

Culture



Edward T. HALL, *An Anthropology of Modern Life. An Autobiography*, New York: Doubleday, 1992. 269 pages, \$24.50 (cloth)

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In the second essay, "On the Category of Place in Eastern Sumba," Forth's intention is "to demonstrate several ways in which 'place' operates as a major category informing aspects of social order, practice and ideation" (56) in the domain of Rindi. The argument is that discriminations of "place" in the plan of a village are linked to the classifications which govern the ranking of the major groups (clans and lineages) of the community. The essay is an exploration of the semantics of the Sumbanese term *ngia*, which means "place" but which also means "kind, type, species" and which is linked in ritual language to the word *ngera*, which means "part, share, responsibility, duty, obligation" and "social position." In Sumbanese the terms for physical space and social identity are all but synonymous.

Placement, both in the physical landscape and in society, implies movement. To be placed is *màndungu*, "fixed, firm, secure, settled." While one properly located in society is *màndungu*, one also moves in society as when one has changed one's social category through a rite of transition or has married. Wherever the exigencies of social life may take a person, he is said always to reside in his clan's ancestral house which is located in relation to other houses in terms of the precedence of the group attached to it.

These essays are a worthy addendum to Forth's earlier, encyclopedic monograph *Rindi: An Ethnographic Study of a Traditional Domain in Eastern Sumba* and are a good indicator of the direction of his more recent work in Nage.

Edward T. HALL, *An Anthropology of Modern Life. An Autobiography*, New York: Doubleday, 1992. 269 pages, \$24.50 (cloth).

By Philip Moore
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Hall's work is well known in anthropology; yet it is fair to say that his work has been most influential beyond the discipline. Here Hall presents an autobiographical account of the first fifty years of his life, from earliest memories to 1963. He shows how his interests as an anthropologist can be understood when related to the events of his life. Contrary to the ordering of the book's title and sub-title, the book contains more autobiography than anthropology. It is not so much about "the anthropology of everyday

life," as this phrase might normally be taken, but about the anthropology of Hall's own life — the private and public events and the people that Hall believes have most influenced him.

The volume comprises an Introduction followed by twenty chapters divided into four chronological/geographical sections. The Four Parts deal with: his early family life and schooling — "Early Days: 1914-1931"; his first work experiences in the Indian Service — "Indian Country in the Thirties: 1932-1935"; his university training, as an archaeologist, and experiences during and immediately following WW II — "Transitions: 1935-1949"; and the beginning of his academic career through his time at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the State Department — "Washington, D.C.: 1950-1963." The division of the book in this way locates Hall's career in space and time and emphasises that his private life experiences are intertwined with the public development of his anthropology. Hall came rather late to the discipline, formally entering anthropology only after a period of employment. Throughout the book the impression Hall works to convey is of himself as a practical man, independent and skilled in looking after himself and well suited to applying anthropology beyond the confines of university teaching and research.

While Hall has been a publicly successful anthropologist, his influence and analytical interests have been quite marginal in the development of American anthropology. He speculates about whether or not this had something to do with his failure to tie himself and his work to some big name in the discipline (p. 247). Instead, Hall chose to follow his own sense of problem and direction and in his autobiography the connections between his work and the development of American anthropology are not very well developed. It is telling that anthropologists are not often referred to in Hall's text. A brief scan of the bibliography illustrates this point: apart from reference to Hall's own work, mentions of other anthropologists are few. Indeed, if one were to read the reference to others as significant — in the text and in the bibliography — it is artists and psychiatrists who have had the greatest influence on Hall's work. Not only does he acknowledge the significant effect of psychoanalysis on his own life, but he also identifies how the methodology of his psychoanalysis has informed his own analytical techniques. Hall's 1949 paper, on ethnic strife in Denver, Colorado, is grounded in a creative application of one of Freud's methods so that a reading of cultural "slips" can be used to understand meanings "beyond cul-

ture." The title of Hall's volume evokes Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

