



Review: 50

Author(s): Edmund Leach

Reviewed work(s):

Le totemisme aujourd'hui. by Claude Levi-Strauss

La pensee sauvage. by Claude Levi-Strauss

Source: *Man*, Vol. 63 (Mar., 1963), pp. 46-47

Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2795977>

Accessed: 11/02/2009 18:07

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=rai>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Man*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

arranged on my behalf by Mr. D. R. M. Stuart of the Northern Rhodesian Department of Game and Tse-tse Control, have confirmed this identification.

Notes

¹ This note is based on research undertaken during field work sponsored by the Colonial Social Science Research Council, London, to whom I make grateful acknowledgment.

² A. C. P. Gamitto, *O Muata Cazembe*, Lisbon (Imprensa Nacional), 1854, pp. 128-32.

³ S. S. Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, London (Crown Agents for the Colonies), 1932, p. 90.

⁴ Letter dated 29 September, 1954, from the Conservator of Forests, Ndola, for whose co-operation and that of the Provincial Forestry Officer at Fort Jameson I am grateful.

CORRESPONDENCE

Zande Texts. Cf. MAN, 1962, 235

48 SIR,—Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, in his note on 'Three Zande Texts,' raises issues of wide interest in connexion with Zande folklore. These particularly refer to the possibility of 'recent introduction from Europe.'

It is therefore all the more surprising that Professor Evans-Pritchard nowhere indicates, in his introductory remarks, the main text or the notes, when these three texts were collected. Were they collected as part of his original pioneer field work among the Zande back in 1926, or on some much more recent visit? Quite apart from the specific relevance in this case, it is an axiom in collecting folk texts that they should be accompanied by full particulars not only of the date, but of the place and source of the informant. It may, for instance, be extremely relevant to know the social status of the latter, and in particular what contact he has had with European missionaries and others up to that time.

It is also misleading to refer, in this context, to such material as 'texts.' Surely these were spoken stories which have been transcribed. Here again, it would be relevant to know if they have been transcribed by hand or on tape. There is additional uncertainty in his note 1, which leaves it far from clear whether he gives the whole of the first Zande text from a recorded document or tape, or whether it is 'from memory.' I do not wish to quibble, but I should have thought that by 1962 it was axiomatic that agreed scientific methods should be applied in field work of this type. We look to people like the Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford to raise the standards, not to ignore them.

TOM HARRISSON
Sarawak Museum, Kuching Curator and Government Ethnologist

Note

The above letter has been shown to Professor Evans-Pritchard who replies as follows: 'Mr Harrisson complains that I did not give

such information about some Zande texts as he considers was required. I will not dispute his complaint. I would like, however, to say that I have time and again stated in many publications on the Azande when and where I conducted my research and that had I conducted further research among that people I would have said so. I have also given an account of the circumstances in which my texts were taken down in introductions to other texts, some of which have already appeared in *Sudan Notes and Records*. Others are about to appear in *Kush*, in a small privately printed edition, and elsewhere. Yet others would have been printed in *Zaire* had not publication of that journal been suspended. Of course I cannot hold it against Mr. Harrisson that he has not seen these collections of texts, especially as some are still in the press.

'I do not agree that "spoken stories which have been transcribed" should not be described as "texts." Once they have been written they become texts in my view of the matter. Many of what historians call texts are spoken stories recorded in writing. My texts were recorded by hand. I believe that there was no tape in those days. Note 1 refers to the English version. I trust that Mr. Harrisson now has the information that he desires.'—ED.

On Nannas and Nannies. Cf. MAN, 1962, 288

49 SIR,—The last paragraph of Jack Goody's unusual article prompts me to send you a story which I found to be popular in Moscow just now.

A child is reading a pre-revolutionary story and asks his mother 'What were domestics?' The mother replies that they used to keep the house clean, do the cooking, look after the children. 'Oh, I see,' the child says returning to the book, 'Now the name is changed to grandmothers.'

