Lowell D. Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa: The Mead/Freeman Controversy and Beyond.* Postscript by Eleanor Leacock. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1987. Pp. xii, 209, bibliography, index, photographs. Cloth $29.95. Paper $14.95.

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> Lowell Holmes, a careful ethnographer . . .
> --Bradd Shore (1983:18)

Quest for the Real Samoa draws heavily on material already published elsewhere, as Holmes himself admits (p. ix). Long passages from previous works are sometimes reprinted with only changes in the phrasing and the inclusion of a few new sentences (compare, for example, Holmes 1974:67-72 with the corresponding section on religion in *Quest* [pp. 65-71]). Hence, the book does not bring much new information to the student of things Samoan or the observer of the Mead/Freeman controversy.

The book is organized into a preface, ten chapters, and a postscript written by Eleanor Leacock. Chapters 1 and 2 describe, from Holmes's point of view, the background of the Mead/Freeman controversy and the history of his own involvement in Samoan studies, as well as his relationship with Margaret Mead. Methodological problems of restudies are discussed and Meads research in Samoa is outlined. Chapters 3 to 7 present an ethnographical sketch intended to serve as a foil to the assessment of the Mead/Freeman controversy. Samoan social organization, religion, the life cycle, and culture change are dealt with and a portrait is given of the community of **Ta'ū** in Manu'a, American Samoa, where Holmes did much of his fieldwork. Chapter 8 is titled "Assessing

Margaret Mead," chapter 9 treats psychometric assessment of the Samoan character, and chapter 10 is called "Assessing Derek Freeman."

Holmes's Samoan ethnography is generally reliable, but he makes some mistakes that should not pass unmentioned, even when they do not bear directly on his discussion of the Mead/Freeman controversy. I will deal with these first and later turn to Holmes's manner of dealing with the Mead/Freeman debate.

Holmes's Samoan Ethnography: Some Mistakes

In the Samoan language, there exists a class of polite and respectful words and courtesy phrases that are substituted for ordinary words when one wants to be polite. They are not a "chiefs language" because they are neither used exclusively by chiefs, nor exclusively when addressing chiefs (pp. 28-29). Hence, this class is more appropriately named "vocabulary of respect" (Milner 1961).

Four sovereigns of kingly status *(tama-a-'aiga)* exist in Western Samoa, not two as Holmes erroneously claims (p. 47). These are: Malietoa, **Matā'afa,** Tupua Tamasese, and Tuimaleali'ifano. They can claim certain honorific titles ***(pāpā),*** which are conferred on them by groups of orators traditionally entitled to do so. The *pepa* TuiAtua normally goes to Mata'afa and TuiAana to Tuimaleali'ifano, but Tupua Tamasese, too, can claim them. **Mālietoa** is Gatoaitele and Tamasoali'i.

Holmes describes the *aualuma* as being "composed of the unmarried women of each family" (p. 42) and later says, "Today, the organization is composed of unmarried girls . . . widows of all ages, and, in many villages, the wives of untitled men" (p. 77). There is an alternative description of the *aualuma,* however, that Holmes does not mention. According to Schoeffel (1977; 1978:75), all the women *born* in a community or *adopted* by its families forever belonged to this community's *aualuma.* Wives did not belong to it, since they were taken from other communities.

In the representation of a dying chiefs testament ***(māvaega)*** as to who should be his successor, Holmes commits an error of quite capital magnitude. A son in Samoa does not normally succeed automatically to his father's title of *matai* (elected head of a Samoan family). Nomination by the former title holder in his last wishes *(mavaega)* is one of the points taken into consideration by the family assembly that confers the title on a successor. Now, Holmes writes: "The role of *mavaega* in title succession is not mentioned in other literature and may be an innovation. Certainly it is unique to Manu'a" (p. 44). Here the mind boggles. ***Māvaega*** are certainly no innovation and certainly not restricted to

Manu'a, since the nomination of a successor by a dying title holder is mentioned, for example, by Ella (1895:597), Bülow (1898:101), and Stair (1897:75); and under the name *mavaega* it is expressly listed by Krämer (1902:480), Schultz (1911:52), and Gilson (1970:31-32), to name only sources accessible to Holmes. He mentions, for example, an English translation of Krämer's magnum opus (Rarotonga, 1941) and repeatedly quotes from Gilson. The *Journal of the Polynesian Society,* too, should be available in Wichita.

