If individualism is to appear in a society of the traditional, holistic type, it will be in opposition to society and as a kind of supplement to it, that is, in the form of the outwardly individual' (p. 26). At this point there arises the main question which the first three chapters (and, less directly, all the others as well) of Dumont's *Essays on Individualism*

attempt to answer: how could this early outworldly individual who can be found all over the world - take the Indian renouncer, for example - develop into the modern inworldly individual, who according to Dumont is typically represented in modern Western society?

It is perhaps asking too much of short articles which pursue a difficult and complicated question with authority and great clarity of thought to quibble about some omissions. However, I feel that in 'Genesis I', which tackles problems concerning early Christianity, there is too little reference to Gnostic ideas. The specific history of Western thought unfolds itself, vehemently in the beginning, and continuously throughout the centuries (with eruptions every now and again), as a struggle between Christian and Gnostic ideas. One could even hold, with some justification, that modern times represent something like a revival of Gnostic values (I can here only refer to Blumenberg's interesting discussion in *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung* [Frankfurt 1974]). In 'Genesis II' Dumont, in my opinion, could have dedicated more attention to the ideological expressions of the struggle between Church and Empire for political dominance as these are manifested in the doctrines of the nature of the king and the royal office. It is perhaps significant that among the works cited one looks in vain for what must be regarded as one of the best expositions of late medieval ideologies, Ernst H. Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (1957).

Dumont's research is based on the assumption that there is a system of ideas and values that characterises modern society, the 'modern ideology' of the book's subtitle. While the first three chapters discuss the origin and emergence of this modern ideology, in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 Dumont is concerned with what he calls 'a national variant', the German variant, which is compared with and opposed to the French one. In Chapter 4 he discusses Herder's and Fichte's notions of the *Volk* and the *Nation*, while Chapter 5 is concerned with 'The German Idea of Liberty According to Troeltsch'. Chapter 6 is entitled 'The Totalitarian Disease: Individualism and Racism in Adolf Hitler's Representations' and it offers an interesting new perspective on the phenomenon of fascism, which appears as a manifestation of the crisis of German ideology and as such of modern ideology in general.

Coming back to the 'circuit we have to travel' one finds throughout the book comparisons between modern Western and Indian ideology. The subtitle 'Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective' can thus be read in two ways. On the one hand, Dumont's essays represent a study of modern ideology and its development from the point of view of an anthropologist. On the other hand, they represent a study of modern ideology and its reflections in anthropological perspectives of other cultures. The reason for the constant moving back and forth from the world of the observer to the world of the observed is clarified in the 'Introduction'. It is here that Dumont articulates most clearly not only the legitimacy but also the necessity for the transition in his thought from Indian anthropology to the European history of ideas. He points out that anthropological monographs enshrine 'a comparison of the most basic sort, between "them and us"' (p. 6). And he goes on:

This comparison is radical, for it brings into play the observer's own ideas, and in my view it governs everything else. Now from this point of view, the way we conceive ourselves is obviously not irrelevant: whence it follows that a comparative study of modern ideology does not lie beyond the concern of anthropology (*ibid.*).

By discussing the epistemological basis of anthropological research the 'Introduction' provides the intellectual link between the first part of the book discussed so far and its second part. In Part Two Dumont's conception of the science of anthropology is enlightened by three chapters which address issues of social anthropological theory. Chapter 7 offers a portrait of Marcel Mauss; Chapter 8 is entitled 'The Anthropological Community and Ideology'; while Chapter 9 is a reprint of the Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology for 1980 with the title 'On Value'.

Though all the chapters of the book were previously published elsewhere and stand by themselves, the coherence in Dumont's thought over the last two decades means that the bringing together of the essays in a single publication results in a volume which makes great sense as a whole. I was impressed by the authority and ease with which Dumont leads the reader through wide-ranging material of great complexity. In his expositions Dumont combines scholarship with imagination and he illustrates that history and anthropology are not just about facts but - essentially - about how to think about facts. In this sense reading Dumont will prove thought-provoking and inspiring to many philosophers, historians, sociologists, or anthropologists, whatever their particular object of interest may be.

The book contains a valuable bibliography, glossary, index and a preface to this English edition.

BURKHARD SCHNEPEL

BRUCE LINCOLN, *Myth, Cosmos and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press 1986. xv, 171 pp., Notes, Bibliographies, Indexes, Tables, Figures. £18.95.

