

HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY (Frazer Lecture)¹

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Marc Bloch wrote that the "good historian is like the giant of the fairy tale. He knows that wherever he catches the scent of human flesh, there his quarry lies" (Bloch, p.26). The good anthropologist is likewise a cannibal. "What social science is properly about" urged Wright-Mills, "is the human variety, which consists of all the social worlds in which men have lived, are living, and might live" (Wright-Mills, p.147). In the first half of this paper I will discuss the ways in which social anthropology and history could, in theory, benefit each other. In the second half I will briefly describe a case study of an attempt to compare historical and contemporary societies.

The current dilemma facing social anthropologists can be stated briefly. While their past achievements command considerable respect and still excite students and general readers, practitioners already regard themselves as an almost extinct species. Their plight is easily explained. Their hunting grounds have nearly vanished, the pre-literate and non-industrial societies they originally studied have almost been destroyed and their rather simple weapons, the diffusionist spear and functionalist bow, are obsolete. They do not satisfy emotionally or intellectually. Doom was prophesied in the early 1950s, but has been masked and postponed by the hitherto impenetrable musings of Levi-Strauss. Some believed that he had discovered a hidden pass into a new land, thus locating a rich flora and fauna consisting of symbols, myths, collective representations, classificatory systems, all of which could be trapped and devoured with the aid of the structuralist net. But now his most ardent admirers speak of their disillusionment. Needham pointed out that "after all its resounding ambition, the secure results have proved woefully pathetic" (Needham, p.785) and Leach dismissed this brand of structuralism as "not so much a false start as a will-o'-the-wisp in a dark night leading ever onwards to quagmires yet unplumbed" (Leach, p.772). The best that can be claimed for the discipline, many argue, is that it encourages the collection of information about vanishing societies. This appears to be too defensive a position. The problem therefore

¹This is an expanded version of the Frazer Memorial Lecture 'Clio's Task: History and Anthropology' delivered at the University of Liverpool in 1973. I am grateful to Sarah Harrison and Irish Macfarlane for comments on this paper and for undertaking most of the work on the records of Earls Colne. The Social Science Research Council provided financial support for the local study described in the second half of the essay. Parentheses refer to works in the list of references at the end. Date of publication is only included in the text when two or more works by the same author are used.

appears to be, how much of the very real contribution made by anthropologists over the last seventy years can be salvaged while incorporating the many criticisms anthropologists and others have made of the 'anthropological approach'?

One of the advantages of studying small, semi-enclosed, communities was that it allowed a "total" approach to human institutions. The interweaving of levels of action and thought, of the economic, religious, political, legal, and other facets of human existence, laid bare connections which were impossible to perceive in the highly differentiated modern communities from which investigators came. This "total" approach has been stressed by most anthropologists (e.g. Malinowski, p.37; Firth, p.5). It provided a more flexible and attractive approach than the dialectical materialism of Marxism. The best social historians have also praised and attempted to practice this rounded approach. Marc Bloch for example argued that "the only true history, which can advance only through mutual aid, is universal history" (Bloch, p.47). Tawney was praised most highly for the "sensitive awareness of the complex relationships of economic, social, ideological and political change" (Stone, 1967a, p.xvi). This faith in totality also made possible a second, highly remarkable, result. It became possible to understand the hitherto incomprehensible.

David Hume long ago pointed out, "let an object be presented to a man of never so strong natural reason and abilities; if that object be entirely new to him, he will not be able, by the most accurate examination of its sensible qualities, to discover any of its causes or effects" (quoted in Winch, p.7). In other words, there are a whole range of phenomena in other societies and in our own past which we have to dismiss as irrational because they are beyond our reason. Anthropology managed to bring much of this realm within the boundary of comprehension while retaining the 'otherness' of the phenomena. A notable example occurs in the study of witchcraft and magic, beliefs which were beyond the grasp of 'ordinary common sense'. The "total" approach, by setting each belief or practice within its context, rather than dragging it away from its roots, made the topic less meaningless. Furthermore, by assuming that societies were systems where each part had a function, confidence was engendered and the investigator was not prepared to rest until he had found a positive function. He refused to take the easy course which was to dismiss the phenomenon as a "cultural hand-over" or a "superstition". Although we can now see that many assertions of function were glib and mistaken, much also was gained. Here the best social historians have again shared the experience of social anthropologists. Keith Thomas in his recent work on magic and related phenomena is constantly aware of the very superficial contributions made in this field by previous historians. Such historians have consistently been facetious and patronising about subjects with which they have found it very difficult to identify at all (Thomas, 1971). Collingwood noted on several occasions that if the gap between the historian's own experience and his subject matter was too great, then the past would be intelligible. He argued, for example, that "though we have no lack of data about Roman religion, our own religious experience is not of such a kind as to qualify us for reconstructing in our own minds what it meant to them" (Collingwood, p.329, see also p.218). As Bloch points out, "successive technological revolutions have immeasurably widened the psychological gap between generations. With some reason, perhaps, the man of the age of electricity and the aeroplane feels himself far removed from his ancestors" (Bloch, p.36). If we add insurance and anti-biotics, literacy and computers, to Bloch's revolutions it is easy to see the huge imaginative

leap both historian and social anthropologist have to make in order to study problems which seem no longer to affect us. But at least the anthropologist can go and live in a world where the institutions and modes of thought, different though they are, still exist.

