



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Africanisms in American Culture by Joseph E. Holloway; D. C. Hine; J. McCluskey, Jr.; D. B. Gaspar

J. Lorand Matory

American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 93, No. 2. (Jun., 1991), pp. 489-490.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-7294%28199106%292%3A93%3A2%3C489%3AAIAC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N>

American Anthropologist is currently published by American Anthropological Association.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. 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/journals/anthro.html>.

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 an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

This book, which largely represents the Indian tradition in applied anthropology, is appropriately dedicated to honor the contributions of B. K. Roy Burman, the doyen of Indian rural social science and anthropology today. Roy Burman was deeply influenced in his early life by the writings of S. C. Roy and was later trained in anthropology by N. K. Bose and T. C. Das. He is considered one of the few Indian anthropologists who "refused to allow their professional vision to be coloured entirely by western thought" (p. 19). Noted for his empirical awareness and methodological rigor, Roy Burman maintained a humanistic approach to social issues in India. He carried out many studies among villagers and hill people under the aegis of the Census Commission of India. One of his foremost academic and professional commitments concerns tribals and their social formations. Roy Burman founded the Institute of People's Action in 1977 to actively involve Manipuri tribals in the process of development and research.

The 42 papers in this volume, written by his friends and colleagues, are twined around the role of social science in delineating and solving social problems, as the title indicates. The epilogue contains a fairly long interview with Roy Burman focusing his thoughts and views on the future of Indian and world anthropology. The editor, S. B. Chakrabarti, instead of providing a particular theme for the volume, asked the contributors "to pick up some issues where Roy Burman had at least done some thinking" (p. xii). As a result, it turned out that three very important elements of Roy Burman's professional concern, namely, tribal studies, participatory development, and multidisciplinary research, became the strongest common threads uniting all essays in this collection within a single social-applied framework. The first three papers, by L. K. Mahapatra, Bhupinder Singh, and Ajit Danda, depict a profile of Roy Burman and his works both as a social scientist and a humanist. The authors, in addition to discussing their personal encounters with and stories about Roy

Burman, systematically critique the scholarly activism for which he is widely known.

Eleven essays examine a variety of topics highlighting the tribal issues and contemporary developments in India. It is encouraging to find a significant shift in approach to tribal studies from a more conventional framework (i.e., transformation of tribes into peasants and caste-groups founded by Riskey, Bose, and Srinivas) to a political economy approach. This shift is best illustrated in the article by Jaganath Pathy. Tribal issues like land and resource control are inextricably intertwined with the Indian political economy. As Pathy puts it: "The land problems of the tribals cannot be comprehended in isolation from the dominant economy, politics and ideology of India" (p. 44). Nine articles focus on "participatory development" in rural India and the need for "empowerment" of the people. Eight articles are devoted to analyzing caste practices, ethnicity, and nationalism. Roy Burman's own views on ethnicity and tribal national movements are not reviewed adequately in this volume; he categorized tribal movements in northeastern India as "proto-nationalistic"—a phase of expansion of identity that is not necessarily incompatible with "official nationalism" (p. 225). Several articles examine urban/industrial policies and social changes. The book integrates reasonably well various development issues and social concerns as reflected in anthropological research and studies in India.

The epilogue should be interesting to readers. It provides a broad overview of Roy Burman's interests in anthropological practices, both in an Indian context and globally. His concern about indigenous peoples worldwide and the need for multidisciplinary research are relevant themes in contemporary anthropology. Roy Burman considers that the future of anthropology lies in the systematic and continuous study of "human needs," "freedom," and "quality of life" in cross-cultural perspective. This book is a welcome addition to the literature of applied social sciences and may be used as a reader in developmental and applied anthropology courses.

General/Theoretical Anthropology

Africanisms in American Culture. *Joseph E. Holloway*, ed. Blacks in the Diaspora (*D. C. Hine, J. McCluskey, Jr., and D. B. Gaspar*, general eds.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. 272 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

J. LORAND MATORY
Princeton University

Written chiefly by African-American scholars, this volume is itself a landmark in an emerging historical consciousness, abandoning the fearful and once-popular sense that any sign of Africanness fueled the argument that African-Americans were unassimilable as citizens. At the same time, the best of these essays admirably revise the much-criticized eth-

nohistorical method of Melville J. Herskovits, to whom the volume is devoted.

