Introducing Changes

Kuyo Chico. Applied Anthropology in an Indian Community. OSCAR NÚÑEZ DEL PRADO with the collaboration of William Foote Whyte. Translated by Lucy Whyte Russo and Richard Russo. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973. xvi, 162 pp., illus. $9.50.

I've told the story so often that I have an uneasy feeling every once in a while that I must have made it up. It's supposed to symbolize the value of applied anthropology, and it goes something like this.

Once upon a time there was an Agency for International Development man in an Asian country. Appalled by the insanitary fecal disposal practices of the local population and the high incidence of hookworm and bilharzia, this official proposed a $30,000 appropriation for the construction of outdoor privies modeled, with some improvements, on the army version of the slit trench. The locals were appropriately indoctrinated, through films and lectures, about the hazards of defecating and urinating in unauthorized places. A few pilot privies were built, and the members of the hygiene staff sat back and waited for results. There were none. No one used the new pits, and no member of the mission could find out why. Finally, in desperation, the mission head thought it was time to seek professional help. He learned that not too far off there lived an American anthropologist who had been conducting research on a variety of topics having to do with village culture. So the AID leader sent to discover if the anthropologist could tell him why the people would not use his slit trenches. When the emissary from AID told the anthropologist about the privy project and how the new facilities had failed to attract the locals, the anthropologist sucked thoughtfully on his pipe for a moment and then said: "You placed your supports over deep holes in the ground?" The emissary said, "Yes." "Then," said the anthropologist, "you must know that the people will not use your inventions, for they believe that evil spirits live underground. Your deep holes can only facilitate their emergence. And if one crouches over such a hole . . . well!"

The emissary thanked the anthropologist, got back in his jeep, returned to the head of his mission, and reported what he had learned. The mission head ordered a stop to the construction of privies, thus saving $27,500, which sum was applied to some other AID project whose nature I never learned.

The moral is so obvious that it would be almost rude to spell it out. But there is more to applied anthropology, its supporters and practitioners aver, than knowing what the local sensitivities are and how to avoid them. Thus, whether one functions as "critic" of programs that were initiated and carried on without "the research data and advice of the anthropologist"; or as "consultant to" a program whose aims he accepts; or as "principal change agent . . . chief strategist [and] tactician of change" (pp. xiv–xv), the applied anthropologist must also know the language, the aspirations and ambitions, and, especially, the patterns of authority and power—that is, the political and social structure of the community, region, or country for which the program is designed (*1*).

Kuyo Chico is an account of the conception, life, and death of one of those rare change enterprises in which the anthropologist *is* the principal change agent. Núñez del Prado's intervention was sanctioned and financed (except for a limited and brief Peace Corps input) by an agency of the government of Peru, specifically the Indian Institute of the Ministry of Labor and Indian Affairs, and was a part of that agency's National Plan for the Integration of the Indian Population. The National Plan and the authors of the present work favor a kind of benign "integration." Thus Whyte tells us:

> National integration will be the result of taking the best aspects of both cultures and forming a homogeneous species of a third order. The aim of integration is to achieve a balanced fusion of the positive features of both cultures while eliminating the negative features [pp. 8–9].

I find it analytically more illuminating to consider serfs, peones, slaves, and peasants as already well integrated in the system or the social order. "Balanced fusion" and "positive and negative features" carry much too heavy a conceptual burden. A just reintegration need not yield a single cultural pattern that retains the "best" features of each of its genitors—even in the remote eventuality that we could agree on what these are. A just reintegration would be just *because* it offered what it has to offer—good, bad, or indifferent—to all individuals in the society without distinction of class or estate. Núñez del Prado's program for change was applied in a community of 350 Indians who were disprivileged and put-upon precisely because they were not excluded or isolated from the national culture, precisely because they *were* integrated.

When he came to Kuyo Chico in 1959, Núñez del Prado found an impoverished, land-poor Indian community with its people depressed and intimidated by the several grades of mestizos: the Cholos (Indians who have moved to the town and adopted townie ways of dress and the Spanish language); the Mozos (transitional between the Cholo and the Mestizo proper); and the "Mestizo proper" (landowners, businessmen, and public officials—those "at the top of the social scale").

