

**Russell, Andrew, and Elizabeth Rahman** (eds.): *The Master Plant. Tobacco in Lowland South America*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. 259 pp. ISBN 978-1-4725-8754-1. Price: \$ 100.00

This quite interesting book aims at presenting some anthropological insights on different uses of tobacco among indigenous peoples of Western Amazonia. Tobacco is much less studied than ayahuasca, for example, probably because it often seems to belong to a more everyday world, which blurs its specific qualities and effects. Actually, after Wilbert's major work on the topic, "Tobacco and Shamanism in South America" (1987), almost nothing was specifically written about it.

Should Schultes's prediction (1967) that "we shall see other narcotic stuffs assume greater roles and tobacco find a progressively less important [one]" be true? It is not so sure, at least in the indigenous realm.

Firstly because its use appears to remain very widely spread, even where evangelist missionaries are present. According to the case, tobacco may be consumed for pleasure, for healing, or for other rituals, it may be smoked, chewed, snuffed, or licked, with or without some opposition between local production and commercial cigarettes, there are rich or poor symbolic elaborations, but everywhere in indigenous Amazonia, tobacco is used and thought in a relational way, quite different from the Western individual, compulsive consumption.

Secondly, public policies began now to fight against the devastating effects of tobacco for long-term human health and well-being, but indigenous societies were always aware of its potent toxicity, and that is the reason for its role in shamanism. As Kinerai, a Witoto tobacco healer, said to Juan Alvaro Echeverri (after advising him to stop smoking for a month because "tobacco is strong and hot," and it might be heating up his body): "But a man *must* smoke tobacco." The point is the *manner* you do it. The book provides so some fascinating comparisons and contrasts with our own consumption habits.

The first part of the book deals with historical matters. It opens with a chapter by Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo and Nicholas C. Kawa about the "objective" aspects of tobacco, a review of the 76 species of the genus *Nicotiana* (from America, but also from Africa and mainly from Australia), a discussion about archaeological data and the geographical origin of the two most important ones, *Nicotiana rustica* and *Nicotiana tabacum*, linked or not with the dispersion of manioc, a review of the various forms of use, and an insight into the beginning of the colonial period, with a progressive commodification and various changes in symbolic values.

The second chapter is written by Peter Gow, in its usual, allusive style. He compares tobacco uses among two closely related Arawakan peoples, the Yine-Piro and the Apurinã, beyond Wilbert's "unnecessarily functionalist categorization by methods of use," which obscures historical processes. Starting up from representations of ancient pipes and snuff tubes, and analyzing them as a transformational system, he shows how the form of these instruments could led the Piro to shift from tobacco snuff to pipe-smoking, which was later linked with ayahuasca

consumption, while the Apurinã do not link the recently introduced cigarette- and pipe-smoking to shamanism, and did not adopt ayahuasca at all.

It follows a very dense text from Françoise Barbira Freedman about tobacco uses and symbolic values in whole Amazonia. Sometimes it is a little intricate (the author, for example, not always clearly explains what comes from her own fieldwork among the Keshwa Lamas and what belongs to secondhand data), but it is full of quite interesting observations, for example, about the relationship between ethnic distinctions and different forms of use (tobacco rolls / other preparations), about the distinction between the different kinds of healers, about the interethnic "landscapes," about the current evolution of shamanism, etc.

The next contribution, from Bernd Brabec de Mori, is a fascinating ethnomusicological study. Song is the preferred mode of interaction and negotiation between human and non-human entities in the region. Comparing and analyzing various peoples' ritual songs, it appears that the "fluvial style" of Kukama, Shipibo, and Yine-Piro songs is different from the interfluvial dwellers' one, and is related to the Catholic Mass: it seems that "tobacco smoking, ayahuasca drinking and a synthesized singing style were 'co-invented' in this missionary context", which confirms an old proposition of Peter Gow. Furthermore, in a perspectivist approach, tobacco is the food of the spirits, but it is also the cigar and the scent, the ritual song, and a powerful healer, and the singer himself: its shifting possibilities transcend perspectives. But currently there are also some changes: "nowadays healing is [often] associated with ayahuasca while sorcery smells like tobacco".

Juan Alvaro Echeverri's chapter discusses Lévi-Strauss's opposition between tobacco and honey among the "People of the Centre" (Witotoan, Boran, and Andoquean), who commonly use licked tobacco paste. In this case, according to the production process and the adjunction of vegetal ash salts to the tobacco juice, the opposition *dry* tobacco / *moist* honey has to be replaced by the *dry* salt / *moist* tobacco one. The system is completed through the analysis of myths: men/women production, meat/non-meat, coca/cassava bread. But the point is that "all the substances of the culinary space are meant to raise children and to construct true persons, but all of them are strong and hot and thus potentially harmful – particularly tobacco, salt and coca": you have absolutely to learn how to slowly cool them down.

The next author, Elizabeth Rahman, deals with the mixed-blood dwellers of Xié River, a tributary of Rio Negro. They use tobacco for numerous blessing rituals, especially with infants. The author describes in detail the particular techniques of meticulous, repeated home basin and river bathes, always accompanied with tobacco blowing: water and tobacco facilitate the progressive development of a cool, firm, and dry adult person. Tobacco smoke blessings continue during weaning, or in case of fright (*susto*). But how do they work? Powerful sensations awaken the person to the here and now: the smoke which focuses attention, the tobacco aromatic smell, the suspended time. As an early inductive, informal education, it teaches the infants how to respond later to these stimuli.

