
Senri Ethnological Studies is a sort of a cross between a journal and a monographs series. Sponsored by the Japanese government and given away for free to overseas institutions (and selected individuals or an issue-by-issue basis), it exists primarily to provide an English-language publication outlet for staff and affiliated scholars of the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. It is technically a very well produced series, and this volume, in consort with most others in recent years, is well edited for English style. Many of the best volumes to date have been proceedings of international conferences held at the National Museum of Ethnology. The present volume is one of those to come from the Eighth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 8), a symposium of some 200 specialists who gathered there in October 1998. Other volumes from that conference include The social economy of sharing, Resource allocation and modern hunter-gatherers (no. 53) and Self-and other-images of hunter-gatherers (no. 60).

Identity and gender in hunting and gathering societies is made of up papers from three CHAGS 8 sessions: ‘Gender and the dynamics of culture’; ‘Ethnicity, church and state’; and ‘Identity, transformation and performance’. These have been grouped here into two related but nevertheless distinct sections: Part I, ‘Challenging identity in post-foraging societies’ (edited by Ian Keen, from the Australian National University, who spent nearly a year after the Osaka conference based at the museum); and Part II, ‘Gender and the dynamics of culture’ (edited by Takako Yamada of the Faculty of Integrated Human Sciences, Kyoto University). The former includes a sub-section on historical change and political contexts of identity, and another on performance, symbols and narrative styles. What unites the diverse sections of the book is an attempt to account for the continuity and even revitalisation of hunter-gatherer, or simply indigenous, identity in the face of changing cultures and new forms of social relations, including dealings with wider societies, national governments and global economic change. Most, though not quite all, the papers deal in some way with such changes, although there is often an implicit question in them: to what extent does being a ‘hunter-gatherer’ matter? Ethnographic cases come from Russia, Alaska, Canada, Native North America (taken as a whole), Japan, Australia, Botswana, the Indian mainland and the Andaman Islands.

Part I contains an introduction by Keen, three papers on historical change and political contexts (Glavatskaia, Norström and Shnirelman), four papers on performance, symbols and narrative styles (Hiwasaki, Inoue, Karkavelas, Ridington), and three on constructions of identity (Taylor, Goulet and Keen). Keen’s introduction is brief but makes the point that there exist a variety of approaches to the study of ethnicity, before going on to introduce the issues of each of the three sections of Part I and present short summaries of the papers. I would have preferred a fuller treatment of concerns in the study of ethnicity, though certainly these are readily available elsewhere. The introduction, like the book a whole, is well structured and makes clear the connections between the papers.

Let me take the first section of Part I in some detail, as indicative of the issues raised more generally in the volume and in some cases issues raised (by virtue of their absence) by the volume. In the first substantive paper of the volume, Elena Glavatskaia writes on religious and ethnic identity among the Finno-Ugric-speaking Khanty of western Siberia. These are hunter-gatherer-trappers, who in some locations have traditionally supplemented their subsistence with reindeer herding (in the north) or agriculture (in the south). Glavatskaia outlines in a fairly short space an interesting and complex history of interaction between Khanty, the Orthodox Church and the
Russian state. She argues that indigenous shamanic religion has always been important to the Khanty in defining their ethnic identity, and suggests that the post-Soviet revitalisation of the indigenous religion is closely associated with contemporary ethnic consciousness.

