



**Review: [Untitled]**

Reviewed Work(s):

*Warfare among East African Herders* by Katsuyoshi Fukui; David Turton  
Ivan Karp

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parison of African religions. These and other contributions of the anthropologists are useful. But the strongest anthropological contributions come from Fernandez and Karp who consider issues of a more philosophical scope.

Fernandez's contribution considers the epistemological problems associated with interpretation. Can we use compartmentalized categories of Western experience to interpret the thought of African peoples? In the West, Fernandez tells us, we seek to extract rules and/or axioms from data and the rules becomes the foundation of knowledge. For more traditional societies, however, "intelligence is a matter of relating to the context, in developing it, revitalizing it" (p. 58). We are therefore confronted by a system of iconic thought that we, as outsiders, may misread. Indeed, Maxwell Owusu suggested in 1978 that many well received monographs on African societies are flawed because the authors misinterpreted essential data.

This problem of misinterpretation points to the classical confrontation of researchers with their informants, a problem Karp considers in his essay on Iteso beer drinking. Through beer drinking, Karp suggests, the Iteso "express an implicitly held set of ideas about the nature of their world and their experience of it" (p. 83). In Iteso country, beer drinking is a frame of experience that presents itself to Iteso and outsider alike, and it is up to the outsider qua scholar, in this case Karp, to learn to interpret how Iteso social life is "lived" and "felt" through this social form. The strength of Karp's contribution is that he allows the Iteso to teach him about beer drinking; he accepts their invitation to share their social experience fully, and as a result he drinks, learns, and makes his way along the path of Iteso social experience. This enterprise is far more difficult than filtering data through a preconceived social theory.

One major problem with all of the articles, however, is that none of the contributors would be considered elders in the societies they study. While they all probe with perspicacity the problems of analysis associated with African systems of thought, there are essential elements of these systems which people—be they African, American, French, or British—cannot learn unless they are of age. The guardians of African truths are elders who have studied their worlds for a lifetime. The lifework of Roger Bastide on the thought of Afro-Brazilians took more than 30 years of preparation; with patience, luck, and time, some of the contributors to this volume may produce a work on an African system of thought of the same magnitude as Bastide's masterwork on Brazil.

**Warfare among East African Herders.** KAT-SUYOSHI FUKUI and DAVID TURTON, eds. *Senri Ethnological Studies No. 3.* Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 1979.

ix + 225 pp., tables, figures, photographs, fold-out map. n.p. (paper).

IVAN KARP  
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This volume examines intersocietal aggression among some pastoral peoples of East Africa, especially among the Maa-speaking peoples and the different linguistic groups occupying the Omo Valley, where warfare has been endemic in recent years. The result is a collection that provides a fascinating picture of international relations among East African societies occupying semiarid environments.

The introduction distinguishes between warfare, which tends to involve the whole society and is an exceptional social condition, and raiding, a small-scale activity of an action set usually composed of younger men. Major conclusions of the editors are that raiding can escalate into warfare, not always an intended state of affairs, and that the motivation for raiding cannot be understood as primarily economic. Instead they argue that "prestige" factors intervene to act as an impetus to raiding. Because they leave the category of "prestige" unexamined, the significance of their conclusion is unclear. There is evidence in the book to show that material factors do not entirely determine raiding, but the editors fail to examine the symbols through which "prestige" manifests itself. They do show a connection, however, between successful homicide and the movement of persons through the social order. They might have related this pattern to frequently cited conceptual oppositions such as "hot" youthful passion and "cool" wisdom of age. These notions are found in other parts of Africa and elsewhere, recently described by Michelle Rosaldo for Southeast Asia, for example. Among East African pastoralists they are usually tied to generation sets in an age system that defines persons in relations both of interdependence and conflict. The material in this volume calls out for a systematic examination of the concept of the person and the symbols through which personhood is manifested as these relate to the dynamics of conflict in these societies.

The essays vary in quality. The most bizarre is Tournay's account of Nyangatom warfare between 1970 and 1976. Although he provides a conventional historical account of hostilities in the Omo Valley, he salts it with some of the most remarkable statements found in recent anthropology. He categorically asserts that generation sets are always superstructure and that age sets are infrastructure! In historical scholarship he tells us that "in Western societies history is part of the dominant ideology, one of its functions being to allow social classes in each society to follow a certain evolutionary path" (p. 113). One wonders how Tournay can justify the privileged position in which he places his own essay as a Westerner writing a historical account of a subject people. Tournay's essay confuses form with

function and fails to recognize that base and superstructure in social formations are both cause and effect, with base determining superstructure only "in the last instance." The resurgence of Marxist theory is the single most important development in current anthropological thought; it will not be helped by blanket denunciations of all non-Marxist scholarship. This is a form of what that most perceptive Marxist scholar John Paul Sartre called "Marxist Terrorism."

