THE COOKS' TOUR SYNDROME: TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF WESTERN ANTHROPO–SOCIOLOGY

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The western world, from ancient times, say from Herodotus onward, was and is interested in how others live. Herodotus's *Histories* was unabashedly curious about the lives of the Egyptians, Persians, and other races that inhabited the immediate or remote environs of ancient Greece. The then-Greek world, while conscious of the intellectual and social power of the Greeks vis-à-vis other races, did not descend to the peddling of romantic made-up stories of other peoples; this culminated in later European tales, the keystone of which was Mandeville's *Travels*.

The Greeks and the later Romans, while maintaining the essential superiority of Greeks and Romans, nonetheless were inclined to the view that there were social and economic gradations among the Greeks and the Romans themselves. The fruits of Graeco–Roman civilization were reserved for those who were "gently" born. The decision makers, as well as most philosophers (the ultimate thinkers of those times), came from socially privileged groups. There were a few exceptions: The philosopher Solon was held to be an oil-seller, a fact that Plutarch never fails to belabor in his *Parallel Lives*. In fact, Plutarch's work reads like an ancient *Almanach de Gotha* or Burke's *Peerage*.

The Romans, who, unlike the ancient Greeks, conquered a large part of Euro–Asia, were careful to limit citizenship to specific foreigners. Among native-born Romans, aristocratic birth was the key to social and

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political prominence. Even well-educated and broad-minded Romans, such as the historian and administrator Suetonius, writing in the first century C.E., could dismiss the reforms of Julius Caesar as:

> He showed equal scorn of constitutional precedent by choosing magistrates several years ahead, decorating ten former "praetors" with the emblem of consular rank, and admitting to the Senate men of foreign birth, including semi-civilised Gauls who had been granted Roman citizenship.[1]

These two strands, the "natives" ethic and the "patrician" ethic, were to form the basics of the social sciences, which, several centuries later, flowered as anthropology and sociology.

The Foundations of Modern Anthropo-Sociology

Modern western anthropo-sociology was given an impetus through the Renaissance, which impelled littoral Europeans to seek new lands and to know new cultures, all in the service of greater trade. Travel, thus, bred more ethnographic information, whether it was actual travel or virtual travel. (Actual travel being what it is, virtual travel is when stay-at-home scholars edit or classify travel information garnered by those in the field. Richard Haklyt is the classic example.) Much of this information, however, was not anthropologically targeted.

Later, when the imperial impulse of the European powers made the subjugation of the indigenous peoples possible, a rationale for the systematic collection and classification of anthropological knowledge began to emerge. The middle nineteenth century accelerated this process. A key figure in this period was Sir Richard Burton (1821-90), "the most celebrated of Victorian scholar–explorers, not least known for his part in the perilous expedition under J. H. Speke, which led to the discovery of Lake Tanganyika."[2] Burton was a compulsive collector of important as well as trivial information. His linguistic erudition as well as a persistent habit of roughing it among the indigenous peoples whom he chose to investigate, not to speak of his ability to take extraordinary risks, made him an ethnographer and anthropologist in spite of himself.

Burton's avid interest in indigenous peoples led him to concentrate on their genealogies, their racial and "anatomical structures, kinship, social and political hierarchies, belief systems (most of which would be honed into "scientific" considerations into later standard western anthropology). Referring to the Bedouin of Hijaz, with whom he stayed during the 1850s, he wrote:

> In some points, they (the people of Madina) approach very near the true Arab type, that is to say, the Badawi of ancient and noble

> family. The cheek bones are high and saillant, the eye small, more round than long, piercing, fiery, deep-set, and brown rather than black. The head is small, the ears well-cut."[3]

Burton gave further personal details of the Arabs whom he encountered. Discussing their temperament, he wrote: "The temperament of the Madani is not purely nervous, like that of the Badawi, but admits a large admixture of the bilious, and though rarely, the lymphatic."[4] Working on these details, he erected a theory, though not entirely his own, of races: "The Arab may be divided into three races—a classification which agrees equally well with genetic genealogy, the traditions of the country, and the observations of modern physiologists."[5] In these concerns, he was united with the views of Edward Lane (1801-76), though Lane was, in his controlled life, mainly an Arabist.

The anthropological exercises of Lane and Burton were characterized by: (a) a direct involvement with the peoples about whom they wrote. Anthropology or sociology had not become almost pure and faceless, as, say, entomology; (b) an almost total interaction with the indigenous peoples. This situation was brought about by the fact that both Lane and Burton, though Christian Englishmen, were living in disguise as Muslim Arabs[6]; (c) their acceptance that the civilizations of those indigenous peoples were as great as their own (as, indeed, they were); and (d) their knowledge of the customs, heritage, food, and linguistics of the indigenous peoples. Quite often, their mastery of these cultural aspects were acknowledged by the indigenous peoples themselves.