While the anthropological method made it possible to understand the strange, it also distanced the over-familiar so that it became possible to study it. As Homans pointed out, "when a man describes a society which is not his own, he often leaves out those features which the society has in common with his own society. He takes them for granted, and so his description is distorted" (Homans, p.382). This is also true of historians studying their own societies in the past, but in their case the danger was much greater. The reason why anthropologists appeared to be boring to the very roots of mankind's existence was that they encountered in alien cultures institutions and ideas which were in so many basic ways different from the models which they had imported from their own background that they felt bound to engage in some fundamental heart-searching. Investigators predominantly came from societies which are not ultimately based on kinship and which do not have unilineal kinship systems. They have therefore devoted much energy to the basic study of kinship, which seemed so much more important than the same institution in their own societies. The same is true of religion and morality. Europeans and North Americans came from a predominantly guilt and sin, heaven and hell, monotheistic culture. They found societies which often lacked these concepts and instead ordered their world in different ways, using different modes of classification, arguing along other causal lines, employing concepts of purity and power which struck outsiders as so totally alien that they had to be examined. The same was true in the sphere of economics. Very often, the whole capitalist, market based, acquisitive, economic philosophy and behaviour with which researchers were familiar were absent. To give meaning to the alternative institutions that were encountered, and to absorb the threat of often attractive beliefs, explanations had to be found. In order to do this it was necessary to go back to basic principles, a common substratum which lies beneath both 'our' own cultures and 'theirs' had to be found.

Historians, like anthropologists, also took their own society as the norm, but searching through written documents makes it easier to disregard or overlook points of difference. Furthermore, much of the past of one's own country, or even western Christendom, seems so familiar and obvious that it seems to need no explanation. Maine touched on this problem when he alluded to "the difficulty of believing that ideas which form part of our everyday mental stock can really stand in need of analysis and examination" (Maine, p.271). This helps to explain why, until the last ten years there have been no satisfactory attempts by English historians to analyse such features as kinship, the family, sexual behaviour, childrearing, geographical mobility, marriage, literacy, astrology, witchcraft, popular religion, concepts of sin, death, time, the symbolism and ritual of everyday life and a host of other topics listed fourteen years ago by Keith Thomas (Thomas, 1963). "He little knows of England who only England knows" applies to every country and can be widened to whole areas which share basic social structural and ideological features, for example Western Europe. The basis of all investigation is comparison. Most anthropologists accept that, implicitly if not explicitly, they are comparing other societies with their model of their own. Historians also work with implicit models of human behaviour and motivation drawn from their own societies. Whether they like it or not, confining themselves in this way inevitably blinds them to most of what was important and

meaningful to their ancestors. Only in those areas where there has been moderate change can analysis take place.

The achievements of social anthropology, not least in emphasizing the dignity and rationality of hitherto exploited and patronised human groups, are very considerable. But it became obvious fairly soon that there are basic flaws in the explanatory framework of the discipline and in the type of material anthropologists were forced to use. Firstly the material available for analysis, although rich at a point in time, was without any force or dynamic. It was almost impossible to assess whether any radical changes were or had been occurring. Even if some clues of present or past change did emerge, it was not possible to speculate very much as to why such change did occur. Hence, all hypotheses about the phenomena under discussion had to be functionalist, that is, related to their present use in the society. Not only does our knowledge of societies elsewhere make it seem unlikely that such interpretations are accurate in more than a very limited number of instances, but it is impossible to test which hypotheses were true and which false. The few attempts at prediction and the few 'before and after' or 'ten years after' studies were not satisfactory. The a-temporal bias had several notorious side effects: an over-emphasis on harmony and integration and a highly conservation interpretation of society, as well as a selective over-stress on certain aspects of culture and society.