Stratford-on-Avon

JACQUETTA PRIESTLEY

REVIEWS

GENERAL

Le totemisme aujourd'hui. By Claude Lévi-Strauss. Paris (P.U.F.), 1962. Pp. 154. Price N.F. 6. **La pensée sauvage.** By Claude Lévi-Strauss. Paris (Plon), 1962. Pp. 389, many illus. Price N.F. 19.75

50 Though each of these books may profitably be studied by itself the first is really a preface to the second. They will here be discussed together. It is now generally recognized that Lévi-Strauss is one of the few really important anthropological writers of the present day. Recognition has been slower among British social anthropologists than elsewhere. Whereas the *American Anthropologist* immediately rated *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* as 'undoubtedly the most important book in anthropology in this generation,' MAN took two years to admit rather grudgingly that it was 'the most important contribution made by a French anthropologist since the war' (review by Dr. A. I. Richards, MAN, 1952, 13). But times are changing. When, in 1952, Lévi-Strauss delivered lectures in London, Oxford and Cambridge on the 'structural study of myth' his audiences were uniformly baffled and uncomprehending; ten years later his Henry Myers Lecture, which was a version of Chapter IV of *La pensée sauvage* and intrinsically far more difficult than the

earlier myth lectures, was received with tumultuous enthusiasm by an audience in full communication with the lecturer. Lévi-Strauss is not the only influence currently affecting British social anthropology but he is certainly a dominant one; every serious social anthropologist must read and re-read these books.

In a recent brilliant essay (E. Gellner, 'Concepts and Society,' *Trans. Fifth World Congress of Sociology*, Washington, D.C., 2-8 September, 1962, Vol. I, pp. 153-83) Professor Gellner has made the remark that 'Durkheim's main problem . . . was not to explain religion but to explain conceptual thought and above all the necessity, the compulsive nature of certain of our categorical concepts.' This 'Kantian problem' is also the starting point of Lévi-Strauss' investigations as exemplified in these two volumes but, just as I would defy anyone to provide a satisfactory commentary on *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* in the compass of a MAN review, so also any brief 'criticism' of Lévi-Strauss could only be both presumptuous and misleading; I shall merely try to indicate what the two volumes are about.

On the theme of totemism, Goldenweiser's critique of Frazer appeared in 1910, Freud's *Totem and Taboo* around 1913, Durk-

heim's *magnum opus* in 1912. These works Lévi-Strauss takes for granted; *Le totemisme aujourd'hui* is concerned with post-1918 thinking on this classic theme. Elkin, Firth, Radcliffe-Brown are the writers who receive closest attention. The argument runs that in the inter-war period the dominant Malinowskian brand of functionalism contaminated anthropological theories of totemism. Functions were equivalent to the satisfaction of biological needs; the purpose of totemism was to increase the totemic species, to provide food for the totemites. Totems are ritually valuable because they are already socially (*i.e.* economically) valuable—thus Radcliffe-Brown in 1929. Lévi-Strauss notes with admiration that already in 1931 Firth interprets Tikopia totemism as a logically ordered system of categories, as well as an allocation of magical power over foodstuffs and the pests which attack them; but he also claims, on the evidence of the Huxley Lecture for 1951, that towards the end of his life Radcliffe-Brown had made a radical shift in his views, that he had become interested in totemism as a system of logical categories rather than as a system for providing functional satisfactions: 'on comprend enfin que les espèces naturelles ne sont pas choisies parce que "bonnes à manger" mais parce que "bonnes à penser".' The book ends with a discussion of the relation of this aspect of Radcliffe-Brown's thought to ideas which appear not only in Durkheim but also in Rousseau.

In comment one might remark that Radcliffe-Brown's thought did not really develop in quite this clear-cut way; mathematical and biological notions of structure were both present from early days and never adequately distinguished.

La pensée sauvage provides the general theory for which the essay on totemism provides the special case. A tightly packed tremendous book of which no *précis* is possible. I shall do better if I summarize the argument in my own terms rather than attempt to follow the intricate maze of Lévi-Strauss's own exposition. The background argument runs something like this. Our modern mastery of the world depends upon mathematics, that is upon our ability to manipulate symbolic logic in a completely abstract form. We incline to take such abstract thinking for granted, yet it is the most stupendous and improbable of human achievements. What are the ultimate roots of mathematical transformations, of logical thinking, of the formation of categories, of thought itself? On the one hand man, through his system of concepts and categories, imposes order on the world he inhabits; yet on the other hand the categories themselves are of necessity drawn out of experience, they derive from the natural world. The perception that the world is populated by 'species' of things is primitive; thought of any kind entails the