Christer Norström presents a rather different scenario in his chapter on recent developments affecting the Paliyans of South India. In 1994 the government of Tamil Nadu proposed a new forest sanctuary for them, and Norström set out to study events as they occurred. What is interesting is that at the time of his writing, they had not yet occurred! Or, more accurately, Norström has been observing the interactions between the Paliyans, the Forest Department, local NGOs, and so on. The gist is that Paliyan notions of governance differ from those of outsiders, and this works against them. Although an extremely interesting paper from an anthropology-of-development perspective, I would have liked more on the cultural background. The third paper in the section is by Victor Shnirelman, on the construction of ethnicity among Alaskan Tlingits. The author outlines historical background and recent cultural and especially religious conflicts. He suggests that, among other things, traditional arenas of conflict (in the clan structure) are being suppressed in the movement towards a cultural unity that demands the sacrifice of intra-cultural diversity. At the same time, more traditional Tlingits emphasize other factors, including genealogical relations, in the construction of their own group identities. While each of three papers is intrinsically interesting and appropriate to the theme of the section, none touches very much on any classic theme of hunter-gatherer studies. This presents a question for a reader in the hunter-gatherer mould: is there anything about hunting-and-gathering-society that makes such people different from any other? If there is (and I think there is), the reader will not find it here. Some of the issues raised are relevant to the anthropology of development, others to indigenous identities – but these are not necessarily hunter-gatherer identities.

In the second section, there are papers by Lisa Hiwasaki (about the perceived conflict between unity and diversity among First Nations in Canada), Toshiaki Inoue (on the symbolism of hunting and food-sharing, and bush skills, among Alaskan Gwich’in), Will Karkavelas (on the novels of Native American writer James Welch) and Robin Ridington (on the continuing use of hunter-gatherer discourse in relations among people and between people and animals). Of these, the papers by Inoue and Ridington fall clearly within the realm of hunter-gatherer studies, and both offer credence to the view that hunting-and-gathering life is more of a mode of thought than a mode of production.

On constructions of identity, we have Russell Taylor (on debates about being Aboriginal in Australia), Jean-Guy A. Goulet (on the reification of such notions as ‘Dene’, the ‘Dene nation’, ‘Denendeh’ or the land of the Dene), and Ian Keen (on relations between theory, cultural continuity and applications for native title in Australia). This section has a clear coherence, and the juxtaposition of Australian and Canadian papers suggests some intriguing parallels between the two places.

Part II, on gender and cultural dynamics, contains a very short introduction by Yamada and papers by Kaoru Imamura (on /Gwi and //Gana sexual relations and beliefs about reproduction), Zubeeda Banu Quraishy (on gender politics among the Alu Kurumba of Tamil Nadu), Sita Venkateswar (on gender and power in the Andamans), Elena G. Fedorova (on the taboos of Russian Mansi female culture), and Takako Yamada (on gender and cultural revitalisation among the Ainu). All these papers possess rich ethnographic material. Some are more theoretical than others (with habitus, hegemony and gendered anthropologists), but as in the other part of the book the papers generally skirt the issue of the ‘hunter-gatherer’.

That said one paper stands out as especially intriguing to this reader: Imamura’s. Hardly anything had been written before on sexual liaisons in Bushman society, but she offers here an excellent study of the institution of zaã-ku among /Gui–//Gana. These are legitimate sexual relationships outside marriage, and often involving the swapping of spouses as long-term partners. Imamura cites case to illustrate aspects of /Gui–//Gana theories of conception. In these theories, multiple sex acts are required for pregnancy, and a woman can have a baby (the same baby) by a mixing of her husband’s male water, her lover’s male water and her own female water. Male water is required as ‘food’ for the baby, and should the two men quarrel, their bad water will not mix and a miscarriage may result. While this paper does perhaps sit uneasily in this particular collection, it begs comparison not least with other Bushman cases.

In all, this is a fine collection of papers, well put together and with a general (if not quite universal) thematic coherence. It can certainly be
recommended to non-hunter-gatherer specialists; indeed they may enjoy it more than some hard-line CHAGS enthusiasts.

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This book is an invaluable contribution to the rapidly growing anthropological literature on the highly topical question of borders. Over the course of eight chapters the authors explain the anthropological approach to the concept of borders, its connections to related disciplines and, drawing on ethnographic case studies, seek to shed new light on our understandings of culture, identity, ethnicity, nation and state. Particularly by employing a close ethnographic focus, the authors try to understand how it is that people experience the nation and the state in their everyday lives at international interfaces. They examine how an anthropological focus can illuminate the role of border identities and regions in the process of the strengthening and weakening of the nation state, caught, as it is, between the twin constrictions of supranationalism from above and regionalism from below.

