



Using Historical Sources in Anthropology and Sociology

Review Author[s]:
Alan Macfarlane

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way to equip oneself to succeed in the most important career of all, which is living.

Other peoples: other customs is an altogether weightier contribution to the ethnography of ethnography. Reading it is like wading through a volume of an encyclopaedia. It is as heavily burdened with facts, figures and references as Anderson's book is innocent of these scholastic encumbrances. Yet it is hardly less naive in its unquestioning acceptance of social linear-evolutionism. Throughout, Professor Oswalt appears to be troubled, in a way that could hardly occur to Professor Anderson, by the question of why he and his readers should spend their time studying the curious ways of 'ethnics', as he calls them. Honesty compels him to give space, albeit in parentheses, to the shocking radical view that 'the anthropologists' involvement with primitives is a disgraceful exercise in intellectual masturbation and that the real task before him is that of a social scientist, to work actively and diligently in order to plan the future of man' (p. 46). Oswalt's own conclusion, after surveying the history of anthropology since Herodotus, is that 'to better understand ourselves and our future through the experiences of ethnics is a selfish but worthwhile human goal' (p. 90). These lessons are spelt out in the ethnographic accounts which occupy the rest of the book, so that one gets consecutive chapters on Kaingang sexual relations, Jivaro shrunken heads, and drugs among the Yanomamo. The final chapter, 'Learning from ethnography', must, however, tend to leave the reader scratching his head rather than, as with Anderson, prepared for a cavalry charge:

Somewhere within the essence of their technology rests the answer to why all men are what they are.

Did someone mention Ludwig Feuerbach?

R. G. WILLIS

NOTTRIDGE, HAROLD E. *The sociology of urban living* (Students Libr. Sociol.). x, 115 pp., bibliogr. London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972. £1.50

This book attempts to introduce within just over a hundred pages the views and summarised findings of over 100 social scientists. The bibliography extends to almost 200 items and the overall effect is rather like being taken on a time-scheduled package tour of an area of both scientific and antiquarian interest.

The five chapters can each stand alone. In succession they cover the problem of defining 'urban sociology', the different ways of studying towns, types of urban social interaction, identifying communities and associations, and the inevitable 'social change'

tagged on at the end. Any attempt at such a comprehensive introduction is bound to invite criticism of its deficiencies. And yet, before moving on to them, it is worth stating firmly that to Nottridge's credit, he *has* pulled off a difficult job. At the very least the student is made aware of Weber's contribution to the study of the city, of the Chicago school headed by Park, and of the need to preserve a cross-cultural perspective when moving from analyses of urban structures to consideration of the kinds of 'social problems' which areas within them allegedly produce.

The author's technique is to summarise or reproduce critical paragraphs from his repertoire of scholars. This may be acceptable for an introduction of this size and is not unlike the standard first-year, information-producing set of lectures. But is it permissible to reproduce, with only slightly altered wording, other scholars' summaries of other scholars? I encountered one example of this (88-9), only partially acknowledged as such, with which I was familiar, and would be most worried if it characterised much of the book.

A second drawback of basing an introduction on a tight chain of brief summaries is its occasional effect on coherence. For example, on page 29 in his discussion of Park's urban ecological approach, the author usefully introduces Firey's opposing view of the formation of ghettos as areas of cultural and ethnic attachment and perpetuation, but then reverts to Park and his distinction between 'cultural' and 'biotic' levels in a way that left me quite mystified as to the logical connexion.

In his attempt to do the impossible the author deserves our praise. Indeed, perhaps it is the non-specialist student rather than the supposed specialist who should judge a book of this kind. For my part I would certainly recommend it as a preparatory book for a general course on urban social systems, because it does contain one of the most useful collections of abstracted ideas and accounts of urban life throughout the world and is even able to specify, if only briefly, certain theoretical problem areas. Its bibliography is excellent though the bibliographical references in the text itself are irritatingly, inconsistently presented and sometimes inadequate and inaccurate (e.g. on page 89 Southall 1961 should be Southall 1959). The volume is easy to read and marred only by the occasional jolts mentioned above.

