



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots
by T. O. Beidelman

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to set the record straight on matters dictated in an interdisciplinary community of Afghanistan specialists by political scientists and development economists. Making the Arabs' story available to others by casting it in the most accessible economic terms recommends this contribution to the ethnography of northern Afghanistan to such policy advisors—and it can be recommended to students—who are initially likely to project images "based more on misconceptions about what nomads are supposed to be like than on any real knowledge of what a nomadic pastoralist actually does for a living" (p. 170).

Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots. T. O. BEIDELMAN. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. xix + 274 pp., maps, bibliography, index. \$37.44 (cloth), \$12.50 (paper).

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The subtitle of this work seems to indicate that it is a narrowly focused, fine-grained history of a particular mission, the Church Missionary Society, located in one part of Tanzania. Actually, Beidelman's study aims at nothing less than presenting the defining characteristics of colonial culture through a case study of a colonial institution, the mission, and an ethnographic description of those quintessential colonial figures, the missionaries. Even more important are the theoretical implications of this study. It provides an example of a mode of Weberian ideal-type analysis that is sadly neglected in anthropology.

The subjects of this study are the low church Anglicans of the Church Missionary Society in Ukaguru, Tanzania. Beidelman carefully examines church records and missionary publications to reconstruct the history of the Ukaguru Mission. His study is not based on fieldwork or on the collection of oral traditions. Beidelman honestly admits that neither he nor the missionaries were sympathetic to each other. Instead, Beidelman relies primarily on missionary writings and correspondence between mission and home office. He focuses on the social history of the mission rather than on specific figures. He reconstructs missionary ideology, forms of organization, internal conflicts, and the changing strategies the missionaries employed to achieve their goals. A particular interest is to describe in what ways the missionaries fell short of their ideals and how they managed their failures. Failure was inevitable. Evangelical ideals proved impossible to achieve in this setting. In any case, Beidelman would argue that ideals are impossible to achieve in life and that much of social and symbolic action is spent in negotiating the space between our ideal strivings and the forms in which we enact them.

This orientation is essential for understanding

the Weberian thrust of Beidelman's study. One possible interpretation of Weberian sociology stresses the role of the ideal type in social analysis. Ideal types are observer's constructions, based on accentuations of "strivings," as the sociologist Harald Falding calls them, related to the actors' goals and purposes. The task of the sociologist or anthropologist is not simply to construct ideal types but to demonstrate how members of society fail completely to realize their "strivings." Hence, Weber refers to an ideal type as a "utopia." Ideal-type analysis must be rooted in the typifications people make of their everyday lives and fit the criteria Alfred Schutz called "adequacy" in relationship to the standards by which members of society define their existence. Most of the concepts developed by Weber are either ideal types, such as his forms of imperative coordination or ideals of religious action, or they are concepts whose value is to point to historical processes that can account for the inability of actors to fulfill their strivings. Weber's notion of the "routinization of charisma," the necessary return to everyday concerns even under the direction of charismatic leadership, is an instance of the second. Ideal types are turned into empirical types by relating ideals to action. The point is that we may not understand what actors do until we can comprehend what it is they are trying to do.

In the space between the striving, the utopia, and the failure of the actors to realize it, Weberian analysis thrives. The tone of such analysis can only be ironic and emphasize the pathos of human productions. Bryan Turner describes Weber as a sociological "pessimist" for similar reasons. No anthropologist has focused more on this dilemma of the human condition than T. O. Beidelman. In such well-known papers as "Swazi Royal Ritual" (*Africa* 36:373-405, 1966) and "The Moral Imagination of the Kaguru" (*AE* 7:27-42, 1980), he explores how symbolic forms are used to manage the inevitable failure to achieve ideals. *Colonial Evangelism* is his most systematic statement to date.

Beidelman notes that missionaries are well suited for a study that attempts to illuminate the nature of the colonial enterprise. Missionaries embody the "arrogance" of colonialism. No other group so attempts to alter the colonized in specific directions. That they fail to direct the changes they initiate is a notable conclusion of the literature on missionaries. A perceptive anthropologist writing about missions, Mary Huber refers to the best of this literature as "ironic."

The ironic mode is set in the first chapter of the book, which describes the theoretical frame and develops an ideal-typical model of colonialism as a set of purposes worked on the colonized by colonial agents. Throughout the rest of the work Beidelman examines the peculiar variant that the colonial agenda took when associated with an evangelical world view. Succeeding chapters examine a set of colonial and evangelical goals, the reasons they could not be fulfilled, the interpretation made by missionaries of this experience,

and the forms they developed to survive in an unaccommodating environment.