Much of the book involves a broad sweep through the works of anthropological theorists in pursuit of answers to one of the major paradoxes of our time – on the one hand, the upsurge in ethno-nationalism and the demand for particularity, separation and political autonomy that have been so much a feature of the aftermath of the demise of communism and cold-war systemic structures; and on the other, and contrary to it, the simultaneous increase in porosity and permeability of inter-state demarcations impelled by economic interdependence, globalism, cultural diffusion and transcendence. In their detailed exploration of these issues the authors wrestle to make sense of the complex and multi-stranded meanings of ‘border’, ‘identity’, ‘culture’, space’ and ‘place’.

In developing its arguments, the book progresses from introductory chapters, where the authors sketch the dimensions and complexities of the issues they propose to cover, to an examination of diverse viewpoints in the anthropology of borders and boundaries, followed next by a discussion which brings in the perspectives on borders presented by other disciplines (geography, history political science, sociology). Further chapters deal with the anthropological approach to cultural relations of power among border peoples, nations and states. With this there are discussions of the role of rituals, of the meanings of ethnicity, and of the impacts of economic forces and the drive for mutually opposed nation–state construction.

The concluding chapter is devoted to a consideration of what is seen as the contemporary crisis of the nation state and asks how anthropology might contribute to the wider debates in the scholarship of borders, nations and states.

Overall, this is an ambitious project. It addresses some of the thorniest and most hotly debated issues in the field of current anthropology and whilst it does not seek to launch new, high-level theories, it does provides great value and insight into current thinking and research and in so doing manages to reconcile differing and divergent positions. Right at the outset, in an authoritative and highly illuminating survey of the relevant literature on recent debates it distils three ‘reasonably distinct but mutually interacting streams [that characterise] the anthropological study of borders and boundaries’, and then goes on to offer a ‘modest attempt’ at reconciling them (pp. 40–1). In a similarly constructive manner, the theoretical illuminations of the chapter devoted to thinking on these issues in other disciplines are brought to a synthesis and convergence that covers research problems, questions and hypotheses and even answers (p. 62).

The discussion on symbols and rituals is not only rich in detail, but shows how these rituals not only encode relations within and between border ethnic groups but also form a key part of the hierarchical relations between ethnic groups and their states. This leads on to a chapter depicting the twilight and legally shadowy activities that characterise border commerce of all sorts, and brings everything neatly together in the novel and graphically precise theoretical encapsulation – ‘the subversive economy’ – an economy whose practitioners are characterised as the ‘subversive but integral underbelly of the state, undermining it at the same time as they constitute it’ (p. 106).

In sum, the authors of this book have provided a masterly survey and synthesis of the social science scholarship on the issues entailed in
problematising borders and boundaries. To this achievement they have added valuable anthropological insights and perspectives derived from the accumulated wisdom of years of ethnographic study that, as they say, enables them to ‘put flesh on the stickman frame of institutional and macro-level studies of nation and state’ (p. 158).

It is a book that is as accessible to the able student as it is valuable to the seasoned academic. And its value is not just to anthropologists; practitioners of other social sciences might equally read it with profit and come to appreciate just how much the social sciences can learn from each other. At a time when the virtues of multi-disciplinarity are more preached than practised, this book stands out as an exemplar. It is destined to become a classic of the genre.

MIKA TOYOTA


For those familiar with Aihwa Ong’s post-modern, post-colonial or post-structuralist excursions into issues of transnationalism, diaspora and cultural globalisation during the past decade there is nothing much to surprise us, for the simple reason that much of the book (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6) comprises reprinted book chapters and articles published between 1992 and 1997. A longish introduction has been added, along with a Chapter 5 on the culture of Chinese corporate forms and ‘Mandarin’ capital, and a final section of two chapters on ‘Global futures’, with a brief Afterword in which Ong argues for the importance of ‘nomadic thinking’ in anthropology, which enables us ‘to stand outside a given modernity’ (p. 244).