In addition to Núñez del Prado, who was the social anthropologist and director, the staff included a physical anthropologist, an agricultural engineer, an educator, a doctor, a home economics teacher, an administrator, and a chauffeur. "The size of the staff was shortly reduced and continued to vary greatly from that point on" (p. 7). The total grant for the nine years during which the program functioned was $188,413, of which staff salaries amounted to $123,720; wages, $7,172; and "other expenses," $57,521. The estimated value of physical improvements introduced by the program is given as $514,463 (pp. 116–117). The improvements included, among others, the construction of irrigation channels, kilns for the manufacture of tiles, school building and repairs, the construction of two civic centers, remodeling of 25 dwellings, the construction of a hospital, installation of electric lights, various sanitation projects, and the planting of 20,000 eucalyptus trees.

Family income during this period [from the start to the end of the program] has quintupled [(2)] . . . amount of cultivable land has risen from 9.44% in 1959 to almost 50% . . . an improved system of crop rotation yielded two harvests per year where before there had been only one . . ." [pp. 111–112].

It is clear from Núñez del Prado's excellent description of the village, its people, its political structure, and its resources that (i) in terms of material life-style and physical amenities, Kuyo Chico had no place to go but up, and (ii) it could not have gotten there without the funds and personnel supplied by the government. The key question that remains is: Would the results have been any different if funding and official sanction were held constant but a couple of Peruvian social workers or a pair of civil libertarian lawyers, or two more carpenters, or an economist and an agronomist, had been substituted for the social and physical anthropologists? The authors answer affirmatively, for they believe that

An understanding of the culture was the only thing which could provide us with the criteria necessary to determine which would be the most appropriate and effective courses of action to follow in order to bring about changes in the opinions, attitudes, and action of the group. If the ideas and programs which we introduced were related to already existing meanings in the culture, rather than based solely on our point of view, the receptivity of the group would be greatest, since these "innovations" would be in accord with the group's own modes of thought [pp. 9–10].

Back to the slit trenches. In addition to its very obvious material successes the program has had some not so easily quantifiable but nevertheless significant nonmaterial accomplishments. Thus the Kuyos have been alerted to their rights under national laws. In the presence of the very officialdom that had always connived at their mistreatment, Núñez del Prado told the Indians that

No one had the right to force them to work without pay, or to take things from their homes, or to mistreat them, or to imprison and require personal work of them. . . . The authorities present were obliged to see to it that their rights were not violated, *since these abuses were forbidden by law.* Then I enumerated all of the illegal actions and abuses which had been committed in the area, indicating that the authorities were obligated to enforce the law and obey it themselves if they didn't want to end up in jail. . . . I proceeded to take further advantage of the situation by asking the authorities to affirm my words or speak out if what I had said was untrue. Of course they had no alternative but to affirm publicly what I had said [p. 49, emphasis added; see also pp. 53 and 144].

The consequences of this educational exercise in the use of knowledge for power—as these are related by Núñez del Prado—are far-reaching. The Kuyos refuse to perform unpaid labor; they no longer humble themselves in the presence of town officials or the *hacendados;* and, in one heartwarming anecdote, the author describes an encounter between an 18-year-old Indian and a trustee of the church who orders the young man to appear for work in his (the trustee's) garden.

[The trustee] got off his horse and approached Justino, saying: "I should knock all your teeth out so that you'll learn to answer your patrón without insolence." The youth . . . answered, "Sir, don't hit me, because if you do, I will hit you back. I'm from Kuyo Chico."

The trustee retreated in confusion (p. 114).

To know something about the locale and the habits of evil spirits in a remote tribal corner of a patently "underdeveloped" nation may require some anthropological probing. But it does not take anthropological fieldwork to know that "in the [Peruvian] constitution and in various bodies of legislation there are provisions which accord with the highest humanitarian ideals" (p. 144) and that these involve sanctions against those who violate the ideals. On the contrary, as the authors tell us, the anthropologist may be quite capable of missing the laws that affect his constituency in a peasant community *if* he treats it as though he were "examining customs and beliefs of a primitive tribe. . . . Knowing that the laws of the country did not originate from within the community, the anthropologist sometimes tends to consider them as outside of his area of study" (p. 144). In short, it was not Núñez del Prado the anthropologist who precipitated the breakthrough that enabled the Kuyos to defy their exploiters. It was Núñez del Prado the university professor, humanitarian and urban sophisticate with some knowledge of his country's statutes, who did the job. Nor was it Núñez del Prado the anthropologist who repaired the houses, planted the trees, dug the irrigation ditches, or built the hospital. It took no specialized knowledge to see the need and the desire for these improvements. Nor, it seems clear, did it require the insights of anthropology to "overcome native resistance" to change, for, as Whyte tells us, the peasants "are engaged in an active struggle to improve their conditions of life" (p. xix).