Next, Holmes divulges the mysteries of Samoan prehistory: "By the first century A.D. the Samoan islands had been settled by emigrants from eastern Melanesia. . . . Archaeological evidence suggests that negroid-type people (probably from New Guinea) did not arrive in the Fiji islands until about 1000 A.D." (p. 190 n. 1). This curiously outdated passage on Samoan prehistory is taken word-for-word from Holmes's earlier book, *Samoan Village* (Holmes 1974:8). Now, either *Quest* was hastily patched together without care being taken to update references, or it has escaped Holmes's attention that settlement of the Fiji-Tonga-Samoa area by members of the Lapita Culture took place between circa B.C. 1500 and B.C. 1000 according to recent syntheses of Polynesian prehistory (Bellwood 1978:311; Jennings 1979; Kirch 1984:48-53; cf. Kirch 1986; Janet Davidson 1981: 101). Yet the only reference he gives is to a 1933 work by physical anthropologist W. W. Howells, which, by the way, is not listed in the bibliography, where we can only find Howells's *Mankind in the Making* (rev. ed., 1967). The paper of 1933 is Howells's "Anthropometry and Blood Types in Fiji and the Solomon Islands" (*Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 33 [4]: 279-339)--not an up-to-date source on Samoan prehistory, I dare say.

Holmes's Discussion of the Mead/Freeman Controversy

The purpose of *Quest,* however, is to discuss the Mead/Freeman controversy that began with publication of Derek Freeman's book *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (Freeman 1983a). The target proper of Freeman's criticism are those generalizations in Mead's works that portray the Samoans as an easygoing people, without deep emotions, almost free from jealousy, with easy solutions for every problem, living in a paradise of free love for the young people, and with an adolescence free from storm and stress. Though it was soon realized that there are contradictions between Meads data and her own generalizations (see Raum 1967 [1940]: 42-43, 293-294), the myth created by Mead became enshrined in the anthropological, sociological, and psychological literature. To

explode this myth was Freeman's aim. To assess his achievement, we have to take into account not only his book, but also his sometimes very detailed responses to his diverse critics (see Freeman 1983b, 1984a, 1984b). What is more, his critique is not a personal attack on Mead, as some critics who fail to distinguish between a personal attack and criticism of a doctrine would have it (e.g., Lieber 1983; McDowell 1984:127; Weiner 1983:910). Under these circumstances, and considering that in the wake of the publication of his book Freeman was subjected to an amount of aspersion and vilification unprecedented in the history of anthropology--I return to this later--one is indeed anxious to learn what Holmes, one of the most resolute defenders of Margaret Mead, has to say in his new book. *Quest,* however, is a big disappointment. And it is depressing reading.

Very generally, I am dismayed that Holmes neglects to consider Freeman's detailed responses to earlier criticism. Holmes merely elaborates his criticism published elsewhere (Holmes 1983a, 1983b) and reissues charges to which Freeman had already replied (Freeman 1983b, 1984a). None of this is incorporated into Holmes's book. Holmes merely repeats what he has said elsewhere. During the three to four years between Freeman's responses and the publication of Holmes's book, there should have been ample opportunity to revise his manuscript and tackle Freeman's detailed and--to my mind--mostly convincing replies. Considering that we are concerned here with anthropological issues of fundamental importance, I can think of no excuse for such conduct, because I cannot bring myself to believe that Freeman's responses should have passed unnoticed by Holmes.

Holmes, it is true, differs with Mead on several issues and he is explicit on this in chapter 8. Hence, he is far from being an uncritical admirer of Mead, taking her every word for holy writ. Yet, despite the conspicuous contradictions between his own and Meads results, he has always been committed to the message that "the validity of her Samoan research is remarkably high" (p. 103). This view he had already professed in his Ph.D. thesis, *A Restudy of Manu'an Culture* (1957:232, cited in Freeman 1983a:105, 325 n. 22). *Quest* is a desperate attempt to buttress this general conclusion and, to do so, Holmes not only gets entangled in self-contradictions, but he also resorts to omission and evasion. First, let me present some examples of self-contradictions.

Self-Contradictions

Unwed Mothers and Children Born Out of Wedlock. Holmes writes that "unwed mothers face very little stigma, and their offspring are

welcomed into the family" (p. 78). In the same vein, he holds that "an unwed mother faced only the short-lived anger of her parents and brothers" (p. 106). Yet we learn that "abortion . . . does occur when an unmarried pregnant woman feels that the man responsible for her condition will not marry her, or that family censure will be severe" (p. 81).

Virginity. On one hand, Holmes writes: "As Mead says, 'Sex activity is regarded as play; as long as it remains informal, casual, meaningless, society smiles' (1930:84)" (p. 106), and young men and women "have had numerous affairs and flirtations" by the time they marry (p. 78). On the other hand, we are told that "Samoan society certainly did not sanction sex outside marriage" (p. 122), and "proof of virginity at marriage is applauded by the families of both the bride and the groom" (p. 80). In fact, virginity is applauded to such an extent that in cases of non-virgins, "many a girl has been saved embarrassment by the substitution of a membrane containing animal or chicken blood for that normally produced by a broken hymen" (p. 80). One may indeed be astonished at Meads smiling society that goes to such lengths to uphold the image of virginity. There is yet more to say about it, however.

