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A continuing concern of twentieth-century anthropology has been finding effective ways to incorporate process and change (including historical time) into our theoretical paradigms. Whether through efforts to document cases of the historical diffusion of cultural elements and traits, through attempts to explain the evolutionary "emergence" of new structural forms, or from a hope that functionalism could be resuscitated with models of "dynamic equilibrium," there has been a continued quest to capture "change" in our models of human social life.

The applications of structuralist transformations and exchange cycles to anthropology originally were presented as ahistorical (Levi-Strauss's "mechanical time"), and distinguished from the "statistical time" employed by historians. In recent years Sahlins (1981, 1985) has led an effort to bridge this gap by wedding cultural structure to historical events in a dialectical process, thereby incorporating change and process into a revamped structuralist paradigm. The goal has been to join synchronic structural analysis to diachronic historical analysis. As one of Sahlins's students, Parmentier has been caught up in this enterprise, and The Sacred Remains provides an illuminating illustration of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

Parmentier's book is an ambitious effort to understand "the link between social relations and historical process" by identifying a set of

signs that operate as an underlying model of cultural structure. He argues that this underlying model of "unseen, unoccupied, unused, and unspoken" signs yields "the diagrammatic representation of social institutions and relationships" that, in turn, functions "as [a set of] meaningful constructs in which the structure and processual regularities of Belauan society are recorded, imagined, and interpreted" (pp. 124-125). This is a bold claim.

A crucial task in assembling a model that combines structure and history is to determine how to "get at" the underlying structure. One way this has been attempted in recent years has been to exploit a category of information long shunned or deemphasized by historians and anthropologists seeking to reconstruct historical events: a people's oral traditions (myths, legends, genealogies, histories, etc.). Those who have followed this path hope that by carefully studying and critically examining oral traditions they will be able to identify a hidden structural pattern or "logic" characterizing these narratives. Parmentier's book on Belauan myth, history, and polity is a sophisticated attempt to accomplish this feat.

Parmentier argues for the existence of four key signs (Peircean "diagrams," a subclass of icons) "which organize the composition and interrelations among persons, roles, and sociopolitical units." The four signs Parmentier identifies are: path, side, cornerpost, and larger/smaller (p. 108). He believes that these four signs or diagrams together constitute an underlying cultural structure that makes sense of "history from the perspective of local actors and their cultural categories" (p. 54). He "gets at" the semiotic relations of these diagrams primarily through analysis of assorted Belauan narratives dealing with their own political history, and secondarily via an examination of various "symbolic markers": sacred stones, particular trees, traditional Belauan valuables, local place names and ranked political titles (p. 109).

Finally, Parmentier tries to demonstrate that the revealed underlying semiotic model of cultural structure permits a reinterpretation of Western narratives about historical events in Belau from the late eighteenth century onward. The bulk of his book is a detailed presentation of Belauan and Western historical narratives interpreted via their relationships to the underlying structural model that he develops in chapter 3.

Parmentier sees his sort of anthropological analysis as a way to bring the Other back into the history of the Other, as that has been recorded and interpreted by Western historians. One way to think of Parmentier's work is that it is an effort to develop a kind of "polyvocal" history,

in which people are allowed to "speak for themselves," somewhat along lines of recent postmodernist concerns to compose "polyvocal" ethnographic texts. Parmentier's hope is that we might begin to understand historical events in other cultures not only from the perspective of Western observers, but also from the emic point of view of participants in that cultural tradition. The implication is that this emic point of view is revealed in his semiotic anthropological model of Belauan cultural structure.

While the inspiration for Parmentier's model comes from semiotics and the specific ethnographic components come from Belauan narratives and "symbolic markers," the underlying model he develops is essentially structuralist. In fact, Parmentier's model conforms quite specifically to the requirements for a structural model laid down by Lévi-Strauss (1963:279-280): It exhibits the characteristics of a system; there is a possibility of ordering a series of transformations to result in a group of models of the same type (cf. Parmentier's chapter 4); these properties make it possible to predict how the model will react if one or more of its elements are modified; and it is constituted to make immediately intelligible all the observed facts.

Although Parmentier does not cite Victor Turner, parts of his argument remind me of Turner's work. In particular, Parmentier's argument for an underlying pervasive cultural structure in Belau that integrates the Belauan polity and organizes the categories of Belauan history (narrative texts) is reminiscent of Turner's statement that the ultimate unity of the Ndembu is expressed in the recurrence of a system of ritual symbols representing Ndembu historical origins (1957: 290-291). Similarly, just as Parmentier demonstrates how the Belauan polity is "held together" (at least conceptually) by the four key semiotic relationships (or signal relationships), Turner argues for the politically integrative role of Ndembu rituals: "It [ritual] is not so much a buttress or auxiliary of secular social regularities as a means of restating, time and again, a group unity which transcends, but to some extent rests on and proceeds out of, the mobility and conflicts of its component elements" (1957:316).

I take anthropology to be a scientific endeavor in the sense of a search for systematized knowledge derived from observation and study in order to determine and understand the nature and principles of that being studied. One goal of any scientific investigation is to identify general regularities and recurrent patterns in the phenomena under study. In anthropology (and many other scientific disciplines) this poses an

epistemological conundrum: Does the scientist discover system/order/regularity/pattern "out there" in the world, or is this something that is created by the investigator? I incline to the latter view; Parmentier apparently believes the former.

This leads to what I perceive as the major weakness of his approach: The semiotic model of cultural structure is presented as an emic (Belauan) model that has been discovered by Parmentier "out there" in the narratives, lithic objects, and so forth. But I remain unconvinced that this is a Belauan model for how culture and history work, despite Parmentier's identification of Belauan lexemes for each of the four signs on which he focuses. It is by no means unusual (let alone unique to Belau) to find linear relationships (paths), binary oppositions (sides), quadripartitions (cornerposts), and gradations in size, rank, value, etc. (larger/smaller) in many cultural systems around the world. In fact, Parmentier periodically makes a case that these relationships are common to much of the Austronesian world (e.g., pp. 109, n. 1; 117, n. 2; 124). Levi-Strauss stated many years ago that the anthropologist may have to construct "unconscious models," by which he meant "a model from phenomena the systematic character of which has evoked no awareness on the part of the culture" (1963:281-282). Parmentier has failed to convince me that the models he presents are not "unconscious models" in this sense.

But why should we accept all of this as a peculiarly emic Belauan way of seeing things? If, rather, we grant that Parmentier has skillfully created a set of semiotic categories that order and make sense of his data (categories that have Belauan lexical referents), we can go on to admire the sophisticated analysis that he produces.

And there are numerous strengths in Parmentier's analysis. The linking of semiotics and structuralism is innovative, particularly as a means for rethinking anthropological studies of history. The refreshing openness with which alternate versions of narrative are treated (e.g., p. 233) suggests one productive way in which anthropologists can come to terms with the intracultural variability of which we have become so acutely aware in recent years. Indeed, Parmentier shows how we can exploit this diversity to create general cultural principles and implicit cultural theories. I was also impressed by the way he successfully related Belauan stories and Western eyewitness historical accounts through his general structural-semiotic model. Although there is a risk of privileging "native texts" here, this may counterbalance the risk that more mainstream approaches to historical evidence may privilege West-

ern views contained in written documents over those of the Other contained in oral traditions. Parmentier makes a compelling case that a closer approximation to reality comes from a combination of the two.

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