Dismemberment and creation, kingship and cosmos, death and digestion: a mythic system, centred on a creation story in which a primordial victim is cut in pieces and put back together, but elaborated by a series of 'alloformic homologies' (man / cosmos, flesh / earth, king / society, cattle / food etc.) into an all-embracing ideology that could legitimise an exploitative social hierarchy and encompass even cures for baldness. Such is the system of ideas reconstructed in this book and attributed to the Indo-European tradition.

Lincoln begins with the account in the *Edda* of how the gods created the world from the body of the giant Ymir. 'Narratives resembling this one,' he writes, 'are well attested throughout the world... I take as the data for this book the large set of such stories preserved in the ancient literatures of the various peoples speaking Indo-European languages.'

It comes then as something of a surprise to encounter a few pages later, amongst the first material cited, an apocryphal book of the Old Testament, known as *II Enoch*. This is generally recognised, it seems, as the likely source of descriptions of the creation of man in various Latin, Celtic, Germanic and Slavic texts; but this would most naturally be taken to point to diffusion in the Christian period, and the text would hardly seem to belong within a discussion of Indo-European beliefs. The issue is never squarely faced, but perhaps we may take as justificatory hints the remark that the book 'was most probably written in Hellenistic Alexandria between 30 B.C. and 70 A.D. (and thus, perhaps subject to Greek and Iranian influence)' or the contention that the book became popular because in it 'European peoples found a superficially Christianised - and thus acceptable - version of their own still familiar and fondly remembered pre-Christian creation accounts': in other words, the text may be Indo-European after all, at least in inspiration, or not necessarily Indo-European but just like the Indo-European texts that we might have expected, had they only survived. The manoeuvres are transparent, and serve only to indicate an absence of rigorous criteria for establishing what is to count as evidence.

Let us suppose that the question of which texts may legitimately be cited has been settled; it remains to establish their form (and Lincoln shows a regrettable readiness to delete as an interpolation anything that will not fit his theory) and their interpretation. Since all texts are given in translation, with occasional important words in the original language, and since a wide range of languages is represented, it is not immediately easy for the reader to judge the accuracy of the evidence presented, but an example from a familiar text may illustrate why some misgivings are aroused.

In Lincoln's attempt to show an Indo-European association between cosmogony and sacrifice, and more particularly between the origin of society and ritual dismemberment, one of his key texts is a passage from Tacitus (*Germania* 39) that describes a sacrifice performed by the Semnones. Tacitus relates how at fixed times the tribes assemble at a sacred grove, '*caesoque publice homine celebrant barbari ritus horrenda primordia*'. This is usually construed so as to make the tribes the subject of the verb *celebrant*, since they have appeared as the subject of the immediately preceding *coeunt* 'assemble', and so the Loeb translation, for instance, reads: 'and after publicly offering up a human life, they celebrate the grim "initiation" of their barbarous worship'. Lincoln, ignoring the connecting *-que* and treating this as a new sentence, takes *barbari ritus* to be the subject and translates: 'Barbaric rites celebrate the horrific origins, through the sacrifice (*caeso*, lit. "dismemberment") of a man....' The gloss on *caeso* is absurdly tendentious; one may wonder what Tacitus would expect his readers

to make of 'horrific origins' that are never explained, but in any case the rendering is unnatural and does violence to the language. Lincoln is here following an interpretation put forward by Hammerich 'whose arguments have since won considerable support among Germanists': it would be more pertinent to observe that they have not found favour with any competent Latinist. And Lincoln's complaint that 'scholars have often selected the more obvious readings rather than the more fully expressive ones' seems unlikely to provoke apology.

A few lines later, Tacitus declares: '*eoque omnis superstitio respicit, tamquam inde initia gentis*' The Loeb again has a clear version: 'the whole superstition comes to this, that it was here where the race arose ...', but Lincoln translates: 'There the belief of all looks backward (to the primordial past), as if from that spot there were the origins of the race.' Apart from translating *omnis* as though it were *omnium*, he has taken *eo* as 'there' instead of 'thither, to that', so that he has failed entirely to recognise the construction of *eo respicit tamquam* (despite the parallel *illuc respicit tamquam* in section 12 of the same book), and has forced onto *respicit* a weight of meaning - the gratuitous addition in brackets - that the word simply cannot sustain; a note explains that he adopted a translation in consonance with his view that the ritual is primarily concerned with repetition of origins, so that he has restored 'the proper active sense to the verb *respicio* ... instead of artificially translating it in the passive, as is often done ("the superstition of all is respected," or some such)'. It inspires no confidence to find Lincoln's mis-rendering bolstered by the rejection of a version that would disgrace the weakest beginners' class (one wonders, indeed, by whom it is 'often' perpetrated), and the admission that it has been guided by preconceptions about the content is thoroughly disconcerting. 'All the translations', the author writes in a footnote to page 1, 'are my own.' Quite so.