manipulation of 'species' categories. It is no accident that the animals of palaeolithic cave paintings should be as sharply distinguishable as if they were in the pages of a zoological handbook. At another level the organization of society depends upon the organization and manipulation of categories of human relationship. But on what should this categorization of relationships be based? Relationship is an abstract notion; an animal is concrete. It is not really surprising that categories of the one kind should be closely derivative from categories of the other—and *vice versa*. Some of this is implicit in the writings of Radcliffe-Brown. But Lévi-Strauss goes much further and asks us to consider the quite general problem of the way in which things are named and classified, for it is in the relationships which exist between the individual members of sets of names that the structure of logic and mathematics first begins to emerge. Some of it is tough going even for the enthusiast; but very well worth while.

This hurried pastiche gives no indication of the subtlety of Lévi-Strauss's thought, nor of the brilliance of his exemplifications, nor of the astounding range of his learning. No ethnographical essay escapes his eye, but he chooses his cases where he will; the naming customs of dog-fanciers and horticulturalists are as much grist to his mill as the time concepts of Australian aborigines. No outline is possible; I can only say that reading this book is a most exciting intellectual exercise in which dialectic, wit and imagination combine to stimulate and provoke at every page.

Both books demand urgent translation into English, though I should add that translation will present most formidable difficulties. For example, a considerable section of *La pensée sauvage*, starting at p. 26, depends upon the semantic associations in French of the word *bricolage*, for which I can think of no English equivalent—even approximate. Or to start even earlier—there is the baffling fact that this study of primitive thought bears on its dust cover an illustration of wild violets ('*pensée sauvage*'). The pun is discussed in an appendix at pp. 358–60, but heaven help the poor translator! Even so I hope that someone will try.

The MAN review of *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* included the comment that 'this is in some ways a transitional book which is bound to lead the author into clarifying new positions.' Certainly that was right, and here we are at the new positions; but the result is a still more transitional book. This is only the beginning of a new phase in social anthropology, and it is certainly to be hoped that British anthropologists will bestir themselves to make their contribution.

EDMUND LEACH

ASIA

Peasant Marketing in Java. By Alice G. Dewey. Glencoe (Free Press), 1962. Pp. xxi, 238, endpaper maps. Price \$6

51 Following Clifford Geertz's *The Religion of Java* and Hildred Geertz's *The Javanese Family*, this is the third book to give results of the study of a town in east central Java by a team of Harvard anthropologists.

After a brief comparison with the peasant economy of Malaya, West Africa and Guatemala, and a general introduction on Javanese social organization, it introduces the reader to the functioning of the market in the town of 'Modjokuto'; the hours of business and the market week; the carriers, customers and traders, and their interaction; the financing of marketing activities; and the main types of trade.

The theme is original: whereas practically all previous micro-economic studies on Java approached the subject from the situation of the producer, Dewey's book is the first to concentrate on the market. By doing so, it very usefully fills some of the gaps in our knowledge of peasant economy, in Java and elsewhere. Several details, in fact, never seem to have been described before: traders' groups (p. 88), granting of credit by the farmers to the traders (p. 107), price-formation in intermarket trade (p. 127).

For all that, there remains something unsatisfactory in the present study: the marketing process is described almost as an isolate. What

the earlier 'producer-centred' studies did bring out, but this book does not, is the relationship of the economy of the market to the peasant economy as a whole. The stress is on the selling, to the almost total neglect of the customers' buying. The influence of marketing on the domestic budgets and on the diet remain obscure, its connexion with the agricultural seasons is very summarily dealt with, and the agricultural factors that make this kind of marketing possible and necessary are not mentioned.

One cause of these shortcomings lies, I think, in isolation of a different nature: the study is presented as totally unconnected with previous economic studies carried out in Java. If the author had cared to consider earlier research, it might have been a pointer for her own—if only so that she could have systematically improved on what was scrappy in her predecessors' work. It would have introduced the time dimension, which simply forces itself on one in the rapidly changing and yet so stable society of the Javanese; and it would have made the book more of a contribution to the body of knowledge and understanding of Javanese culture that has been patiently built up through the years.

The Appendixes give *inter alia* a sample of traders' purchases and sales (very useful), a list of kinship terms (the purpose of which is less obvious), and a discussion of Boeke's theories. The defects in Boeke's views on western economic theory have been dealt with