

commercial trade, and state formation, the question is not the existence of a history but rather how to extract it, especially after a 400-year colonial history has influenced both that history and oral accounts of it. Fortunately, the region is also characterized by an epic tradition, of long and detailed narratives of Homeric proportions. The very qualities of myth which make it seem out-of-time make it especially attractive as a unique tool for the reconstruction of the distant past. Epics, however, tend to combine human, animal, and divine characters, and to reiterate dramatic passages which seem more prototypical than historical. Jan Vansina first set forth a serious and influential account of these "Savannah Kingdoms" by literally interpreting the series of events found in epics as sequences of invasions, rulers, and dynasties, encoded in a language and structure of myth. De Heusch appears to accept this "literalist" perspective, for which he is chided in the translator's introduction, but in fact pursues the question of the "origin of the state" from a quite different point of view, the symbolic armature which both reflected and shaped the definition of political order among the Luba, the Kuba, and Lunda, and the Bemba, with secondary reference to other groups in the region.

Here is where structure and history coincide, since it is only through a structuralist analysis that the implications of the vagaries of myth for a political history can be revealed. Thus, the actual content of the book has an appearance and a pace of reading more comparable to Lévi-Strauss's *Du Miel au Cendres* than to Vansina's *Les Anciens Royaumes de la Savane*, or even to Willis's recent *A State in the Making: Myth, History and Social Transformation*, which uses social and economic perspectives to address similar questions of myth and history in the region. The book reads as a panoply of reflections on and insights into mythical themes which are placed in a dialogue with other transformations in the area and South American parallels in the work of Lévi-Strauss. We hear about solar mythology and analogues of the lunar cycle; the Tower of Babel; divine kingship, especially in the form of the Kuba "Drunken King," Woot; the interplay of kinship themes of matrilineality, patrilineality and incest; parallels between hunting, marriage, and fecund sexuality; and visual and auditory symbolism in the structure of color and noise.

It is not difficult to lose oneself in the mythical analysis and forget the overriding issues of politics and history; yet, the discussion is held together by the central insight that there exists a vast intercultural "code," representing a "veritable political ideology" with a "dual concept of power" in the region, involving sacred magic and terrestrial authority, both invested in the political order. To tie together two themes, "the myths present patrilineality as progressive; it puts an end to an uncouth original culture in which the refined customs and divine kingship were unknown." The history of the region involves the emergence of kingship and the devel-

opment of empire, buttressed by mythical origin and justification.

This book, then, can be read in two ways: retrospectively as structuralism, and representing perhaps the best example of the method practiced by anyone other than Lévi-Strauss; and prospectively as a transitional stage in the emergence in anthropology of a historical method which takes account both of structure and event. But above all it represents, with the entire structuralist perspective, a return to 19th-century concern with comparative ethnology and regional culture. And as a nonuniversalistic Frazerian product, it should continue to be of interest as a rich account of Central African symbol, society, and thought.

***African Religious Groups and Beliefs: Papers in Honor of William R. Bascom.* SIMON OTTENBERG, ed. Meerut, India: Archana Publications (Berkeley, CA: Folklore Institute), n.d. xii + 355 pp., figures, tables, photographic plates, bibliography, notes on contributors. Rs. 150 (cloth).**

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A memorial poem by Ved Vatak opens this festschrift to the late William Bascom (1912-81). Simon Ottenberg provides an overview of Bascom's "warmhearted anthropology" (p. 7), then introduces each of six sections organizing eclectic contributions by 15 of Bascom's former students. Bascom's complete bibliography plus notes on contributors close the volume.

Ottenberg notes that while Bascom's respect for detailed ethnography underscores "all good anthropology," some aspects of his work "are not strongly in style with current anthropological fashion but . . . are nevertheless enduring" (p. 5). This is reflected in several articles here which catalog more than explain and employ "an approach which is not heavily theoretical" (p. 13). Those working in the same subject or geographical area may rejoice in the descriptive treatment Alan Merriam brings to *kifwebe* and other Songye (Zaire) "cult groups" and Vernon Dorjahn brings to the initiation of "ordinary" Poro cult members (Sierra Leone); yet these are neither case studies nor thick descriptions of particular occasions of social process that might attract nonspecialist readers. Similarly, David Ames's survey of dance among Hausa of Zazzau (Nigeria), Philip Peek's of a particular form of divination throughout southern Nigeria, and Joseph Moore's of music and dance in Cumina and revival cults in Jamaica provide documentary background for future interpretive writing. In three Nigerian studies, John Messenger outlines Anang religion, Phoebe Miller describes sex polarity among Afikpo Ibo, and Nancy Leis discusses "the Not-So-Supernatural Power of Ijaw Children." In each case one wishes the author had followed up the insight displayed:

it is not clear what constitutes, for Messenger, "deep probing of religious views" (p. 67); for Miller, Afikpo women's "considerable shopping" for "sympathetic and supportive husbands" (p. 90); or for Leis, vengeance, fury, and punishment for Ijaw.