At other times the problem is rather that the texts as presented may seem, on closer examination, not to provide the parallels required to substantiate the claims based on them. Lincoln has, for instance, a chapter on myths concerning the origin of food (or 'sitiogony', as he elects to call it, by somewhat maladroit formation from Greek *sitos*) in which he collects a set of stories that purportedly show how the body of an animal, usually an ox or bull, on being dismembered after sacrifice is transformed into food, in both liquid and solid form. Iranian evidence is adduced to set the pattern, but the next instance cited is a passage from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that tells how the god Indra killed Vṛtra, and how the waters fled the putrefaction of the body and produced *kuśa* grass: Vṛtra is monster, not bovine, and the grass clearly does not spring from the body but from the avoidance of it, and the parallelism amounts to no more than a limp correspondence of a violent death and a somehow consequent creation of plants. Yet there seems to be little reason to suppose that *kuśa* grass is a foodstuff: it is used in sacrifice as a purifier, it is strewn on the sacrificial area, it serves to make ropes with which to bind victims, but is it eaten? Weaker still is the parallelism exhibited by the supposed European

variant, an episode from the Old Irish *Adaigh Con Rói*, in which 'the sacrificial background is absent. Rather ... the creation of food is presented as part of the lore of cattle raiding.' Some cows are driven without being milked, and eventually let their milk flow, from which there springs a plant named *bó-eirne*. The discomfort of swollen udders, as Lincoln recognises, seems hardly commensurate with death and dismemberment, but he still presses the parallel in the creation of food 'again defined as fluid plus plants', claiming further that the very name of the plant, with its first element *bó* 'cow', establishes that it is to be identified as an alloform of cattle. This last assertion seems of doubtful validity - whatever would one make on this principle of fat-hen or viper's bugloss? - but more important is the question of what sort of plant *bó-eirne* is: the word is not in the Dictionary of the Royal Irish Academy, and it is left untranslated in the rendering that accompanies the edition of the text that Lincoln cites, which suggests that there is no secure identification. The problem is simply not addressed by Lincoln, but the matter is surely crucial in the context of a claim that edible plants are in question. It requires considerable faith in identity under transformation to accept that these stories are all manifestations of a single 'sitiogonic' myth, and the consideration that each variant adapts the basic construct to 'its own particular narrative constraints and ritual construct' will hardly suffice to sway the sceptic.

On the basis of his chosen texts, Lincoln has constructed an elaborate edifice. In the face of an entire mythic system, an all-pervasive ideology, philological objections such as those above may seem mere pedantic quibbles, but no superstructure, of course, can be sound if it rests on dubious foundations, and it seems that Lincoln's evidence is, at the least, in need of hard and detailed scrutiny before attention can profitably be turned to his grand schema. But it may be appropriate finally to raise a more general question: in what sense is this an Indo-European ideology?

The claim appears to be that there are sufficient correspondences between the beliefs of various peoples speaking Indo-European languages to allow an Indo-European tradition to be posited. But if similar beliefs are found elsewhere (and it seems that they are - see Lincoln's remark cited in the second paragraph above), then clearly there can be no question of something uniquely Indo-European, in which case it is not obvious that the correspondences must be explained by reference to such a tradition rather than, say, by borrowing. And common tradition implies some common source, in this context, one might suppose, the Indo-European community: but Lincoln is hesitant about positing any such thing. In a note, he writes:

In general, I have tried to avoid in this book formulations that involve positing a hypothetical 'Proto-Indo-European' community, ethnic group, homeland, a body of myth, or social system. Rather, I prefer now to speak in terms of a shared tradition.... Multiple explanations are possible for the commonalities that can be observed: common genetic origin ... diffusion, overlapping circles of influence and connectedness and so on.

