Paideuma 47:147–160 (2001)

THE POLITICAL USES OF ETHNOGRAPHY
A Workshop Report*

Carola Lentz

Texts produced by professional anthropologists, folklorists and historians often have played and still do play an important role in authorising ethnic, regionalist and nationalist movements' ideas about the history and culture of the community which they intend to build or defend. The cultural norms and practices of any group are inevitably multifarious, polyphonous, ambiguous and contested. However, the strengthening of a sense of community and political mobilisation depends, to a certain degree, on a reduction of these complexities. In order to offer an attractive and coherent message to their followers as well as to an outside audience, the leaders of ethnic and nationalist movements often present a unified, coherent concept of the culture of the community which they wish to promote. To construct such unambiguous images, the movements' activists sometimes draw on classical ethnographic accounts which are written in the 'ethnographic present' and in an authoritative mode. This mainly holds true for contemporary political movements in the non-western world, but parallels can also be found in the way in which European nationalist movements drew on the writings of historians and linguists.

However, the political appropriation of anthropological texts is not merely a process of copying; the original texts are usually re-arranged and re-interpreted in ways that fit the new needs and contexts. Such re-interpretations may promote hierarchical, male-centred and traditionalist concepts of the culture in question or may also argue for debate, innovation and a more active participation of women and juniors in society. In some cases, contemporary members of the communities attack the classical ethnographies which portray them because defining the group 'against' the ethnographic account and its presumed stereotypes can become a focus for unity and identity. In order to better understand these different forms of re-interpretation and the political 'uses' of ethnography, we need to undertake more ethnographic, historically specific case studies, following the example set by the advances made in the ethnography of anthropological fieldwork over the past few years.[1]

The issues discussed above inspired a workshop which I organised together with

* I am indebted to the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences for providing the facilities and time to finish this paper.

1 See for instance the case studies and general arguments in Fischer (1985), Lentz (1989) and Adenaike and Vansina (1996) as well as the critical reflections on what constitutes today 'the field' in Gupta and Ferguson (1997).

Dimitra Gefou-Madianou at the 1998 conference of the European Association of Social Anthropology in Frankfurt am Main. It became apparent that this resonated with the concerns of quite a number of colleagues. We were eventually able to bring together an interesting range of case studies on the various 'uses of ethnography', and the presentations by the following colleagues will be discussed: Volker Gottowik, Lars Kjaerholm, Anastasia Karakasidou, Thomas Zitelmann, Gerasimos Makris and Pietro Scarduelli.[2] Gottowik looked at the way in which Clifford Geertz's ethnographic texts on Bali have been read and understood (or, in some cases, ignored) by Balinese intellectuals and students (Gottowik 1998). He found that although many details of Geertz' assumptions on Balinese society and culture were challenged, the very fact of 'being put on the map' so prominently was welcomed and contributed to the further essentialization of local concepts of Balinese culture. 'Being put on the map', Kjaerholm argued, was also the most important result of Western ethnography for various groups in the Philippine cordilleras (Kjaerholm 1998). Not so much the content of the ethnographies but the scholarly attention itself, underpinned by academic publications, helped to strengthen the groups' political position in a postcolonial state which has recently adopted a policy of granting partial regional autonomy. The theme of Anastasia Karakasidou's contribution was how ethnographic writing has assisted in the creation of a Greek national identity (Karakasidou 1998). On the one hand, ethnographies provided images of cultural continuity through the static quality of 'ethnographic time'; on the other hand, they transcended the local culture in question by projecting these images on to an imagined national culture. Recently, regional groups such as the Macedonians have challenged the hegemony of Greek national culture, and in their politico-cultural quest for recognition they, too, look for support from the ethnographer's magical ability to essentialize culture.

