

intense resource competition in Eurasia led families to develop strategies of continuity in property and status that gave value to the rights of, and linkages through, women.

The empirical argument will be familiar to readers of Goody's previous works. As they accumulated durable goods from intensively exploited resources, the societies of Europe and Asia (but not those of Africa) also became socially stratified. Families developed strategies that would preserve (or increase) the status of male and female descendants and also keep their property "in the family" over time. Two social patterns resulted: "diverging devolution," where sons and daughters were endowed with wealth, and close marriages, whether between cousins or, as in much of the ancient Near East, between siblings.

In certain regions the diverging-close marriage nexus conflicted with an agnatic ideology, and the varying degrees to which such systems of ideas (Han, Brahmin or Catholic) dominated different regions or different classes explain some of the variance within China, India or Europe in strategies of heirship. The friction between agnatic descent and diverging devolution was "pushed" in one or another direction by additional variables: high or low status, degree of economic development and strength of state control. The author cautiously points to intriguing regularities in the resultant patterns. Southern portions of India, China and Greece were richer and have been characterized by more frequent use of "filiacentric" marriages and direct dowry, thereby emphasizing the bride's perduring ties to her natal family. By contrast, the poorer northern areas of all three regions were characterized by stronger agnatic ideologies and the greater use of indirect dowry, thereby emphasizing the relations between agnatically-defined groups.

The author convincingly argues that inheritance, dowry and marriage are best considered as part of a system of social reproduction rather than as separate institutions of kinship, property rights or exchange. As he moves from region to region, the analytical targets shift accordingly: lineage theory in China, exchange theory in India, patriarchy in Greece and Rome. At times the very nature of his thesis—that a single set of relations among women, property and group formation underlay developments throughout Eurasia—inevitably lends a certain sameness to treatments of very culturally distinct regions. This is decidedly a work of sociological comparison rather than cultural contrasts, but a masterful one it is.

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### **The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia**

James Holston

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Based on fieldwork begun in 1980, this ethnography of Brasilia is a study in cultural invention, specifically, the creation of a city whose architecture and layout condemned the society that constructed it. Holston establishes the initial subversive intentions of Brasilia's planners and builders and then chronicles their out-

come in practice. As they took form in an exemplary urban centre, these intentions sometimes exacerbated or enlarged upon existing Brazilian cultural patterns rather than revolutionizing them. At other times, these intentions successfully excised cultural patterns but failed to replace them with a radical alternative; only a void was left.

Holston convincingly argues that a utopian intention lay behind the highly generalized plan with which Lucio Costa in 1957 won the competition for the design of Brazil's new capital. He relates this intention to the modernist movement in architecture. The modernist design was to create pockets of subversive space in the capitalist city, to make room in such places for subversive social practices. Eventually, the movement hoped to reconstruct the whole social edifice in this manner.

To ensure acceptance of his plan for Brasilia, Costa concealed its utopian modernism. He presented its design features as linked to classical forms or to the panorama of the human construction of space. This recovery of Costa's intentions and of the way he buried them in Brasilia's plan, is one of Holston's most interesting analyses. Holston also shows quite nicely how modernism's plan for a perfected future dovetailed with the modernization strategy pursued by the Brazilian government. Both joined forces behind a conception of Brasilia as an exemplary centre.

In the event, neither the utopian intentions of the modernists nor the modernization expectations of state leaders were fulfilled. Raising up Brasilia did knock down Brazil, at least aspects of its culture, but, as Holston indicates, it left empty spaces in people just as it did in the city. For example, the rearranged street patterns provide little room for the active street life that characterizes other Brazilian cities; the standardized glass fronts of apartment buildings, which reflect no status differences, also expose and deprivatize the individual; the apartment designs eliminate the informal private areas in which Brazilian family life usually occurs. Holston aptly reminds us that cultural invention, even with the best of intentions, can still be Frankensteinian.

Similarly, the sprawl of inequality characteristic of Brazilian urbanism — centre city for the wealthy and hinterland for the poor — reappeared in Brasilia. Planners aimed to make residential space class-less, and government restrictively allocated apartments and commercial locations, but neither effectively foresaw that the immigrant, "riff-raff" population necessary to build Brasilia in Third-World Brazil would demand its place in the city. Holston details the struggle by which such squatters eventually wrested recognition and amenities from the government thereby creating a periphery of the poor, a noose around Brasilia's ostensibly utopian equality.

Holston sees his study as an exercise in "critical ethnography," which, against postmodernism, remains committed to imagining better worlds and working for them. Anthropology, he argues, can inform this continuing commitment to modernist goals by keeping in mind — and making known — the "dialectic between alternative futures and existing conditions" (p. 318). In this work, Holston puts these intentions into practice most convincingly.