This evasion is the *only* discussion that Lincoln offers of the whole question of what it means to label something Indo-European, and how it is to be recognised as such. It is therefore not even clear what this book is supposed to be about.

J.H.W. PENNEY

A. DAVID NAPIER, *Masks, Transformations and Paradox*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1986. xxvi, 223 pp., Bibliography, Index, Plates. £33.95.

Within a monotheistic tradition, masking is considered primarily as a form of deception. It arouses curiosity as to what is being hidden rather than what is being revealed. This ambitious and original book reverses the question. Masking is discussed not as a means of disguise, but as a form of representation. Because the use of masks is often associated with transition, Napier is especially concerned with the capacity of masks to reconcile human beings to uncertainty and change. He therefore seeks to identify a common Indo-European iconography of the apotropaic mask which presents, in visual terms, the ambiguity inherent in its function.

After a relatively conventional review of the origins and importance of the mask in Greek drama, Napier sets off in pursuit of visual and mythological parallels to the pre-classical iconography of the Gorgon's head. The pace is exhilarating and the route unexpected. On page 114 the reader is treated to a full-page photograph of Elsa the lion, and invited to observe her superciliary tufts. This feature of leonine physiognomy is faithfully recorded in both Assyrian and Greek sculpture, and is occasionally featured in representations of the Gorgoneion, suggesting a link between the Gorgon and the leonine pantheon of Assyro-Babylonian religion. Humbaba, the Babylonian monster whose decapitation parallels that of the Medusa, is, in turn, linked with the Sanskrit *kumbha*, a word meaning 'jar', which may also be used metaphorically to mean 'womb', or to describe round objects suggestive of fertility such as the superciliary protuberances of rutting elephants. In India, the Great Goddess is not only worshipped in the form of a *kumbha* filled with water, but also parallels the Gorgon in being depicted with tusks, protruding tongue, bulging eyes and attendant snakes, while in Greece, there is a Proto-Attic amphora which appears to depict the Gorgon's head as a bowl containing water.

It is impossible for a summary to convey either the ingenuity or the intellectual excitement of Napier's argument. For this reason it is all the more disappointing that the author attempts to combine discussion of the intercultural diffusion of images with the view that the features of the apotropaic face are autonomous

archetypes grounded in a phylogenetic mechanism common to lions and primates. While the two accounts are not strictly incompatible, the one renders the other superfluous. Thus, on page 108 Napier argues that it is precisely because the Greeks lacked the opportunity to observe lions at first hand that the leonine character of the Gorgon should be attributed to Assyrian influence. But if we take seriously the suggestion made on page 206 that the apotropaic face is a 'manifestation of the predominant sensory capacities of the brain', the Greeks had no need of lions, or representations of lions, to produce a grimacing face with exposed teeth, bulging eyes and two dark spots on the forehead.

Napier's tolerance of such minor inconsistencies is perhaps the result of his methodology. His own writing has the quality he attributes to his subject matter, namely 'a sensibility for multiplicity and saltatory change' (p. 27). But while thinking in 'unnuclated chain complexes' speeds the author on his fascinating pursuit of the Gorgon from Greece to the Ganges, it also allows him to stray from his initial premisses. In the first chapter it is suggested that masks offer the 'prospect for reconciling the ambiguities of change' (p. 15) and that they are capable of 'elucidating problems in interpretation' (p. 16). Yet in the final chapter it is argued that the apotropaic face 'discourages dialogue' and is 'non-communicative' (p. 200).

A paradox perhaps? If so it is unlikely to concern Napier, who regards a paradox not as a problem to be solved but as a thing to be cherished. In this he is akin to New Critical literary theorists whose vocabulary ('ambivalence', 'ambiguity' etc.) he sometimes appears to share. The mask, like the verbal icon, is conceived as a condensation of conflicting elements dense with meaning. As such it is the very opposite of the monotheistic conception of the mask as something that dilutes and distorts essential truth, and thus demands its own removal. In polytheism the mask signifies presence, not absence.