Other papers are more thought-provoking. Harold Schneider's intriguing suggestion that lion-man beliefs among Turu (Tanzania) are a recent elaboration of older ideas, an attack by men on women's increasingly feisty independence, reflects Bascom's own studies of culture change. Peter Hammond fails—but at least has tried—to resolve the contradiction of an "intentionally materialistic and generalizing approach" (p. 238) with a "'particularizing' and historical" one. As he portrays Mossi (Upper Volta) decisions to convert to Islam or Christianity, his unequivocal statements of Mossi rejection of traditional religion as irrelevant, unimportant, and "not portable" in "altered material circumstances" (p. 232) do not allow an understanding of the subtleties of how, as he later says, conversion to Islam or Christianity does *not* "entail abandonment of belief in their traditional religion" (p. 235).

Most successful are papers by Daniel Crowley, Simon Ottenberg, James Fernandez, Morton Marks, and especially Erika Bourguignon. Crowley describes masks used in *mukanda* boys' initiation in west-central Africa. He confronts the idiom manifest in coffee-table surveys of the *chefs-d'oeuvres* of African art, that "each African style is quite distinct from all others, that it is somehow coexistent and coterminous with a 'tribe', . . . that only a few ethnic groups . . . have produced art objects of merit," and that "traditional African creativity is tragically dead," a position, as he writes, instrumental to art dealers' control of their market (p. 207). Ottenberg, in discussing the "secret societies" of preinitiate boys at Afikpo (Nigeria), contrasts "the sense of peer-group unity and non-differentiation with reference to the outer world" among "the very real internal social distinctions" with the boys (p. 173), and highlights how adult sex roles are introduced and practiced through aggressive, creative dramas the boys stage. Fernandez demonstrates how Christianisme Celeste, a cult group of southern Benin and Togo, offers its adept "restoration to the converted self of valued qualities . . . brought into jeopardy or contaminated or abused" (p. 246), through the person and the preaching of its charismatic founder. While pulling people together to a central focus of one god (Jehovah), the cult maintains identity through its opposition to "fetishism." Marks discerns rules for the performance of Afro-American gospel song and sermons in which the preacher recreates an original trance experience—being saved—as s/he dissociates according to a "culturally constituted model" (p. 307).

In the most satisfying of the 15 pieces, Bourguignon confronts Alfred Metraux's (1959) doubly damning characterization of Haitian *vodoun* as "'a paganism of the west,'" and "'a decadent and rather bastardized African religion'" (p.

291). Instead, she finds its "universe of mythological themes and ritual behaviour . . . in a constant process of change" (p. 291), allowing for accommodation of the great diversity of history and experience of Haitians. As her centerpiece, she offers remarks by a *houngan* or *vodoun* priest, the brilliant complexity of which rivals and is reminiscent of the Bwiti sermon discussed by Fernandez in his wonderful "Edification by Puzzlement" (1980).

By all accounts, then, this is a mixed bag in terms of subject matter and success of development. The frequency of technical problems in the book would suggest the editor may not have been allowed to proofread the galleys. The binding by four loops of thread seems to assure that the book will self-destruct: most of Peter Hammond's essay fell out as I was reading it! Bascom deserves better.

**Communicating with Quotes: The Igbo Case.** JOYCE PENFIELD. *Contributions in Intercultural and Comparative Studies, No. 8.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983. xiv + 138 pp., figures, tables, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 (cloth).

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Penfield's short book is an inquiry into the use of proverbs as a communicative strategy in conflict situation among the Igbos of Imo State, Nigeria. The author has two additional broad goals: to determine what significant cultural patterns and values emerge from an analysis of quoting behavior and to search for concepts useful in constructing a theory of proverbs. For conceptual framework and methodology she relies on the work of Mukarovsky, a literary member of the Prague School. The Igbos were chosen for this study partly because of their apparent reputation for using quotes in speech-making.

The first two chapters of the book are devoted to the twin-problem of conceptualization and methodology. According to Penfield, theory and methods in the study of folklore are relatively undeveloped. Past studies have tended to concern themselves largely with recording proverb texts without analysis of the interactional settings (i.e., social contexts) in which they were used; or, the studies were mainly descriptions of interactional settings with no analysis of the effects of the proverbs on the interlocutors or audiences. Nor did past studies analyze how the effects of proverbs differed from those of ordinary speech. The author undertook to analyze Igbo proverb use in its interactional setting, apparently in an effort to remedy the situation.

Mukarovsky's work suggests the kind of analysis Penfield undertook. The former defines proverbs as a manifestation of quoting behavior