The anthropological exercises of Lane, Burton, and others like them was thus a gentlemanly anthropo-sociology rather than a purely "clinical" anthropology. The purification or (mathematical) rigorization of anthropology only took place in the last phase of the nineteenth century. By that time, Britain had acquired India and other possessions; France, large parts of North Africa; the Netherlands, the Dutch East Indies; and Belgium, the Congo. Germany and Spain also began to have colonial aspirations in Africa. The European imperial presence seemed a permanent and effective reality. Earlier, the fragility of the European presence in Asia and Africa had been conceded by those involved in the imperial process. For instance, Fanny Parks (Mrs. Fanny Parlby), who arrived in Calcutta, India, in 1822, while referring to the fact that a member (invariably British at that time) of the Indian Civil Service had to serve twenty-five years for his pension, twenty-two of these in India, wrote acidly:

> I should like first to know, how many will be able to serve their full time of bondage? Secondly, what the life of a man, an annuitant, is worth who has lingered two and twenty years in a tropical climate.[7]

Once the reality of the permanent presence of the European imperial powers was accepted, the infrastructures of imperial governance were given a prominence they had not enjoyed before. What was needed was a distinct moral philosophy that would give a rationale for the subjection of indigenous people by imperial rule. The two legs of such a philosophy (namely, pure anthropology) were ready at hand. One was the technique of classification, ultimately derived from Francis Bacon and René Descartes. That was the situation on the ground. A simplistic formula was suggested by K. R. H. Mackenzie, a Fellow of the Anthropological Society, in 1866. He wrote, discussing the major divisions of anthropology: "First, the history of mankind upon the earth . . . second, a description of the existing races of men . . . and third, the comparison of races structurally, geographically, and mentally *inter se*."[8]

Mackenzie's classification descends from the general to the particular and posits a hierarchy of races not only with differing physical attributes, but also a grading of intellect. The germ of "superior" and "inferior" races is already there. That anthropology is a normative science based on statistical material is implicit here. A gradation of culture or intellect, obviously, involves the acceptance of the existence of the highest grade (from which all others are downward departures).

That is the first leg of the philosophy mentioned above. The second leg is that of a "sense of the moral superiority of European institutions."[9] That was a commonplace in nineteenth-century European thinking. Indeed, it seemed to be the underlying premise of Darwinism. In concluding his *Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin wrote:

> The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors . . . For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy to save the life of his keeper . . . as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions . . . Man maybe excused for feeling some pride at having risen . . . to the very summit of the organic scale.[10]

An analysis of the above excerpt reveals at least three assumptions: (a) that there is a steady development from the primitive to advanced cultures; (b) that the earliest primitives, though laking most of the cultural apparata, did not have much inclination or weaponry or facilities for inflicting cruelty. Hence, they are not causes for concern; and (c) that it was the middling peoples (the somewhat cultured indigenes) who had

the incentive and the ability to cause social or individual cruelty. The alarm that Darwin shows regarding the Fuegians is of the same intensity as that shown by Robinson Crusoe when he sights the footprint of Friday. But then, Daniel Defoe was writing for special effects.

The existence of these middling groups meant that the European races at the top of the "evolutionary pyramid" did have a right and, indeed a moral duty, to apply constraints on these groups on the basis of a higher law. Though this unilinear theory of social development in anthropology came under attack by such diffusionists as F. Ratzel (1844-1904) and F. Grabner (1877-1934), it has, through ox-bow shifts, continued to retain its effective permanence.

As the nineteenth century wore on, anthropo-sociological studies in Europe and the United States split into several subdivisions. The Americans, bereft of colonies, ventured into their "internal space." They researched native American tribes, suitably sedated by "cowboy" wars and life on the reservations. The British, the French, the Belgians, the Dutch, and the Italians took up the study of primitive groups in their colonies. There were any number of such groups. Even today, there is a steady, though dwindling, supply.

The British were pragmatic. There was a "growing preoccupation with fact, and the subsequent development of terminology and conceptual distinctions."[11] It was thus an extended "naming of the parts," a fine tuning of the process that Sir James Frazer (1854-1941) had perfected in *The Golden Bough*—garnering all evidence from ancient writings to substantiate his thesis of the priest–king being killed by his successor in the sacred grove (a thesis poeticized by T. S. Eliot in his *The Waste Land*).

