

Anthropology, Carole E Hill, ed, AAA Special Publication, Number 27, American Anthropological Association, 1991.

Publications and Organizations of Interest

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Newsletter is published biannually by IRD/Macro Intl Inc, to provide information about the DHS program and the current state of its surveys. This program is a nine-year project funded by USAID and administered by IRD/Macro to assist developing countries in implementing population and health surveys. Contact IRD/Macro Intl Inc, 8850 Stanford Blvd, Suite 4000, Columbia, MD 21045.

Social Science and Health in Africa: A Directory of People Working in Social Science and Health in Africa, by J Muita and E Muia (eds), 1992. This is the first issue of a directory, whose purpose is to provide a human resource database for promoting health development in Africa through collaborative work, information exchange, and application of scientific methods in decision making on health issues. Contact Social

Science and Medicine Africa Network, PO Box 20811, Nairobi, Kenya.

Migration and Health Quarterly Newsletter promotes interaction among those working on research and policy dealing with migration of both immigrants and refugees, and those involved in various health fields. Contact Intl Org for Migration, PO Box 71, CH-1211, Geneva 19, Switzerland.

South African Women in Health Network offers a network for action on a variety of health issues affecting South Africa. They recently convened a symposium entitled "AIDS in South Africa: Myths and Reality." For information, contact the Network at PO Box 1423, New York, NY 10028; or Nonceba Lubanga at 212/736-2510.

SMA News Column Information

Information for inclusion in this column should be sent to either Janet Bronstein, Dept of Health Care Organization and Policy, UAB School of Public Health, Birmingham, AL 35294, 205/934-3748 (fax: 205/934-3347); or Barbara Rylko-Bauer, 2825 E Fulton, Grand Rapids, MI 49506, 616/957-2466. Deadline is 6 weeks prior to publication date.

SOCIETY FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Katherine Ewing, Contributing Editor

Stirling Prize Winners Reflect on their Work

This year two papers tied for first place in the Stirling Prize competition. One award went to Stephen C Levinson and Penelope Brown for their paper "Immanuel Kant among the Tenejapans: Anthropology as Empirical Philosophy." The other went to Christopher Boehm, whose comments will appear next month in this column.

Background to "Immanuel Kant among the Tenejapans"

By Stephen C Levinson and Penelope Brown

Penelope Brown, as a student of Brent Berlin and John Gumperz, began work in Tenejapa, Chiapas, Mexico, in 1971; she studied conversational inter-

action and wrote a doctorate on women's speech and politeness in Tenejapa Tzeltal. Since then she has recurrently conducted fieldwork there on a variety of topics, and is currently studying aspects of Tzeltal language acquisition.

Stephen Levinson, a student of Edmund Leach at Cambridge, was a co-student with Penelope Brown at Berkeley, and later visited Tenejapa many times. He found the comparison of Tenejapan life to the Tamil village where he had done his primary work endlessly fascinating, and partly out of this comparison came the jointly written book *Politeness* (1987). Since 1990 he has been more seriously engaged in the study of Tzeltal.

Both authors work for the German scientific research organization, the Max Planck Society. Levinson was

recently given the job of establishing a Cognitive Anthropology Research Group for the Society; since August 1991, this has been located at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, where Penelope Brown is also based. The Group now conducts fieldwork in about a dozen fieldsites around the world, on specialized topics of mutual interest to Anthropology and the Cognitive Sciences. The current focus of research is Spatial Conception, and a "kit" of elicitation and experimental techniques has been devised for controlled comparative work (for more information write to the Group at PB 310, NL-6500 AH Nijmegen, Netherlands).

Detailed work in Tenejapa on spatial conception has been conducted over the last two years. Tzeltal turns out to be quite interesting from the point of view of theories of spatial conception. Firstly, like other Mayan (and indeed many Mesoamerican) languages, Tzeltal is intensely preoccupied with shape and position (as shown by Brent Berlin's classic study of Tzeltal numeral classifiers). This preoccupation shows up in what Mayanists call "positional" roots, extended uses of body-part terms and much else besides. Ordinary statements of location, which would be innocently translated using the English prepositions *in* or *on*, in Tzeltal come specified for precise shape and disposition. Recent work in the cognitive sciences had predicted that such shape information could not occur in the locative systems of languages (see eg, Landau & Jackendoff, in press, *Behavioural & Brain Sciences*).