What did the anthropologist and his team do that a balanced Peruvian community-level team, armed with all the resources and the prestige of Núñez del Prado's group but without its anthropological members, could not have done?

The authors reiterate that "a thorough knowledge of the culture of the area" is a "prerequisite" for a program of this kind (p. 142). But is it? The evidence is not convincing. Empathy, sensitivity without sentimentality, patience, technical knowledge, money, the prestige that comes from the imprimatur of higher authority, and, above all, the combination of knowledge, position, and political connections that enables one to assert and wield power—these plus a determination to deal with injustice, right ancient wrongs, and elevate the living standards of the depressed are the necessary if not the sufficient conditions for the success of such a program (*3*). And none of these features, characteristics, attitudes, or knowledge is the exclusive property of the trained anthropologist, applied or other.

If the medical program was introduced by stages so that the doctor and the local *curandero* did not wind up in a head-on confrontation, does that represent a triumph for anthropology or for common sense in the 1960's? And if layettes were introduced and produced communally because it was believed that if an expectant mother prepared clothes for her unborn child it "would either die or cause the death of the mother" (p. 82), is that proof of the need for "a thorough knowledge of the culture"?

Construction, repairs, marketing, manufacturing of tiles, and a variety of other occupations and activities were introduced, assisted, and developed in a communal framework. And many of these enterprises prospered. But there were some failures. Thus, because they presented a hazard to young children, 142 fireplaces were raised off the floor on the advice of the anthropologist. But "some time later [it was] discovered that only 3 of the 142 were in

use" (p. 90). The women had gone back to the old fireplaces on the floor. And they had their good reasons, as Núñez del Prado tells us when he confesses that he didn't have a proper understanding of kitchen culture.

> I had completely failed to understand. . . . The responsibility was exclusively mine, for the job of the anthropologist was to decide how to introduce changes based on an understanding of the Indian culture [p. 91].

They launched two other programs that failed because the team had not taken cultural or other "technical" considerations into account (pp. 91–92).

So, even if you are an anthropologist you win some and you lose some. How about grass-roots guidance as a device for boosting the average? Well, the authors have some illuminating observatons to make about that kind of insurance.

> People may express a series of needs, some of which are impossible to satisfy. . . . The ideas of the change agent should not be imposed, but neither should the statements of the community people be blindly accepted [p. 148].

So they made what they felt was a commonsensical decision.

> We felt that the first project should not necessarily be what the people wanted most but something which offered good possibilities of success [p. 148].

On the other hand the program came "to adopt the following as a basic operating principle: 'Wait for the people to suggest or demand an action.'" But don't neglect your own ideas, and "use every opportunity . . . to keep [them] 'in the air' until finally the Indians would make them their own" (p. 98). Devious? Coercive? I don't think so. The grass-roots concept of change seems to assume that if change is suggested by radio, television, films, the newspapers, magazines, ESP, a friend from the next valley, or a kinsman from the big city it is somehow rootier than when the same suggestion is made—as a suggestion—by the change agent himself.

In any case—and however they got introduced—the program was responsible, during the years of its operation, for many changes, not only in Kuyo Chico itself, but in other villages.

> Many of the actions carried out in Kuyo Chico were seen by the Indians in surrounding communities as nothing short of sensational, particularly those actions concerning relations with the Mestizo world. Our spectacular successes soon produced similar projects [(*4*)] in other communities so that many of the changes we introduced became widespread in the area [p. 102].

The authors estimate that "18,703 people have felt the influence of the program" that started with 350 Kuyos (pp. 103–104). Then,

> On March 31, 1969, two officials of the Ministry of Labor and Communities delivered to the director of the program a note stating that it had been decided to close the Kuyo Chico project and requiring that all property of the project be turned over to the bearers of the note. This was done [p. 153].

The government seemed to feel that Kuyo Chico, like Vicos (*5*) before it, had become a potential threat to the entrenched landholding interests.

> A key official of [the Peruvian] government at one time said privately that he would never approve the expropriation [that is, taking hacienda land away from the *hacendados* and turning it over to its Indian inhabitants] of Vicos because "it would set a terrible precedent" . . . and the whole social and economic structure of rural Peru would be threatened. The same general point can be made regarding the Kuyo Chico project [p. xxii].