Thomas Zitelmann's paper on the political imagination of Makonnen Desta, the Harvard-trained Ethiopian minister of education, showed how, by the 1940s, academic anthropological traditions had become part of the 'self-description' of the educated elite in the Horn of Africa (see Zitelmann 1998 and Zitelmann's article in this volume). Desta's concept of a united and unique Ethiopian "we-race" combined metropolitan and local discourses and was meant to strengthen nationalist opposition against the Italian occupation. It was developed to counter alternative ethnographic 'styles', such as that of British social anthropologists like Evans-Pritchard who concentrated on local particularity. The complex relations between political interests and different modes of anthropological imagination were also the main theme of Gerasimos Makris' analysis of the history of competing images of the Sudan (Makris 1998). Anthropologists and colonial officers, but also local political elites tended to emphasize either the 'Arab'

---

2 I wish to thank the contributors and all others who participated in the discussion for making the workshop an arena of lively debate. Special thanks are due to Dimitra Gefou-Madianou for the fruitful co-operation in the organization of the workshop as well as to Adam Kuper for his insightful comments on the participants' papers.

Islamic influences in the north of the country or the 'primitivism' of the African 'pagan tribes' in the south. These competing, stereotypical images were created by medieval Arab geographers and still continue to influence the contemporary political debate in the context of the civil war. Finally, Pietro Scarduelli presented a case study on the 'home-made' anthropologists and historians of the Lega Norte in Italy who have constructed the myth of a 'Padanian' identity in order to justify northern Italy's right to secession and sovereignty (Scarduelli 1998).

It is not possible to review all these papers here in detail, but I wish to outline some of the common themes and arguments of our workshop and point to the open questions which merit further research. In general, the workshop discussions made very clear that my initial idea of the 'political uses of ethnography' was rather simplistic, suggesting too much of a unilinear process, with the ethnographic texts on one side and readers and 'users', such as ethnic or nationalist movements, who would take these texts as building blocks for their ideology, on the other. I had examples in mind such as the various late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century formulations of the Hamitic hypothesis (i.e. diffusionist ideas about the superiority of 'white' civilising forces from northern Africa, immigrating to 'black' sub-Saharan Africa) which ultimately came to play a role in the legitimisation of, as well as opposition to, Tutsi hegemony in Rwanda. The workshop papers showed that the processes of integration of anthropological texts into politics (and *vice versa*) were much more complicated and multifaceted. There exist substantial variations in which factors are actually fed back into the political sphere: the ethnographic coverage itself, the 'essentialized' representation of local cultures or selected images and core arguments. In addition, the intermediate processes of bringing ethnography to bear on politics can be quite varied. Thus we need to study the media and the brokers who translate and transmit professional anthropological texts to the general public and local social movements. We must also ask under which circumstances certain ethnographic texts and images become powerful, and why other texts are ignored.

Some of these questions have been addressed by anthropologists working on Europe and North America. For instance, the articles assembled in Carolyn Brettell's succinct volume "When They Read What We Write" (1993) demonstrate the variability in how different groups respond to published anthropological monographs. However, these case studies deal almost exclusively with research in societies with well-established traditions of elite and popular literacy. They are especially concerned with the ethical problems of writing and publishing ethnographies in a world where the dividing line between informants and researchers is increasingly less clear and where 'the native talks back' (not least because the informants often speak the same mother tongue as the researchers). Many report on the harsh criticism which the anthropologists faced from their counterparts. Our workshop was less concerned with ethics and direct responses of people *vis-à-vis* the text of 'their' ethnographer, but more with an ethnography of the uses of anthropological texts in local and national politics. In addi-

tion, most of our contributors dealt with societies with dominantly oral cultures (which does not preclude the existence of a literate elite), and my impression from these papers and also from my own experience in northern Ghana is that the impact of written ethnography takes on quite specific forms in 'non'- or 'semi'-literate environments. In what follows, I would like to present several examples from northern Ghana of the use of ethnographic expertise in political conflict and community building. I shall then outline some of the more general themes that emerged from the discussions of our workshop, namely the different ways in which ethnography can become relevant to local politics, the limitations of the impact of ethnography and the variety of intermediate processes and brokers who bring anthropological ideas to bear on political situations.