Another reason why it was impossible to test hypotheses was the subjective, non-statistical, nature of the evidence. No sampling frame was, of course, available, so that one did not know how far generalizations based on an intensive small-scale study could be extrapolated to a wider group or area. It was also usually impossible to give any numerical weight to any statement. By definition, the number of persons one could study intensively was really below any statistically meaningful number, except for the crudest and most aggregated numbers. Thus all topics of a vaguely statistical nature, particularly demography or changes in domestic economy were very difficult to pursue. Generalizations concerning the universal horror aroused by incest, the social status of witches, or the prevalence of matrilineal cross-cousin marriages, turned out, on closer examination, to be based on a few haphazard examples, or cases scattered across the continents. Without going so far as to say that one cannot count what one cannot count, it soon became obvious that progress was really blocked by the inherent nature of method and material.

A similar in-built limitation was the selective over-emphasis on almost closed, small-scale, non-literate, non-industrial, societies. Of course there have been many attempts to apply anthropological approaches to sub-sectors of societies elsewhere, an American ghetto, Irish farming community, London suburb, Indian peasant village. Though they are often fruitful, they somehow seem quickly to slip away and lose the characteristically 'anthropological' flavour, merely becoming exercises in micro-sociology. Soon, however, there will be no choice left. Even if one wished to study societies as little influenced by 'westernization' as possible, such areas are rapidly dwindling away. In a couple of decades it is unlikely that any 'natural', non-influenced, societies will remain. The huge destruction of complexity and "otherness" which is currently occurring in the animal and plant worlds is also happening to mankind. But there are, with man, not even any partial remedies such as seed-banks and wildlife parks. Once 'contaminated', cultures cannot be preserved. Nor have

we an obvious right to decide whether they should be 'preserved' or not. Hence it is arguable that only in historical material, ethnographic or otherwise, will investigators be able to study 'non-western' man. Demographers, in their search for 'natural' populations have turned to historical materials and anthropologists are likely to follow them in this direction.

Recent developments in historical research.

A number of developments have occurred in the last twenty years which make it possible to undertake, for the first time, a type of social history which is very much closer to social anthropology than to conventional historical research. Some of the necessary, if not sufficient causes for this change may be briefly listed. A huge quantity of archival material has very recently become available which has hitherto lain dispersed and in private hands. Stone, for example, has been able to present new findings as a result of this "archival revolution" (Stone, 1967b, p.2). For a long time, the historical sources seemed to limit historical research to politics, the constitution, law, ecclesiastical affairs, and, more recently, economics. As a result, as Malthus long ago noted, "the histories of mankind which we possess are, in general, histories only of the higher classes" (Malthus, p.16). Now, for the first time since the past was actually "present", the material for social history has risen to the surface and is beginning to be organized in such a way that we are able to study it adequately.

Added to increased organization of the deposited archives are better techniques of reproducing documents; microfilming, xeroxing, microfiche, tape-recording. These represent as important a break-through in historical research as was the transition to working in the vernacular for anthropologists. As Bloch realized, "one of the most difficult tasks of the historian is that of assembling those documents which he considers necessary (Bloch, p.69). This may appear to the non-historian as a trivial matter, but, in practice, it means the difference between a total and a partial or segmented study. The archival and photographic revolutions have made such sources available and made it possible to utilize them.

One of the enormous advantages enjoyed by an anthropologists is that the social, economic and mental systems of the society he visits have been partially processed for him by his informants. Although, as we all know, this has many inherent dangers, it does mean that in a very short period of time the investigator can obtain information which it might otherwise take many years of observation to elicit. An able anthropologist can work out the kinship relations of a small group or their colour symbolism in a few days of well-directed questioning. It might take months, more probably years, for a historian to find out the same thing. The raw data of behaviour and experience, which is very low down the ecological chain, has been devoured and turned into high-level information by the actor-observers in the society being analysed. Although work in their field is only just commencing, it seems possible that a properly programmed computer could partially overcome this difficulty. It could provide a way of concentrating information slowly fed into it over time and of making it available in a much more precise and concentrated form. The computer, however, suffers from one obvious disadvantage. It can only process information which is at the statistical or behavioural level; it cannot state that "this ought to happen", "I don't like that man" or

"red is beautiful". Thus, its use precludes one of the essential dimensions of anthropological work at its best, namely the tensions and contradictions between the moral and statistical levels and between what is thought to happen and what does happen.

Yet there are compensations. Assuming that the data is put in properly and questions are asked sensibly, the machine does not make mistakes. It never forgets. It will do the same operation a thousand times without fatigue or boredom. Using historical material, it has a much longer memory than that of an individual human being, as well as a much wider one. For example, a computer could produce age and occupation-specific mortality rates for a historical community over several hundreds of years in a few seconds, whereas an informant might find it difficult to remember how many children died in his community two years ago. On the other hand, an informant could one how deaths in such a community were regarded. The computer would here be silent. The most important point is that the computer could turn out to be an essential tool, allowing one to attempt a more satisfying and rounded type of social history. One could envisage a situation where everything that could be discovered about a particular past society would be placed in a disc pack. This would then be the nearest one would ever get to a total picture of that community. The computer could draw kinship diagrams for any individuals, test hypotheses, correlate variables, draw maps, link transactions to people. In the end, however, the way the material was arranged in the computer and the type of models that lie behind the questions that were asked would have to come from outside the community under investigation.

