JACK H. DRIBERG: A HUMANISTIC ANTHROPOLOGIST BEFORE HIS TIME

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Abstract: Jack H. Driberg (1888-1946), a British social anthropologist who wrote a classical ethnography on the Lango before receiving formal anthropological training, spent over a dozen years doing fieldwork in Africa. He was both an atypical colonial administrator who was able to understand and convey to others Africans' views and an extraordinary anthropologist for his time and place who raised issues in anthropology which have come to the fore only in recent years, primarily in American humanistic anthropology. This essay reassesses Driberg's contributions to humanistic anthropology focusing on his writing in "non-scientific" genres.

Résumé: Jack H. Driberg (1888-1946) un anthropologiste social britannique qui écrivit sur les Lango, avant même d'avoir reçu un entraînement formel en anthropologie, un essai devenu classique, se livra à des travaux pratiques en Afrique pendant une douzaine d'années. Il était à la fois un administrateur colonial non-typique, capable de comprendre et de communiquer aux autres les vues des Africains, et un anthropologiste extraordinaire – pour son temps et dans sa situation – qui souleva des questions d'anthropologie venues sur l'avant-scène seulement ces dernières années, principalement dans l'anthropologie humaniste américaine. Cet essai réévalue la contribution de Driberg à l'anthropologie humaniste, se concentrant sur ses écrits de genre non-scientifique.

> "The science of society is essentially humanistic." — Driberg 1930b:79

Jack Driberg would probably be an active participant in the current discussions of alternative ethnographic genres to the ethnographic monograph if he were alive in the 1980s. A poet by avocation and sensibility, he wrote a classical ethnography on the Lango before receiving anthropological training, as well as ethnological essays on East African culture, short stories based on his fieldwork, translations of poetry collected in the field, popular books on anthropology and his experiences as a colonial administrator in East Africa,

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popular essays, letters to newspapers and journal editors on African culture, and book reviews on a wide variety of topics including music, the ethnography of Melanesia, anthropological theory, linguistics and Africa. Because Driberg felt that he had a mission to show the British public the relevance of anthropology for understanding people in the British Empire, he wrote more "popular" than "professional" anthropology.

Driberg was born in Assam in 1888, the child of a British colonial servant. Before joining the colonial service in 1912, Driberg was educated at the Grange Preparatory School, Crowborough, Lancing College and Hertford College, Oxford, where he studied the classics. Driberg served in the British colonial administration in Uganda, where he lived among the Lango, Lugbara, and Acholi, from 1912 to 1921, when he transferred to Sudan. Before he retired from the colonial service in 1925, he also spent time in Kenya, Ethiopia, Congo (Zaire) and Morocco. Driberg studied anthropology with Malinowski and Seligman at the London School of Economics from 1925 to 1927. Subsequently he lectured in anthropology at the London School of Economics from 1927 to 1929 and taught in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University from 1931 to 1942. In 1942 he joined the British Ministry of Information, where he served until his death in 1946.

In his own time Driberg was better known to the British public from his popular writing than to the scholarly community from his anthropological writing. His books were widely reviewed in non-anthropological publications both in Britain and America. British anthropologists acknowledged that he was an exceptional linguist who made a significant contribution to East African ethnology, but felt that he was a more talented popularizer than an original thinker (Evans-Pritchard 1947), largely because he made no contribution to prevalent functionalist theories of the time. As a colonial administrator he was considered unorthodox because of his active participation in East African cultures (Williams 1946), and a romantic figure because of his harshly critical and culturally relativistic views about colonial administration. An assessment of Driberg's career as a colonial administrator is outside the scope of this essay.

Although Driberg was a popular lecturer in anthropology at Cambridge University from 1931 until 1942, and as such helped the anthropology program "flourish" (Evans-Pritchard 1947), no "school" of anthropology developed around him. Anthropologists of his own time, especially his British colleagues, who were concerned with the theoretical development of structural-functionalism, compartmentalized his scientific and popular writing, thereby seriously underrating his anthropological contributions and importance as an innovator and original thinker in what today would be called humanistic anthropology. The humanistic innovations of other anthro-

pologists at the same time, such as Hilda Kuper and Carleton Coon, also were ignored by their anthropological contemporaries.