Conceptual distinctions seemed to hinge on the anthropo-sociological considerations of the incidents and accidents of individuals, such as birth, marriage and death ceremonies; rites of passage, the incidents and accidents of group life, such as class and caste systems, kinship, political, and social hierarchies. Curiously, the administrative infrastructures that the British instituted in their colonial possessions, say India, reflected their anthropo-sociological distinctions. Their administrative hierarchy of Indian Civil Service, the officer corps, and the "box wallahs" reflected, respectively, the caste system of Brahmin, *kshatriya* (military caste), and *vaisya* (merchant groups). The theory of pollution, the keystone of the caste structure, also came to life in the exclusive housing settlements and the clubs of the British, from which the indigenous were excluded rigidly. English education was the rite of passage by which the Indians became "visible" to the ruling British. The district collector was the transformation of the princeling obedient to the distant sovereign, in this case the Viceroy of India. Even the tattoos of the Indian Army, held annually, might be construed as the pale reflection of the *aswa medda yagam* of Indian kings.

Not all anthropo-sociologists of the western (European and American) kind were enamored of these descriptive–classificatory procedures of the British anthropologists. Commenting on this matter, the French legal anthropologist Rouland wrote:

> Certain methodologies seem less well adapted than others in protecting the researcher from ethnocentrism. Thus the English-speaking tradition, the dynamic school of anthropology, favours ethnographic descriptions. Even if we assume that a "pure" description is possible, which we doubt (because to classify is also to conceptualize), it is an absurd solution; are we to avoid ethnocentrism in interpretation by reducing our interpretation?[12]

Strong words these. But it should be remembered that the ground reality partly determined the situation. The French, in their scholarly concerns, were confronted by fiercely independent indigenes, who being Muslims, were self-sufficient and rejected Franco–Christian values. Or French scholars took as their discipline the study of relatively primitive, uncomplicated indigenes, such as (at least till recently) the Inuits (Esquimaux groups), the specialty of Rouland himself. (His classic work includes "Les Modes juridiques de solution de conflixts chez les Inuit" in *Etudes Inuit*, 3, sp. No. 3/1979).

On the other hand, British scholars had to face indigenes, either urbanized for thousands of years and habituated to instant agreement with the views of anyone in authority, or secluded tribes, dispossessed and disregarded by other indigenes and so wary of any investigation into their lives. This situation obtained, perhaps till recently, inmost parts of Africa and Asia under British occupation.

Most colonial European powers faced different configurations of indigenous confrontations. Their anthropo-sociological studies veered to meet and "anthropologize" these encounters. Since Islam was the major equation in many of these countries, western scholars sought to differentiate between "folk" Islam and "classical" Islam. (Later, this concept was to be enshrined into such terms as lower and higher vehicles.) Folk Islam was conceived by these scholars as the persistence of pre-Islamic practices on the one hand and, on the other, mystical experiences (gathered up in the blanket phrase "the way of the Sufi."). Even such writers as the French scholar Louis Massignon, primarily an Arabist, participated in its exercise. The same tendency is noticeable in the works of Italian scholars, basically Arabists, Semiticists, or Hamiticists, such as Carlo Nallino, L. Caetani, and Levi della Vida.

Dutch anthropo-sociologists faced more dramatic situations. They were, in essence, members of a European power (with a small population and land area) that controlled a vast area with a high population density

in the eponymously named Dutch East Indies (presently, Indonesia). Dutch anthropological studies split into two divisions: social anthropology and legal anthropology. Social anthropology, in turn, divided into two concerns. One confined itself to the study of the *kraton* (the sultan's court) and its adjuncts, the class hierarchy, the code of behavior suitable to each class, and systems of social, economic, and political control. The other anthropological concern was the "older and less developed communities" of the outer islands (Bali, out of mainland Islam, was of perennial interest to academic and popular writers). Critics contended that such anthropological exercises kept alive, at least on paper, obsolete and fast-fading practices. In that process, these exercises encapsulated and marginalized Islam. In that sense, these were imperialist devices.

Dutch studies in legal anthropology followed the same systemic approach. This Dutch preoccupation is termed, collectively, the *adat* law school. Pioneered by van Vollenhoven, who, in 1901, projected the concept of "autonomous communities," this school views law as being defined and mediated by custom (the term *adat* is Javanese for *essere*). This social mediation by custom implies the existence of wide-ranging or all-embracing, finely articulated and customary practices. Van Vollenhoven's concept is not so new as it seems: by 1760, the Dutch had put together a code of Javanese marriage, divorce, and succession practices apparently collected form accepted authorities. This code was included in section 34 of the chapter "Bysondere Wetten aangaande Mooren or Mohammetanen on andere Indlandsche Nation" (Special Laws Relating to Moors or Mohammedans and Other Native Races) in the *New Statutes of Batavia* of 1766. (This code, was imported into Sri Lanka [Ceylon], home of a substantial number of Muslims, when the Dutch ruled maritime Ceylon between 1656 and 1789.)[13]

The Adat Law, as espoused by that eponymous school, reflected the view that legal anthropology should "adopt an indigenous view of law, as represented in thought and speech."[14] However, critics held that, in fact, it was not an indigenous view of law as represented in thought and speech, but rather a European conception of such an ideal. In crude terms, *adat* law was a second-hand analysis of a congery "of a wilderness of single instances." Critics held that an imperialist purpose was at work.

