

Rezensionen

Barker, John (ed.): *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007. 235 pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-7185-5. £ 55.00

The compilation of studies motivated by the work of Kenelm Burridge and edited by John Barker, succeeds in maintaining the focus of morality in Melanesia and a high quality of scholarship throughout. The main concern is with morality as a motivating force in Melanesian experience, seen particularly in the interface between values associated with village life and the ethical orientations associated with modernity.

Anthropologists have commonly understood morality as a system of rules regulating social behaviour. This volume goes beyond that to the existential problem of moral integrity (found in “equivalence” among the Tangu studied by Burridge). Melanesians are continually faced with the challenge of reconciling moral equivalence with individual willfulness.

The dilemma of Melanesian morality takes different forms depending on the context in which it occurs – whether it be in local communities, *wantok* networks, modernist institutions, or imagined communities such as the nation. It is not a simple choice between traditional or modern societies or economies but is experience in terms of a moral conflict as to what it means to be a good person. In terms of equivalence, people have to face compromises and contradictions as the ethics of reciprocal obligation contrasts with individualism mediated by money, consumerism, and Christianity. Migrants to the towns rely on the moral logic of equivalence (often experienced as moral contradictions) to get assistance from employed kin. With institutions such as schools or health facilities, the assumption of moral equivalence is often expressed in compensation demands by landowners to reciprocate for land and other resources used by that institution.

At the national level people find themselves facing moral choices between moralists, ranging from Christian fundamentalists to the creators of consumer advertising. While environmentalists support traditional values to fight for more equitable logging arrangements, human rights activists call for changes in traditional mores that disallow economic and political security to women. As Barker notes (14), with such varying moralities, the claim to moral legitimacy begins to appear as one item in a marketplace of alternative ethical codes.

John Barker’s introduction is followed by two studies that explore indigenous moral systems in terms of

morality, power, and the human condition. Joel Robbins shows how Urapmin bigmen “transcend” the moral order. People allow them to be morally adventurous because their moral transgressions are socially productive. Doug Dalton argues that Rawa sorcerers may act as a gauge of anger, hatred, and violence within a community. Thus it may be moral to be a sorcerer, not through moral principles, and not when sorcery is employed, but through the sorcerer embodying the violence and evil in the society. The next three chapters focus on the transition of Melanesian societies into “modernity.” Bruce Knauff compares the Gebusi with the Tangu and sees them at different ends of a continuum of change in Melanesia – from capitulation to outside authority figures at one end to assimilation of outside influences into their own cultural and moral system on the other. John Barker considers the changing moral identities among the Maisin associated with triangle of tribesmen, citizens, and Christians. Speakers at community meetings would draw upon the authority of tradition, the law, and Christianity to critique the community and promote solutions. Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz show how notions of balanced reciprocity pervade disputes witnessed at the Ramu Sugar plantation and factory. The next three studies consider individuals whose actions reveal new moral possibilities in the changing conditions of modernity. Dan Jorgensen focuses on the figure of the spirit woman in Telefolmin, Roger Lohmann tells of a Min evangelist whose strength and weakness lay in believing that his will was inseparable from that of his God. Nancy Lutkehaus considers the life of a Sepik woman who confronts the traditional moral systems that constrain the roles available to women. The final two chapters by Robert Tonkinson and F. G. Bailey go beyond Melanesian ethnography to consider the ethical implications of Kenelm Burridge’s writings.

A theme emerging in a number of places in this volume is the transformative role played by mission churches and Christianity. This is partly due to Burridge’s sympathy for missionaries, appearing openly in his last major work, “In the Way. A Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours” (Vancouver 1991). The most sympathetic account of missionary work in this volume is that of Nancy Lutkehaus who focuses on the figure of a Papua New Guinean woman as an exemplar of a new type of woman – who joins the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit (Holy Spirit Sisters) and is missioned to Africa. The most

critical is from Robert Tonkinson and his experience of a fundamentalist Christian group at Jigalong in Western Australia during the 1960s, who seemed unable to see the Aborigines as fully realised moral beings. Tonkinson notes that Catholic and other missions may have conformed more to Burridge's model of sustained transcultural interactions rather than reactive condemnation, yet he questions whether Burridge's approach to mission and missionaries was overly optimistic.

Others in this volume help broaden the missionary critique. Lohmann notes (145) how missionaries can place themselves in a position where they expect the obedience and respect of others, even as they are offering these qualities to their God. This can be morally problematic if their relationship with God seems so special that God's will and their own views become inseparable. Dalton makes the intriguing point that Europeans, including missionaries, acted much like sorcerers: powerful, autonomous, and having little sense of obligation to share their wealth with villagers. Their refusal to engage in reciprocity brought great shame in its implication that Melanesians were not worthy to deal with on an equal basis. Thus the arrival of Europeans, including missionaries, posed a radical challenge to the Melanesian moral system in its impact where reciprocities that grounded communities no longer applied. As Barker points out, this could be both threatening and liberating. Many accepted the new churches and started to rebuild their moral communities around cooperative and economic ventures. He notes (91), how today many Melanesians are experiencing a conversion towards a more individualised ethic, leaving less space for collectivist traditional values.