Technological and organizational changes which have affected historical research are not too difficult to chart, nor is it difficult to see that the provision of funds by foundations helps to encourage new forms of social analysis. But more important, yet less penetrable, are the broader social and intellectual changes which make more and more people interested in historical studies and historical explanations. A shift of interest suggests that a very substantial change in our society is occurring. More easily demonstrable are some of the products of recent changes.

"Thoughts grow mouldy. What was good and nourishing food for the spirits of one generation affords no sustenance for the next". Thus wrote Nathaniel Hawthorne, stating a truth that applies to historical, as to other, research (quoted in Brockbank, p.37). This remark partly explains the reasons for the growing interest in fields of history outside those which have dominated the discipline for the last hundred years. It might well be argued that there has always been some interest in the social history of ordinary people. The difficulty has been that there seemed little chance of satisfying such curiosity. Even the most daring, for example Homans and Tawney, believed that it would never be possible to reach the sub-structure of personal life in pre-modern societies (Homans, p.219; Tawney, p.121). There are now several indications that with the aid of external models, the newly available sources, and the new technology, major advances are occurring which will enable a new kind of historical anthropology to emerge. There already exists a brief but helpful summary of some of these developments (Thomas, 1966), so that it is only necessary to mention two areas which are particularly relevant to the second part of this paper. One is the work of historical demographers, based mainly on the pioneer research of Fleury and Henry. The methodology is based on the technique of linking births, marriages and deaths recorded in parish registers so that families may be

"reconstituted" (Wrigley). In practice, this means that the family history of about ten to twenty per cent of the population of many European and some Asian and North American countries from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries up to the present can be pieced together in a detail which allows one to ask questions about contraception, infant mortality, marriage patterns, as well as many other topics. Such work is very time-consuming and attempts are currently being made to computerize it. Yet it brings the demographic historian very close to the social anthropologist. The other trend is that of the development of local history, perhaps best illustrated in this country in the pioneer work on W.G. Hoskins. Although still concerned with population, the emphasis is more strongly on economic history at the local level. (Hoskins, 1957, 1959, 1964). A wider range of sources, including inventories of possessions, taxation, and manorial records are incorporated. As yet, however, the three other major strands necessary for a "total" local history, social, mental, and political, are missing at the local level. There are signs, however, that such developments are not far off. Major works encompassing several of these fields have already appeared (Goubert; Le Roy Ladurie; Spufford). As the evidence becomes increasingly complex, the framework for analysis needs to become more and more flexible and sophisticated. Here, historians are increasingly looking to social anthropologists for guidance.

The data of history and anthropology: a case study.²

We have already alluded to the three levels at which an anthropologist and historian operate. At the level of what is felt ought to happen, and what is widely thought does happen, the anthropologist observes behaviour, listens to unsolicited comments and remarks in the society, and probes further with directed questions. The historian mainly depends on what might be called 'literary' or 'polemical' literature, as well as contemporary autobiographical material, for these levels. The manuals, diaries, letters, plays and poems of the period tell us about these normative and observed levels, as does the legal code. But these should not be confused with the level of what does or did actually happen, the statistical level, often unperceived by actors in a society. This is reconstructed by the anthropologist by counting instances. For the historian, it is also a matter of counting cases, and often this is best done through an intensive study of a particular community or group of individuals. Nevertheless, in order to study any particular phenomenon, whether it be astrology or price rises, historians have to move from one level of evidence to another. To trust exclusively in

²The records upon which the Earls Colne study is based are in the Essex Record Office, County Hall, Chelmsford. I am most grateful to the County Archivist and his assistants for help in their use, and to the vicar of Earls Colne for access to the parish registers. The major records used are the parish registers (D/DP/209), the ecclesiastical records (D/ACA), manorial collections (especially D/DPr), the ecclesiastical records (D/ACA), manorial collections (especially D/DPr) and wills (D/ACR, D/ACW).

any particular set of documents leads to a very great distortion, just as an anthropologist who merely counts and never asks questions, or vice versa, would present a very impoverished and distorting account. For the moment, however, I would like to confine myself mainly to the statistical level.