Belgian studies in anthropology were either pragmatic district studies designed to help administrators (preeminently, as those of H. Rolin) or ethnocentric studies that defended and supported Belgian moral authority to rule the Belgian Congo. Behind the latter concerns was the intellectual difficulty Belgian scholars and administrators faced in confronting the indigenes of the Belgian Congo. Being members of a very small European nation, they had to assert their moral right to rule a backward but potentially aggressive population. Again in rough terms, this concern reflected the unease the slave-owner feels when he rules

over a large number of slaves—he walks on the razor edge of obedience, never certain, though frequently given. (This unease comes through clearly in fiction works on the Congo or by Belgians, as in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the Congo-based novels of Georges Simenon).

American scholars had a cosier situation. Like Thoreau practicing a simple life at Walden, right at his doorstep, their "primitives" were close at hand and were of the same time and of the same country. Native Americans furnished many tribes that were small enough, isolated enough, and made docile enough to provide the same anthropological satisfaction as those offered by "primitive" tribes in Asia or Africa. Besides, some of these tribes did not have written languages, which gave opportunities for anthropo-linguists to furnish written scripts.

Later Developments in Western Anthropo-Sociology

Western anthropo-sociology is a synthetic "social science" that stands at the interface of various disciplines. Its conception that humanity and human actions can be studied dispassionately and "objectively" owes not a little to the intellectualism introduced, or rather asserted, by Francis Bacon and René Descartes, although Claude Levi-Strauss added a rider that "now there is an equation of anthropology with the intellect of man, and this intellect is more than an intellectuality, it is man's reflexive consciousness of himself."[15]

Biology gave anthropo-sociology such conceptual distinctions as group behavior (herd instinct), selection of species, mating procedure, and territorial exclusivity. Linguists and philology gifted the arts of decoding and coding unwritten languages. Archaeology furnished the modes of identifying and analyzing artifacts of today's "primitive communities," Statistics enabled the arrangement of masses of disparate data into rather meaningful arrays.

It was not altogether a one-way traffic, however. As anthropo-sociology grew, and with it field studies, its methodologies and terms of art entered other studies. As the art of Matisse and Picasso demonstrates, African sculpture furnished much of their creative response. (Even the paintings of Douainer Rousseau were a dreamy version based on half-digested anthropo-sociological information.) European literature, especially British poetry, was another beneficiary: T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* has its underpinnings, on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and Miss. C. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. The emerging study of psychiatry was young enough to absorb many anthropo-sociology's concepts. Such terms as *totem, taboo, shamanism*, and *Oedipus complex* (itself a myth of ancient Greek "anthropology") were imported freely into psychiatry and its layman variant of psychology. A literary survey of some thirty-five years ago commented:

> Modern psychology stresses group dynamics rather than individual behaviour, the total configuration rather than the isolate . . . The notion of "adjustment" to society comes to play an important part as a value concept . . . A social psychologist like J. A. C. Brown can write that "the primary group is the basic unit of society, not the individual." (*The Social Psychology of Industry*, 1954).[16]

Psychiatry and psychology could never shed their anthropo-sociological carapace.

The two world wars had different impacts upon western anthropo-sociology. World War I shook western belief in the permanence of European culture and showed how close European sensibilities were to those that anthropology was inclined to regard as "savage behavior." In addition, World War I helped shape the exclusive technology of anthropology, namely, field studies or fieldwork, in the person of Bronislaw Malinowski, the Pole who subsequently became an American citizen. While studying kinship structures among the Aborigines of Australia, World War I intervened and he, as an "enemy alien," was interned in Australia for the duration. He spent it by living with and studying the Aborigines. This gave him a taste of such field studies and took him to Trobriand Islands, where he was to perfect his skills in this field.

World War II had an impact of a different kind. At its end, the imperial European powers (Britain, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Belgium) were losing their imperial possessions. Thus, there was no need for anthropological learning for imperial administrative purposes. For instance, Ethiopia and Somalia had been the focus of anthropological attention by such Italian scholars as Colucci and Scarpe. These concerns petered out after World War II. Former imperial possessions that had not received independence, such as North Africa and Indonesia, saw the emergence of indigenous political movements. This was a situation not quite comprehended by the usually staid western anthropology.