Although most of Driberg's writing was not deemed worthy of review by anthropologists, general reviewers repeatedly recognized its anthropological significance. For example, an anonymous reviewer in *The Spectator* recognized that *Engato the Lion Cub* included two sections that "reveal the same exhaustive understanding of native life as Mr. Driberg's more heavyweight works" (The Spectator 1933:974), while C.H.W. who reviewed *At Home with the Savage* in *The New Statesman and Nation* found that despite some weaknesses it was valuable in:

> stimulating interest in anthropology as a science capable of serving practical ends, and in taking the blinkers from our eyes so that we may see the uncivilized peoples of the world for what they are – human beings faced with the same fundamental problems of how to solve their biological needs that we are faced with, and solving these problems in their own more or less satisfactory ways. (C.H.W. 1932:135)

Jack Driberg was a born anthropologist whose life and written work were infused by principles of anthropology combined with a unique humanistic sensibility. All of Driberg's writing, professional and popular, fiction and non-fiction, showed that he was a sensitive, thoughtful and keen observer of East African life, who not only had a deep sympathy for Africans, but also respected and loved them. However, he neither romanticized African life nor was sentimental about African culture. Despite his long-term, close contact with African peoples and speaking knowledge of eleven African languages, he was always humble about how well Europeans could know African peoples and cautious about generalizing about African cultures.[1] Driberg had a critical mind which he applied to all aspects of his professional work. He could examine dispassionately the limitations of his own knowledge of Africa, the principles and practice of anthropology and British colonial administration, and books and articles he read and reviewed.

Trained as a classical scholar and knowledgeable about music, Driberg also was a published poet. In his first book, *Poems*, Driberg wrote regularly metered, rhyming verse about love and classical topics, and translated several poems from the classics. His ability to support non-traditional viewpoints was shown in the poem, "The Man of Kerioth" (Driberg 1908:11-16), in which he presented a specious defense to minimize the guilt of Judas "in conformity with the growing modern tendency to 'whitewash' historical characters" (ibid.:11).

By his own admission, Driberg had neither heard of anthropology nor read any anthropological works before he went to Uganda as a colonial administrator in 1912 (Driberg 1932b:1). Yet in his earliest written work he

showed a clear sense of scientific method, a keen eye for observing behaviour, and objectivity and balance in drawing conclusions from his observations, characteristics which were to become more pronounced after his formal training in anthropology under Malinowski from 1925 to 1927. Driberg learned from his field experience the convergence of interests between colonial administrators and anthropologists to which Malinowski later drew attention (Malinowski 1961:8). He was a participant observer to a fuller extent than many anthropologists of his time,[2] which is all the more remarkable because as a colonial administrator political barriers were placed between him and the peoples among whom he lived.

The Lango (Driberg 1923), his classical ethnography on one of the Nilotic peoples of Uganda, is a model of detailed ethnographic description for the time in which it was written. As Robert Thorne Corydon states in the "Foreword," it was not Driberg's duty to collect the data, it was a "labour of love" (Driberg 1923:5). Driberg's stated purpose in writing *The Lango* bears this out:

> The record has been inspired by my affection for a race with whom I have lived and worked for several years, and among whom I have been fortunate enough to form some of my most enduring friendships. Brave, loyal, courteous and hospitable, they have readily accorded me a confidence greater than my deserving, and they will always remain more than a pleasant memory now that the exigencies of service have separated us. In repayment of this obligation this work was in the first place undertaken in order that in these days of rapid change and transition to newer modes of life and thought some memorial might remain of their past traditions and of customs, which may too easily be overwhelmed by the hurrying and ruthless march of an alien civilization. (Driberg 1923:19)

Although Driberg spent six years among the Lango, he felt that for some purposes twenty years' observation was necessary (Driberg 1923:49); he readily admitted that he was unable to collect adequate data on such topics as physical characteristics (ibid.:50), music (ibid.:126) and historical forms of government (ibid.:204); and stated that his account of Lango history "is largely conjectural and open to criticism" (ibid.:25). Such qualifications are typical of all Driberg's professional and popular writing, but not of most ethnographic writing of his time.