It is clear that the authors of this study had an appreciation of the restraints that were likely to be imposed on an enterprise of this kind when and if it appeared that its effects might get out of hand. Thus Whyte observes that "neither Vicos nor Kuyo Chico can realistically be considered as preliminary stages of a broad program of structural transformation of rural Peru" (p. xxiii). Agrarian reform can be planned and implemented with great fanfare and small consequences. And the program may have temporary or even lasting value in raising the expectations and hence the political consciousness of the peasantry. But if it leaves the "structure" substantially unchanged, disappointment and discontent are likely to follow. In this connection, a pair of attitude surveys conducted jointly by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and Cornell University (1964 and 1969) contain some important insights with reference to the overall impact of the program. In brief, the surveys indicate that, despite the obvious gains and benefits delivered by the program, "Kuyo Chico, after the termination . . . had markedly lowered its level of confidence in the national government" (p. 140). In short, the project "stirred things up," promoted discontent by revealing hitherto unsuspected possibilities, converting vague hopes into concrete demands.

> As long as a group remains firmly subjugated and there is no perceived possibility of improving their condition, there will be a tendency for them to adapt themselves to what appears to be inevitable, to the point that they may even be able to find some positive aspects in their situation [p. 137].

Since 1969, however, there have been some significant new developments in Peru. The military government has taken over the large coastal sugar plantations and appears to be trying to convert them into producers' cooperatives. Numbers of the semifeudal haciendas in the highlands are being turned into peasant communities with some combination of private family ownership and cooperative organization. In this process, Whyte avers, "large landowning families have been losing much of their political power and economic leverage" (pp. xxiii-xxiv). But it is too soon to know what will be the ultimate effects of these agrarian reforms on the national power structure. The peasants, as Whyte reminds us, may "find that a new set of bosses has been substituted for the old ones. . . . A change in the power structure is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for creating the new participatory society" (p. xxi) (*6*).

In any case, the central theme of the study, and the authors' rationale for their participation in the Kuyo Chico program and others like it, is that they do not trust structural change that is designed and administered from above —*unless* those who implement such change "can understand culture and social processes in communities like Kuyo Chico" (p. xxiv). I am concerned about the implications of such a judgment. There is a tinge of professional presumptuousness about it. But there is something else. For while Núñez del Prado and Whyte seem only to be cautioning against an *unconcern* for local *costumbres,* they are, in fact, specifying a chronology for change. Although they are not asking that all hamlets, villages, and Indian settlements throughout Peru be subjected to study by cultural anthropologists before any "structural changes" are initiated, they are implying that the implementers don't already know as much as they should

about "culture and social processes" in rural communities. Perhaps not. But, then, even the anthropologists, as Núñez del Prado reveals with admirable frankness, can make mistakes. *And the consequences need not be catastrophic.* Whether one *knows* these things in great detail is less important, it seems to me, than: (i) the goals and aims of the program, (ii) the political and financial resources of the planners, and (iii), related to ii, the means to subvert the entrenched power that is responsible for the inequities and the injustices of the status quo. And in these respects, applied anthropology functions optimally when it helps the people to know their legal rights and to struggle to extend these rights when they prove in fact to be too restrictive; and, in the words of Kwame Nkrumah, when the people have joined together to "seize . . . the political kingdom."

The applied anthropologist's admonitions to go fast or slow, to beware of this or that sensitivity, taboo, or bias in the local culture may help to reduce frictions in the implementation of the program. But in the longer run it will be government policy and power that determine the nature and scope of agrarian reform in Peru. And there the anthropologist who favors drastic change may make his greatest contribution by leaning more heavily on his humanitarian concern for the lives, welfare, and aspirations of the *indigenes* and on his political savvy than on his professional training and his research experience. He may find that it will bring great benefits to the Indians if he urges them to dare the evil spirits and go ahead with the privies. And if he does not, it is my guess that they will take to the shovels themselves. "There go my people, I must hurry up and follow them for I am their leader."

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Notes

1. I am referring here especially to applied anthropology in Third World or other "developing" areas. Anthropology is also "applied" to more homely enterprises such as the prevention of juvenile delinquency, the improvement of relations between nurse and patient in a hospital or between warders and inmates in a variety of detention settings (prisons, schools, and homes for the handicapped or the aged), and so on.
2. Average annual family income "did not exceed $67" in 1959 (p. 26).
3. "The successful use of power and the symbols of power provided a necessary base upon which all of our projects depended" (p. 146).
4. The question of financing and technical assistance for these projects is not discussed.
5. Locale of an applied anthropology project conducted on a rented hacienda in Peru. The project was under the principal supervision of the late Allan Holmberg of Cornell University's Department of Anthropology.
6. This peculiarly Peruvian phenomenon—a military government acting as a "third force between capitalism and Marxism"—is a phenomenon of considerable interest to students of agrarian reform in Latin America. How it will work out eventually—or even why the military seems both willing and able to carry on its program of expropriations (with compensation)—is a complex subject and one that, happily for me, lies outside the scope of this review.