Another aspect of Tzeltal spatial conception is the focus of the Stirling Prize essay. It is the puzzle raised by the Tenejapan indifference to the concepts of left and right, especially as spatial coordinates.

Here's the puzzle. Immanuel Kant wrote a paper in 1768 in which he argued that notions of left and right are fundamental institutions, unreducible to any simpler notions. His argument went as follows. Knowing a left hand to be a left hand and not a right one doesn't depend on the internal measurements of the hand—which may be identical for left and right hands. So the perception of their difference must lie in the external frameworks of our naive spatial conception, which give us the regions of front vs back, left vs right, up vs down, based on the planes through the human body. Although one may attempt to reduce notions of left and right to other notions, one will be invariably frustrated: clockwise rotation already embodies a left/right distinction, specification of the cardinal points relies on clockwise rotation from north, the interpretation of maps depends, say, on deciding that the left hand side of the map corresponds to the region on my left. The issues raised by Kant in this paper are still the subject of lively philosophical debate. Kant's ideas about the fundamental nature of the left/right distinction receive indirect reinforcement from the anthropological tradition, initiated by Robert Hertz and extended by Rodney Needham, which sees the distinction as the primordial binary opposition as it were, and thus a cultural universal.

Now let us confront these ideas with Tenejapan concepts and practice. They have compound terms for left-hand and

right-hand but without Hertzian associations, and they are reluctant to extend this distinction to other body parts. They have no spatial terms for left or right region, as in English "to my right," let alone the notion of left or right in the visual field (as in English "to the left of the tree"). Thus they cannot give directions of the sort "Take the first left, then the next right," or "Turn the knob left" or "Stay on the right" or "Pass the cup to your left." Instead, amongst other things, they use a system of coordinates that does not move or revolve with the body but is anchored in the landscape: from a mountainous terrain with an overall inclination, they have abstracted an idealized "downhill" and "uphill" with transverse "across" which figures in the semantics of motion verbs and adverbs, and locational expressions of various kinds. These abstract directions can be used to describe things on the flat, eg, instead of referring to a bottle on a table as the one to the left, it can be described as the downhill or uphill one as appropriate. Using such notions they find no need for notions of left and right, as shown by a number of informal experiments reported in the essay.

So are the Tenejapans an empirical refutation, as it were, of Kant's ideas? Well, perhaps yes and no. Yes in the sense that they demonstrate that one can have a perfectly coherent system of naive spatial conception that makes no reference to left and right. But no in the sense that their systematic indifference to notions of left and right suggests that Kant may have been right to think that these notions are inextricably bound up with other ones, like clockwiseness, the reading of maps, the directional rotation from one cardinal point to others, and the very perception of mirror-image objects or "enantiomorphs." Let us explain.

What makes the difference between mirror-image objects like left-hands or right-hands, or to take a simpler case, lower case b and lower case d? The d can be reflected, flipped over in an additional dimension, into the b. Is it the same shape or is it different? Our literate tradition considers the shapes distinctive, but if one looks at ancient writing systems, the majority seems to have been indifferent to such left/right reflections (including early Greek and Mayan scripts). Tenejapans on the whole robustly assert that such mirror-image objects are the same shape. This suggests that there are aspects of shape discrimination that are fundamentally cultural, whatever the universal perceptual underpinnings: mirror-image discrimination, along with left/right sensitivities generally, is something that can be culturally enhanced or culturally diminished. Westerners live in a world of fundamental left/right asymmetries, enforced by our cultural environment of writing, driving, clockwise (or significantly "handed") revolving meters and knobs, and architectural designs (doors that open inwards to the left), etc. Tenejapans, despite their linguistic preoccupation with shape mentioned at the outset, live in a world (at least traditionally) in which symmetry across the left/right axis is emphasized in material design from weaving patterns, chattels to architectural details (eg, doors that are split down the middle). The symmetry across the left/right axis shows up in the "uphill"/"downhill" system of



Penelope Brown and Stephen C Levinson

coordinates: canonical orientation seems to have ego facing uphill towards the ritual centre (roughly South—various cosmological ideas are relevant here); but contrary to Kant's prediction that one must find the rest of the cardinal points by clockwise rotation from a designated one, Tenejapans can rotate from "uphill" (South) either way through "across" (indicating indifferently East or West) to "downhill" (North). It is this sort of detail that suggests that Kant was right that developing conceptual distinctions based on handedness yields a fundamental network of interrelated concepts; but the Tenejapans seem to show that one can replace that entire conceptual scheme with another, less anthropocentric one, providing one does so lock, stock and barrel.