The survey of anthropology edited by V. F. Calverton and published in the *Modern Library Series* (New York) in the 1940s gives an insight into the state of western anthropology up to World War II. It includes excepts from the works of modern anthropologists, even those out of accepted recognition, such as Boas, Briffault, and Westermarck. It discusses such themes as kinship systems, the historical assessment of marriage, outmoded theories as "mother right," and such exotic terms as *shamanism*. Hence, western anthropology at that period was roughly historical descriptions of human institutions and the detailing of exotic lives of primitive (in the sense of lacking facilities) communities.

Once Europe had recovered from World War II, the state of anthropology took a different turn. There were university chairs and students

for anthropology, not to speak of funds for anthropological research. But the trouble was that there were fewer and fewer exotic tribes. Either the primitives were dying out or, more usually, were becoming "civilized." One way out of this impasse was to concern oneself exhaustively with one tribe. Thus, E. Evans-Pritchard, who had published *The Nuer* (1940), continued with the same concern in *Nuer Religion* (1956). Another technique was to have the original tribal behavior "frame frozen" and relate it to the present situation (the ground reality). This was mainly a pure academic mode and resembled relating present legal concerns to antique legal matrices, as for instance, where referring to Roman law and Scots law, a writer notes:

> And from that time forward, the judges might be said no to have received but "validated" Roman rules as rules of Scots law, that is, accepted a Roman rule into Scots law if a similar rule to that in question had been previously treated as a rule of Scots law.[17]

Two other techniques need to be mentioned. Anthropological attention seemed to be focused on ritualistic or exotic practices among civilized communities, such as appeasement dances, exorcism, trances, and fire-walking, and cargo cults. The problem here was that the historical reasons for these practices had long since evaporated, leaving them chiefly as tourist entertainment. The anthropologist–observer has more interest in keeping these practices alive than the host community. Another technique was to offer continually alternating theories, as was done for the Hindu caste system. Fifty years ago, A. M. Hocart rationalized caste on the basis of territorial kinship. Subsequently, Louis Dumont adopted his theory based on pollution-degrees, equivalent to the strict Brahmanical concept. Quite recently, Dumont's theory has been challenged, as "questioners" prefer Hocart's ideas.[18] (The caste system has spawned several anthropological terms and, thus, ways of thinking. One of them is the term *Sanskritization*.)

While the caste system was one of those anthropological concerns that would not go away, other structures were highly fragile. Oral anthropological history was one of those fragile elements.

> Sometimes disaster is averted; a year before the death of Ogotommeli, the old blind Dogon hunter, Marcel Griaule (Dieu d'Eau) was able to retrieve the extremely rich Dogon mythological corpus from him.[19]

Sometimes, disaster is not averted, in which case oral history has to be "reconstructed" from other "oral resource personnel." Then, that in itself becomes a technique of anthropology.

That the stock of primitive communities must shrink to nothingness over time has to be admitted. The influence of the modern world is so pervasive that all human groups are drawn together. Hence, the capital of western anthropology is forever being reduced. To counter this, current anthropology has produced the myth of endangered tribes and communities. Preservation of the biodiversity of living creatures is one thing; subjecting some groups of human beings to a life lived by their ancestors thousands of years ago is another. As a rule, the lives of primitive communities is "short, brutish, and nasty."

Preserving modern humans in a state or "time freezing" lacks any logic and is the denial of the advantages of modern life. With all its drawbacks, modern living is many times more pleasant and purposeful than the lives of present-day primitive communities.

Western Anthropology: Characteristic Machinery

Just as the hospital is the characteristic machinery of modern medicine, the law courts of law, and the laboratory of chemical sciences, fieldwork is the characteristic machinery of western anthropology. The fieldwork instituted by western anthropology was the *rigorization* of the ancient pasttime of the European rich, namely, The Grand Tour. While The Grand Tour was undertaken by the well-to-do and the well-born, amidst a group of assistants, interpreters (dragomen), and servants perambulating in luxurious (at that time) carriages and lodging in comfortable (at that time) hostelries, the anthropologist's fieldwork was a "scientific" one. While the participant of The Grand Tour returned with paintings, expensive antiques, and curios, the anthropologist came back with fieldnotes, diaries, and (recently) audio- and videotapes. But the laird and the anthropologist had more things in common. An important one was (and is) ethnocentrism. The returning participant of The Grand Tour was open about his own and his race's ethnocentricity; the returning anthropologist veiled it through several scientific "ifs."