What can be found out about a contemporary community and about an historical one? By undertaking this comparison I hope to show that the sources for the historical study are far richer than one might expect. It conventionally takes one anthropologist one or two years to gather all the information concerning one community, whereas it would take at least three times as long to collect the material for a similar sized historical community in Tudor and Stuart England over a period of 200 years. This does not merely reflect the superior ability of an anthropologist, or the dispersion of historical material. It is true that the anthropologist has one less stage in his research for his community is already in action, he walks into an already constituted world, while the historian has to reconstitute his subject matter before he can start to analyse it properly. Nevertheless, there is more to the difference of time than this. Here I would like to compare two communities which I am myself in the process of analysing, a contemporary community in the Annapurna range in central Nepal, and the parish of Earls Colne in Essex, over the period of 1560-1800 (Macfarlane, 1970,1976). One way of comparing the communities is by the total number of persons in the sample. The essence of the anthropological method is personal contact, and this usually means that only about five hundred to a thousand persons can be studied in any depth. In the village of Thak in central Nepal I studied some five hundred and twenty persons and by the end of fifteen months recognized all their faces. In the Essex village of Earls Colne the population averaged about twelve hundred persons during the period of the study; thus it was over twice the size. In terms of man-years, however, the contrast is much greater. I stayed in the Nepalese village for a little over a year; thus about six hundred man-years were actually studied. Even if one assumes that one has an average accurate historical recall of some ten years for every man, woman and child, one is only studying a little over six thousand man-years. Roughly twelve hundred inhabitants of Earls Colne at any point in time are being studied over a period of three hundred; thus one is investigating three hundred and sixty thousand man-years of behaviour, or over sixty times as much as even the most optimistic estimate for the Nepalese community.

Another major difference lies in the field of sampling and comparison. Very similar records exist for several hundred other Essex parishes during this period and it is possible to compare particular features in the chosen village with many other areas at the same point in time. In Nepal I was only able to visit and study one other village, previously described by the French ethnographer Bernard Pignede (Pignede, 1066), and this suggested that many of the features which I had taken as 'given' or universal to the tribe on the basis of one village study were, in fact, extremely localized, and possibly limited to Thak. Yet, until other anthropologists have worked elsewhere, this suspicion will be extremely difficult to prove or disprove. The bureaucracy of pre-industrial England was infinitely more record conscious than that of contemporary Nepal. Consequently one has, in effect, the beginnings of statistical accounts for almost every parish in the country. It is therefore not too difficult to construct a sampling frame and to be more confident concerning the area to which one's generalizations apply.

While conceding the immense superiority of numbers, an anthropologist could well retort that there are a whole range of topics which he can investigate, particularly in the realm of social attitudes and perception, which remain closed to the historian. This is, of course, true. But before we accept that quality entirely makes up for quantity, it is worth looking a little more closely at the various fields about which one can gather information in the two disciplines. If we use as a check-list the topics listed in the Royal Anthropological Institute 'Notes and Queries on Anthropology' (6th edition), it would appear that approximately two thirds of the areas could be tackled in an historical community study. Social structure, political organization and economics could be very fully investigated. The fields of 'the social life of the individual', 'ritual and belief', 'knowledge and tradition' and 'material culture' could be partially investigated, while 'language' would be almost totally beyond the reach of such a study. Over-all it would seem that the width of problems which an anthropologist can study is indeed greater than those fields open to the investigator of English parishes in the past. Though we can learn something concerning medicine, witchcraft, leisure, attitudes to time and so on, for many historical communities, a systematic study of any one of these could not be performed at the local level. On the other hand, in the fields of social structure, economics and, to a certain extent, material culture (where there are probate inventories), the historical information, though different from that used by the anthropologist, is often much richer.

In order to see what information can, in practice, be gathered about individuals in an historical and an anthropological setting, let us compare two people. My knowledge of the two communities leads me to believe that both were middling-to-poor men, both reached middle age, and there is no reason in either case to think in advance that they would be better documented than their co-inhabitants. One is Indrajid Gurung, in 1969 a retired staff-sergeant from the British army, aged 55. He represents the forty or so adult males for whom I have the most information. Cornelius Brownson lived in Earls Colne from 1610 (when he was born) to 1657 and described himself as a 'labourer' in his will. The will is the most condensed portrait we have of the man. Brownson is only one out of well over two thousand adult males who lived in the community during the period 1500-1800 and for whom we have similar information. How much material is there concerning the two people?

A comparison between the amount of information can be made by way of a diagram (see original file for diagrams). This illustrates under the various major fields the amount of information that is available. It will be seen that the number of questions to which answers are obtainable is roughly equal, though one can find out a little more about the seventeenth century farm labourer than about the contemporary Gurung from my field notes.