One of the special attractions of this research area is that it promises to connect a number of apparently disparate fields, for example the study of shape (in archeology or visual anthropology) and architecture, the study of cosmology and ethnogeography, and the comparative study of cognition together with anthropological linguistics. It is the holistic view of the nature of our species which is the hallmark of the anthropological perspective, rather than the fossilized institutionalization of "four fields" which has so preoccupied the columns of this newsletter. "Only connect" should be the motto, and the comparative study of cognition surely has a central role to play here: sometimes the bits fit together on the ground, but more often they fit together in the head.

About the Contributors

Penelope Brown has a BA (psychology) from Carleton College, an MA in anthropology from the University of Iowa, and a PhD in Linguistic Anthropology from the University of California-Berkeley. She has taught anthropology and linguistics at the Universities of Cambridge, Stanford and East Anglia, and Mayan languages at the Lateinamerika Institut, Berlin. She has held a research post at the Australian National University and currently holds a research position at the Max Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, and continues her primary research in Tenejapa. She is co-author with Stephen Levinson of the book *Politeness: Universals in Language Usage* (1987).

Stephen C Levinson has a BA (social anthropology) from the University of Cambridge and a PhD in Linguistic Anthropology from the University of California-Berkeley. He has taught anthropological linguistics and various aspects of theoretical linguistics at Cambridge and Stanford, and currently directs the Cognitive Anthropology Research Group at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics at Nijmegen in the Netherlands. He is the author of the textbook *Pragmatics* (1983) and a fellow of the British Academy. He continues fieldwork in Tamilnadu, Queensland and Tenejapa.

Debate over AAA Executive Board Continues

By Naomi Quinn (Duke)

[Naomi Quinn is President-Elect of SPA]

In April the AAA Executive Board will hold a special meeting to rethink the recommendations made by the Commission on Unit Status regarding a change in the governance structure of the Association. The April meeting was called because of controversy that arose over the recommendations (1) that the new Executive Board at the pinnacle of the organization represent what the Commission designated as the "five fields" of anthropology—archeology, biological anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology and practicing anthropology; (2) that the chairs of the units representing these fields be guaranteed seats on the Board; and (3) that the unit representing sociocultural anthropology be the American Ethnological Society (as the largest cultural/ethnology section). (The Board would also include the chairs of the three largest sections not already represented, and three additional chairs to be elected at large by the proposed Section Assembly.)

The Executive Board of the Society for Psychological Anthropology generated some of the controversy over these recommendations. It is the SPA Board's position that the proposed new AAA Board composition would ratify an unfortunate situation that has developed over the past 20 years, in which psychological anthropology has been marginalized within American sociocultural anthropology. Ours is not an argument for exclusion of the "traditional" four fields or the new constellation of subdisciplines dubbed the "five fields." Ours is an argument for inclusion. We believe that the SPA should have a guaranteed seat on the new AAA Executive Board.

At the AAA Meeting in November, President-Elect James Peacock was delegated to come to an SPA board meeting in response to the letter to the AAA board from Vincent Crapanzano and myself (reprinted in this space in the September 1992 AN), to hear in detail our arguments as to why SPA should have a guaranteed seat on the AAA Board, and to air the issues. We understand that other delegates were sent to other units that had raised objections to the proposed board composition; we welcomed the opportunity to have this discussion. In the course of the discussion, Peacock pointed out that our request would have to be considered in the light of the requests of other units for the same guarantee of representation. He asked on what grounds we should be considered a unique case, especially given the guaranteed representation we would presumably have on the proposed Board through the American Ethnological Society.

Our answer lies in what we regard as the key explanatory role of psychological anthropology is culture theory broadly speaking and in theoretical progress being made on a range of current issues such as the comparative study of personhood, the emotions or ritual; and in the fact that psychological anthropology has been marginalized in sociocultural anthropology despite our past, ongoing and potential theoretical contributions to that endeavor.