Driberg also was careful to present the precise meanings of words such as *ajoka*, witch doctor.[3] He described the *ajoka's* duties in detail and concluded, "The *ajoka* is no more a charlatan than any priest of any religion; he obeys an impulse which he attributes to the deity and utilizes his peculiar gifts to the service of that deity" (Driberg 1923:236); he "is in short, a primitive philosopher, a scientist in embryo" (ibid.:237). Likewise Driberg

referred to the specialist who removed people's incisors as a "professional dentist" (ibid.:51).

In his first field experience Driberg obtained a deep understanding of polygyny and brideprice, topics about which he wrote frequently in the course of his career.

> It is often urged against polygyny and the payment of dowries that it results in the degradation of the women to the position of being mere property. However true this may be elsewhere, it is very far from the truth among the Lango, whose womenfolk are treated with remarkable courtesy and consideration, and though invested by custom with the right of vetoing a husband from contracting a second marriage, would be the first to resent the institution of monogamy. (ibid:67)

Although Driberg differed from many of his contemporaries in his relatively "enlightened" views on polygyny, bridewealth, health, disease, morality, cannibalism and religion, he apparently accepted without question the Hamitic hypothesis that more "advanced" culture traits in eastern Africa were introduced from outside Africa and that precolonial Lango culture change resulted from "waves" of Hamitic migrations.

Although Driberg observed that "In their narration they show keen dramatic insight, distinguishing the characteristics of the animals or persons represented by appropriate gestures and changes of voice" (Driberg 1923:133), his translations of twelve Lango "fables" (ibid.:433-455) gave no indication of narrative features, and though by no means literal translations, were not tellable. The translations of these "fables" are a marked contrast to his skillful translations of Lango and Didinga poems in *Initiation* (Driberg 1932f), published by the Golden Cockerel Press. This book of poetry, produced by a cooperative press well-known for its illustrations and established to make finely produced books available to the public at a reasonable price, was another labour of love. It also was a unique presentation of oral literature for a British social anthropologist of his time, which captured the spirit of its composers and original performance.

In one of his typical scientific qualifications, Driberg stated in a "Note" in *Initiation*:

> A word of explanation for these poems is, perhaps, necessary. I do not care to call them translations, though that word would most accurately describe them. Many of them are translations in the strictest sense.... "Spear-Blessing" is a fairly close rendering of a Lango invocation, and the two "Songs of Initiation" might be called translations, but I hesitate to do so, and they are incomplete, because in the one case... what I have given is all that I have heard (a very small fragment of the whole).... "The Ancient Gods" is incomplete, however, because though I heard every word of the original I am debarred by the fact of initiation from reproducing more than I have given here.... Others...

> are synthetic, composed of snatches heard on different occasions, each accurate in itself and homogeneous in content, but not originally one song. (Driberg 1932f:1)

These poems with illustrations by Roger Gibbings were written in a free verse style markedly different from his own *Poems*. They showed Driberg's poetic sensibility in their rendering and were intended for the public to enjoy, in contrast to the songs and fables in *The Lango* which appeared adjacent to the Lango texts, so that experts could check the translations against the originals. Driberg, however, did not take credit for the "originality" of the poems in *Initiation*:

> They are all based on African motifs and, so far as it is possible for any European, I have tried to express only their thoughts and to interpret the motifs in their own way. The imagery and metaphor is entirely African, and I have to thank my Didinga and Lango friends for enabling me to reproduce their sentiments to English readers unfamiliar with their cultures. I stress this point, as it is the fashion to assume that primitive people, and particularly Africans, are deficient in imagination and poetical expression. My experience, and the experience of others who have been on terms of intimacy with Africans, is definitely against such an assumption. (Driberg 1932f:2)

