

BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Kinship and the Drum Dance in a Northern Dene Community

Michael Asch

The Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, 1988. xi + 113 pp. \$12.95 (paper)

Reviewer: Robin Ridington

University of British Columbia

This book is a study of the Slavey Drum Dance at Pe Ts'eh Ki (Wrigley, NWT) in 1969-70. Much of the ethnographic information was previously available only in the author's Ph.D. thesis. The present book is more than a reissue of the thesis, however. While Asch bases the book on information he collected for his thesis, he asks questions relevant to changes in both his own thinking and that of the Dene in the intervening years. Unlike the thesis, which was organized in relation to the anthropological musicology of its time, this book discusses the meaning of a successful Drum Dance as defined by the community as it existed in the 1960s.

Asch relates his thesis material to his later interests in political process among the Dene by showing how the Drum Dance helped resolve dynamics of economic and social stress prior to the development of contemporary Dene political institutions. He also gives a critical review of the anthropological musicology available to him in 1972, the publication date of his thesis. Asch reflects that, like many another Ph.D. thesis, his own work may be more valuable for its ethnographic information than for its approach to a theoretical problem that it did not entirely resolve.

Asch begins his account of kinship and the Slavey Drum Dance with a story in the voice and highly contexted discourse of his Dene informants. This "Dene Account of How the World Was Created" is circular, like the Drum Dance itself, in that it describes the intersecting circles of a world in process. The book then goes on to provide detailed information about Pe Ts'eh Ki economic life in relation to the division of labour, ownership, knowledge, and household organization.

A chapter on social structure and organization describes kinship terminology and usage. Asch interprets Pe Ts'eh Ki kinship as a Dravidianate system of structural opposition between parallel and cross relatives. It organizes relations between members of nodal kindreds that are like bands within the community as a whole. The Drum Dance is related to kinship, Asch says, in that it helps overcome dynamic tensions that are endemic in current circumstance.

Finally, Asch describes and analyzes a corpus of 22 songs that illustrate the repertoire that were available to the Pe Ts'eh Ki in 1969-70. These songs enabled singers to bring about what Asch describes as an "ideal drum dance." Such a dance, he says, creates a "special world" in which personal disputes are laid aside in the interests of creating a "we rationale" of community solidarity. In a 1988 postscript, Asch admits that the theoretical perspective of his thesis led him to a more pessimistic view of the Drum Dance's efficacy than both the Pe Ts'eh Ki and Asch himself experienced at the time. Although the Drum Dance did bring about community solidarity, Asch argues that the Dene as a whole have been ultimately successful by confronting "the external forces of change" directly.

This book is an important addition to northern Athapaskan ethnography. It will be of value both to non-Native scholars and to the Dene themselves. It should be required reading for courses in anthropology and Native studies departments that deal with Native peoples in Canada or in subarctic cultures in general.

Who Shares: Co-operatives and Rural Development

D.W. Attwood and B.S. Baviskar, eds.

Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988. x + 432 pp. \$46.50 (cloth)

Reviewer: Marilyn Silverman
York University

In focussing on co-operatives, this volume "use[s] comparative case study analyses to . . . deepen our understanding of this field of development studies" (p. 1). To this end, the volume contains a very readable "Introduction" written by the two editors and 18 case studies which originally were presented at an 1983 symposium in Montreal.

The most striking feature of the volume, and both its strength and its weakness, lies in the sheer diversity of the cases presented. First, the articles cover a wide variety of locales and modes of livelihood. There are studies of co-operatives among pastoralists (in Baluchistan, Botswana, East Africa, Kenya) and among agriculturalists (in north-eastern Brazil, Kenya, Uganda, Egypt/Tunisia, Nigeria and the Philippines). Eight of the case studies are from India; four of these concern the dairy industry. Secondly, the kinds of co-operatives which receive attention vary considerably. The cases range over production, purchasing, processing, marketing, credit and savings co-operatives. Thirdly, the antecedent conditions out of which the co-operatives developed are extremely variable. For example, in some places the co-operatives were generated out of indigenous systems of land tenure, whereas in others they were located in colonial structures such as plantations. As a result, the class bases of the focal co-operatives are highly diverse. The various case studies deal, among other things, with wage labourers, pastoral nomads and small farmers. Fourthly, the co-operatives run the gamut of highly institutionalized organizations to "informal" ones based on prior local groups and networks. Fifthly, the levels of analyses differ. The articles range from those which focus on a single co-operative to one, for example, which assesses co-operative development for all of Africa. Finally, the different perspectives of the authors add a further dimension to this diversity. These range from anthropologists doing local-level political economy to sociologists collecting data by random sample and questionnaire.

In the light of this diversity, the editors are to be credited for achieving a degree of intellectual orderliness by organizing the contributions around three central questions. First, what is, and has been, the relationship between socioeconomic inequality and co-operatives? Secondly, how does the intervention of the state affect co-operatives? Thirdly, how does informal co-operation work and how does it affect the "fit" of more formal, "official," co-operatives?

In the "Introduction" the editors pose these questions and show how the particular case studies shed light on them. At the same time, a reading of the particular