It remains difficult to say whether the need to resurrect Herskovits's efforts flows from past political motives or from the paucity of evidence for the "Africanisms" thesis as it is conventionally posed. In this volume, many instances of African "survivals" in North America are drawn from the distant past and from isolated regions like the Georgia Sea Coast Islands. Moreover, because they participate in a highly creolized North American culture, the Africanness of such "survivals" is evident only when they are abstracted from North America and interpolated into the elaborate ritual systems of Haiti, for example. Hence, some of these essays seem an archeology of shreds and patches, neglecting their relation to the peculiar internal dynamics of North American society.

Certain essays tendentiously assign African origins to widespread behaviors and feelings. In his "Kongo Influences on African-American Artistic Culture," R. F. Thompson claims that the Kongo gesture of crossing the arms provided the historical model for a Black man in 1980 who, on the New Haven green, crossed his arms to end a conversation (p. 158). Other essays show an inadequate knowledge of the African ethnography. For example, Holloway attributes to "the Bantus . . . a homogeneous culture," adding, "This homogeneity is indicated by a common language" (p. 8). Several essays also uncritically repeat the shibboleth that African-American *shouting*—being filled with the Holy Ghost—is cognate with West African, Haitian, and Brazilian spirit possession. Though partly convincing, the comparison remains questionable on several counts: (1) outside the Christian churches, possession by the High God is virtually anathema in Africa; (2) untranslatable glossolalia and the conventional violence of North American *shouting* distinguish it sharply from most West African and Afro-Latin spirit possession, which mimes the personalities of gods, enlists comprehensible languages, and, unlike *shouting*, entails the medium's amnesia; and (3) perhaps more obvious precedents are found in the church at Corinth and the English Civil War sects.

Some North American religious, aesthetic, and social conventions indeed manifest not only African "survivals" but distinctly African structural templates—a point scored excitingly in Maultsby's "Africanisms in African-American Music." The author reviews the standard improvisation-and-polyrhythm argument and beautifully illustrates patterns of performer-audience interaction recogniz-

able on both continents, as well as the American aesthetic and political concerns that have generated innovation. Despite the self-evident strength of the case for "Africanisms" in "Sacrificial Practices in Santeria, an African-Cuban Religion in the United States," Brandon sensitively outlines the influences of non-African religions, the class contexts of their convergence, and the dynamics of revitalization and cross-ethnic diffusion as well.

Concluding this volume is Philips's exceptional article, "The African Heritage of White America," which subverts some of the dearest assumptions of the Herskovitsian method. Philips argues that the distinguishing features of African-American culture owe more to class conditions than to African descent and that "Africanisms" are, most importantly, what distinguishes the American culture at large from the European. Although class analysis cannot account for the full range of African-American cultural distinctiveness, this essay and others arm us with a rich array of historical and ethnographic materials, while enhancing our means to revise both unilineal visions of American cultural development and outmoded assumptions about the nature of cultural continuity in general.

The Cultural Context of Aging: Worldwide Perspectives. *Jay Sokolovsky*, ed. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1990. 416 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper).

MARCIE PARKER
University of Minnesota

The Cultural Context of Aging is an important new contribution to the field of anthropology and aging. The book is well conceived and crafted. It is divided into six sections: "Culture, Aging, and Context"; "The Cultural Construction of Intergenerational Ties"; "Aging, Modernization, and Societal Transformation"; "The Ethnic Dimension in Aging"; "Community, Environment, and Aging"; and "Culture, Health, and Aging." The goals of the book are to show "how older adults function as social actors in the context of diverse societies and . . . how the cultural context in which people grow old creates a varied reality of what aging means" (p. 1). The book shows how social groups construct shared expectations about aging and uses the notions of time, the life cycle, intergenerational relations, dependency, and death (p. 2).

This book helps us understand how the aging experience in the United States compares with that in other cultures and it suggests