Books Received

Advances in the Biosciences 10. Schering Workshop on Contraception: The Masculine Gender. Berlin, Nov. 1972. Gerhard Raspé and S. Bernhard, Eds. Pergamon, New York, 1973. viii, 332 pp., illus. $25.

Algebra, with Applications to Physics and Systems Theory. Robert Herman. Published by the author, 18 Gibbs St., Brookline, Mass., 1973. 6 vols., paper, variously paged. Vol. 1, General Algebraic Ideas. $7.50. Vol. 2, Linear and Tensor Algebra. $6.50. Vol. 3, Algebraic Topics of Importance in Systems Theory. $10. Vol. 4, Energy-Momentum Tensors and Deformation of Metrics. $8. Vol. 5, Topics in General Relativity. $9. Vol. 6, Topics in the Mathematics of Quantum Mechanics. $13.

Annotated Bibliography on Effects of Salinity and Salinity Changes on Life in Coastal Waters. S. H. Hopkins. U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station, Vicksburg, Miss., 1973. x, 418 pp.

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Archaeological Investigations in the Nepeña Valley, Peru. Donald A. Proulx. Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1973. xii, 294 pp., illus. Research Reports, No. 13.

An Atlas of Mammalian Chromosomes. Vol. 7. T. C. Hsu and Kurt Benirschke. Springer-Verlag, New York, 1973. 50 folios. $16.80.

Atlas of Monthly Mean Sea Surface and Subsurface Temperatures in the Gulf of California, Mexico. Margaret K. Robinson. San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, Calif., 1973. 98 pp., illus. Paper, $3. San Diego Society of Natural History Memoirs, No. 5.

The Atmospheric Environment. William R. Frisken. Resources for the Future, Washington, D.C., 1973 (distributor, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore). viii, 68 pp., illus. Paper, $3.50.

Bacteremia. Laboratory and Clinical Aspects. Alex C. Sonnenwirth, Ed. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1973. xiv, 106 pp., illus. $7.95. American Lecture Series in Clinical Microbiology.

Barrier Islands. Maurice L. Schwartz, Ed. Dowden, Hutchinson, and Ross, Stroudsburg, Pa., 1973. xiv, 452 pp., illus. $22.

Basic Readings in Neuropsychology. Robert L. Isaacson, Ed. Krieger, Huntington, N.Y., 1973. xiv, 448 pp., illus. Cloth, $12.50; paper, $6.50. Reprint of the 1964 edition.

Biology. Its People and Its Papers. Howard B. Baumel and J. Joel Berger. National Science Teachers Association, Washington, D.C., 1973. viii, 104 pp. Cloth, $4.85; paper, $3.85.

Calculational Methods for Interacting Arrays of Fissile Material. A. F. Thomas and F. Abbey. Pergamon, New York, 1973. xii, 128 pp., illus. $13.50. International Series of Monographs in Nuclear Energy, vol. 108.

The Chaining of Prometheus. Evolution of a Power Structure for Canadian Science. F. Ronald Hayes. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1973. xx, 218 pp., illus. $15.

Child Studies through Fantasy. Cognitive-Affective Patterns. Rosalind Gould. Quadrangle, New York, 1972. xxvi, 292 pp. Cloth, $8.95; paper, $2.95.

The Child's Discovery of Himself. Clark Moustakas, Ed. Aronson, New York, 1973. xvi, 254 pp. $10. Originally published as *Existential Child Therapy*, 1966.

Classical Mechanics. T. W. B. Kibble. Halsted (Wiley), New York, ed. 2, 1973. xii, 254 pp., illus. $13.50. European Physics Series.

Colloque sur l'Ovogenese et la Folliculogenese. Nouzilly, Dec. 1972. Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, Versailles, France, 1973. 266 pp., illus. + plates. Paper, 160.50 F.

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The Distribution of Air Quality in the New York Region. Jeffrey M. Zupan. Resources for the Future, Washington, D.C., 1973 (distributor, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore). xvi, 88 pp., illus. Paper, $3.50.

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(Continued on page 719)