Some commentators on Ong’s work find it overpoweringly jargonistic and repetitious, others insightful, even inspiring. This collection illustrates the best and the worst of Ong. In my view, she has brought to the study of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, following in the footsteps of distinguished scholars of the Nanyang Chinese like G. William Skinner, Victor Purcell, Wang Gungwu and Maurice Freedman, an understanding of the complexities of identity and cultural construction in the context of mobility, of political uncertainty, and of risk in global capitalism. Her focus is the ‘nomadic subject’ and the ‘multiple-passport holder’ epitomised by the Hong Kong Chinese, who are ‘people always in transit’ (p. 2). Her perspectives owe much to Arjun Appadurai, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Ben Anderson, and a stream of work in American anthropology that conceives of culture ‘as a contingent scheme of meanings tied to power dynamics’ (p. 243). She examines the ways in which political actors in nation-states interact flexibly with ‘global’ business, international capital and mobility. Most particularly she analyses the ways in which ‘local’ individuals, groups and communities generate and negotiate cultural meanings in the period of late modernity when people and information are interconnected and flow across space as never before. Specifically, what Ong seeks to uncover are what she refers to as the ‘cultural logics’ that inform the actions and thoughts of those who operate in transnational, border-crossing environments; in other words, how those who are ‘active manipulators of cultural symbols’ interpret, utilise and synthesise cultural capital (some of it western), in order to create meaningful worlds (p. 88).

A major ethnographic interest in this collection is the consequences of interconnectedness, mobility and the fragmentation of social life for changing and flexible representations of Chinese identity (in mainland China, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and California). Ong argues in the Chinese case that there are ‘competing imaginaries of modernity’ generated in a dialogue with western modernity (p. 55). In the Chinese case she identifies two broad representations – on the one hand a nationalist, territorial, Confucian, historically grounded identity and on the other a hybrid, mobile, deterritorialised construction which stresses ‘overseas Chinese as enlightened cosmopolitans who possess both economic capital and humanistic values’ (p. 131). Lee Kuan Yew’s Singapore has played a crucial role in articulating Chinese, Confucian modernity and morality, based on the supposed Asian values of discipline, order, efficiency, hard work and a collective ethos. However, Ong points to the contradictory nature of the image of the enlightened merchant Mandarins as against the new forms of gender and class exploitation which they have ushered in.

For those interested in changing discourses of identity, the strategies which transnational migrants deploy in creating meaningful social and cultural spaces, the contexts and trajectories of the
Asian values debate (Samuel Huntington is taken to task yet again for his ‘cultural essentialism’, ‘neo-evolutionism’ and ‘binarism’), the book is well worth reading. Nevertheless, the same messages tend to be repeated in slightly different ways, at times the post-modern prose weighs heavily on the reader, and we need to hear more about the cultural constructions of those overseas Chinese outside elite circles.

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Every ten years, the United Kingdom census is undertaken. Its results (though somewhat slow in appearing – the 2001 census results will not be available in full until 2003) are eagerly awaited by politicians in national and central government, and, within the academic sphere, those active in social policy, human geography and related disciplines concerned with the distribution of human happiness and misery. Each census has particular points of interest. In 1991, these were, among others, the inclusion for the first time of an ‘ethnic’ question which revealed a mass of important – in policy terms – data about the distribution of ethnic minorities throughout Britain; it also raised interesting questions about the substantial numbers of people, particularly young males, who had ‘disappeared’ from official statistics as a result of the politics of Thatcherism – cuts in benefits, the introduction of the poll tax and the dismantling of the public housing sector.