This volume points to new directions in ethical theory and practice. If your budget can afford, it is a book well worth having. Certainly, it is a volume well worth reading.

Philip Gibbs

Berthod, Marc-Antoine : Doutes, croyance et divination. Une anthropologie de l'inspiration des devins et de la voyance. Lausanne : Éditions Antipodes, 2007. 431 pp. ISBN 978-2-940146-71-0. Prix: € 30.00

Il s'agit d'un travail très remarquable de ce directeur d'un institut de recherche valaisan. Il applique en particulier l'un des préceptes trop oubliés de la méthode cartésienne, qui consiste à établir d'abord un bilan exact et complet de l'état de la question. Déjà son préambule, "approcher la voyance" ne néglige ni l'apport de poètes, ni celui des sociologues, ni les journaux populaires, ni bien sûr la mise en situation de l'auteur lui-même comme anthropologue en situation d'entretien, avec son souci d'accord et de retour d'information vis-à-vis de ceux qu'il étudie. Il fait preuve en même temps d'une érudition éblouissante, voire exhaustive – par la suite peut-être excessive (mais bien compréhensible) quand il cite les mémoires non imprimés de jeunes étudiants helvétiques.

Le chapitre qui suit se préoccupe de "situer les arts divinatoires" d'abord dans l'histoire – Bible, antiquité classique, astrologie persistante chez les chrétiens, visionnaires médiévaux, évolutions théologiques modernes,

positivisme, où la divination devient marginale (on regrettera la faible place laissée à l'Orient proche ou extrême, quand l'Égypte fantasmée reste si présente). Puis est examinée l'influence des institutions – regard des médias, approche scientifique parfois ambiguë, en revanche réglementation juridique et contrôle religieux hostiles – dans des positions face auxquelles les "voyants" se regroupent pour préciser leurs conceptions ésotériques et leurs pratiques et obtenir une part de légitimité (95–110 particulièrement intéressantes). Enfin sont évoqués trois récits autobiographiques de voyants, qui mettent en relief les épreuves diverses que chacun d'entre eux a dû surmonter.

Suit le chapitre "rencontrer les devins", qui présente (sous pseudonymes) les six personnages, cinq femmes et un homme, avec lesquels l'auteur a noué des relations en profondeur, pour tenter de partager leurs univers singuliers, retracer leurs modalités de travail, comprendre leur parcours, leur rapport au sacré, les liens qu'ils créent entre eux et avec leurs consultants. Pages très concrètes, souvent émouvantes, qui nous plongent au cœur d'une observation participante englobante et du travail "de terrain" proprement dit de l'anthropologue. Chaque devin porte le sentiment d'une mission à remplir au service d'autrui, souvent dans un contexte mystique assez "New Age" comme pour "Stella" (199–208). Ces histoires de vie sont longues, certes un peu répétitives, mais finalement rapprochées de l'hypnose et des avatars de la psychologie moderne.

Elles sont très bien résumées et synthétisées au début du 4^e chapitre, "penser les intuitions divinatoires", qui tente d'en établir la théorie (295–297 ss.). Avec références à Bastide et Laplantine, puis à Durkheim, Mauss et De Martino, l'auteur présente le "sentiment d'extension de soi", lié souvent à l'émotion religieuse, comme la base du "don" intuitif, de la force de parole amenant le devin à faire naître les "certitudes du possible" dans le dialogue existentiel parfois dramatique (cf. 321 s., 325) avec son consultant. Par la remise en cause de leur vision du monde se crée entre eux un sentiment de communion et la confiance en ce qu'ils disent. Des exemples de "rhétorique mantique" et de dialogues, puis une reprise des positions compréhensives de Bruno Latour au sujet de la croyance, terminent ce chapitre.

Le dernier et court chapitre, "raconter la voyance", est une reprise réflexive du parcours de l'auteur : lui aussi a été amené à se remettre en question et il a éprouvé également la difficulté de traduire des sentiments et des émotions en connaissance significative pour autrui : vivre le terrain n'est pas l'exprimer. Il propose cependant pour s'en tirer trois principes de méthode très intéressants (372 s.) qui correspondent à ceux qu'il a utilisés ... et termine sur la nécessité et la difficulté de se faire écrivain.

Suivent en annexes : la photographie peinte d'Arielle Dombasle en voyante par Pierre et Gilles (1991); un exemple d'arnaque d'une vieille dame par un "voyant-médium", article du journal suisse *La Liberté* (1999); un article "La voyance n'a rien à voir avec la science ... et tout à voir avec la conscience", par le psychiatre-psychanalyste Édouard Collot dans *Le Courrier*