Driberg's poetic facility, as well as his narrative competence were shown in *People of the Small Arrow* (Driberg 1930d), his most widely read and reviewed book. This collection of short stories focused on members of a Didinga clan over several generations. Although Driberg did not write a comprehensive account of Didinga culture, he wrote anthropological essays about their age groups (Driberg 1932d) and divination (Driberg 1933) and included information about them in his popular non-fiction. For example, it is clear that Driberg used the names of real people in at least some of his short stories. "The Tragic Love of Lotingiro and Nachai" was about Lotingiro, a deviant in Didinga society, who questioned the validity of well-established Didinga customs and was ultimately killed for his repeated violation of incest norms. In *The Savage As He Really Is*, Driberg used Lotingiro as an example of there being deviants in all cultures, reviewed the "facts" that are presented in the story, and gave additional information, such as Lotingiro's age, that was not included in the story (Driberg 1929h:9-10).

Even more details about the factual basis of "The Rainmaker" were provided in *At Home with the Savage* (Driberg 1932b:253-255). In this example, it is clear that Driberg greatly simplified an exceedingly complex incident involving minute details of Didinga kinship in his story. Throughout his stories Driberg expressed Didinga viewpoints through the characters. He also wove sensitive descriptions of the natural environment into the stories. These apparently represented Didinga viewpoints too, for in *The Savage As*

He Really Is, Driberg used the Didinga as an example of the artistic and aesthetic appreciation of "savages," citing as an example a Didinga who changed the location of his household so that he could get a better view of the sunset (Driberg 1929h:73).

People of the Small Arrow clearly was based on Driberg's "fieldwork" and had a foundation in "fact." However, the stories were told without any overt scientific descriptions of cultural details, with full attention to action and motivation of the characters. Today the stories in this collection might be labelled "faction." Six of the stories were about intersocietal warfare between the Didinga and Topotha, who initiated the warfare but were defeated by the Didinga and their Acholi allies. The other stories dealt with commonplace events in Didinga culture such as birth, death, love, marriage, hunting, witchcraft, rituals and music. "Kaiywe," the concluding story, was an allegorical discussion among the mountain peaks in the Didinga chain that reviewed the succession of peoples, African and European, who had lived in and passed through the mountains. The Didinga were clearly the mountain's favourite people, and perhaps were Driberg's as well, since he wrote about them with more sustained empathy than about any of the other African peoples among whom he lived.

Reviewers were enthusiastic about *People of the Small Arrow* primarily for the skillful way that Driberg provided insight into Didinga life. William Plomer considered it a "saga in miniature" and more than a "film" of "savage life," "it is invested with the inward light of sympathetic understanding; the characters are thought of as creatures of flesh and blood" (Plomer 1930:709), while an anonymous reviewer in *The Nation* found the stories "intimate, vivid sketches" of life written without condescension and "free from the pedagogue's responsibility to inclose the greatest possible amount of information" (The Nation 1930:132).

Three reviewers considered *People of the Small Arrow* far more valuable than professional anthropology. Alain Locke found in it:

> more of the true flavor of the primitive mind than from a half dozen typical anthropological treatises. We learn, with great interest and considerable relief, how complex and sophisticated the African mind really is, and how an outwardly simple life can be inwardly complicated with irony, guile, romance and tragedy. Perhaps gradually we are approaching a completely new view of primitive mentality. (Locke 1930:406)

An anonymous reviewer in the *New Statesman* had a similar opinion, "As a study in the psychology of the African negro this interesting little book will have far more value for the general reader than a whole shelf-full of learned works by anthropologists" (New Statesman 1930:644), and went on to say "the verisimilitude is wonderful; as we put down the book we are left

with a perfectly clear impression of having ourselves lived for a brief period among the Didinga''(ibid.:646).

Max Lerner compared the life of the Didinga as presented by Driberg with that of other authors and noted that it was ''far from the unrelieved superstition and degradation which Lévy-Bruhl and his followers attribute to savage life'' (Lerner 1930:M10). Lerner questioned whether *People of the Small Arrow* was a novel, but found it very valuable nonetheless.