In 2001, interest for those concerned with Britain’s minorities will focus on two particular issues; the growth of minorities who will, the census will show, now be found in every local government area in Britain, including the most remote and rural areas. But most of all, in terms of what it will say about what has, since the mid-Victorian period, been Britain’s largest, but hidden minority, those regarding themselves as Irish. The Irish have been hidden because their skin colour is white but paradoxically, contain within their grouping the Irish Travellers population who are hidden, yet far from hidden; hidden because, on account of their mobility, they are rarely picked up in official population counts, yet not hidden because, as a result of their chosen way of life, they stand out against a backdrop of sedentary populations. The consequences of this way of life have been, within Britain and most of Europe, to become the objects of a sustained and widespread campaign of vilification stretching back over hundreds of years, and ranging from – at best – the view that they are an unwelcome necessity (for those requiring their knives sharpened, their front drives tarmacked, or wishing to take their children to the fair), to the extreme hatred which sees them as a cause of crime and unrest, and has led to both illegitimate and legitimate (in the sense of within the framework of a prejudiced legal framework) vigilante attacks on ‘gypsy’ camps.

In recent years, a number of distinguished scholars, including my University of Hull colleague Professor Judith Okely, have looked inside the black box of the experience of Irish travellers and represented that experience carefully to a wider audience. Helleiner’s sympathetic account fits within this tradition, written from the perspective of one resident for a considerable period within a traveller camp within Ireland and drawing both on that ethnographic research but also on written accounts, including government and local government records and press coverage. Helleiner’s organising focus is the phenomenon of racism, a highly topical focus which links to wider debates, such as the recent Durban UN conference on racism and the heightened levels of racist action linked both to global trends such as the increase in migration from poor to rich countries, and to specific events such as the attacks of September 11.

Helleiner starts with a brief historical account of travelling people within Irish and British life, noting attempts to classify them into differing groups (tinkers, travellers, romanies, gypsies etc.) which resonates with the determination of the British state to separate out the deserving from the undeserving poor. For those who believe that the emergence of independent nations will protect minorities, the story of Ireland’s travellers is salutary, since it is clear that racism against them within an independent Ireland is as virulent as it was under British rule (see also Henderson and Kaur 2000).

The author is concerned to articulate analyses based on class and gender with her account of racism, and reveals, for example, a sobering account of the way in which the Irish state used stereotypes of travellers as a means of terrorising women and of legitimising the removal of children into public ‘care’ (redolent of the Australian kidnapping of Kuri children). Her main task
however is to explore the politics of culture, that is, how ‘anti-traveller racism has articulated with wider constructions and social relations of class, gender and generation’ in a context where Irish travellers have had to develop an identity and way of life as a response to an alien and oppressive political regime. She does this through the prisms of work, travelling, gender, childhood and youth, revealing at every turn the ways in which travellers have defended their own identity against often brutal and typically ethnocentric state intervention.

Interestingly, the global context is now changing to one where mobility is becoming both valued and feared in equal measures by states determined to protect their sense of nationhood. One positive feature of this mobility has been the increasing levels of political organisation by ‘gypsies’ on a transnational basis. This may provide stronger political leverage for demands both for equality of an appropriate kind (and not equality with a two-income, two-child owner-occupied household), and for recognition of nomadism as a legitimate way of life. Helleiner’s detailed and careful account will be a very useful political tool for those concerned to add their weight to these demands.

Reference

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According to the cover text, this book intends to show how ‘the arts are biologically evolved propensities of human nature: their fundamental features helped early humans adapt to their environment and reproduce themselves over generations’.

The author develops her argument with a broad interdisciplinary approach, drawing on sociobiology, psychology and ethology (especially studies of child behaviour), as well as physical and sociocultural anthropology. The theoretical orientation is Darwinian evolutionary theory, arguing for a concurrent origin of art, language and individual intimacy (or ‘love’). I do not see a problem with the Darwinian orientation as such, which has been gaining ground in recent years with a number of innovative studies by anthropologists on the origins of symbolic systems, such as art and language (see, for example, Knight 1995 and Dunbar et al 1999).

However, before addressing the crucial question of the origins of arts, over half of the volume is dedicated to the presumed importance of human intimacy in the mother–child relationship, some of which is examined cross-culturally, especially with reference to hunter-gatherer societies.