Though many parts of *Quest* are taken verbatim from articles and books already published, this is not always so. The passage just quoted, for example, is taken from an article (Holmes 1957), later published as a book by the Polynesian Society. In the article, what is now a "membrane containing animal or chicken blood," however, was "a chicken bladder full of blood" (Holmes 1957413). The chicken, of course, has no bladder (see Freeman 1983a:353 n. 48). What do we make out of this? Metamorphosis? Another "Samoan mystery"? [1] Or just a spoof by informants who told Holmes the chicken bladder story? There may be something in the contention, after all, that the Manu'ans sometimes dupe anthropologists!

Sexual Freedom in the U.S. and Samoa. Holmes holds that a "certain amount of sexual freedom is enjoyed by Samoan young people but *probably no more than is characteristic of their counterparts in the United States* " (p. 78; emphasis added). Compare this with: "in American culture, *which denies normal heterosexual outlets,* young people may be forced, through anxiety during the dozen odd years between puberty and marriage, into less preferred patterns of sexual behavior" (p. 106; emphasis added). Now, if young people in Samoa enjoy sexual freedom probably no more than is characteristic of their counterparts in the United States who are denied normal sexual outlets, it follows from

sheer force of logic that young Samoans, too, are denied normal heterosexual outlets. Yet, we learn that in Samoa "society smiles," as Holmes, parroting Mead, would have it. Society smiles with regard to youngsters' "informal," "casual," "meaningless" sex activity (p. 106; Mead 1930:84)! Let it smile. This reviewer can but weep about such desperate attempts to make Samoan reality conform with Meads idyll.

The story goes on. I regret I will now have to turn to what I call omissions and evasions. First, omissions.

Omissions

On Freeman's Interactionist Viewpoint. I have already commented on Holmes's neglect to take into consideration Freeman's responses to earlier criticism. Moreover, other sources relevant to an assessment of Freeman's stance are not considered either. This is vexing since Holmes seems intent upon labeling Freeman as a narrow-minded ethologist. For example, Holmes writes: "Although Freeman rejects the label sociobiologist, his main orientation appears to be ethological and his tendency is *to rule out the forces of culture* as an explanation of behavioral differences between young people in the United States and Samoa" (p. 13; emphasis added). Quite apart from the fact that there is no basis for such a charge in Freeman's *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (in which Freeman subscribes to an interactionist point of view of human evolution in which the genetic and the exogenetic [cultural] are interacting parts of a single system), a careful researcher intent upon assessing Freeman's position should also consult his other publications. Elsewhere, Freeman has taken pains to clarify his position in relation to the interaction of the genetic and the cultural (Freeman 1980, 1981), yet none of these papers is taken into consideration by Holmes. What I consider particularly annoying in this regard is that Freeman's "The Anthropology of Choice" (1981) pops up in the bibliography of *Quest,* yet nowhere in the text itself is this paper mentioned. Thus, to a casual reader of *Quest* consulting the bibliography, Holmes appears as a careful reviewer trying to weigh the evidence before passing judgment about Freeman. Holmes, however, only added the paper to the bibliography but failed to take its content into account.

Holmes on Samoan Titles for Europeans. The treatment of Freeman's interactionist approach to human behavior arouses the suspicion that it is Holmes's aim to discredit, through omission, Freeman's status as a cultural anthropologist. The way Holmes deals with Freeman's status as a Samoan researcher is another example to corroborate this suspicion.

Freeman claims that his status as the holder of a Samoan chiefly title gives him privileged access to the Samoan cultural universe. Holmes comments on this claim as follows:

> He is not the first anthropologist, however, to be made a chief. My title, awarded in Ta'ū village in 1954, is Tuife'ai (King of Fierce Cannibals), but I have never considered this honor anything more than a friendly gesture (or perhaps a good joke) that is not to be taken seriously by anyone. Since holding a title involves both family responsibility and a certain amount of control over family property, including land, it is hardly something that Samoans grant foreigners *seriously*. (P. 148; Holmes's italics)

This is almost a word-for-word repetition of a statement Holmes made earlier (Holmes 1983a:930), to which Freeman has replied as follows: "For Holmes's information the title of Logona-i-Taga (lit. 'Heard at the Tree-Felling') which was conferred on me in a formal installation ceremony in 1943, after I had been adopted into a Samoan family, is a prominent title *(suafa fa'avae)* of great antiquity . . . in the constitution of Sa'anapu" (Freeman 1984a:403). What is more, Logona-i-Taga is not a *matai* title, but a *manaia* title, and Freeman, as the holder of this title, not only had access to chiefly assemblies *(fono),* but "as a *manaia* I was also afforded contact with numerous Samoan girls and young women, many of whom, as I was able to speak their language fluently, became my close friends" (Freeman 1983b:161). This is important since it bears directly upon Freeman's claim to represent not only the chiefly viewpoint on the issue of sexuality, but also the attitude of girls and young women.