We may look at one variable in a little more detail in order to see how the comparison was made. I made a conventional attempt to record kinship links, and cross-questioned Indrajid's elder brother about his ancestors. We may place the results against those from a preliminary set of links derived from historical sources for Cornelius Brownson (see diagram 2). In terms of generation depth and complexity, the historical individual, though only a farm labourer, is better documented. This is partly a function of the lack of interest in ancestors among the Gurungs. But even when, as in parts of Africa, one could have established a much more elaborate genealogy, it seems doubtful whether

one would have been able to go back to each individual on the genealogy and create as full a picture of his life history as of the original informant. Yet that is what one can do with the historical material. We know as much about Cornelius's father and his father's father as we do about Cornelius, and likewise about his father's brothers. Indrajid's father is totally obscure, apart from name, birth, death and place of origin.

Another way of comparing the sources for historical anthropology with those for contemporary anthropology is to look in some detail at a field where anthropologists have rightly claimed a special competency, that of sexual behaviour and norms. We now know that parts of Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries enjoyed, if that is the word, a "unique marriage pattern" which meant that there was a gap of some ten years between puberty and marriage for the majority of the population (Hajnal). We also know that Europe inherited an ethic which stated that all pre-marital sexual behaviour was not only unwise, but immoral. This likewise places it in the minority of societies (Murdock, p.265). Did the combination of social structure and ethic lead to a great deal of repression, frustration, and sublimation as Malinowski or Freud might have argued? One possible index of a clash between individual desire and official morality might be expected to be the amount of pre-marital sexual intercourse, and one sub-aspect of this would be the number and treatment of brides who were pregnant when they married. Changes in the rates of bridal pregnancy could well be used as a wider index of basic change in the society under study. As a result the topic is currently receiving considerable attention (Laslett, p.135-158; Mair, 1966, 1970).

In the Nepalese society I studied there are some hints that the age at which Gurungs enter sexual relations has risen during the last twenty years. It seems likely that pre-marital sexual relations were once normal and not greatly disapproved of; marriage was not the necessary gateway to sexual intercourse. The institutional setting for pre-marital sex was the *rodi* or communal house for unmarried persons of both sexes, a parallel to the Assamese long-house or *Muria ghotul*. More recently the Gurungs have come under pressure from their Hinduized neighbours to the south and wait until marriage before commencing sexual relations. While virginity at marriage is still important, it is possible that the scolding of a girl who has become pregnant before marriage is now harsher than it was. The pressure on her to marry the man responsible, if possible may have grown. Again we can see that knowledge of the number of brides pregnant at marriage and the treatment of them could provide information for the solution of several problems.

The difference in the amount of information available to answer questions in this area, however, is immense. The data on the Nepalese village, apart from general statements about the reactions people might be expected to have, or ought to happen, is very thin. It is impossible to tell which women were pregnant at marriage since no question was asked directly in the census I took on whether a woman was pregnant, or thought herself pregnant, when she married. It is just possible that if I had asked for the month of marriage and the month of first birth, a few cases would have emerged, but with such a small sample (about one hundred childbearing women) and the difficulties of recall over a period of about ten years, there would only be a handful of cases. Thus, any kind of sociological analysis of bridal pregnancy is impossible, either at one point in time or over time. Not

a single pregnant bride was encountered, not a single remembered instance discussed. Nor is this a subject to which other anthropologists have made any significant contribution.

The two central sources for an historical study of bridal pregnancy are parish registers and ecclesiastical court records. These provide the actual instances and sometimes some quantitative material on attitudes. With parish registers the technique is, in principle, simple. On the assumption that people were baptized a few weeks after birth, the gap between marriage and baptism of the first child is worked out and all those women whose first child is baptized within seven and a half months after marriage are presumed to have been pregnant when they married. If we look at our sample Essex village over the period 1585-1605, we can see the result of applying this technique (see diagram 3). One could, in principle, do the same agram for almost all the years between 1560 and 1840, some 280 years instead of 20. The total number of marriages registered in the parish is also shown in the diagram. It is possible to compare different decades, different months and so on. But first it is best to add in the other major source, the ecclesiastical court records. Among the questions to be asked of vicars and church wardens in some of the parishes of Essex at this time was; "whether there be in your parish...any fornicators, adulterers, incestuous persons, bawds, or any that receive such incontinent persons; or any that harbour women with child which be unmarried...; or any persons that are vehemently suspected of any of these or such like faults, or that be out of good name and fame touching such crimes...; why they be? (Kennedy, p.130). This means that month by month, throughout the parishes of over half of Essex, as well as other parts of England, individuals were presented for a very great number of sexual offences. A type of supervision of popular morality occurred which is perhaps unique in English history, or at least uniquely recorded.