Although he does not specifically use the concept of charisma, Beidelman's analysis recalls Weber's account of it. The evangelical urge is continually frustrated by the necessity of developing secular skills and organizations that subvert the evangelicals' image of themselves. Even toward the end of the colonial period, the very success of the missions as agencies of education and healing led to a disappointing secularism. The missionized disturbingly come to act in the materialistic manner of the society the missionaries have left behind.

European missionaries are frontstage in this study, as they should be. The Kaguru play very little role in Beidelman's account. The chapter on Ukaguru at the point of missionary contact is unnecessary and could better have been left out. The author then would have been able to provide more of the ethnography of the missions themselves, such as on the patterns of social control he describes in his 1981 article. He could also have been more explicit about the methodological basis of this study.

These are minor failings in an important and innovative book. This is at one and the same time a splendid ethnography of the theory and practice of the colonial enterprise at "the grassroots level," an important contribution to the study of the dynamics of religious communities in relation to the secular world, and a model of analysis that proposes to treat culture as a set of ideals intimately but not comfortably related to practice. On the theoretical level it stands in opposition to forms of anthropological analysis that make a radical separation between cultural systems and social action. Beidelman's use of Weberian theory provides us with a much needed alternative in social and cultural anthropology.

***Dry Grain Farming Families: Hausaland (Nigeria) and Karnataka (India) Compared.* POLLY HILL. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982. xvi + 322 pp., figures, tables, photographs, references, index. \$39.50 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper).**

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Dry Grain Farming Families is the product of one of those all too frequent mishaps where an anthropologist, prevented from conducting field research in a chosen site, is obliged by circumstances to study an entirely different society. In this instance, Polly Hill, who had planned to return to Nigeria in 1977, "decided at the spur of the moment" to work in the south Indian state of Karnataka.

The book is essentially a comparison of the two communities Hill had previously studied in Hausaland with the six south Indian villages where she worked on that occasion. Indeed, Hill was struck (much, one gathers, to her surprise) by

the similarities between communities in these two regions so vastly disparate both culturally and geographically. This is not to imply that Hill is insensitive to differences between the two regions (not to mention between communities in the same region), which she discusses, like everything else in the book, in meticulous detail. Some of these differences come as no surprise, particularly the importance of caste in south India and its absence in Nigeria. Hill's discussion of the striking differences in the position of women in both regions is particularly interesting and far less self-evident.

The title of the book is somewhat misleading. Although Hill devotes a portion of the book to the importance of joint families in Hausaland and Karnataka, its real subject is not at all "families" per se but the rural economies of the two regions. The thrust of her argument is that in spite of any differences between the two regions, the similarities are so striking as to allow classification as variants of a single type which she calls a dry grain agricultural mode. (Hill stresses that her adoption of the term "mode" in no way implies a commitment to neo-Marxist theory; moreover, she emphasizes that this is only one of several dry grain modes.) The features of this particular mode include: (1) high population densities entailing annual cultivation of virtually all available farmland; (2) effective ownership of land by farming households or individuals rather than by corporate groups or absentee landlords; (3) cultivation by household members with or without hired help; (4) use of most farmlands for cultivating basic staples (specifically millets or sorghums) without irrigation; (5) the existence of a market for land; (6) a sluggish market in land, given its high price relative to (7) low yields; and (8) production of basic implements by social craftsmen.

The bulk of the book is devoted to spelling out both the consequences and the causes of this particular mode. Hill's analysis of its consequences is quite convincing. She insists that this is a fundamentally inegalitarian system, generating differences in household incomes ranging from the relatively prosperous to the absolutely destitute. Not only do richer farmers own more land, but they are also much more able to diversify their sources of revenue by engaging in profitable activities other than the cultivation of basic grains. The destitute, by contrast, must rely on casual wage labor and are very ill paid (since supply far exceeds demand). As a result, not only are larger landowners able to cultivate more effectively than smaller ones, but the regions as a whole are characterized by chronic underemployment. The overall shortage of land not only perpetuates but actually exacerbates inequalities; children of poor families have little hope of bettering their lot, and children of richer farmers are more likely to succeed but are by no means immune from falling into poverty. On the whole, Hill succeeds admirably in depicting in minute detail the "depth" of "dire rural poverty" in these communities.