

Anthropologists Studying Political Organization

Local-Level Politics. Social and Cultural Perspectives. MARC J. SWARTZ, Ed. Aldine, New York, 1968. x + 438 pp. \$9.75.

The 18 essays in this volume report the results of a conference held in July 1966 at Burg Wartenstein, Austria, under the sponsorship of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. The purpose of the conference, although not explicitly stated, seems to have been to develop a general framework for understanding politics in situations most often encountered by anthropologists. Typically these situations involve a local group of people who have a complex set of relationships which includes politics, economics, religion, kinship, and so on. Also, this local group, for example, a village or ethnic enclave, is today almost always part of a larger political organization such as a state or nation.

After reading the essays in this volume, one might conclude that anthropologists excel at interpreting the politics of a particular local group but they know almost nothing about local politics in general. This conclusion could be applied equally well in several other areas of concern to anthropology, for example, economics and religion; specific studies are often excellent whereas generalizations are weak or lacking. Three factors help account for this situation, and all three can be illustrated from the essays presented at this conference. First, anthropologists tend to limit their analyses to the data they have gathered at first hand through intensive field work. As a consequence, most anthropologists are limited to information from one or two studies, since field work is expensive and time consuming. Sixteen of these essays are based directly on field work done by their authors, and only two, those of Epstein and Nicholas, report on more than one society. The second factor, which compounds the first, is that anthropologists include within their domain of study the complete range of social types. The societies reported on in this volume range in size from a small Eskimo village to an Indian state with a population of over 73 million. They include such diverse social entities as an Indian village, the Lapps of Norway, and the Hausa quarter in the city of Ibadan in Nigeria. The geographic range includes Africa (several examples), Alaska (Eskimos), Norway (Lapps), India (several examples),

Mexico, Taiwan, and Burma. The third factor, finally making generalizations impossible, is that anthropologists do not have a common framework or theoretical orientation for analysis. Almost every essay introduces a new system for analysis: Hughes draws from ego psychology for his interpretation of the politics of the Eskimo, Barnes is concerned with social networks, Friedrich relies upon life histories for understanding the politics of a Mexican village, and Turner begins his analysis with Kurt Lewin's field theory. One must be impressed with the range of concepts anthropologists bring to bear on the interpretation of their data and dismayed that after 100 years of scholarly effort anthropologists do not have a common paradigm for framing their questions and directing their research. Swartz tries in his long introduction to derive from these essays some common framework for understanding local-level politics, and it is on the basis of his statement that the results of this conference will be considered.

Swartz sees two problems which have prevented fruitful analysis of political organization: (i) an emphasis upon the study of formal political structures, whether they are parliaments or lineages, and (ii) a synchronic approach which cannot deal with processes of change. If we wish to compare the politics of an Eskimo village and an Indian state, then obviously we cannot depend upon a concrete structural analysis since the latter has a governmental structure and the former does not. Furthermore, if we look at the modern world, we find that any given political unit is just as likely to be characterized by change as by stability. To overcome these two problems Swartz develops his political analysis around the concepts "public goals," "field," and "arena." Politics, by his definition, "refers to the events which are involved in the determination and implementation of public goals and/or the differential distribution and use of power within the group or groups concerned with the goals being considered." Public goals must be purposively sought by the participants in the political action, and the political action may or may not involve conflict or struggle for power. The "field" includes all the individuals and groups, along with their combined resources, values, and rules, that are involved in the action to achieve their

public goals. Finally, the "arena" includes all of the individuals and groups, plus their resources and so on, that are outside the field but directly related to it. Using these three concepts, the investigator empirically establishes the public goals and determines the actors and their attributes in both the field and the arena. To assist in this investigation Swartz includes a set of questions one should ask oneself, such as, "If there is more than one group in the field, what is the nature of the relations between them?" One should not assume that there is a formal governmental structure, or that the political organization is stable, or that the boundary between the field and the arena is permanent; whether these conditions exist or their obverse is an empirical question.

If the foregoing is a fair statement of Swartz's framework, then he has not developed a system for political analysis, but a method of collecting and organizing information that might be useful for political analysis. His attempt to avoid the "static assumptions of 'classical' structuralism" has not led to a new framework for generalizations, but to greater particularism. This is unfortunate because anthropology already excels at particularism. We probably have in our libraries studies of over 2000 social groups of the kinds reported in this collection of essays. These reports vary in quality, the same as data in other sciences. However, the information we have is not likely to become more meaningful simply as a result of better descriptions or greater volume. What we need is some serious thinking about ways of interpreting and analyzing the information already available. I do not find that the conference made significant progress in this direction. The essays, which were written before the conference, show little evidence of having been revised before publication, although Swartz says "the final papers as published represent the authors' distillations of what was said [at the conference]." I noted only four instances of cross-reference among the essays and no instance where the material reported in one article was integrated into another article for purpose of contrast or comparison. Another attempt to report the results of the conference, other than Swartz's introduction, are the introductions to the four parts of the book which were written by one or more of the authors who contributed articles to the respective sections. These introductions do little more

than review the articles and attempt to justify including them in a single section. I find these efforts strained and unconvincing, and I finished reading the book wondering how such a diverse set of papers could have been bound into a single volume.