If we confine ourselves to the same twenty years, though one could study approximately three times this length of time through these records, we find the following (see diagram 4). We see here the total number of sexual offences each year, and within these, the number concerning the supposed offence of bridal pregnancy. Over this period of twenty years there were over ninety cases concerning sexual offences at the ecclesiastical courts, involving well over one hundred and forty persons. About one seventh of these concerned brides pregnant at marriage, so that we are only dealing with a minor aspect of sexual behaviour. The combined information from these two sources does, however, give us a reasonable number of cases to juggle with - over fifty persons in all. The overlap and numbers can be seen in a further diagram (see diagram 5). The question then occurs; how much likelihood is there that we will be able to find out enough about other features of the individuals and the community to be able to suggest some plausible causal links?

One further descent to the minutiae of actual life is necessary. We may look at some aspects of sexual behaviour in one Essex village over a three-year period, 1587-89.

Work on the social background is still in a preliminary stage, but a few impressions may be of value. During these three years twelve persons are known by name to have been suspected or guilty of sexual relations before marriage; another twelve persons likewise of bridal pregnancy; ten of adultery; eight of bastardy; four for aiding and abetting sexual offenders; two in an attempted rape

case, and one for malicious sexual rhymes. Of this total, about one third have so far been placed in the houses in which they were living. Their distribution is shown in the following map (see map of village showing sexual offenders). The cases predominantly occur at the richer end of the village, rather than in the small cottages of Holt Street or the outlying farms. Given that this only represents approximately an equivalent to one year's cases, it can be seen that over several decades some interesting patterns will emerge, and changes will be visible. In terms of occupation, the preliminary breakdown is as follows. Of the twelve men whose occupation has been established, three men, or one quarter, were engaged in agriculture as husbandmen or labourers; half were artisans - three tailors, two bricklayers and one tinker; the other three were a miller, the schoolmaster and the vicar. Three out of four of the known women were servants, the other was a midwife. In terms of status, those involved ranged from churchwardens, the vicar, the schoolmaster and major landholders, to servants and labourers. The complete village spectrum seems to have been covered, though closer analysis and breakdown of each offence should reveal further patterns.

As far as kinship is concerned, it is possible to draw out partial genealogies of about half those involved; these often extend over several generations and there are numerous overlaps between those involved in different cases. In terms of other deviancy, about half those named in connection with sexual offences were accused in other records of further offences, drunkenness, scolding, brawling, theft and so on. The sexual accusations were merely one thread in a complex web of social relationships, all of which have to be laid bare before the real meaning of the accusation can be understood.

The picture of each character that emerges from this kind of microanalysis is often as vital as that which an anthropologist can expect to find in his field work. It has the advantage of being equally good at any point in time. To illustrate this conclusion, let us look at just one of the individuals accused of a sexual offence in the three-year period.

In 1589 Edward Read, then aged twenty two, was cited to the ecclesiastical court as "suspected to have begotten Jone Crabb of the same" with child, on her accusation. Read's genealogy and place of residence can be seen as follows (see diagram 6). The year before this bastardy allegation, Edward had been a witness to the rhyme supposedly made up about one of his neighbours as follows: "Wo be unto Kendall that ever he was borne he kepes his wyfe so lustylie she makes him ware the horne but what is he the better of what is he the worse she kepes him lyke a Cukolde with money in his purse". Then five years after the bastardy case he was cited for brawling in the churchyard and calling one of the constables "knave", for which offence he claimed to have already been punished by imprisonment. Most of the Read family appear, in fact, to have been embroiled in sexual misconduct. Only four out of nine of Edward's siblings survived childhood. Anne, the eldest, married John Parker, sometime constable and son of one of the churchwardens, whose house we can see in diagram 6. She was two months pregnant when they married, and her husband was cited to the ecclesiastical court for this offence. Edward's younger sister Rose was accused of being "begotten with child by Mr. Thomas Kelton", one of the gentry of Earls Colne. Edward's younger brother John was summoned in 1604 on "vehement suspicion of incontinent living between him and

Edith the wife of Henry Bridge". The supposed adulteress's house can also be seen in the diagram; she was about thirty-eight at the time and her supposed lover thirty-two.

If we look for precedents in the parental generation, they are not hard to find. Edward's father Robert was styled a yeoman and his considerable landholdings are shown on a contemporary map. Although not known to be himself guilty of any sexual offences there is some evidence that the most notorious prostitute in the village managed to blackmail him into paying her various sums of money. Edward's mother's brother was cited "for receiving a harlott into his house being with child without the consent of the parish" and his mother's brother's wife was accused of adultery with the village schoolmaster. Their house is also shown in the diagram.

It is clear from the occupations and statuses of those involved in this particular case that the family was among the middling, husbandman to yeoman, group of villager,s the strata from whom churchwardens, constables, and jurymen in local courts, were chosen. They were not some unruly minority group of very poor. Investigation of other individuals has begun to suggest that one can fairly often probe right down to the lowest and most mobile elements in village society. More broadly, what an examination such as the above hopes to illustrate is that, with some luck in the survival of sources, one is able to find out a very great deal about village relationships from the Elizabethan period onwards. One can re-constitute not only the demography of the community, but also the dynamics of kinship, marriage, social mobility and deviancy. Here the skills of the social anthropologist would be indispensable.