Freeman's assessment of the standing of the title of Logona-i-Taga I can fully confirm on the basis of my own fieldwork in Safata in 1980-1981 and 1985 (Bargatzky 1988a, 1988b). [2] I would like to mention two additional aspects. First, while it is certainly true that sometimes (as in Holmes's case) "titles" are conferred on Europeans as a joke, Holmes forgets to mention that titles (this time without quotation marks) are also conferred on Europeans to honor them. Such is the case, for example, with German businessman Gerhard Schwegmann, who befriended Laupepa, the late son of Western Samoa's head of state, Mālietoa Tanumafili II. In order to honor Schwegmann, one of Laupepa's chiefly titles was conferred on him: the *ali'i* title Papali'i Tele; probably not even Holmes would maintain that Laupepa held his title as a joke. Second, Holmes intimates that there is a connection between the literal meaning

of a title and its dignity, a funny-sounding title necessarily being a joke. This is not so. There are many titles in Samoa that, when translated, sound funny but are, nevertheless, dignified titles of good standing.

I cannot bring myself to believe that Holmes, given his involvement in Samoan studies for more than thirty years, is unaware of all this. The only conclusion for me, then, is that he omits these facts in order to devalorize Freeman's status as a Samoan title holder and thus render less significant the latter's observations on Margaret Mead and Samoa.

On Holmes and His Witnesses. To enhance the credibility of Mead's account, Holmes quotes some statements of indigenous Samoans. For example, he quotes the highly respected La'ulu Fetaui **Matā'afa** (whom he mistakenly believes to be the "wife of the Prime Minister of Western Samoa"),[3] who stated in a letter to the editor of *Newsweek* magazine (28 February 1983) that "neither Margaret Mead nor Derek Freeman represented our ancient land, its customs or its way of life" (p. 137).

But at least one Samoan authority fully supports Mead's conclusion, Holmes writes:

> One man, Napoleone A. Tuiteleapaga *[sic],* is definitely known to have had close ties with Mead as both informant and interpreter. He is quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* article (14 Apr. 1983) as saying, "Margaret Mead was 100% right in her book." And in an interview in the *Samoa News* (11 Feb. 1983), published in American Samoa, he stated, "She got to know people well and wrote an accurate analysis of what she saw. Why didn't these anthropologists condemn Meads book when she was alive? I'll tell you why, they waited until Mead is gone because they knew she knew what she was talking about." (P. 138)

Here we have the Samoan authority, after all, who personally knew Mead and who is incensed about those anthropologists who disagree with her. Who is this remarkable man? Tuiteleleapaga (not Tuiteleapaga) is, among other things, the author of a book titled *Samoa Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (New York: Todd and Honeywell, 1980). This book was reviewed in *American Anthropologist* (84, no. 3 [1982]: 715-716), and the reviewer records how he first met the author:

> Since most of my informants up to this point were extremely reserved . . . I was somewhat astonished by this extroverted

> man who claimed, among other things, to be a Rosicrucian and a songwriter. . . . He . . . claimed to be interested in anthropological research and was at that time engaged in a study of Samoan sexual behavior, primarily through participant observation. When I left Napo's house he gave me a copy of a study he had done of old Samoan "superstitions." The manuscript contained some very detailed and impressive information concerning Samoan charms, taboos, deities, and spirits. Mostly I was impressed by the fact that the paper turned out to be chapters IV and V of George Turner's *Samoa, A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (1884). . . .
>
> The introduction to the book is by Margaret Mead, and it is interesting because she has managed to reproduce Napo's style of writing almost exactly. But the most puzzling aspect, which surely can be chalked up to insufficient proofreading, is Tuiteleleapaga's statement in the dedication (p. iv) that Margaret Mead wrote the introduction "after reading the whole manuscript in her office in New York shortly after her death."

Maybe it is this transcendental relationship with Mead that enables Tuiteleleapaga to assert that she was "100% right." I regret that Holmes has denied us this piece of information about his witness. The book review in question cannot have escaped his attention, because it was written by a certain Lowell D. Holmes from Wichita State University, who is identical, I presume, with Professor Holmes, the author of *Quest* (cf. Holmes 1982).