DAVID PARKIN

PITT, DAVID C. *Using historical sources in anthropology and sociology* (Studies in Anthropological Method). viii, 88 pp., illus., bibliogr. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972

The controversy over whether 'history' and 'anthropology' are different disciplines continues and this book provides a useful contribution to the debate. It briefly summarises some of the theoretical issues and points out that, in practice, the anthropologist will miss large areas of both the present and the past if he does not use documentary historical material. Professor Pitt then provides a practical account of how such sources are to be used: where the materials are to be found, the types of document that are likely to survive and be of value to the anthropologist, how to use guides to records. Suggestions are made as to how to record and index the material and how to evaluate the contents. Finally, the author's own fieldwork in Samoa is drawn on to illustrate how a particular community study benefited from the use of historical sources. There is a useful bibliography, though one could add items, for example G. Kitson Clark, *Guide for research students working on historical subjects* and William Matthews's two works on *British diaries* and *British autobiographies*.

Excluding the case study there are sixty-two pages, most of which are devoted to practical problems. It is not, therefore, fair to expect the author to get much involved in the larger issues of the way in which historical material, once invoked, requires a new explanatory framework. Such sources wreak a peculiar destructive magic, turning to dust the beautiful but insubstantial functional and structural models. It is arguable that it was only by excluding historical material that anthropologists were able to simplify the complexity of human life to a level where it seemed possible to achieve a new synthesis. By delimiting in time, as they did in space, they seemed able to achieve an overview of all thoughts and actions. They could then show how these were linked. We now know that this was largely a deception, but in the agony of destruction it is uncertain how much can be saved from the wreck. Here Professor Pitt is least helpful. It is not clear from the summary of his own work what lasting advantage he has gained from *anthropology*. But then, that is not the purpose of the book. Judged in its own terms, it is a helpful contribution.

ALAN MACFARLANE

LASLETT, PETER (ed.). *Household and family in past time: comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group* . . . ; with the assistance of Richard Wall. xii, 623 pp., illus., tables, bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1972. £12

The accidental discovery of a seventeenth-century English list of inhabitants, combined with the enthusiasm of Peter Laslett, has led to the publication of this very large book. It has

also helped to add a new dimension to historical studies. Listings have proliferated. This volume is perhaps most important as evidence for the enormous quantity of such documents, scattered over time and space. The contributors analyse lists for England from 1574 onwards, France in 1644 and the nineteenth century, Corsica in the eighteenth century, the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Liège in 1801, Serbia from the sixteenth century onwards, and north America from the eighteenth century. The most fascinating documents are a listing for Tuscany made in 1427 and covering 264,000 persons, and the repetitive listings of certain Japanese communities from 1671 onwards. The latter provide almost annual censuses of the population covered.

Perhaps the most striking conclusion is that households (defined residentially), have changed little in size, in England and Japan at least, between about 1600 and 1900. Thus Laslett writes of England that household size has 'remained fairly constant at 4.75 or a little under, from the earliest point for which we have found figures, until as late as 1901' (p. 126). Chie Nakane concludes that 'There is a remarkable similarity in mean household size in 1663 and in 1959' (p. 520), for Japan. Industrialisation and urbanisation have had little effect. As for the structure of the household, if anything, it became *more* complex with the first phases of industrialisation. For instance, as Anderston shows for Preston, there is evidence that households had more co-resident kin in 1851 than either before or after that date (p. 220). The variations in household size and structure are exhaustively analysed, and there is considerable discussion of how a household is to be defined. A number of contributors, however, disagree with the general editor's theoretical distinctions (e.g. notes to pp. 279 and 297). The pictorial representation of listings in 'ideographs' is of interest to anthropologists.

The major criticism one can make is of the source, a listing. As Laslett himself warns, 'obviously there is little to be gained from recovering the facts about the size and composition of the domestic group unless their influence on behaviour can be gauged' (p. 10). Goody makes the same point in several places (e.g. p. 119), but none of the contributors has been able to heed the warning. Demos alone has ventured on to the effect of structures, and his article is a warning of the dangers of conjecture based on very little evidence. An enormous amount can be squeezed from good listings, and this is best illustrated by the superb article by Hayami and Uchida on Tokugawa era Japan. This raises many hypotheses concerning the relation between social structure and industrial-