It is precisely in the importance accorded to infant behaviour and its connection to hunter-gatherer societies that one of the book’s fundamental problems lies. For Dissanayake, the symbolic behaviour (for example, ritual and artistic) of these pre-modern and pre-literate societies can be usefully understood by looking at pre-literate humans cross-culturally (including western societies) – that is infants. Further, contemporary hunter-gatherer societies (that is those for whom we have ethnographic records) are equated to prehistoric societies, and both of them are opposed to ‘modern’ societies in Europe and North America – the former being closer to nature than the latter.

The simple equation, hunter-gatherer societies : nature :: modern societies :: alienated from nature, is in itself problematic, as the author argues precisely for the origin of culture in hunter-gatherer societies. In addition, she also seems to avoid any discussion of societies which, in terms of social complexity, are situated in between her two ideal types, such as agricultural and feudal societies.

Even when speaking about ‘modern’ societies, we are left to ask what is meant by the term: just the middle-class American society which Dissanayake attacks with so much verve, or the whole range of contemporary societies, both in the west and the rest of the world (the majority after all), now affected by and participating in globalisation? Overall, it would have been more rewarding methodologically if the author had studied empirically how the arts are acquired by infants, children and adolescents in different cultures, rather than deducing from research on the motor and symbolic behaviour of toddlers or pre-verbal infant humans, of how prehistoric peoples or cultures might have invented the arts.

While the author wants to bring across a strong moral message (which it is difficult to disagree with), namely that we in the west are violating
human nature (in the evolutionary sense) by the way we presently organise society, one must ask who the audience of this book is. Summarising largely published literature, it will enter already open doors for most academics, who would expect a tighter argument and more development of theoretical points.

Nevertheless the broad interdisciplinary scope of the book might yet encourage other scholars of visual culture to follow some of the leads of this well-meaning treatise, especially when Dissanayake advocates a stronger research emphasis on making and doing, as well as sensory overlap, in contrast to the prevailing focus on vision and interpretation.

References


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The views of Adam Kuper are of some considerable consequence. He has been a founding member of the Commission on Theoretical Anthropology (Cota) since 1993, when it was established by the International Union of Ethnological Sciences to improve communications between anthropologists in different places in the world and raise the status of theoretical anthropology. The essays in this volume are of interest in both respects. Mostly written in the 1990s, nine of the chapters appeared in print between 1989 and 1999. Two chapters are published here for the first time. Chapter 1 is the record of a conversation between Adam Kuper and Charles Stafford, an anthropologist specialising in the ethnography of China, that took place in 1996. Chapter 9 is the text of a distinguished lecture read in 1997.

Adam Kuper is of a school whose adherents study the past in order to know and understand the present. One lesson from the past is that political, bureaucratic, commercial and ideological interests and agendas hold sway over academic interests, agendas, institutions and personnel. This is so not only under dictatorships, such as those that ruled Spain, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and South Africa. In democratic North America, for example, the world’s strongest and largest bulwark of academic anthropology is conditioned significantly by a growing number of political agendas and demands. In this respect, there is a note of warning in Kuper’s words. In particular, in the past three decades an excessive number of niches have been carved out of academic anthropology in North America. Their extrication and growth was a response to a variety of needs and crises, real or perceived, and were spurred on both by altruistic motives and self interest. These developments did not necessarily serve the discipline well. Rather, academic anthropology was usurped in what looked like growth.

In this volume Kuper provides a sketch of anthropology in the twentieth century. He portrays some of the legacies and effects that remain. I consider two of them in this review. One of these is the disregard for anthropology outside the ‘centre’, including its own peripheries. This can be regarded as a significant impoverishment and disfigurement of the discipline, and a disguise of history.

The second issue is that European social anthropology seems at loggerheads with American cultural anthropology. The problem is rooted in perspectival closure and stifled discourse. Unfortunately, scholars who stay within closed and stifling circles appear to be more numerous than those who operate within open arenas. The more open minority, small as their number may be and rare as their voice is heard, are important to anthropology and its future. They bridge specialisations, regional and thematic, and link scholars, generalists and specialists, from different places and times.