Malinowski, who made fieldwork popular in standard anthropology, gave several antidotes to this predisposition. In one of his works, referring to his hankering for European company and facilities, he encapsulates this situation:

> But it must be far enough away not to become a permanent milieu in which you live and from which you emerge at fixed hours only to do the village. It should not even be near enough to fly to at any moment for recreation. For the native is not the natural companion for the white man, and after you have been working with him for several hourrs, seeing how he does his gardens, or letting him tell you items of folklore, or discussing his customs, you will naturally hanker after the company of your

> own kind. But if you are alone in a village beyond reach of this, you will go for a solitary walk for an hour or so, return again and then quite naturally seek out the natives' society, this time as a relief from loneliness, must as you would any other companionship. And by means of this natural intercourse, you learn to know him.[20]

From this except, some assumptions of western anthropology ease themselves out: (a) Anthropological observation is not interaction with the group but a dispassionate neutral study by a superior group of an inferior group, namely, natives; (b) Hence, to obtain total neutrality in judgment and study, there must be total absorption in the group studied for a limited or lengthy period. By this method, a certain neutrality of observation say, as that of Fabre (the entomologist studying bees, ants, and spiders) might be obtained; (c) Hankering after one's European society is caused by the "toxicity" of total absorption in the lives of simplist groups; (d) In other words, in studying simplist communities, a European researcher has to become, temporarily at least, simplist. This is unnatural, burdensome, and only undertaken for "scientific" purposes; (e) For a short period, loneliness can be an antidote to one's ethnocentricity; (f) By seeing the native at work or play and listening to his talk, one can "know" him. That the native himself might present feelings and concepts that are not actual, but only produced to please the researcher, is of no consequence. What mattered is a bulk of fieldnotes, whether actual or simulated; (g) To accept permanently the society of natives is a disgrace, if not an impossibility; and (h) Once the living in period ends, the researcher, with relief, can return to his own society and get on with writing his books and articles.

Other anthropologists offered deeper therapies against ethnocentrism. One legal anthropologist posited inbuilt parameters and also their inbuilt disadvantages. These three parameters are language, time frame, and choice of informants.[21] There must be a stock of terminology, as appreciated by the group studied. However, he accepted that this particular skill cannot be possessed by every researcher, so that interpreters had to be brought into play "with the attendant risk of the deformation of ethno-linguistic data."[22]

As regards the time frame, a year in the field was the absolute minimum. However, he agreed that shortening this period was realistic, at least in the case of young researchers.[23] The choice of informants was more troublesome. The researcher was apt to come into contact with the leaders and decision makers of the group studied, with researchers being more drawn toward their own sex. This legal anthropologist, also discussed the complexities of the spoken language, the only accessible medium of simplist communities.[24]

These constraints, obviously, affect other branches of western anthropology. Hence, it is legitimate to assume that the modal anthropological fieldwork exercise is a flawed experiment, distorted by inexact language, indifferent informants, and an inadequate time frame. Instead, it tends to be a conceptual (somewhat imaginative) appendix to an earlier body of conceptual information (for example, the accepted matrix of western anthropology). In that sense, it is an inexact gloss on earlier inexact glosses.

In sum, the basic characteristics of western anthropology are:

a) Incorporation of many principles or notions derived from such disciplines as political theory (general will), biology (herd instinct), statistics (regression equations, frequency tables), ethics (definition of the good life), history and historiography, (Greek theories of incest, patriarchy, matriarchy), and linguistics (nature of written and spoken language);

b) Acceptance of "native" terms of art in western anthropology and subsequent incorporation into such disciplines as psychology and psychiatry.

c) "Cultization" of some principle theories, such as those of Tylor, Frazer, Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, Levi-Strauss, and Leach.

d) Acceptance and subsequent modification or reversal of the doctrines of these theorists as "engines of growth" of western anthropology.

e) Belief that western anthropology is an amoral, nonnormative, and generalized science (in which every tribe or group is a specified variant).

f) The consequent premise that all communities or tribes or groups or cohorts are equal in role, status, and function.

g) The resultant hypotheses that all groups etc. should be preserved in their original version (preservation of biodiversity). In fact, this classic preservation point is the late Victorian era, when the founding fathers of western anthropology happened to write their definitive works.

h) The existence of fieldwork (Cooks' Tour syndrome) as the only nexus between academic theorizing and groups (backward or primitive) in actual day-to-day life.

i) The crucial role of anthropological fieldwork (Cooks Tour syndrome) in the matrix of western anthropology. This is invariably flawed due to language difficulties, insufficient time, and dependence on "skewed" information.

j) Hence, the probability that flawed fieldwork, supported by statistical details and such modern techniques as audio-visual tapes will be accepted as "plausible reality" by those outside the fieldwork area. Quite often, the anthropologist is a WASP (White Anglo–Saxon Protestant) and the informants, considering the anthropologist as a kind of "sugar daddy," tailor the information to suit his/her theoretical parameters.