The Politics of Anthropology in Northern Ghana

For the last ten years, I have been researching the history of chieftaincy and ethnic identities in north-western Ghana, with a special focus on the area of Nandom and Lambussie. One of the themes I became particularly interested in was the recurrence of conflicts over succession to chiefly office that have plagued this area since the 1930s. In my first article on the colonial introduction of chieftaincy and the succession conflicts, I tried to present alternative versions of this history without taking a decisive stand on 'what really happened' (Lentz 1993). I dutifully gave copies of the article to my informants and some local intellectuals. As was perhaps to be expected, I was accused of being partisan – incidentally by all of the parties in the latest succession conflict – and, more importantly, my publication was harshly criticised as 'washing dirty linen in public'. Criticism was also voiced by many people who had never actually read my text, but just heard others talk about it. However, it was precisely my apparent knowledge of the 'dirty linen' that caused many interlocutors to volunteer additional information in order to correct the 'wrong picture' which I allegedly held. One of the parties in the conflict had written out their own version of the story and gave me a copy of this after I gave them my text. But not all reactions were quite so benevolent; from one of the parties I received a letter stating that if I did not publicly withdraw some of my statements (by a rejoinder to my own article or something of the sort), they would sue me in court. Other interested readers, by contrast, criticized some details of my text but rejoiced over other statements because they felt that these substantiated their claims.[3]

This kind of experience is run of the mill for researchers who publish about ongoing conflicts. But writing and publishing about what has been so far largely an

[3] For a considerably enlarged and reworked history of the succession conflicts to the Nandom chieftaincy see Lentz (2000a).

oral history of the conflict seems to add dynamite. The few documents that exist and are accessible to the litigants, such as the colonial lists of chiefs, have become ammunition in the recent succession conflict. It is certainly no coincidence that the only copy of the proceedings of a commission of enquiry into a succession conflict during the 1950s, which contains *verbatim* records of the oral testimonies of all witnesses on the history of the Nandom chieftaincy, is kept under lock and key by the incumbent chief. He feels that this is one of his trump cards and told me in no uncertain terms that he would only disclose it in court. It was one of his contestants who allowed me to copy the summary of the proceedings, but he also expressed his fears that anything I wrote could be used in court. There is no doubt that written documents, including anthropologists' reconstructions, have become a new source of power, especially when cases move from the local and regional levels to the Ghanaian National House of Chiefs and the High Court in Accra over which local actors have little control.

An illustration of the power of texts as well as the lack of control which anthropologists have over what their writing is used for is the conflict which developed in the context of a student research project in the area of Nandom which I supervised in 1989–1990. One of the students researched the history of chieftaincy and the tenuous relations between the chief and the earth priest in a village which, in colonial times, came under the political control of the paramount chief of Nandom. As in most settlements of the region, the village history was strongly contested, and we hoped to get around the problem of partisanship by presenting not only the dominant, but also alternative versions of the history. Following the anthropological fashion of the day of letting 'the informants' voices be heard', I also encouraged the students to include in their reports, wherever suitable, direct quotes from their interviews. It was precisely one of these quotes, presented in the English summary of the research report which was distributed to some of the local dignitaries, that triggered a conflict between the interviewed village chief and the paramount chief of Nandom. The quotation, translated into English, read as follows:

> Before the white man came, every chief was his own paramount chief. [...] But when the white man came, he saw that with the separation it would be difficult to communicate easily. He made Nandom central. The Nandom Naa [paramount chief] was taken as the leader. Our forefathers did not agree to have him as the paramount chief, but it is on paper that he is the paramount chief.[4]

We were naïve not to foresee the trouble which this quote could cause, particularly the rather ambiguous last sentence. The Nandom chief, whose relationship with some of his subordinate chiefs was already rather strained, took this as an open attack on his position as the paramount chief. For him, it was clear that the Nandom paramountcy already existed in precolonial times (a claim which all of the subordinate chiefs would deny) and that his forefathers had ruled forcefully, without opposition from the sub-

[4] For a fuller version of the conflict over this quote and the contested village history see Habig (1996).

ordinate chiefs, not merely 'on paper'. He suspended the interviewed chief and appointed the village earth priest as acting chief. He insisted that the suspended chief, if he wanted to be reinstated, should write to me officially to withdraw the controversial statements (and demand that I publish this in a revised version of the report) as well as pay a heavy fine of several cows and many cowry shells. Of course, I tried to intervene on behalf of the suspended chief. But the Nandom chief stuck to his interpretation of the contested sentence as an attack on his paramount position and would not accept my diplomatic suggestion that all was perhaps a matter of an erroneous translation. At the same time the village chief insisted proudly that he had indeed told the truth, which his forefathers had passed on to him, and that he would suffer the consequences. During all of my subsequent visits, matters did not change, but two years ago, the chief finally wrote a letter to me (with a partial withdrawal of his statements), paid the fine (which had been considerably reduced in the meantime) and was reinstated in his office.