With the exception of the final chapter, a discussion of contemporary Balinese ritual, Napier's book concentrates on masks not the practice of masking. This may be the unavoidable consequence of having to rely on archaeological data that is mostly visual in nature. But it is regrettable that the different conceptual problems involved are not spelled out more clearly. Masks may embody paradox, but masking does not, for paradox is primarily a contradiction within, not between, layers of reality. Transformation, on the other hand, occurs either diachronically or else between levels, and is thus a concept more appropriate to a discussion of masking. Napier's conflation of the two enables him to generate paradox where others might perceive only transformation. In Balinese drama, for example, both noble characters and demons in noble roles may be presented unmasked. This is surely indicative of the univalence of the human face and of the transformational power of masking, not, as Napier suggests, of the ambivalence of the human face as a mask.

Although Napier's occasional lack of clarity is a source of confusion, the reader is more than compensated by the rich and suggestive detail of the argument, and the dazzling skill displayed

in the handling of visual evidence. The book will also be of interest to students of Western iconography, for it demonstrates the pre-classical ubiquity of the bearded Gorgon, an unusual and anomalous image in the West that has long been attributed to medieval Arabic copyists who mistook the blood dripping from the Medusa's head for a beard. Napier's work potentially sheds light on subjects as far removed from his brief as the iconography of the Caraffa chapel in San Domenico in Naples where a sixteenth-century bas-relief shows Perseus holding the head of a bearded man.

MALCOLM BULL

F.E. HUFFMAN, *Bibliography and Index of Mainland Southeast Asian Languages and Linguistics*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1986. xxxii, 514 pp., Index. No price given.

The growth in studies relating to Southeast Asian languages has been phenomenal in the last three decades, partly a consequence of American involvement in the region; overall, there may have been a fivefold increase in the volume of research in that period. Huffman's bibliography is very comprehensive and succeeds in listing the vast bulk of what is now available on the subject, incorporating some earlier bibliographic collections (especially those of Shorto *et al.* and Shafer). Specifically, it covers Tibeto-Burman (not Sinitic), Austroasiatic (including Munda, in India), Tai-Kadai-Kam-Sui, Miao-Yao (or better, Hmong-Mien) and mainland Austronesian apart from Malay (i.e. Chamic). However, it is organised alphabetically by author and not by language family, 'precisely because [the relevant] issues are still being debated'. It includes both published and unpublished material, and some ethnographic references for the least researched languages. The Index includes a number of alternative ethnonyms, though these are not cross-referenced. The Harvard/ASA system of listing references is employed, and in this connection it is unfortunate that there is no way of distinguishing different works published by the same author in the same year: e.g. for 'Benedict 1976', mentioned on page ix of the Introduction, there are eight possible entries in the bibliography. However, this is hardly enough to spoil a very exhaustive work of reference which will be invaluable for Southeast Asianists for years to come.

ROBERT PARKIN

OTHER NOTES AND NOTICES

GROUP FOR DEBATES IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

In any academic subject, the level of debate concerning its theoretical and intellectual foundations is a good measure of its current vitality. In British social anthropology, such debate is nowadays somewhat muted, and the infectious sense of excitement that it should generate seems to be lacking. In its absence, the great figures of the past cast an ever-lengthening shadow over current work. It is as though, in the search for an academic identity, we have to resurrect an anthropology of former times increasingly at odds with what we practise today.

One reason for this state of affairs lies in the gradual ageing of all those fortunate enough to hold academic posts in the discipline. But it is not the only reason. Another is that there currently exists no suitable forum for the discussion of what could be called 'theoretical anthropology' in this country. To remedy the situation, it has been decided to establish a Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory. The Group was launched at a meeting held in Manchester on 8th January 1988, and has already received the backing of the Royal Anthropological Institute. The aims of the Group are as follows:

1. To establish a forum in the UK for the regular discussion of topics in anthropological theory;
2. To explore the relationship between theoretical and ethnographic work, both in research and in teaching;
3. To examine the connections, on the level of basic concepts and ideas, between anthropology and contingent disciplines in both arts and sciences;
4. To raise the academic profile of anthropology, and to promote wider public awareness of how anthropology can contribute to human understanding;
5. To forge a new identity for the anthropology of the next century, as an intellectually vigorous and thriving discipline.

These aims, particularly the last, may sound inflated and over-ambitious. However, to survive in an increasingly competitive academic environment, we must begin to 'think big', to show the world that we are 'thinking big', and above all to demonstrate that we - more than anyone - have the intellectual and scholarly resources to do so. If we do not, other disciplines will

hog the limelight, and anthropology will remain as an obscure and eccentric backwater.