Evasions

Where Mead's cause cannot be advanced by omissions, Holmes turns to evasions. Let me present some examples.

On Authoritarian Tendencies in Samoan Society. On page 162 of *Quest,* Holmes quotes Freeman's position that there are authoritarian tendencies in Samoan society and that these tendencies may lead to mental and emotional stress and outbursts of uncontrollable anger (Freeman 1983a:216, 218, 222). Holmes contends that "other observers of the Samoan scene, however, do not corroborate Freeman's claim regarding the oppressiveness, authoritativeness, and lack of flexibility of the Samoan social system" (pp. 162-163). To support his statement, he quotes Grattan (1948:14, 158). The quotations, however, do not sup-

port the point in question since they deal in a very general way with such things as the reception of strangers, the laws of hospitality, and the complementary character of status groups. In addition, Holmes refers to Gilson (1970: 15) and Brown (1910:59) to the same effect.

While it is certainly true that the Samoan family system is complex and that different observers can get different impressions, this in itself is not sufficient to do away with Freeman's claim regarding the authoritarian tendencies in Samoan society. No unbiased observer, I dare say, would deny that these tendencies do exist. Untitled Samoans, especially children and adolescents, are supposed to *usita'i,* "obey," "obey the instructions" (Milner 1966). One Samoan informant further explained to me that *usita'i* carries the meaning of obeying orders, obeying at once, without hesitation, without any more questions. *Musu,* the state of sullen unwillingness to comply with orders, is a culturally tolerated outlet for Samoans when they feel that demands are too hard. It is beyond my comprehension how a serious student of Samoa, obviously obsessed to salvage even the most untenable of Mead's generalizations, can bring himself to deny all this. In this context, Holmes's reference to John Williams's observation (p. 164), noted in 1832, is not relevant since it refers to interfamily relations. The whole issue of authoritarianism as discussed by Freeman, however, refers to *intra*family relations. Williams, by the way, noted in the very same 1832 journal that the "King" in Samoa "possesses absolute power over the persons of his subjects" (Moyle 1984:283). This quotation shows merely, however, that we have to take great care, when evaluating early ethnohistorical sources, to disentangle the shifting frames of reference.

On Ta'u and Sa'anapu. In a paper published well before Freeman's book came out, Holmes has this to say concerning cultural continuity in Samoa:

> Why a given culture such as Samoa, which shares a common Malayo-Polynesian heritage with those of eastern and central Polynesia, would have remained relatively unchanged in its traditional cultural patterns while the others have been drastically stripped of this is a question which must intrigue any student of cultural change. . . .
>
> In the area of social organization very little change has taken place since Samoa was first described by missionaries in the middle of the nineteenth century. (Holmes 1980: 189,193)

Elsewhere Holmes asks: "Why has this island group during 150 years of European contact been able to retain so much of the traditional way of life. . . ?" (Holmes 1974:94) and it is always the entire Samoan group to which he refers. Since publication of Freeman's book, however, Holmes and other Freeman critics go to great pains to demonstrate that Sa'anapu, the community in which Freeman carried out most of his fieldwork since the 1940s, is culturally not the same as **Ta'ū,** where Mead did her fieldwork (see Holmes 1983a:932; Holmes 1983b:8-10). In *Quest* he repeats his argument (pp. 148-151) that "Sa'anapu has been for some time culturally more modern than most outlying villages in Western Samoa" (p. 150). A daily bus provided communication as early as 1954 with the port town Apia, "with its commercial establishments, theatres, nightclubs, libraries, and government buildings" (ibid.). On the other hand, Manu'a in 1954, when Holmes did his fieldwork there, was much the same as it had been when Mead worked there--very isolated, with interisland vessels calling only about once a month. There were no vehicles and only a handful of salaried jobs; almost everyone was engaged in subsistence agriculture. Throughout Upolu, Holmes claims, villages "have for some time been heavily involved in working such cash crops as cocoa, bananas, copra, and coffee. People tired of working in agriculture could also find a fair number of jobs in Apia, which has been a cosmopolitan community with substantial numbers of European inhabitants for over a century" (ibid.).

This is a typical example of Holmes's evasions. Immediately after the passage just quoted, for example, a long citation from Gilson (1970: 178) is inserted that proves nothing since it refers to Apia on the north coast of Upolu, but not to Sa'anapu on the south coast. In addition, Holmes quotes J. W. Davidson (1967:238) to prove his point. The quotation in question refers to 'Anapu Solofa, the high chief of Sa'anapu, who had encouraged his kinsmen to develop their own plantations for commercial agriculture. Holmes fails to tell us, however, that on page 290 of the same work, Davidson writes that in Sa'anapu traditional and progressive practices existed side by side with traditional ones prevailing, for example, in matters of the customary basis of chiefly and political organization.