Hall's focus throughout his career has been on the importance of culture as it exists beneath conscious experience. His focus is on the "hidden rules" of culture and his point is that unconscious cultural acts often indicate more clearly and reliably the orientation of people than do overtly phrased explanations: it is harder to lie when one does not consciously control all the communicative codes. The volume is also useful as a broad introduction to Hall's understanding of culture. At one point Hall identifies his interests as "more phenomenological" (p. 220) than other analysts of culture. He is mistaken on this point. Hall's cultural theory is formalist and naturalistic rather than phenomenological. This is evident in the formulation by Hall and his colleague at the FSI, linguist George Trager, that: "There are three kinds of time: formal, informal and technological!" (p. 223). Once this formulation was produced, the analytical task became one of observation and classification. Hall's analysis of culture, often undertaken for a therapeutic or some other "useful" purpose, denies the significance of actors' conscious understandings. Indeed, there is little evidence of Hall taking other peoples' conscious purposes seriously. He worked with Hopi and Navajo between 1932 and 1935 but he presents a very structured sense of what was happening. Rather than learning to communicate with the Indians, he learned to manipulate cultural practices in order to serve his own purposes.

With the growth of biography in anthropology — accounts of the lives of many American anthropologists are now available — it is interesting to see Hall confront his place in the discipline in an autobiographical form. Here we find insight that could never be found in archival materials. Hall's account is based on his memory rather than archival sources. We also find an anthropologist working out the sense of his own life within an anthropological framework. (Is there any connection between the numerous anthropological biographies and autobiographies now available and our interest in the "life story" in the past?) A difficulty with the volume is a problem which dogs all autobiography: when a life is written looking back, how much does the present inform the past. Hall's reconstructed accounts of learning to recognise culture fit his professional anthropological concerns very neatly. The accuracy and adequacy of the reconstructions must, for the moment, remain a mystery.

Writing this account could not have been an easy task for Hall. It makes public the sorts of things many of us might try to keep private. As such, it is a much closer look at one person's life than many of the other anthropological biographies offer. This is a revealing book about Hall — perhaps his own therapeutic statement — but not so revealing about anthropology and the way our lives, as anthropologists, are shaped. It will be interesting to see if anyone rises to the challenge of locating Hall's work

Lisa FALK (Ed.), *Historical Archaeology in Global Perspective*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, 122 p.

Par Philip E. L. Smith
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Ce petit volume n'est qu'une goutte dans la mer de livres produits pour souligner en 1992 les cinq siècles écoulés depuis l'arrivée de Christophe Colomb au Nouveau Monde. En vue de cet anniversaire l'American Museum of Natural History de New-York a organisé en 1987 une série de colloques dans lesquels des spécialistes de divers champs d'étude se réunissaient en séance fermée pour discuter la portée de leurs recherches sur l'aventure colonisatrice des Européens en Amérique. Par la suite, des conférences publiques furent offertes au grand public sur ces mêmes sujets. Certaines de ces communications, révisées par leurs auteurs, sont présentées ici.

Il y a cinq auteurs. Ils sont tous citoyens ou habitants des États-Unis. On ne s'étonnera pas donc de trouver une emphase particulière sur l'archéologie historique de ce pays. Le titre du livre s'avère alors un peu trompeur car il n'y a qu'un seul chapitre (sur l'Afrique du Sud) qui discute la recherche ailleurs dans le monde.

James Deetz, un des spécialistes les plus célèbres et les mieux connus en archéologie historique, écrit une courte Introduction où il plaide en faveur d'une perspective comparative et internationale parmi les savants américains. Selon lui, un processus de globalisation s'opère depuis 500 ans et les archéologues de la période historique (contrairement au préhistoriens, insiste-t-il) doivent travailler dans cette perspective. Pour illustrer sa thèse il présente des exemples de Virginie, de New-York, des grandes plaines de l'ouest américain et de l'Afrique du Sud.