> To achieve a portrait of a community in action, utterly free of dullness and pedantry, managing somehow to convey social characterization through the implications of the narrative and to do it without running headlong into ''popularization,'' is a Napoleonic feat. If I had the task of inducting people with normal taste and interests into the study of anthropology I should choose this book before any of the treatises. It is human and creative where they are not. The writing is superb, possessing dignity, economy, movement. I know of nothing in anthropological literature to equal it. (Lerner 1930:M10)

In marked contrast to the enthusiasm of the non-anthropological reviewers, T.J.A. Yates in a review in *Africa* tempered his appreciation of the stories as ''very well worth while'' and remarked on Driberg's great empathy for the Didinga which enabled the reader to identify with the characters thereby introducing ''that emotional factor which does so much more for understanding than cold reason is capable of doing'' (Yates 1931:136). He concluded: ''Although there is much new ethnological material in this book, the fictional form of its presentation, so useful in winning the general reader's interest, militates against its use by the anthropologist''(ibid.:136).

Engato the Lion Cub (Driberg 1934b) was not a ''fairy-tale,'' but Driberg was ''almost tempted to start with the traditional Once-upon-a-time''(ibid.:13). It was a true story about a lion cub that lived with Driberg for two years, dedicated to a child and probably written for adults as well as children. In the context of an engaging story about a lion cub's adventures, it incorporated ethnographic information about the Lango and Bakenyi and Driberg's fieldwork among them which was not included in his writing for anthropologists.

Driberg provided brief ethnographic information about the Bakenyi, who lived on ''floating homes'' on Lake Kioga where he visited them annually, and a detailed description of his initiation into a Lango age group (Driberg 1934b:56-62, 100-115). He also revealed his feelings about the significance of his initiation:

> When my Lango friends suggested that it would be a good thing if I were initiated at that year's *Eworon* (the festival of initiation, which can be translated almost literally as ''let us now praise famous men''), I took it as the highest compliment that they could pay me, though we might sometimes have to take

> different sides officially, they nevertheless considered me as their friend and not entirely alien from their point of view. (Driberg 1934b:104)

Nowhere in his writing for anthropologists did he reveal in as much detail the kinds of personalized field experiences as in *Engato the Lion Cub*, where he commented on specific informants (Driberg 1934b:91, 128), told how the Lango staged events to take advantage of him (ibid.:25), and related how he took advantage of the Langos' amenability to flattery (ibid.:29). He also described how the Lango composed songs about one of Engato's unsuccessful encounters with a warthog and about "the not too agreeable details" of his own first hunt (ibid.:45).

As in his other writing, Driberg showed his respect for Lango hunting abilities and honesty: "Africans whose lives may depend on the accuracy of their observations are, as a rule, trustworthy informants, and their statements are not to be lightly thrown aside as incredible (Driberg 1934b:120-121). He also briefly described his final departure from the Lango "with infinite regret, knowing that in all probability I should only return to them as a wayfarer" (ibid.:140).

Driberg also included information on fieldwork in his popular introductions to anthropology, *The Savage As He Really Is* (Driberg 1929h) and *At Home With The Savage* (Driberg 1932b), but the context was that of popular science rather than a story as in *Engato the Lion Cub*. These introductions to anthropology reflected Driberg's field experience as a colonial administrator in their emphasis on the value of applied anthropology and his cultural relativism in his non-pejorative use of the term "savage" and argument that the term "primitive" was meaningless for living people.

Driberg clearly recognized that fieldwork was both art and science. He observed that the techniques of scientific anthropology "do little more than supplement the faculties of discreet observation, without which we have no right to be in the field at all" (Driberg 1932b:34). He further acknowledged that "good manners – according to native standards – sympathy, a readiness to sink one's personality and to be merged with the communal life of the village, these and the gift of tongues will be our chief assets" (ibid.:33) in fieldwork, but observed that "we still have to retain the amateur's enthusiasm for his subject and to keep the personal element in the foreground. The cold, abstract, unemotional scientist should stay at home" (ibid.:34).