To Holmes's claim that Sa'anapu cannot be compared with **Ta'ū,** Freeman has responded thus:

> Yet another of Holmes's inductivist errors is to have assumed that because in 1954 there was a daily bus service from

> Sa'anapu to Apia that this is a measure of the condition in which my researches in Sa'anapu of 1941-43 were undertaken. In fact, at the time of those researches Sa'anapu had to be reached (from Apia) by a very rough track (for much of the way) over a 3,000 feet high thickly forested mountain range that took up to six or more hours to traverse on foot, as there was no regular transport by sea. Sa'anapu was thus, at that period, a considerably more remote settlement than was **Ta'ū** in 1925-26, at the time of Mead's researches, when a vessel from the naval station in Tutuila called about every three weeks with supplies, so that there was easy and regular contact with the port of Pago Pago. (Freeman 1983b:145)

Relative to the south coast of Upolu and particularly the district of Safata where Sa'anapu is situated, Gullestrup says "the south coast road was not constructed until the mid-1950's. Until that time, the internal communication between the villages was restricted to the use of canoes and foot-paths through the woods, while persons wishing to go to Apia had to cross the mountains in the interior, a walk of about 10 hours" (Gullestrup 1977:43). It was as late as during World War II that U.S. troops stationed in Samoa built a road from the north coast (Leulumoega) to Salamumu in the south, thereby connecting the hinterland of Sa'anapu with the north coast (ibid.; see also Harrison 1978:124), "but only with the actual road connection did it become possible for buses to go to Apia" (Gullestrup 1977:45). Hence, Safata in the 1940s, when Freeman began his investigations there, was not that different from Manu'a as Holmes and others would have it. On the contrary, it was very much like the Manu'a Holmes describes, where, as late as 1954, "one traveled between **Ta'ū** village and Fitiuta in exactly the way Mead had done, either by muddy mountain footpath or by long-boat" (p. 149).

What is more, until 1968, "no extensive modernization processes have been undertaken [in Safata], either in the agricultural sector, the industrial sector, or the public health sector; only the education sector can muster something like a process of modernization" (Gullestrup 1977: 136). Hence, "the south coast area has over the years been regarded as a *backward* area without any political importance. An essential cause of this . . . has no doubt been the *isolated* situation of the south coast, both in relation to the villages among themselves, and in relation to the rest of Upolu" (ibid.:72; emphases added). It is true that since the connection of the cross-island road to the south-coast road, Safata's position

with regard to communication has improved when compared with other districts such as, for example, Aleipata and Palauli (see Pirie and Barrett 1962). To any unbiased reader, however, it should be clear by now that Holmes's and others' claim of an essential difference between Manu'a and Sā'anapu is preposterous. It is merely wishful thinking, therefore, to maintain that Freeman's criticism of Mead's generalizations is nugatory because of the alleged incomparability of these two communities.

On Competition and the Noble Art of Definition. Holmes says that he saw Samoan culture "as considerably more competitive than Mead did" (p. 103). As areas of competition, he mentions, for example, boys' games (p. 75), the zeal of untitled men to distinguish themselves as good servants to their *matai* and family (pp. 76, 93), interest in the ceremonial and traditional aspects of Samoan life (pp. 93-94), competitive spirit in schooling, the wish to have the best carpenter, the best coxswain, the best dancer (ibid.), oratory (pp. 50, 93), and rank (p. 122). To this, Sunday donations must be added (p. 71). This is an impressive list indeed and Holmes cannot help saying that "in view of Mead's long discussions of competitiveness in the village political organization of Manu'a, it is surprising to find that she characterizes Manu'an culture as one where competition is disparaged and played down" (p. 122). In view of such an admission it is highly annoying to realize that Holmes classifies, among other things, "competitive spirit" and "sex activity data" under "ethos" (p. 119), because he later declares: "It should be noted that Freeman did not mention that my disagreements with Mead were over matters of ethos, an area which Campbell believes is so much a matter of emotional response that 'ethos may indeed be beyond the realm of scientific study' (Campbell 1961:340)" (p. 155).