The above cases of my own article and the student's report are examples of the power laden implications of the anthropologists putting into writing and thereby fixing what were context-dependent oral statements on local history and customs. The cases are also examples of the anthropologist showing the written report directly to the informants involved. In many cases, however, the relation between anthropological text and its political uses is much less direct, as the following example shows.

The past decade has seen repeated outbreaks of warfare in northern Ghana, between the formerly 'stateless' Konkomba, Nchumuru and Nawuri on the one hand and the centralised polities of the Dagomba, Nanumba and Gonja on the other. The violent conflicts centre on questions of chieftaincy and, more specifically, on the question whether the relations between the 'acephalous' groups and their chiefly neighbours were traditional relations of subordination or equality. Both sides legitimise their claims with arguments from history, mainly the regional history of immigration, settlement and, allegedly, conquest in the seventeenth century and earlier. To support their respective versions, they invoke oral traditions as told by contemporary elders and, more importantly, oral traditions written down earlier by colonial officers and anthropologists. It is in this context that anthropological texts such as Rattray's "Tribes of Ashanti Hinterland" (1932) or Jack Goody's work on the Gonja (1967) are used as a source of pertinent arguments. A good example of contesting political uses of ethnography is to be found in the commission of enquiry on the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. The Gonja representatives used quotes from Goody's work to support their cause while the lawyer of the Nchumuru attempted to undermine Goody's authority by insisting that he, just like the colonial officers, had uncritically projected colonially created facts of *Realpolitik* into the past.[5] In another conflict between the Konkomba and the Dagom-

[5] See Commission of Inquiry (1992). For more information on the recent conflicts in northern Ghana and their historical background, see Bogner (1998, 2000).

ba, the Dagomba paramount chief responded to the Konkomba's quest for recognition as an autonomous paramount chiefdom with a counter-petition in which he quoted the British social anthropologist David Tait who had written on the political organisation of the Konkomba (Tait 1958). The Dagomba chief used Tait's analysis of the 'statelessness' of the Konkomba in order to back-up his view that even today they were 'anarchic' and not eligible to be accorded their own paramount chief.[6] These examples show once more how little control the anthropologist has over his published text: Tait certainly never imagined that his work were to be used 'against' the people he studied. The precise political use of anthropological expertise depends on the specific relations of power, and it is by no means univocal, as the commission of enquiry's debate on Goody's ethnographic authority has shown.

Local intellectuals in north-western Ghana reacted to and made 'use' of ethnography quite differently than in the examples above. Many of them see Goody's work (1956, 1962) on the Dagara (whom Goody called "LoDagaa") as an example of a Western perspective against which the group under study must now define itself. Few of these critics seem to have actually read the contested monographs. Nevertheless, a cursory reading of the introduction to "The Social Organisation of the LoWiili" (Goody 1956) or hearsay have convinced many Dagara scholars that Goody's ethnic terminology is as divisive as the colonial tribal categories. For instance, the priest and anthropologist Paul Bekye insists that "customary and dialect variations" have been "mistaken by the European colonial administrators and ethnologists for different ethnic groups", but that the "Dagaaba" themselves have always known "that they are one people" (Bekye 1991:95–96). Other local scholars have presented their own findings, particularly on the kinship system, as 'corrections' of what Goody got wrong, even though their own descriptions often actually support Goody's analysis.[7] Interestingly, when I spoke to ordinary farmers in various villages who had come to know Goody in the 1950s, when he was engaged in fieldwork in the area, I was offered quite a different picture. They highly praised Goody's knowledge and respect of local culture and insisted that he had even been initiated into the *bagr*, the most important secret society.[8] These contrasting responses from the local peasants make all the more clear that local scholars may portray European ethnography as the point of view of more or less ill-informed outsiders in order to define their own texts as the insider's voice.