Reporting on the neighboring Dassanetch, Almagor shows results that can be gotten using a sophisticated conflict model. His account of the opposing interests of elders and warriors in the context of escalation from raiding to warfare sheds a good deal of light on the internal dynamics of age systems in East Africa. Other essays of note include an insightful account by Paul Baxter of Borana hostilities that examines the fit of raiding and aggression with the bachelor's life-style and an analysis by Fukui on cattle color symbolism as a model of social organization. Fukui shows that the death or illness of a particular animal with a specific color configuration and identity provides a justification for a raid. Coupled with the following piece in which Turton argues that the Mursi engage in warfare to legitimize territorial gains already made, the complexity of the arguments can be seen. This is a book that will provide plenty for specialists in social organization, warfare, and East African societies to chew over.

***Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848.* WILLIAM H. SEWELL, JR. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. x + 340 pp., notes, bibliography, index. \$35.95 (cloth), \$8.95 (paper).**

STEPHEN CUDEMAN  
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The field of social history has existed only for some twenty years, but it seems clear already that the discipline has close ties to anthropology. Titanic wars and elite political views are not what draw the social historian's attention; instead, he focuses on the common person and ordinary life in other times, and this has meant he must examine topics such as family organization, the household, and everyday sufferances.

William Sewell's book fits neatly into this developing field of history. He provides a lively account of French workers as they were organized and as they conceived of themselves from the 16th century through the Revolution of 1848. In the earlier time, workers defined themselves in terms of a society based on privilege, later, in terms of one founded on property. Eventually, labor as the fecund source of wealth and the social order received clear expression in the workers' views and that of the broader society.

This period also witnessed a shift from an idiom of corporateness to one of individualism, and from a definition of the person in a civil-religious vocabulary to one in legal-administrative terms. One could hardly imagine a more well traversed subject than the French Revolution, but Sewell's perspective is sufficiently fresh that it is certain to capture the attention of historians. The special interest of the work for anthropologists, and what distinguishes it from "normal" social history, is that Sewell is sophisticated in anthropological theory, as well as being an accomplished historian.

Central to Sewell's work, sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit, is a concept of culture—the forms and meanings by which people experience and understand their lives. Over the centuries here considered, French men and women were "working," and the objective nature of their work underwent some radical transformations. But the focus is not so much on the techniques, hours, and rewards of work as on how people construed and constructed what they were doing. Work had a signification; sometimes it was seen as a mechanical activity, other times as an ennobling venture; sometimes it was portrayed as the noble foundation of society itself, other times as a vile craft. Like some anthropologists, Sewell sees his project as that of decoding or coming to an understanding of what it meant to be a French laborer in a tumultuous period. To phrase it more strongly, human lives are themselves a discourse, a communication. We make ourselves, and that making is a representation.

Such a view, I would urge, implicitly counters certain received theories. Ideology is not to be seen as a veil or mystification, nor as a way in which workers are kept from knowing their true conditions. It is, rather, a rendering of those conditions; it is their life. Ideology is not a formal doctrine, inscribed in documents and imbibed by workers through repressive organs of the state, but an informal and changing construction by those who believe and live it. French workers drew on past ideas but continuously reformed and reshaped them to make their lives comprehensible. Each making, however, provided a basis for yet a new one. Patterns of meaning coalesced and were broken apart. The history of French workers is indeed a living and changing language.

The term *language*, however, is too strong, too concrete, too well used to convey the view. How and where a people signify or express themselves cannot be predicted, only investigated and interpreted. The language of labor is made up from the diverse elements of life itself. Like the anthropologist, Sewell must cast his net broadly. If to know French workers we must learn about conditions in the shop and factory, so also do we gain access to their lives through studying parades, patron saints, forms of privilege, arguments about the divinity, funerals, a journeyman's tour de France, and strikes. If this list seems ad hoc, unordered, that speaks more to the way humans have formulated their lives than to the way the historian or anthropologist defines the subject