Kuper uses the terms cultural anthropology and social anthropology respectively to denote the American and European varieties of the discipline. His message is that anthropology in America needs to reassert its professional and academic standards. He argues that the culture concept in American anthropology, particularly in its post-modern style, and influenced by nativism and the demands of political correctness, has become a closed perspective. He traces this development to two sources. One is modern nativism in American anthropology. The other is the tradition of folklore studies. The combination is not unique to America. The idea that only natives can understand the

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natives has been defended in Japanese folklore studies. Also, Kuper reports on Greece, where a recently formed association of social anthropologists decided that membership would be limited to ‘pure’ Greeks alone (p. 48). Cosmopolitanism, a product and virtue of the ancient Greeks, was rejected by modern intellectuals in the Peloponnesian peninsula, and by social anthropologists at that! Thus a small group of Greek social anthropologists and a massive group of American cultural anthropologists seem little interested in anthropology outside their own circles. They turn unto themselves, bracketing out the rest of the world. In Adam Kuper’s words:

The recent debates have been dominated by American scholars, and it is necessary to make explicit something they take for granted. The project of anthropology that is in dispute in their work is the American project of cultural anthropology, one quite distinct in the second half of the twentieth century from the dominantly European project of social anthropology. Moreover, the political spirit that often informs it has, again, a distinctively American character (p. 38).

What makes Adam Kuper designate social anthropology as European, and cultural anthropology as American? His grounds are that anthropology is part of the social sciences in Europe, but part of the natural sciences in America. In Kuper’s words: ‘Disputed as it is between biological scientism and relativist tradition, American cultural anthropology has always been a very different enterprise from European social anthropology. We situate ourselves within the social sciences, while American cultural anthropology has traditionally detached itself from sociology, and has largely ignored the traditions of Durkheim and Weber. What it took from Parsons was the news that ‘culture’ could – as a preliminary step perhaps even should – be treated separately from ‘society’, ‘biology’ and ‘personality’. Each of these anthropological traditions sustains different research programmes, and each will give a characteristic spin to any idea that is brought in from outside (p. 16).

The above notwithstanding, a cosmopolitan mix within anthropology need not, of course, be lacking in any one place in the world. For example, Kuper points to the happy partnership of ethnographers and local experts in Colombia that resulted in Gudeman and Rivera’s innovative work on economic anthropology (pp. 52–3). Similarly, Kuper describes how when he did research in the Kalahari in 1963 he found himself in the company of two American ecologists, Irven DeVore and Richard Lee (p. 22). Two essays in the volume explore cosmopolitan anthropologists and anthropologies in some depth. Chapter 7 is concerned with Audrey Richards (1899–1984). Appointed as Director of the East African Institute of Social Research when it was established in Makerere University in Uganda in 1950, she made is a cosmopolitan place in a colonial society (p. 127). Chapter 8 on Ernest Gellner (1925–1995) considers cosmopolitanism of a broader theoretical and disciplinary nature. Gellner was committed to realism and positivism. He regarded cognitive relativism as nonsense and moral relativism as tragic (p. 138). Moreover, he was central to the extension of anthropology’s geographic scope into the European Union and the former Soviet empire (p. 139).

