

deviendront vite évidents à tout lecteur de "La ronde des échanges."

- (4) Cette même dernière partie de l'ouvrage aboutit à une interprétation qui comporte des éléments structuralistes implicites (opposition forêt-village, hommes-esprit, etc.). Pourquoi Iteanu n'a-t-il pas mentionné plus explicitement cet aspect de son approche théorique?

Malgré ces remarques, le livre (qui est, je crois, la thèse de doctorat remaniée de l'auteur) n'en conserve pas moins beaucoup d'intérêt pour tous ceux qui s'intéressent à la région de la Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, à la méthode comparative ou à l'approche globaliste. Iteanu écrit bien, fait preuve de grandes capacités analytiques et il pourrait facilement parfaire ses perspectives théoriques. C'est un anthropologue qui promet beaucoup et on doit attendre avec impatience ses prochaines publications, qui réserveront une place plus grande à son expérience et à ses données de terrain.

Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal. Lynn Bennett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. vii + 353 pp. \$27.50 (cloth).

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From the perspective of the hamlet of Narikot in Nepal, Bennett explores various aspects of the Hindu perception of women. The basic theme is that Hindu or perhaps Narikot society (it is not always clear which) is characterized by an "ambivalent view of women" which is "reinforced by and reflected in . . . the conceptual and symbolic structures of Hinduism" (p. 214). This ambivalence is summed up in terms of an opposition between patrifocal and filiafocal structures and practices: a woman begins her life as a sacred sister or daughter within her father's patrilineage, but is eventually transmuted into a dangerous wife. In the end, resolving the conflict between sacred sister and dangerous wife, she becomes a mother.

Considering the hazards of modern life, any ethnography which gets published must be regarded as excellent, and any author who publishes an ethnography must be considered heroic. In this case, the intense pleasure of encountering fresh information is mitigated by the feeling that the author was less than enthusiastic about the task of revising her doctoral dissertation. Although the introduction describes a lengthy period of fieldwork in the community of Narikot, it also informs us that this is not a

community study. In the end, it is never clear where the author's information came from or who was studied. Most of the results seem to come from co-residence with a large upper caste family and more or less daily conversations with a learned Brahman. Appropriately, materials concerning family life and upper caste ritual seem to be fairly well localized in Narikot. Such materials take up the early chapters of the book, and they are followed by an extensive analysis of text materials which is designed to relate "Hinduism" to the more specific details concerning Narikot. At this point, it becomes difficult to determine whether the analysis is primarily concerned with Narikot, or with South Asia in general. In either case, there should have been greater attention to the problem of explaining the choice of the particular scriptures which were analyzed.

With regard to the central point of the book, ambivalent feelings toward wives and mothers are so widespread throughout the world that few could doubt that they also exist in South Asia. My own experience leads me to support Bennett's belief that men have particularly warm feelings toward their sisters. On the other hand, I wonder if that special feeling isn't largely the result of a general lack of contact between sisters and brothers. The various Hindu scriptures and sacred tales seem to pay little heed to sisters or daughters, and instead concentrate their full attention on wives and mothers. My own ethnographic intuition suggests that, in fact, it is wives and mothers who are sacred and dangerous. For that matter, the wives of deities--Parvati, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Sita, Draupadi, Radha--seem remarkably benign. If Parvati has a dangerous side, it is when she appears as a chastening mother in the form of Kali or one of the disease goddesses. In these forms, she is often presented as representing her husband, who may be considered safe only when his third eye is firmly closed rather than half open as seems to be the case at present.

In *The Sword and the Flute* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1975), David R. Kinsley finds a high degree of similarity between Krishna and Kali. Thus, the implied proposition that men are safe and women are dangerous, or even that men are different from women seems to require some examination. Certainly, any discussion of this topic needs to consider the ambiguous sexuality of gods and the dangers associated with sacredness. Oddly, this discussion is not an attempt to refute Bennett's thesis, but an attempt to point out that the waters she stirs are already rather thick and muddy. However well the methods of Ruth Benedict and Morris Opler might work with the Japanese or the Apache, there seem to be real problems in applying these same methods to a civilization whose learned priests and Brahmans have made a practice of contradicting each other over centuries of text compilation and revision.

The idea that patrilocality generates an exceptionally strong feeling of ambivalence toward women, perhaps grading into open hostility, is attractive. It would appear that people in many places in the world have feelings similar to those described by Bennett. Without pushing the matter too much further, it would be interesting to know how Bennett would deal with the Eskimo deity Sedna or the Pueblo Indian Spider Woman. Certainly, the credibility of Bennett's hypothesis would be enhanced by references to sacred sisters and dangerous wives in other societies.

In another vein, discussions of the origins of ambivalent feelings ought to consider the fierce economic interdependence of husbands and wives in most societies. Economic considerations also enter into questions concerning the status of high caste and/or rich women, especially where these women lack practical value beyond procreation. At least in South India, the husky, no-nonsense working wives of field laborers are a potent contrast to the bored and anemic wives of the wealthier Brahmans. This alone might account for the contrast between docile and aggressive women seen in the scriptures.

All in all, this book should provide a powerful stimulus for further investigation of the issues raised. In fine detail, Bennett does not succeed in supporting or even clearly stating the main arguments that she makes. There needs to be more thought concerning methodology and the kinds of data that might be relevant to the argument. There is also a need to place the work solidly in the context of previous research. Obviously, a less ambitious work would not have drawn these criticisms. I commend Bennett's ambition, and I commend the present work as an excellent beginning. Certainly, we can agree that women are dangerous and sacred. However, the bottom line, taken from the Code of Manu, is that "Women must be honored by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law."

Navajo Infancy: An Ethological Study of Child Development. *James S. Chisholm*. New York: Aldine, 1983. xii + 267 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

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The growing field of comparative child development tends to be theoretically and methodologically oriented. Most of these studies are confined to the use of standard assessments without consideration of cultural contexts. As a result, these studies lack sound theoretical formulations. However, Chisholm's work is different and represents a step in the right direction.