My last example also relates to works written by the local intellectuals, produced in their quest for a convincing account of the origins of the Dagara/Dagaba: among the

---

6 See, for instance, the "Memorandum of the Ya-Na and Dagbon Youth Association to the Negotiation Team on the Northern Conflict", Tamale, 29 June 1994, and related documents. The parties involved in the conflict and state authorities have a limited number of typoscript copies in their possession. The author of this article also holds a copy.

7 See, for instance, the debate on dual descent in Dery (1987) and Poda (1994). For more details on the debates over ethnic names, see Lentz (2000b:117–121).

8 Jack Goody himself told me that he has not been initiated into the *bagr*.

villagers, history is retained in the form of migration stories of the different patriclan segments. These stories present a picture of a scattered agricultural migration of small groups, and are much less concerned with origins than with political rights and land rights at the final settlement site. Colonial historiography, on the other hand, concentrated on the development of states and was influenced by European images of *Völkerwanderung*, conquest and mass exodus of the weaker peoples. Until very recently, West African university and secondary school history textbooks continued to focus on states and kingdoms, treating stateless groups as a general mass of 'people without history'. It is drawing on both backgrounds, the villagers' oral traditions and the colonial historiographies, that the local intellectuals rewrite the regional history. They attempt to restore historical initiative to the Dagara and other local groups and to inscribe their history in a larger West African context. In order to do so, some borrow their images from evolutionist or cultural-diffusionist models of 'tribal' migration. At the same time, they reject any evolutionary association of acephalousness with a lower stage of development, but argue that this is the direct result of a 'rebellion' against the autocratic overlordship of one of the traditional states.[9] Here, it is not a single ethnographic text that is being appropriated for the construction of a new regional history, but a selected choice of images. In addition, not only are the scholars often not aware of (or don't acknowledge) the fact that these images come from the European imagination of African history and culture, but the images are reworked in ways which make the question of the original authorship complex and unproductive.

Texts, Images, Influences: The Complex Relations between Ethnography and Politics

The examples from northern Ghana should have made clear the great variety of responses to and uses of ethnography in political contexts. The workshop papers seem to support this impression. But before presenting some of the findings, a cautionary remark with respect to the question of 'influence' is appropriate. Ethnographies can be appropriated by a local public, and thus influence the local imagination. However, the anthropologists themselves can also be influenced by being strongly drawn into local styles of imagining communities. Such locally shaped ethnographic 'guild' texts may then in turn be appropriated by local amateur anthropologists or political activists. More generally speaking, then, it is important to emphasize that the ethnographic-anthropological texts often become part of a larger universe of scholarly and popular texts that are being used by nationalists or ethnic movements or other local political actors.

---

9 For more details of the local debates on history, see Lentz (1994).

In the workshop we discussed cases where people appreciated the potential political benefits of 'being put on the map' by the anthropologist, apparently without paying much attention to the specific contents of the ethnography. Such were the examples reported from Bali and the Philippines where the very fact that ethnographies had been written about certain groups seems to have been what mattered. The texts gave importance to an area, and the local group saw its prestige augmented. This in itself had an 'essentializing' and standardizing effect on the self-representation of the local group. More importantly, it could draw administrative attention to an area and, for instance, provide arguments for the creation of an own district for a group.

Often, however, the content of the ethnographic text did matter. The papers on Greece, the Sudan, Ethiopia and Italy especially showed how specific ideas, taken from ethnographic texts, were used in forming political ideas and strategies. In these cases, then, it becomes important to look at the question of what kinds of writing and strands of ethnographic imagining become relevant to certain political actors. Evidently, there is a whole range of possibilities. It could be that specific texts (monographs) describe 'a culture' and thereby define an entity which is to become politically sovereign – 'the Ifugao' (in the Philippines), 'the Macedonians' (in Greece) or 'the Padanians' (in northern Italy). Complete authoritative scholarly texts are important for the authentication of the group as a 'community of destiny'. Yet sometimes the ideas or concepts (for example the "we-group" concept and ideas of a "hybrid race" for Makonen Desta in Ethiopia) are taken from scholarly texts and discussions in isolation and can subsequently be seen to infiltrate and influence local political discourses. As the examples from the Sudan showed, it is not necessary to have a unified body of knowledge. Competing and contested images can also be appropriated by different persons or groups according to their specific needs.