This, then, is Holmes's strategy: where Mead's conclusions are so obviously at variance with the facts that they cannot be explained away, he classifies the areas of disagreement as aspects of "ethos" and declares that ethos is beyond scientific scrutiny. This is immunization strategy.[4] I fail to comprehend, moreover, how a society like Samoa--where "rank and prestige constitute the focal point . . . to which all other aspects of life are secondary in importance," where "every installation, wedding, and funeral of a chief affords an opportunity to gain prestige and raise one's relative position within the village through the display of wealth" (p. 122)--how such a society should provide a "comfortable ideological environment, allowing a smooth and unrestricted maturation process" for young people (p. 34). What is more, not only chiefs' rites de passage

offer opportunities to gain prestige (Tiffany and Tiffany 1978). As every student of things Samoan knows, Samoan life consists of a never-ending series of *fa'alavelave* (trouble, family business) of different magnitudes, each *fa'alavelave* reopening the arena for status competition.

I could go on and on, but I have confined myself to some characteristic examples-- "gems," if you like-- of Holmes's scholarship in *Quest.* To be more specific yet would necessitate more space and I feel that I have already overtaxed the reader's patience. I want to conclude, therefore, with the question Holmes asks at the beginning of *Quest* but fails to answer convincingly: "Why have I written this book?" (p. vii).

Cultural Relativism and Conformity

Quest is slipshod as to ethnographic detail, fraught with contradictions, and omissive and evasive in its attempt to salvage Mead's conclusions and to discredit Freeman's refutations and his status as a scientist. To account for the fact that such a book could have been written and published in the United States, we must look at the intellectual environment. A scandal bigger than *Quest* itself is the fact that this book has been hailed as "a timely contribution to the picture of Samoan culture" (Bateson 1987), "fair and lucid . . . instructive and informative" (Theroux 1987:49), and helping "to set the record straight in a most illuminating manner . . . fascinating reading" (Montagu 1987).

To recapitulate: Freeman was not the first researcher to criticize Mead's Samoan ethnography. Raum, for instance, in his *Chaga Childhood,* first published in 1940, noted among other things that "Dr. Mead deals a destructive blow at her own conclusions by including in her book a chapter on 'The Girl in Conflict,' in which she describes cases of girls making a choice on unconventional behaviour" (Raum 1967 [1940]: 294). Larkin, in her review of the second edition of Mead's *Social Organization of Manu'a,* has remarked that "Dr. Mead has observed the Samoan way of life but lacked the necessary insight to interpret what she observed" (Larkin 1971:222). Freeman, however, was the first one to devote a comprehensive and detailed scrutiny to the factual basis of Mead's conclusions in a book that has drawn wide publicity beyond the field of anthropology. This is very likely due to the circumstance that *Coming of Age in Samoa* "clearly presented a message that some in America very much wanted to hear--myth or not. It is part of a large literature of self-reflection on American society produced in the twentieth century, suggesting that in the search for 'a more perfect union'

Americans could look to other societies and other standards for models" (Jarvie 1983:82). In American cultural anthropology, this attitude found its way into the doctrine called "cultural relativism." Mead's conclusions in *Coming of Age* are informed with the tenets of this doctrine, hence Freeman's refutation of them is at the same time a critique of cultural relativism. [5]

Freeman's critique evoked vilification, opprobrium, and aspersion to a degree unprecedented in the history of anthropology, mostly on the part of anthropologists who would consider themselves to be firmly grounded in cultural relativism. In many of the reviews, there is a "right-or-wrong-our-Mead" attitude that is hard to comprehend for an observer outside the United States. Or, to quote Jarvie, who puts it more politely: "That some of the reviews written in the United States have been defensive not only of nurture, or culture, theory, but also of Margaret Mead's status, is hard to understand" (ibid.:83).

But this is not the whole story, alas! What I consider particularly shocking in this connection are statements by anthropologists such as Lieber (1983: 15) and Ember (1985:910), who intimate that Harvard University Press should not have published *Margaret Mead and Samoa,* or that the book should have been immediately rejected by the anthropologists who read it in manuscript. Ember even went so far as to proclaim that Freeman "is not a scientist" (ibid.:909) because he did not comply with standards that I consider to be so rigid and unrealistic that, should we decide to adhere to them, 90 percent of what makes up anthropology would not be science any more, I dare say. [6] I cannot help feeling that, for some American anthropologists, criticizing Mead is tantamount to un-American behavior. If so, one may understand why Holmes--who, mind you, is very critical of Mead himself--should have felt it necessary to downplay the amount of disagreement between his own findings and Mead's conclusions. There is a telling article, "A Controversy on Samoa Comes of Age," in which the author has this to say:

> In 1970 anthropologist Raoul Naroll of New York State University at Buffalo asked Holmes to contribute a chapter to a handbook on methodology he was preparing. He wanted a chapter on Mead's mistakes in Samoa. Naroll remembers: "Holmes wouldn't do it. He was afraid to criticize her. He thought he would lose grants. That doesn't mean he would have, but he thought he would." Holmes says he declined because he didn't have time to write the chapter. Today he still agrees with Mead's basic observations about Samoa. (Marshall 1983: 1043)

I repeat this passage since it has already been quoted by Freeman (1983b: 176 n. 46) and remains unchallenged so far. Compare this with the fact that in *Quest* Holmes tries to convince the reader that he finds the validity of Meads Samoan research is "remarkably high" (p. 103). Can we conclude from all this, then, that anyone who dares to criticize Mead's Samoan ethnography too openly in the United States may face hard times?