Conclusion; further fields.

The rich material could enable anthropologists to study topics which, so far, they have been forced to avoid. Among such fields are the sociology of population change; the sexual ethics of a society not primarily based on kinship organization and where incest does not appear to arouse great horror; and the kinship system of a 'complex' society over time; the patterns of movement in an open society where there is a high degree of geographical mobility; the status hierarchy of a nation already highly differentiated and mobile; the economic organization of a country that is gradually building up the resources for industrialization without external models of aid; the religious beliefs of a people in a pre-medical age; the changing patterns of deviancy which go with all the above characteristics.

In exploring these and other areas it seems likely that many anthropological hypotheses will be refuted, and many new ones elaborated. It will be necessary to learn a completely new language in order to communicate effectively with the community of study. But the language may often be a computer language rather than a contemporary spoken one, ALGOL or BCPL rather than Hindi. And behind the language is the structure of the data. This will also have to be assimilated. Such learning, as in traditional anthropology, requires total immersion. A student may well spend up to two years studying a past group or community, but it will be done in his own room or at the computer console.

For this reason, the task will be even greater for the historical anthropologist than for the conventional anthropologist. The imagination needed to reconstitute a society from the written clues available is even greater than that required when one goes out to a living society and analyses the permanence behind the surface ripples. Yet the task is similar in that the student has to go well beyond what the data actually tells him. As Levi-Strauss remarked of totemism, "only what is forbidden is specified" (Levi-Strauss, p.35). This is true in general and hence we have to infer the positive, the normative, the invisible everyday assumptions. If this is the case in anthropology, it is also true in historical work. As Bloch remarked, "that which the text tells us expressly has ceased to be the primary object of our attention today", hence, as he puts it, we force documents to speak to us "against their will" (Bloch, p.63,64). In both anthropology and history we have to create a total, ideal, model of the world that exists behind the fragments which we observe. This arrangement of the pieces into something larger than themselves is a creative, imaginative, act and depends entirely on the sensitivity and assumptions of the observer. Computers are only a tool here and they make this kind of investigation possible. Like radio telescopes in astronomy they make new discoveries feasible, though not inevitable.

This creative effort on the part of historians, the fact that investigators do not merely describe, but re-create the world they study, is not always recognized, even by the practitioners themselves. Many accept the definition put forward by Samuel Johnson that the historian "has facts ready to his hand, so he has no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree" (Boswell, p.293). This is nonsense, but the recognition of its inaccuracy is not yet universal. Elton, for example, speaking of his work on Tudor government, claims that "I may have misinterpreted the evidence, but I did not adjust it to my questions and preconceptions" (Elton, p.121). In fact, the moment a historian selects a single piece of information and ignores others, he is bringing to the task a judgment based on a huge armoury of preconceptions and assumptions of which he cannot possibly be aware. Collingwood realized the position and believed that the acceptance of this fact was the "Copernican revolution in the theory of history". He defined this revolution as "the discovery that, so far from relying on an authority other than himself, to whose statements his thought must conform, the historian is his own authority...possessed of a criterion to which his so-called authorities must conform" (Collingwood, p.236); see also Wright-Mills, p.88).

The anthropologist is, of course, notoriously in the same predicament. He must select and interpret, either using his own models, or those of the people he studies. His task is both easier and harder than that of the historian, for he is immediately offered numerous explanations for their behaviour by the actors. These he may be over-eager to accept. The historian has, in the main, to deduce motives and links in a vacuum. He is both freer to speculate and more likely to be entirely ethnocentric, a luxury of which historians have taken full advantage (Collingwood, p.224). If historical research can offer a whole new world of "facts" needing sympathetic interpretation, then anthropology can help stave off the ethnocentric biases which often makes such interpretation impossible. Without anthropological models much of our own past is literally invisible; we cannot even begin to see it because it is too close or too far. Without historical material, anthropological speculation is shadow thin. The historian's task is to turn this shadow into substance. He can only do this after an infusion of wider concepts and external models. A constant tension between original

documentary research and universal hypotheses needs to be maintained. A subtle blend of functionalism and historical, serial, explanation is obviously more satisfactory than an undiluted dose of either. In the end, the aim of both disciplines is largely narcissistic. Collingwood remarked that "we study history...in order to attain self-knowledge (Collingwood, p.315), while Leach states that "the social anthropologist looks at other cultures as in a mirror, the better to understand his own" (Leach, p.771). We find that the two giants of the fairy tale are really one and the same. His quarry, mankind, is unlikely to escape unscathed.

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