The Nature of Islamic Anthropology: Texture and Tone

Islamic anthropology, or anthropology based on Islamic principles, must necessarily be a normative, moral, and prescriptive discipline, just as ethics is concerned with morality. (There cannot be much difference between Islamic anthropology and Islamic sociology, because both deal with communities, one relatively sparse in facilities and the others not. The view that "primitive communities" should live in restrained circumstances for centuries as sacrifices for the concept of biodiversity is not acceptable to Islam.) That the Scheduled Castes and Schuduled Tribes of India or the Veddahs of Sri Lanka should continue to lead lives of physical and mental hardship, underfed, underdressed, and under-healthcared, undertaught or untaught, and apparently looked upon by others as zoo creatures freely roaming, goes against the Qur'anic injuction: "It is He Who has created for you all things that are on earth" (2:29).

Necessarily, the principles of Islamic anthropology should be based on the teachings of Islam, the primary role being given to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. (In this essay, owing to limitations of space, illustrative examples are drawn mainly from the Qur'an.)[25] In this way, the Muslim researcher can resist the widely prevalent idea among western anthropologists that there is somehow a great gap between primitive groups and western man, a gap so vast as to reduce the primitive groups to the level of "quasi-men" (seen in the above excerpt from Darwin). Some components of such a view, and the prophylactics that should be adopted by the anthropologists, come out in the following statement of a distinguished modern social anthropologist:

> We say that primitive or traditional societies change so slowly that for all practical purposes they may be discussed as unchanging. We contrast them with our own society, which, we say, is rapidly changing. When do we experience this rapid change? It is not the case that we get up each morning, make a rapid assessment of our new identity and then cautiously approach our acquaintance to discover if they have changed as much as or more than we have. And yet we know that we and the relationships we maintain are subject to duration. Conversely, it is only to think of the Nuer as human beings to recognize that they cannot be without an experience of then changes that are brought about by duration. The unique experience which individual people have of individual events is a fact of human life that is not explained away by the general and atemporal propositions which render it meaningful (usually in religious terms) to the people themselves. Even less is it to be explained away or disregarded by general and atemporal prepositions formulated by sociologists. Both we and the Nuer as individuals constantly

> experience the individuality of other individual people and groups, perform and suffer constantly individual and unique events.[26]

The arguments proceed from the absurd to the ironic, to demonstrate the simple fact that western people (including anthropologists) and the Nuer (a "primitive" Nilotic people) are both human beings. This dichotomy of the westerners and the tribes studied being essentially different is apparently intrinsic to western anthropology.

Some principles or constants of Islamic anthropology might be summarized in general terms. First, the essential humanity of all human beings as a ruling principle in anthropology. All communities, however advanced or backward, have a place in the scheme of things; and all evolve toward the good life, which God promises and grants. Second, perfect knowledge is not possible for human beings. Hence, anthropology must function within certain limits. As God says: "Moreover His design comprehends the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and of all things He has perfect knowledge (Qur'an 2:29). Thus, human knowledge is not all-comprehensive or all-comprehending, but only aggregates of accreted knowledge (which is always imperfect). This is particularly true of anthropology, where a few presume to assess the mysteries of other peoples.

Third, the study of previous cultures and primitive communities should stimulate the leading of the good life. Speaking of the 'Ad people, the Qur'an declares: "Such were the 'Ad people. They rejected the signs of their Lord and Cherisher, disobeyed His apostles, and followed the command of every powerful obstinate transgressor" (11:59). The translator of the Qur'an notes that the 'Ad "occupied a large tract of country in Southern Arabia, extending from Umman [Oman] at the mouth of the Persian Gulf to Hadramaut and Yemen at the southern end of the Red Sea. The people were tall in stature and were great builders."[27] They were destroyed for their persistent evil-doing . The same calamity befell the Thamud people, a kindred community of the 'Ad. The translator notes that "with the advance of material civilisation, the Thamud people became godless and arrogant, and were destroyed by an earthquake."[28]

These are only two examples of the many such events mentioned in the Qur'an. The inference is clear: It is not the material growth or development of material facilities that ensures the permanent success of a civilization, but the spiritual dimension, the morality, and the ethical conduct of the people that does so.