I want to make it clear that it is not my opinion that Holmes should be assessed by his new book alone. To assess him, his other works have to be taken into account. As far as I am involved, I can only state at the end of this review that it makes me sad that Holmes, after a long career as a professional anthropologist, has seen fit to author *Quest for the Real Samoa.*

NOTES

1. Apologies to Bradd Shore (1982).

2. Safata is the name of a district on the south coast of Upolu in which **Sā'anapu** is located. My own fieldwork was conducted in Fusi, another Safata community. A general knowledge of the more important aspects of the ceremonial constitution of Safata's communities is part of the stock of knowledge, however, of any *matai* of Safata.

3. Former Western Samoan member of parliament and, among other things, pro-chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, La'ulu Fetaui Mata'afa is the *widow* of former Prime Minister Mata'afa, who died in office in 1975. As a *matai,* she holds the orator's title La'ulu. Western Samoa's prime minister in 1983 was Tofilau Eti.

4. Marilyn Strathern, contra Freeman, speaks to the same effect when she contends that "falsifiability in the strict sense surely rests on the replication of experience" (Strathern 1983:78) and that, therefore, Freeman's criticism is invalid. To this I would answer that only in the "hard' sciences, such as physics and chemistry, is experience reproducible, if at all, in experiment. To argue that, therefore, Meads conclusions cannot be criticized when these conditions are not met--and they cannot be met--is to take the realm of behavioral and historical sciences out of the pursuit of criticism. This is immunization strategy.

5. Cultural relativism, according to Holmes,

> is both a methodological tool (demanding objective, unbiased data collection) and a philosophical and theoretical principle, calling for open-mindedness with respect to cultural diversity. It requires that no single culture be held up as offering the "right" or "natural' way of doing things or valuing things. It reminds people of all nations that each society should be free to solve cultural problems according to their own time-tested methods without condemnation from those who would choose different solutions. Having been trained in such a philosophical tradition, Mead, myself, and the bulk of American anthropologists would believe that behavior associated with adolescence or other aspects of the life cycle must be evaluated *only in terms of the cultural context in which they occur"* (p. 17; Holmes's italics).

That sounds noble at first glance, yet cultural relativism is methodologically untenable since it is self-contradictory (cf. Schmidt 1968). In addition, it is ethically dangerous because it denies us the platform to criticize and condemn philosophies proper that propagate intolerance, nationalism, and racism if these attitudes belong to the "time-tested methods" of the society under consideration. Adolf Hitler, to take an extreme example, would have rejoiced to learn that each society should be free to solve its problems according to its own methods without foreign condemnation and undoubtedly would have questioned the legitimacy of the Nürnberg trials (ibid. : 171-172).

6. In reviews written by American authors, alarm is often expressed regarding the potentially injurious impact of Freeman's book on the reputation of anthropology as a scientific discipline. Anthropology, it is argued, might appear as a "soft" and less exact science than it purports to be. To prove his point, Shankman (1983:38), for example, quotes from an editorial published on 15 February in the *Denver Post:* "The real loser may be anthropology's reputation as a science. If its methods haven't made quantum jumps forward since Meads day, the whole discipline might find a better home in creative literature." To this I would comment that exactness is not an abstract value, but a relative one. It depends on the context of the problem to be solved, circumstances of data collection, data quality, nature of sources, and so on, and it is for issues such as these that standards of exactness must be developed and applied. To salvage anthropology's status as a science by adopting Ember's (1985:907) rigid standard for the solution of problems of any kind would be foolish since in so doing we would not improve anthropology, we would do away with much of it. It is no coincidence, I think, that simultaneously with this concern for anthropology as an exact science, the scientific character of Clifford Geertz's thick description-approach is disputed in the United States (see Shankman 1984) while it is appreciated by modern British social historians (e.g., Cannadine 1983). This leads me to suspect that the acrimonious, enraged anti-Freeman outbursts we are now so amply supplied with are but symptoms of some deeper crisis of the cultural relativistic tradition in American anthropology--challenged as it is, these days, by both creationist obscurantism and sociobiological simplification.

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