The ethnographies mentioned in Carolyn Brettell's (1993) volume, to which the communities researched responded critically or even outright negatively, did not belong to the 'classical' genre – which essentialises culture and generalises, using an authoritative voice – but were more recent studies aimed at making the different, and often competing, voices of the researched heard. This fits in with the findings of our workshop, where the examples of the political usefulness of ethnographies mainly referred to texts of the 'classical' genre. One is tempted to ask whether this is a significant relationship, namely that only a specific genre of ethnographic texts is prone to become a building block of national or ethnic identities. Answering this question would require more case studies, and it would be particularly interesting to look at the communities described in ethnographic texts of different styles and by various authors from different periods.

This leads to another theme that emerged from the workshop discussion, namely that ethnographies are not put to political use in every period. It is in this context that the limitations of the impact of ethnography become apparent. There seem to be specific historical conjunctures, periods of heightened change and of challenge to the

nation state, in which anthropological scholarly ideas can make an impact (through the mediation of brokers, whom I shall look at below). The Balinese example made clear that under 'normal' circumstances local scholars may not even bother to read the texts of foreign anthropologists, or if they do read them, they do not find them interesting. It conveyed sufficient prestige that regions attracted the scholarly attention of Europeans and North Americans. Similarly, the Philippine example showed that external ethnographic coverage alone cannot create ethnic consciousness. There must already be some form of internal mobilisation and some feeling of 'tradition', cultural continuity and of being a 'community of destiny' if the ethnographic text is to become a building block of an ethnic ideology. In the Greek-Macedonia example and the case of the Italian Lega Norte, it was the crisis of the existing nation states that created a political context in which anthropology could be used as one of the sources of legitimisation for new imagined communities. Most instructive was the case of Ethiopia (see Zitelmann in this volume) where the different styles of ethnographic imagining had different opportunities to become effective in different historical periods. The opposition to Italian fascism, for instance, made British social anthropologists' insistence on multiple ethnic groups and cultural pluralism less attractive, while North American biological-cultural approaches helped found the idea of 'empire'. We certainly need more case studies along these lines to explore the precise relationship between the anthropological imagination and political interests as well as specific intermediaries. By way of a conclusion, I shall now turn to this topic.

Brokers and Intermediate Processes

The workshop papers repeatedly pointed to the importance of paying more attention to the brokers who read, translate and transmit anthropological ideas to local communities or social movements and bring them to bear on political situations. Looking more closely at these intermediaries, we can detect different types. First, there are ethnic and nationalist movements like the secessionist Lega Norte in Italy, who seem to employ their own ideologists and "home-made anthropologists", as Scarduelli calls them. These ideologists may or may not have received professional training in anthropology, but they are certainly professional in fusing scattered ethnographic materials, ideas and images into the cultural and historical charters of the new imagined communities. Secondly, there are politicians and other members of the ruling elite, like the Ethiopian Minister of Education, Makonnen Desta, or the former Kenyan President, Jomo Kenyatta,[10] or the current president of Ethiopia (with a PhD from the universi-

[10] On Kenyatta's relationship with British social anthropology, see the highly instructive article by Bruce Berman (1996).

ty of Frankfurt am Main) who have studied anthropology and use their knowledge of ethnographies and anthropological theory to develop their own synthesis of ideas which, at least in part, informs their political strategies. Thirdly, there are local intellectuals, such as teachers or civil servants, who are amateur readers of professional anthropological (and historical) texts and produce local histories and ethnographies which aim at strengthening collective identities. The Ugandan schoolteacher Wamimbi, whose work is discussed by David W. Cohen (1991), is an example of such an amateur historian-cum-politician. He drew on an anthropological 'guild' text, an ethnography written by the French anthropologist Jean La Fontaine, in order to rework it into one of the first 'native' historiographies, aimed at forging the unity of the ethnic group under study.