In that sense, anthropology has to play a prescriptive role. Lumping all communities, whether backward or advanced, together and asserting that they are equal and show only different responses to the same stimulus, as current anthropology does, is to abdicate the true role of anthro-

pology. Indeed, the present "scientific" and statistics-larded and questionnaire-based anthropological treatises do not score over the classical works, which contain substantial anthropological information. Reviewing the impact of the (anthropological) historical works of the Graeco–Roman writers Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, and others, a classical historian writes that:

> in the interval of time between them, human nature, the one constant factor in history, has remained fundamentally unchanged, so that the generalizations about it, in which the ancient historian delighted, are as valid today as when they were made."[29]

Fourth, Muslim anthropologists cannot presume, as their western counterparts of whatever persuasion invariably do, that living among other peoples for varying lengths of time gives them an insight into the lives of such people to the extext that they know these people better than the peoples themselves. This belief is noticeable in the works of such western anthropologists as Malinowski (the Trobrian Islanders), Radcliffe-Brown (the Andaman Islanders), Evans-Pritchard (the Nuer and the Anuak), Gluckman (the Barotse), Mahoney (the Birwa), Shapera (the Tswana), Pospisil (the Kapauku of New Guinea), von Banda-Beckmann (Sumatra), and Seligmann (the Veddahs of Sri Lanka). This is all the more curious, for through his color, ethnicity, language, dress, food, and habits, the western anthropologist easily stands out as an outsider.

The Islamic response is different. The key is found in Qur'anic injunctions: "Say, 'Travel throughout the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected truth'" (6:11), and "Say, 'Travel throughout the earth and see how God did originate creation'" (29:20). Here, a humble approach is enjoined on the investigator. There is no arrogant presumption of the thesis that the investigator knows better than the people investigated. No systems of thought should be built upon the flawed "insights" of the researchers. What is enjoined is open-mindedness and the sense that one's perception might not be the actual reality. In any case, it would be far easier for a Muslim researcher to sense a better perception of reality over groups studied (if they were Muslim), because both are governed by the same system of values.

Fifth, Islamic anthropology would not insist upon preserving backward or primitive communities permanently in a "frozen condition" but would rather facilitate their entry into the mainstream of human existence.

In sum, therefore, Islamic anthropology is a more flexible, reasonable, and humane appreciation of the natural condition of humanity, whereas western anthropology would treat humanity with the same neutrality that entomology, say, treats insects.

Endnotes

1. Robert Graves, trans., *The Twelve Caesars by Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus* (Harmondsworth: 1957), 42. The term *anthropo-sociology* is used in this essay to stand for those writings with an anthropological intent, including those with sociological concerns, but with a slant toward anthropology. Thus, a sociological work on the peerage of Britain today, but going back to the Thanes and Witanegemot folk of Saxon times, would come under this rubric.

2. Book-cover statement of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, vol. 2 (London: Darf Publishers, 1986). Reprint of the original 1893 edition.

3. Ibid., 14. Burton's work suffered crucially from his racism, crass insensitivity to other people's beliefs and thoughts and, in some places, shocking behavior. Other British travelers had these vices. Sir Wilfred Blunt, perhaps, was a rare exception.

4. Ibid. *Madani* means an urbanite as a opposed to a *Badawi* (bedouin).

5. Ibid., 7.

6. Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* was published in 1836.

7. Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (1950), cited in Alan Ross, *Blindfold Games* (London: Collins-Harvill, 1988), 43.

8. K. R. H. Mackenzie, *Popular Magazine of Anthropology* (London), (1866) 1:67. Cited in David Pocock, *Social Anthropology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 16.

9. Pocock, *Social Anthropology*, 21.

10. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sexes* (London: Murray, 1871). Cited in Pocock, Social Anthropology, 22.

11. Pocock, *Social Anthropology*, 26.

12. Norbert Rouland, *Legal Anthropology*, trans. Philippe G. Planel (London: The Athlone Press, 1944), 138.

13. M. M. M. Mahroof, "The Enactment of Muslim Marriage and Divorce Legislation in Sri Lanka: The Law in Context," *Journal, Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* (Jeddah) 8, no. 1 (Jan. 1988): 161.

14. Rouland, *Legal Anthropology*, 86.

15. Pocock, *Social Anthropology*, xviii (preface).

16. G. H. Bantock, "The Social and Intellectual Background," in *The Modern Age, The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. 7, ed. Boris Ford (Harmodnsworth, 1961), 35.

17. E. P. Metzger, in review of A. D. E. Lewis and D. J. Ibbetson, eds., *The Roman Law Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) in the *Law Quarterly Review*, no. 111 (April 1995): 354. The time was 1852, when the Scots Law of Common Ownership was traced to a Roman law equivalent.

18. For instance, Declan Quigley, *The Interpretation of Caste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

19. Rouland, *Legal Anthropology*, 148.

20. B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1922), 6-7. Cited in Pocock, *Social Anthropology*, 51.

21. Rouland, *Legal Anthropology*, 138.

22. Ibid., 139.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 139-41.

25. All references to the Qur'an are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (Jeddah: Islamic Education Centre, 1946).

26. Pocock, *Social Anthropology*, 98-99.

27. Translator's note, no. 1040 (p. 358).

28. Ibid., note no. 1043.

29. Steven Usher, *The Historians of Greece and Rome* (Bristol, UK: Bristol Classical Press, 1985), xi.