The following four chapters are shorter. In the first one, Renzo S. Duin describes the alternate uses of commercial cigarettes and locally grown tobacco among the Guianese Wayana. For the Yanomami, treated by Alejandro Reig in the second one, tobacco is just an enjoyment. But the author links it with desire and expressions of need, generosity, and reciprocity, all of which being essential aspects of Yanomami's social ethos. He shows how tobacco creates so genuine "landscapes of desire" – and can organize Yanomami's displacements. In the third chapter, Juan Pablo Sarmiento Barletti shows how tobacco is used among the Ashaninka in two opposite ways. On the Ene River, it serves to restore the ancient sociality after the civil war between the Peruvian state and "Sendero Luminoso." On the Bajo Urubamba, commercial cigarettes (as many other industrial commodities) are consumed in order to "become a Peruvian," and so to maintain paradoxically the specific Ashaninka sense of well-being. The book ends with a last, quite interesting contribution of Paolo Fortis, about the Guna (Kuna) of Panama, and about the relationship between tobacco and *chicha*, the different kinds of tobacco and *chicha* specialists, and the ambiguous animal spirits, who feed on tobacco smoke that they perceive as *chicha*.

Marc Lenaerts

**Sansi, Roger:** *Art, Anthropology, and the Gift*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. 188 pp. ISBN 978-0-85785-535-0. Price: £ 21.99

This book takes the dialogues between art and anthropology to a new level. It moves the reader beyond the interest in "primitive" art during modernism and the crisis of representation in the 1980s towards contemporary art concerned with social interventions. Roger Sansi has investigated the deeper affinities between the two fields, and he argues for an increased focus on theoretical correspondences in addition to earlier assessments of ethnographic practice as the core commonality. While the latter texts have been framed by one of the two disciplines, Sansi presents a groundbreaking volume in its innovative engagement with conceptualisations within both art and anthropology. The author traces complex combinations and recognises possibilities of anthropologists learning from artists practising anthropology, not only their audiovisual techniques, and of artists developing their theoretical and ethical frameworks through collaborations with anthropologists. The book explores relationships between the two fields and is organised through particular questions, such as participation, work, personhood, aesthetics, and politics. The concept of the gift constitutes the main concern. The ethnographic examples are situated in contemporary international art directed towards social and political change, particularly works performed in Spain. They include artists well known on the institutionalised art scene as well as small local collectives.

The central theme of the gift is productively used as a tool to discuss differences, similarities, and possible future collaborations between art and anthropology. The author enhances this analysis by exploring debates and dis-

junctions within each field. Sansi describes how the social turn in contemporary art engages artists in participatory practices including gift-giving and exchange to accomplish community building and subversive acts against the market economy. Simultaneously, certain art critics argue that participatory practices run the risk of reproducing the relations they aim to oppose. Sansi takes this debate further and investigates causes of the risk. From the perspective of art theory, the gift is perceived as free and voluntary and characterised by a capacity to create egalitarian relations. The author suggests that art practice can be better adjusted to accomplish social change through an incorporation of anthropological theories of the gift. Following Marcel Mauss, it becomes necessary to apprehend that the gift produces and reproduces social hierarchies; it is bound to obligations of giving, receiving, and returning, and the giver always distributes parts of his- or herself. Through this perspective, artists' interventions in social space can be understood in relation to existing power relations. The issue of the artist's authority can be illuminated and actions can be taken beyond preconceived intentions and at times be questioned as reproducing the artist's individual fame rather than creating friendship cultures. As an example of earlier transgressions between art practice and anthropological theories of the gift, the author presents the Situationists' appropriation of the potlatch in the 1960s. The ritual organisation of lavish gift-giving on the northwest coast of North America was transformed into a critique of commodification and private ownership in Western Europe. Ideally through actions of stealing and then giving away, the artists held that the commodity would lose its market value.

Sansi claims that the common interest among artists and anthropologists is not other cultures, but the critical rethinking of their own reality and suggestions of alternative perspectives. Their knowledge productions share the aim to challenge classical Western definitions and the current dominance of capitalism and loss of community. Artists seek alternatives through the performance of micro-utopias; enactments of social practices where models of inclusive and collective futures can emerge. While these projects have been realised in smaller scale and often protected in gallery spaces, movements such as Occupy and 15-M aim to transform the social as a whole. They develop as citizen projects and challenge the division between the artist and non-artist, and between art and life. The author suggests that the utopian component in anthropology should engage more with artistic practices as methods of exploring social and political relations, and as methods of understanding how social life can be presented as performative processes rather than representations of a reality already given. The artists' disavowal of their own agency in favour of other participants in collaborative practices enables space for chance and the unpredictable, which in turn can be useful for anthropological ways of working. In sum, Sansi's insightful and sophisticated analysis makes this book an excellent read for all concerned with both theoretical and practical developments in the dialogues between art and anthropology.

Anna Laine