In calling the Group 'Debates in Anthropological Theory', the intention is to stress that it exists not to *produce* theories so much as to ensure that we go on *arguing* about them. Under no circumstances should the Group become associated with or identified with one or another competing 'school of thought'. Its purpose is rather to promote a continuing dialogue between the many and divergent viewpoints that make up contemporary anthropology, for it is in this dialogue and not in any contrived theoretical consensus that the unity of our subject resides.

There are two ways in which the Group plans to pursue these objectives. The first is by organising a major annual event, in which a motion bearing centrally on concerns in current anthropology will be formally debated. Possible motions might be 'Social anthropology is essentially a theoretical exercise', or 'The concept of society is no longer useful' (I should stress that these are only examples of the kinds of motions that could be debated; they are not being advanced as firm proposals). We would invite a leading UK anthropologist to propose the motion, and another to oppose it. Each would be backed up by an invited seconder. The opening addresses would be followed by a free debate from the floor, a summing-up by each side, and finally a vote. We believe that such an event, apart from being a lot of fun, would generate much serious discussion, and would help to focus attention on issues at the heart of our work. It would make a refreshing change from the standard format for academic events of the 'distinguished lecture' type, which involve minimal audience participation and where debate, if any, follows only years later, after publication. The event, probably of half a day's duration, will normally be scheduled for a Saturday in November, and the first one is planned for 5th November 1988.

Secondly, the Group aims to hold a meeting, at least once a year, scheduled to coincide with the annual conference of the ASA. At these meetings, open to all who are interested, participants would decide on the motion for the following November's debate, on the people to be invited as proposers and seconders, and on the membership of an Executive Committee for the Group, which would be responsible for the practical organization of the event. These meetings would also be occasions for open discussion of other matters of concern to participants, including matters relating to teaching as well as research, and for the consideration for proposals for occasional workshops or symposia dealing with aspects of anthropological theory.

The motion and venue for the first debate should be published in May or June this year. We hope to see plenty of people there.

TIM INGOLD

Further information about the Group is available from Dr Ingold at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester, Roscoe Building (5th floor), Brunswick Street, Manchester M13 9PL.

THE ETHIOPIAN FAMINE AND POLITICS

Clay and Holcomb's *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-5* is a very controversial document.* They start off with some blunt criticisms: 'none of the agencies or governments currently sending assistance to the area have collected, independently or systematically, the data minimally needed for effective famine relief programme planning, implementation and monitoring' (pp. 2-3). So Cultural Survival decided to do the research themselves. Neither the Ethiopian government nor the aid agencies working in the country would cooperate, so they were compelled to study Ethiopia from neighbouring Sudan, by talking to the refugees there. Refugees are scarcely a representative sample of the population of any country, and the authors admit that they therefore can only obtain part of a complex picture, but claim it is an indispensable part. They warn, in an ominous allusion to the Holocaust, that 'the voices of refugees have been ignored to the peril of many' (p. 26).

What follows is a horrifying account of war and oppression conducted by a tyrannical government, reaching its zenith in the programme for the forcible resettlement of large numbers of potentially hostile people. Much of the report consists of direct translations of what the refugees themselves said. It reads like an indictment of the government for crimes against humanity, and the agencies, by implication, of complicity.

The author's initial charge is that the international agencies cannot prove they are helping the people of Ethiopia. By the end of the report the accusation is much more serious: 'the provision of humanitarian assistance, no questions asked, helps the Ethiopian government get away with murder' (p. 195). In between is the case for the prosecution.

In the time since the publication of this report influential people have put the case for the defence. The first was Dr Richard Pankhurst in *Anthropology Today* (1986, Vol. II, no. 3, pp. 4-5), who cast aspersions on Cultural Survival's impartiality: 'the allegations made in such an unscholarly publication are so one-sided and extreme that they can only be accounted for in terms of the selective use of data to support a preconceived political standpoint'. He claims the sample was too small (only 250, mostly non-randomly selected), the questions leading and the statistics fiddled. This view is supported by Kurt Jansson, head of the UN emergency office in Ethiopia in the 'official' history of the famine and relief effort (K. Jansson, M. Harris and A. Penrose, *The Ethiopian Famine: The Story of the Emergency Relief Operation*, London: Zed Books 1987, p. 26). The testimony, explicit or implicit, of almost all the international agencies working in Ethiopia, supports this opinion. Central to these criticisms are first-hand reports of resettlement sites, which suggest that things are not so bad there,

* JASON W. CLAY and BONNIE K. HOLCOMB (eds.), *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-5* [Cultural Survival Occasional Paper no. 20], Cambridge MA: Cultural Survival 1984. xi, 199 pp., Appendices, Glossary, Bibliography, Maps. \$10.00.

and the observation that the majority of settlers come from Wollo region, which is not generally an area of insurgency. If these criticisms and various others are accepted, the fragments of the picture presented by Clay and Holcomb fall a long way short of proving their case beyond all reasonable doubt.