Chapter 9 shines valuable light on anthropology in the so-called peripheries. South African anthropology provides the case study. Kuper shows that despite the commonplace disregard for anthropology outside the ‘centre’, the relations between centres and peripheries consist in fact of two two-way traffic (p. 145). He shows clearly the leading roles of anthropology in the peripheries. The chapter is replete with examples that illustrate the point. The first chair in social anthropology in the British Empire, including Britain itself, was established in 1920 in South Africa at the University of Cape Town (p. 147). Between 1920 and 1926 teaching in social anthropology was established in three other universities in South Africa (p. 149). Key modern disciplinary developments can be traced to South Africa. For example, as early as 1929 Agnes Winifred Hoernle, who taught at the University of the Witwatersrand and was one of the founders of the liberal think-tank, the South African Institute of Race Relations, was pioneering urban anthropology. Native and black anthropologists were leaders in their profession. In the 1930s D. D. T. Jabavu, a professor at Fort Hare Native College was the first African intellectual to welcome the new social anthropology to South Africa. The Young Nelson Mandela was one of his students (p. 149). The South African anthropologist Isaac Schapera (b. 1905) published an edited book in 1934 entitled Western civilisation and the natives of South Africa, and in contrast to every other contemporary academic symposium on Africa, it included a chapter by an African intellectual, written by D. D. T. Jabavu (p. 152).
An interest in anthropology was kindled in the Swazi king Sobhuza through personal meetings with Malinowski, Hoernle and Schapera. He saw anthropology as a practical science that might help ethnic cultural reassertion in a colonial context (p. 155). Anthropology is now a very popular subject amongst black students. Ironically, Kuper concludes: ‘Today there are so many calls on anthropologists to act as consultants, and to carry out applied research, that fundamental ethnographic research is suffering’ (p. 164).

Many of Kuper’s observations in this volume are far from being new. Many have been made already by similarly perceptive and open-minded scholars from centres as well as from the outer edges of anthropology. However, few have been widely heard. It is in their repetition that the value of this book lies. A comprehensive perspective, one that incorporates the perspectives of peripheries as well as centres, is still uncommon and needs to take root more widely and colour the outlook of a greater number of scholars if anthropology is to become the multi-vocal and global discipline that it aspires to be.

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Before extensive European contact, the kayak was used by Inuit groups in Greenland, Canada and Alaska, by Aleuts in south-west Alaska, and by Koryak and Chukchi peoples in coastal eastern Siberia. Made from wooden frames, covered with marine mammal skins and lashed with sinew, kayaks were used as hunting craft, to pursue seals, walrus and whales, as well as for fishing and, in parts of the Arctic, to assist in caribou hunts when inland lakes and rivers needed to be crossed. Today, the hunters of the circumpolar North have largely abandoned the kayak in favour of motorised vessels such as skiffs fitted with outboard engines. Yet, in the far north of Greenland and in some parts of south-west Alaska, kayaks continue to be used for narwhal hunting or for retrieving seals shot from the edge of the spring ice. Elsewhere, especially in west Greenland, indigenous kayak building and paddling skills are kept alive by the members of kayak sports clubs.

Archaeological evidence dates the kayak to some of the earliest Eskimo and Aleut sites in Alaska and Siberia, around 5,000 years ago. Across the Arctic, kayak designs reflect the climatic and topographic conditions for which they were built – whether for use in the ice-choked waters of eastern Greenland, the open seas of southern Alaska or the inland lakes to the west of Canada’s Hudson Bay. This short book by David Zimmerly, originally published in 1986 to accompany an exhibition at the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, examines the inland kayaks of the Siberian Chukchi and the Inupiat of northern Alaska, the Yup’ik and Inupiat kayak of the communities along the coasts of the Bering Strait, and the sea-going kayaks of the Koryak and Aleut.

The book is largely descriptive – Zimmerly takes specific kayak designs in turn and provides extensive details about construction techniques, analysis of the framework, skin cover and paddles. These descriptions are contextualised with reference to early accounts by ethnographers and travellers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about sea mammal hunting and the different uses to which kayaks were put – Voznesenskii, Antropova and Jochelson on the Koryak, Menovshchivok on the Siberian Yup’ik, Lantis on the Aleut, de Laguna on the Chugach Eskimo – together with information about how young hunters would begin to learn kayaking skills and the navigation and survival techniques necessary for successful marine mammal hunting. There are fleeting references to the rituals and taboos surrounding the construction and handling of a kayak, such as Aleut beliefs that the kayak was not just a piece of hunting equipment, but a living being, a hunter’s partner. The book is nicely illustrated and has a good glossary of key terms and words. Overall it provides a useful introduction to the kayaks used by the peoples of Alaska and Siberia. The interested reader looking for rich ethnographic description of kayak hunting techniques and the cultural contexts this book hints at would do well to follow up some of the excellent works cited in the text and listed in the bibliography.

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