One site of our marginalization is the American Ethnological Society. As large and as broad-spectrum as AES membership is, AES is not the welcoming environment for psychological anthropology that it is, for instance, for

medical anthropology or feminist anthropology. As an active member of the AES board in the 1980s, I can attest that developments in psychological anthropology that might have had import for more general sociocultural research and scholarship were all too often neglected if not openly disdained in the course of making plans and appointments, in spite of my best efforts to bring these developments and these linkages to the fore. This situation continues, as reflected annually in the tenor of AES program themes and special sessions, and the participants in these. In saying this I am not complaining about the AES, which does what it does very well. I am simply pointing out that the intellectual concerns of psychological anthropologists are in danger of being erased from consideration by the AAA if the AES chair is our representative on the AAA Board. Of course, without guaranteed representation we might still sometimes get a seat on the AAA Board if we were to grow big enough or if we were deemed sig-

nificant enough to other sections to be elected to it at large. But marginality is not conducive to large membership or popular election.

Contemporary sociocultural anthropology is keyed to the politics of marginalization and erasure. Surely such a discipline must recognize the effects of these politics within itself and must be willing to redress these effects. As a field, we are intensely concerned with processes of cultural refiguration. Surely such a field cannot seriously invoke the invented tradition of "four fields" or "five fields" as a rationale for the way things are to be.

In her recent Report (in the January 1993 AN) AAA President Annette Weiner has welcomed all comments on the proposed changes. So do we.

Contributions

Please send contributions for this column to the editor, Katherine Ewing, Dept of Cultural Anth, Duke U, Durham, NC 27706; 919/684-3442; fax 919/681-8483.

SOCIETY FOR URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Robert Rotenberg, Contributing Editor

A Letter from SUA President Walter Zenner

What's in a Name? In various discussions in the last few years questions about the scope of urban anthropology have come up. In 1991, this happened at the panel "W(h)ittier Urban Anthropology?" in which several panelists questioned whether there was anything uniquely urban or if the phenomena which they studied were urban. More recently, in our dialogue with the membership of the Society for the Anthropology of the United States and Canada, questions about the appropriateness of our name, the Society for Urban Anthropology, came up.

I will leave aside for now the problem of the evolutionary significance of the urban, since most SUA members deal with contemporary societies (although in my view, the study of non-industrial cities should be part of our field). Two questions come to mind because of the collapse of the Old Regime in rural-urban distinctions. Is urban anthropology synonymous with the study of contemporary societies? Despite the apparent ubiquity of capitalism, urbanism and "postindustrial" technology, is there still a realm that can be defined as "nonurban"?

This also brings us to the question of what "urban" means outside of anthropology. Certain peoples continue to see themselves as "rural" (such as Appalachians in the US). For many, the urban is synonymous with the increasingly peripheral "inner cities." How and why do we include the "suburban" in our view of the "urban"? Thus, use of the term "urban" also has important implications for the field. I would like to ask urban anthropologists to discuss whether or not we should retain our present name. This question should be approached in terms of defining the scope of our field. Even if we do not achieve closure on the problems raised, it will help us to define the place of

urban anthropology in the intellectual scheme of things.

This column is an excellent place to exchange views on this important question. If you want your views published in the SUA column, send them to Bob Rotenberg at DePaul University, 2323 N Seminary Ave, Chicago, IL 60614; (fax: 312/362-5811, email: INTRLR@ORION.DEPAUL.EDU).

New York Happenings

Judith Frankenberg (Mount Sinai Medical Center) writes to describe two activities of interest to urban anthropologists that took place in New York City recently. The first was an exhibition entitled "Growing Old in Spanish Harlem," held at the Museum of the City of New York, New York City Community Gallery, September 12, 1992, through January 3, 1993. The exhibition featured Frankenberg's research on elderly Latinos. This research used photographs of the informants taken by the sociologist Edmundo Morales as visual frames to generate post-interview responses. Frankenberg also organized a conference at the Museum of the City of New York entitled "The Anthropology of Lower Income Urban Enclaves: The Case of East Harlem," supported in part by the Wenner-Gren Foundation. The conference brought together urban ethnographers who had worked in East Harlem and in other lower-income enclaves to discuss the implications of their work for urban anthropology. Anyone interested in the work of the conference should contact her directly.

A Letter from Constance deRoche, Editor of *City & Society*

New life was breathed into *City and Society* by decisions made during the San Francisco meetings. Following the recommendations of the membership (as reflected in Kathleen Logan's fall poll), SUA officials are arranging for