The criticisms themselves are generally valid. But that does not conclude the case. The defence have yet to produce ordinary Ethiopian villagers who speak in support of the official version of the famine. They produce numerous officials, most of them expatriates. An ITV film made by Charles Stewart, *Living After the Famine* (shown on 18th August 1987), showed ordinary villagers from Wollo welcoming the government's efforts. This is a start but the defence are still not in a position to criticise the small number of ordinary people in Clay and Holcomb's sample while their own sample remains so much smaller. We await further testimony.

ALEX DE WAAL

NILO-SAHARAN STUDIES

Six issues of the original *Nilo-Saharan Newsletter* were published in the late 1970s. It is planned that a resurrected version will appear once a year, its aims being 'to facilitate communication and cooperation among linguists, anthropologists, and historians working in the area where Nilo-Saharan languages are spread'. To this end it will publish information on current research, conferences, seminars etc., and on recent publications. The first issue (October 1986) is promisingly full of such information and being of such value to students and scholars one can only hope that it will prove possible to maintain the *Newsletter* as a permanent source of news.

Further information is available from Angelika von Funck, *Nilo-Saharan Newsletter*, Afrikanistik II, Universität Bayreuth, Postfach 10 12 51, 8580 Bayreuth, West Germany.

J.C.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1986 - 1987

The Oxford University Anthropological Society continued its tradition of bringing a far-ranging selection of material to the Oxford community during the 1986-7 academic year. In Michaelmas Term Veronique Dasen, an archaeologist at Lincoln College, spoke on 'Dwarfs in the Ancient Mediterranean World', and the audience was treated to some slides demonstrating their erotic associations. Jeremy MacClancy brought us through the seedier back streets of London in his talk on 'The British Market in Primitive Art' and Mai Zaki-Yamani flew in from Saudi Arabia to speak on the 'Ramadan in Saudi Arabia'. In order that the society demonstrate interest in subjects other than eating, trafficking and obscenity, Paul Henley, an RAI film fellow, showed his film *Reclaiming the Forest* on the competition for land between gold miners and Indians in Venezuela. In accordance with a long-standing tradition of the Society, the projector malfunctioned, but a tape and cardboard bandage enabled the show to continue.

Hilary Term presentations included William Sturtevant of the Smithsonian Museum on the changing stereotypes of North American Indians. Sturtevant has been collecting material on headdresses for over twenty years and has put together a trail of associations and images that brought us eventually to a recent poster from Pigalle. More erotic associations? Michael Dole from the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine on 'Love, Death and Madness in Islamic Society' and Tamara Dragadze on 'Banqueting in Soviet Georgia' rounded off the term.

Trinity Term saw Howard Morphy, the Society's president, speak on Aboriginal land claims, and Brian Murdoch of the University of Birmingham spoke on ethnic identity in that city. Murdoch left the audience puzzling over the 'ethnic identity' of a young woman he met at a Sufi shrine: born in the United States of America, married to an Iranian, living in England and a devout vegetarian as a result of her 'Buddhist phase'. Brian Street of the University of Sussex spoke on the role of anthropology in anti-racist teaching. This talk was followed by a heated debate on the possibility (or impossibility) of applying anthropology to practical problems. Nonetheless, as with all the Society's meetings, the combatants retired to drinks at the bar with the best of spirits. The year ended with a performance of traditional Chinese music by Li Lisha in the new display of instruments at the Balfour Building of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Afterwards, the audience was treated to wine as they strolled through the gallery with short-wave radio headsets tuned into the broadcast music illustrating the material in the display cases. I am pleased to note here that we managed to get through Trinity Term without a paper on eating.

TIM FERRIS
Secretary, 1986-7

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

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