Some of the essays in this volume are excellent case studies, and a few of them are theoretically stimulating. I think most of them could have been published independently in the anthropological journals. As a collection, however, they manifest the problems which beset current cultural anthropology.

H. CLYDE WILSON

*Department of Anthropology,
University of Missouri,
Columbia*

Archeology of Metallurgy

The Carbon-14 Dating of Iron. NIKOLAAS J. VAN DER MERWE. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969. xii + 140 pp., illus. \$7.50.

Since the initial burgeoning of ^{14}C dating through the mid-1950's, publications in this field have been limited to refinements of technique and to new applications. Should the known-age pundits agree upon the variations of the radiocarbon calendar, ^{14}C folk will be somewhat more confident of the data they publish. Until that distant day, however, publications are limited to surficial refinements. Van der Merwe's *Carbon-14 Dating of Iron* is one of the more interesting exercises to have achieved publication. The author has made a commendable attack upon application of ^{14}C dating to Iron Age chronologies.

The first three chapters deal with the techniques and development of iron metallurgy, and these alone are worth the price of the book. The discussion of bloomery and blast furnace reduction, of wrought and cast iron, and of what makes steel steel is quite rewarding. To the nonferrous archeologist, this neat summary of the intricacies of ironworking and its history are a godsend; I almost believe I understand what these people are talking about.

The remainder of the book is devoted to the techniques of sample pretreatment, combustion, purification, and dating. Herein are contained the nitty-gritty of sample size and suitability, and a list of dates obtained on iron samples of various sorts. This last is

likely of more value to the archeologist than other material in the latter portion of the book.

One could have wished for a different mode of organization. Each chapter begins with a repetition of material already covered in previous chapters; this reader came to expect each section to start, "Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . ." Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted, in large part, to a discussion of ^{14}C dating in general (not all of it strictly true) and of Yale laboratory practice in particular. This book is not the place for such a discussion: it contributes little to the value of the work; ^{14}C -oriented readers already know it, and archeologists are not about to run downstairs to set up a laboratory in the basement and therefore do not need it.

Similarly, both appendices could have been excised: the first is of passing interest only to laboratory personnel, and the second is once again repetition. One suspects that careless editors lifted a respectable Ph.D. dissertation *in toto* without considering the reading audience.

Aside from this nit-picking of what are essentially editorial faults, van der Merwe is to be thanked for his summary of iron metallurgy, the pre-laboratory assessment of samples, for the list of dates obtainable elsewhere only in piecemeal, and for his patience in attempting to date iron at all.

ROBERT STUCKENRATH, JR.

*Radiocarbon Laboratory,
Smithsonian Institution,
Rockville, Maryland*

A Mathematical Account

Population Genetics. W. J. EWENS. Methuen, London, 1969 (U.S. distributor, Barnes and Noble, New York). xii + 148 pp. \$5. Methuen's Monographs on Applied Probability and Statistics.

Ewens's book is a compact presentation of many mathematical subjects related to population genetics. The book is written for highly mathematically competent population geneticists and mathematicians, as is made evident in the very first sentence of his preface: "Population genetics is the mathematical investigation of changes brought about . . ." It is true that many population geneticists use mathematics and statistics as tools to investigate the behavior of genetic populations and analyze the data collected. It is also true

that early population geneticists such as Sewall Wright and others used mathematics to work out systems of matings and the consequences of various pressures on genetic populations. However, population genetics is not a branch of mathematics but an area of genetic biology. Some population geneticists collect their data from wild populations, and some others work with real (not abstract) organisms under carefully designed experimental conditions.

The contents are well chosen, and not too difficult to follow if one is willing to skip mathematical proofs. There are a number of easily understandable points and some that are difficult. Section 1.6, on "the effect of selection," contains a few very important reminders for experimental population geneticists. Section 4.6, on "general offspring distributions," seems to be taken directly from Karlin's *A First Course in Stochastic Processes*, which is elegantly written. Theorem 4.1 is not easy to follow for an amateur population geneticist such as this reviewer. In spite of these criticisms, the book is worthwhile as reading for pre- and postdoctoral students in population genetics.

KEN-ICHI KOJIMA

*Department of Zoology,
University of Texas, Austin*

An Anniversary History

The Cambridge Philosophical Society. A History, 1819-1969. A. RUPERT HALL. Cambridge Philosophical Society, Cambridge, England, 1969. vi + 114 pp., illus. Paper, 10 s.

The author presents us here with a concise history of the Cambridge Philosophical Society at the occasion of its 150th birthday. The Society was founded at the initiative of the geologists Adam Sedgwick and John Stevens Henslow at a time when science in Cambridge was at a low ebb, and its history reflects the initially slow growth of this science to its brilliance in the present century. The author illustrates this growth by thumbnail sketches of the principal figures, and, since there already exists a history of the Society up to 1890 (J. W. Clark, *Proc. Cambr. Phil. Soc.* 7), he devotes much of his attention to the later years. He does not forget, however, some of the more interesting Victorians such as Airy, George Green, Cayley, J. C. Adams, and Whewell. We can only agree with Hall that a good