Driberg clearly recognized the limitations of fieldwork: "a mere man cannot possibly come back with a complete account of a tribe and its activities and beliefs" (Driberg 1932b:31). He admitted having made mistakes in the field which made him aware of the need for anthropological facts: "To try to govern without such knowledge is sheer arrogance, and it is the function of anthropology to provide this knowledge"(ibid.:5). He reiterated the

practical value of anthropological knowledge in statements like the following:

> when we know what native institutions mean, and have studied their laws and customs with the sympathy which they deserve, then our administration of them will no longer be embarrassed by the costly wars and uprisings for which our ignorance has in the past been more responsible than anything else. (Driberg 1929h:76)

Driberg observed, "The savage as he really is is not an academic problem but a very concrete and urgent reality" (Driberg 1929h:76).

Although Driberg never used the term "cultural relativism," he made numerous statements in his popular writing that demonstrated his relativism.[4] For example, he pointed out that if customs are studied in context they may remain foreign to us, but we cannot deny their rational basis (Driberg 1929h:2), and went on to say:

> If we do not believe in the logic of the savage and in the identity of his processes of thought with our own, then we should be proved illogical ourselves in attempting to develop along logical lines peoples of an alien mentality and in attempting to transmit our civilisation to people incapable of assimilating it. (Driberg 1929h:2)

Driberg's popular writing on colonial administration also demonstrated his cultural relativism and the high value he placed on anthropology, as well as his uniqueness as a colonial administrator. As William Plomer observed, Driberg was a

> rare type of colonial administrator, a man of passion, who is richer in imagination, more a humanist, perhaps with a touch of the poetic or scientific, or both, who is apt sometimes to find himself at variance with those who believe in gradually walloping the erring Bantu a step nearer to a visionary future of churches, banks and hospitals (Driberg 1939:709).

In *The East African Problem* (Driberg 1930b) Driberg repeatedly stated the need for anthropology in colonial administration:

> We know little or nothing about our wards, and any steps which we take to ensure their protection or development are taken blindly and are haphazard. We have no formulated policy, because without this knowledge we are not in a position to formulate one. We blunder ahead with the best intentions in the world, but deny to ourselves – and incidentally to our wards – just those guiding principles which anthropology alone can give us. (Driberg 1930b:17)

However, Driberg never formalized his views on the relationship between anthropology and colonial administration in a scholarly format with appro-

priate theoretical underpinning as did Malinowski in *The Dynamics of Culture Change* (Malinowski 1961).

Driberg criticized the prevailing view of the times that the "difficult task of administering primitive peoples is supposed to be a divinely inspired gift, the secret of which is open to any European with a university degree" (Driberg 1930b:77), and pointed out that colonial administrators were as much in need of an appropriate education as were the natives. It is clear from Driberg's writing that he thought that more than "book" knowledge was essential for successful colonial administration.

Driberg's views on colonial education and administration reveal his cultural relativism. He pointed out that African development must rest on African "civilisation" not European civilization (Driberg 1930b:55), and decried the failure to recognize and use African "systems of education" (ibid.:76) and the emphasis on European education. "Unfortunately the education they have been offered has been moulded almost exclusively along European lines. What is good enough for us is often bad enough for them (ibid.:75). He felt that anthropological surveys "would at once enable the government to formulate a 'native policy' and a rational policy of education" (ibid.:19).

Driberg's cultural relativism was evident in his feeling that African cultures should not be abolished "root and branch," but that the "best" in them should be preserved (Driberg 1930b:63-64), and in his numerous harsh criticisms of colonial administrative practice. For example, he wrote that Europeans needed to "rid our hands of intellectual snobbery and to realise that our own needs (and not everyone would concede even that), are not necessarily appropriate for all cultures and environments" (ibid.:65).

