

## Culture



# Joanne RAPPAPORT, *Cumbe Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994. 245 pages, (paper)

Mike Evans

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increasing material wealth. Yet Jeyaretnam's narrator does not simply collide with the dominant trends of Singapore's political and economic development since independence. He must struggle also with his own deeply ingrained beliefs, acquired from his family background, about gender roles, caste and class distinctions, and codes of manly honour. All of these clash with his modern, liberal political and social ideals.

The final quarter of the book plunges him into a last attempt to come to terms with his past and future in the private arena in which traditional norms are both strongly present and most immediately challenged – the turmoil of his failed marriage, and his relations with his son, which parallel those of the biblical character after whom he has been named. Ultimately, the shift in the novel's focus, from the public/personal to a more exclusive attention to the personal, suggests at least a partial, provisional retreat from public idealism into a sphere of personal compassion and pragmatic accommodation to the limits of what is possible under Singapore's current system.

This is a compelling, thoughtful and timely novel that raises many issues relevant not only to contemporary Singaporeans, but to a much wider global audience. It will prove useful material for examining how all of us carry the baggage of the past into our decisions about the future. How we cope with the gaps between our ideals, the current state of society, and the awful burden of trying to shape the latter more to the former's image is another of the questions addressed in this novel. Not least vexing is how people adjust to the difficult intimate relations with those close to them who, more often than not, mischievously refuse to conform to expectations.

Joanne RAPPAPORT, *Cumbe Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994. 245 pages, (paper).

By Mike Evans

University of Northern British Columbia

*Cumbe Reborn* is a rich treatment of the long-term struggle of a number of indigenous communities in Colombia to reclaim lost lands. The product of collaborative research, the monograph details the context and meaning of a series of land

invasions (*recuperación*) that began in the 1970s. In addition to the value of this book as a case study of indigenous Colombian consciousness and resistance, the monograph comes face to face with a number of issues of current interest in anthropological history.

One of the most significant areas with which the book deals is debate around the notion of "invented traditions," and the implications of this notion for how history is to be understood. One of the most contentious problems in the invention of tradition literature has been where and how to look for the sources of innovation in tradition. Are innovations of tradition the result of external influences – that is, are they reactions predicated on the opposition to, or inversion of, externalities – or, can shifts in what people hold to be tradition be viewed as governed largely (I dare say essentially) by autochthonous processes? In this, her second monograph on history-making among indigenous peoples of the Andes, Joanne Rappaport answers this question with what might look like an appeal to the obvious; that is, the answer is both. What is remarkable is the care with which Rappaport has produced an ethnography of history which deals effectively with the historical influences of colonialism, and an encapsulated people's reaction to it, without diminishing or delegitimizing the agency of these people.

Rappaport has done this by embracing an antihistorical, but not ahistorical strategy – a process very similar to the one employed by the Nariño people of Columbia with whom she worked (p.176). Instead of searching for what "really happened," Rappaport follows Greg Dening's advice that we look to the complex and multiple processes of memory which make the past meaningful in the present, rather than detaching the past from the present through violent renderings of local histories.

Again, what is impressive here is the subtlety with which Rappaport works. She insists that we recognise the interplay between oral and written history. This demand, at least in the context of this study, leads to description situating the work of indigenous intellectuals in colonial documents and policy, as well as the more straightforward anthropological practice of reading history-making from local social and cultural processes. In this way she erodes the artificial separation between colonial and indigenous structures of memory and action.

For Nariño *memoristas* (indigenous historians) colonial documents and state laws are a major component of the stuff of history. This is again almost commonsensical, but it is a key facet of Rappaport's quiet critique of current fault lines in anthropological approaches to history making. Rappaport's approach enables her to elide the question of what really happened, in favour of the much more interesting issue of just how history is recalled in the face of current conditions and challenges. Neither external or internal structures of power are given a short shrift in this monograph, and for this reason alone it is a valuable addition to the literature.

If there is a problem with the work, it might be that the theoretical implications are not really elaborated and thus the book is more evocative than definitive in terms of the current debate about an adequate anthropological history. Yet Rappaport's contribution is one which anyone working in the area today would benefit from reading. Leaving aside the theoretical contribution that she makes, work of this subtlety and specificity should always be one of the very good things anthropology can bring to history both past and present.

Anne ALLISON, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. 226 pages, US \$14.95 (paper).

By Joe B. Moore

University of Victoria

Anne Allison's *Nightlife* is a fine study of elite Japanese salarymen at play in a high-class hostess club in Tokyo. Allison's stated objective is to provide an analysis of "masculinist behavior" of Japanese salarymen engaged in after-work nightlife situated within a wider historical, institutional, and ideological setting. In accordance with this objective, Allison focuses primarily on the male corporate employees who participate in "nightwork," though she gives a good deal of attention to the women with whom they play, and rather less to the women they marry.

The "nightwork" of the title refers to the mandatory afterwork gatherings which the large corporations encourage and pay for as a means for bringing the worker and corporation closer together,

and which result, necessarily, in subordinating the demands of home and family to the corporation (pp. 198-199). Allison pays particular attention to the three-cornered connection between salaryman, corporation, and family and demonstrates convincingly that the medium for the interconnection is the particular kind of male sexuality that is put on display in the hostess club.

This public affirmation of male sexuality is what Allison proposes to examine, with an eye toward drawing out "the implications of a phallogocentric practice in terms not only of the privileges it accords men but also the price it extracts from them" (p. 30). Allison does not assume that the hostess-club setting simply allows the expression of a "natural" sexuality of men, Japanese or otherwise. She makes the disclaimer that her "aim has not been to write a polemic on the chauvinistic or sexist attitudes of Japanese men in the nightlife or to reduce these behaviors to some essential attribute that is biologically male or universally patriarchal" (p. 30). Nor is she prepared to go along with the "cultural essentialists" who explain nightlife behavior as unique and comprehensible only in terms of Japanese cultural categories (pp. 79-83 and chap. 7).

Having discarded the easy explanations offered under the headings of biology, patriarchy, and Japanese cultural uniqueness – "Japanology of this latter kind has been the bane of Japanese studies for decades – Allison chooses to attack the problem from the direction of what might be called the culture of corporate capitalism. That is, of the three dimensions of nightwork that Allison scrutinizes – salaryman, corporation, family – it is the corporation that has the paramount role in the cultural construction of male salaryman sexuality, which it conditions and shapes to serve corporate needs (p. 150).

It might be argued that the Japanese employment system has worked outstandingly well since the 1950s in eliciting the loyalty and hardwork of salarymen without the kind of manipulation of sexuality that Allison analyzes here. There are at least two plausible answers to that criticism: that the sexual dimension was there all the time but unremarked; and that the corporations discovered and "developed" the sexual dimension during four decades of restless searching for ways to increase productivity. Unfortunately, Allison does not deliver on her promise to provide an adequate