> If we are obsessed with the belief that our political institutions are the only ones which can save the African from extinction, then the sooner we abandon our trusteeship the better. Half our troubles have been due to our inadaptability, and more than half our wars to a proselytizing belief that what is good enough for us must be good enough for savages (ibid.:67).

Driberg tried to formally combine his interest in academic anthropology with placing anthropology in the service of the public by editing a series of comprehensive surveys of African cultures for administrators, missionaries, economists and educationists. "It is the hope of the editors that applied anthropology no less than purely academic science will find in this series the groundwork upon which it may build for the future" (Driberg 1930c:v). However, only two books were published in the series; neither was written with Driberg's skill for communicating anthropology to a generally educated public.[5]

Driberg's humanism was evident in his professional essays on law (Driberg 1928), religion (Driberg 1919c), and the status of women (Driberg

1932j), as well as in the series of letters about bridewealth that appeared in *Man* (Driberg 1929b, 1930a, 1931a, 1932c). However, his professional writing did not afford him the sustained opportunity for humanistic expression that he found in popular writing. Driberg showed his grasp of anthropological theory in his professional essays on Lango kinship (Driberg 1932h), Galla colonization (Driberg 1931b), and economic development in East Africa (Driberg 1932e), as well as in such book reviews as those of Briffault's *The Mothers* (Driberg 1927e) and Davie's *The Evolution of War* (Driberg 1930h). He sometimes explicitly argued against prevailing theories (Driberg 1929h, 1931b), but more often simply stated his own position without explicit reference to theory, as illustrated in some of the previous quotations from his work. Driberg chose not to emphasize theory in his writing, since it was anthropology in practice, especially applied anthropology in the British Empire, which was of primary importance to him.

Anthropologists of his time were so concerned with equating innovation with theoretical advances that they failed to acknowledge Driberg's contribution to fieldwork through his frank commentary on the realities and limitations of fieldwork which departed substantially from the prevailing *Notes and Queries* approach (Royal Anthropological Institute 1929). Likewise, they ignored his contribution to cultural relativism and cross-cultural understanding through precise, limited comparisons and contextual descriptions that conveyed far better than other anthropologists of his time how non-Europeans thought.

By ignoring Driberg's popular writing in a variety of genres, anthropologists both of his time and the present have failed to recognize Driberg's innovations in the translation of oral literature texts and in the writing of what today would be called "passionate ethnography." By ignoring Driberg's fiction, anthropologists have failed to recognize his contribution to the development of the genre that one reviewer of his time called "fictionalized anthropology" (New York Times 1930:2) and that we today call ethnographic fiction.

Jack Driberg, a humanist trained in the classical tradition of British social anthropology, was an anomaly in his own time and an important unacknowledged predecessor of humanistic anthropology as it is practised in the 1980s. His books merit attention by contemporary anthropologists for the issues they raise about the practice of anthropology in the early 20th century, and for the models they provide of alternative literary genres, derived from anthropological fieldwork, to the scientific ethnographic monograph. The public response to Driberg's writing in his own time foreshadowed the critique of ethnographic writing which has become prevalent, especially in American cultural anthropology in the 1980s, and served as a reminder of the need for a humanistic framework for the description of culture as lived reality.

Notes

1. He frequently criticized other writers for overgeneralizing and usually refused to generalize broadly himself. However, some reviewers felt that his view of "primitive" man was based solely on African cultures and thus was overgeneralized (C.H.W. 1932, Richards 1932).
2. He was highly critical of armchair anthropologists (1932b), but spent more time in the field than many other fieldworkers. His linguistic facility enabled him to be less dependent on interpreters than many anthropologists of the time.
3. In his book reviews and letters to editors he was highly critical of those who used anthropological and native terms imprecisely (1929d, 1929e, 1932i, 1932k, 1936).
4. His relativism is unusual not only for an anthropologist, but especially so for a colonial administrator. Driberg was able to be both a cultural relativist and a loyal British government employee. At the time of his death he was again working for the government, in the Ministry of Information, assigned to the Near East.
5. These books were Isaac Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* (1930) and C.G. and Brenda Z. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (1932).

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