It is, however, not only persons or groups which we need to look at when studying intermediate processes between ethnography and politics, but also the different media involved. Often, the intervention of the mass media has simplified ethnographic findings in problematic ways, as the examples discussed by Brettell (1993:16–20) show. We still need to study more closely both the political economy and the technical aspects of the various processes of the publication, distribution and popularisation of ethnographic texts and their influence on political uses. The Lega Norte example shows that party-controlled newspapers can become an important instrument in vulgarising the new imagined community. In the Ethiopian case, the minister of education constructed community centres in order to divulge his ideas of assimilation politics. The Greek example showed a nationalist historian-anthropologist being given a prestigious prize, thus advertising his ideas. Today, one would also have to include the use of the Internet in popularising ethnographic information.

Embedded in the question of brokers and intermediate processes are questions about how authority is claimed. Balinese students, for instance, criticised Clifford Geertz's ethnography by pointing to their own perspective as better informed 'insiders'. Such mutual interrogations and debates over who speaks for whom and who is 'insider' or 'outsider' have become more and more commonplace over the past years, when all societies traditionally studied by Western anthropologists have produced their own literate elites and scholars. In our workshop, the papers on the Philippines and Greece drew attention to the revealing (albeit probably unconscious) division of labour between 'foreign' and 'native' scholars. In both cases, 'native' anthropologists focused on the core culture of the dominant groups, while the 'foreign' ethnographers studied more peripheral groups which were seeking political recognition. Perhaps the focus by the 'outsiders' on more 'peripheral' groups can also be related to questions of accessibility and the (un)willingness of local scholars to tolerate foreign academics in 'their' field.

In asking about the political uses of ethnography, we should therefore pay attention to the different sources of cultural and academic authority, to the processes of 'authenticating' and assigning or challenging the truth of ethnographic authority. Is it

fieldwork ('to have been there') or is it membership ('to come from') that constitutes ethnographic authority?[11] For what public are 'we' writing? Do external and internal voices belong to different registers of authority, or do they share common criteria of debate? These questions, which are interwoven with complex power relations, will become more and more important in the future, particularly if anthropology is to make progress with its 'decolonization'.

Bibliography

ADENAIKE, Carolyn Keyes and Jan VANSINA (eds.)
1996 *In Pursuit of History: Fieldwork in Africa.* Oxford: James Currey

BEKYE, Paul K.
1991 *Divine Revelation and Traditional Religions with Particular Reference to the Dagaaba of West Africa.* Rome: Leberit Press

BERMAN, Bruce
1996 "Ethnography as politics, politics as ethnography: Kenyatta, Malinowski and the making of Facing Mount Kenya", *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 30:313–344

BOGNER, Artur
1998 "Gewaltkonflikte und der Wandel sozialer Fremdheit in Nordghana", in: Herfried Münkler (ed.), *Die Herausforderung durch das Fremde*, 201–304. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag
2000 "The 1994 civil war in northern Ghana", in: Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (eds.), *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, 183–203. London: Macmillan

BRETTELL, Carolyn B.
1993 *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography.* London: Bergin and Harvey

COHEN, David William
1991 "La Fontaine and Wamimbi: the anthropology of 'time-present' as the substructure of historical oration", in: John Bender, and David E. Wellberry (eds.), *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, 205–225. Stanford: Stanford University Press

COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY
1992 *Report of the Committee into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros Dispute*, 1991. Accra (typescript)

[11] The recent debate between Marshall Sahlins (1995) and Gananath Obeyesekere (1992) is a most instructive example for contested ethnographic authority. On 'native anthropology', see also the literature reviewed in Brettell (1993:14–16) and the case study by Shokeid (1997) (which includes a discussion of the intervention of editors and publishers).

DERY, Gaspard
1987 *Inheritance and Marriage among the Dagaaba of Northern Ghana: Second Opinions to Existing Theories*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation

FISCHER, Hans (ed.)
1985 *Feldforschungen*. Berichte zur Einführung in Probleme und Methoden. Berlin: Reimer

GOODY, Jack
1956 *The Social Organisation of the LoWiili*. London: H.M. Stationery Office
1962 *Death, Property and the Ancestors: A Study of the Mortuary Customs of the LoDagaa of West Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press
1967 "The over-kingdom of Gonja", in: Daryll Forde, and Phyllis M. Kaberry (eds.), *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century*, 179–205. London: Oxford University Press

GOTTOWIK, Volker
1998 *"Strangers in the night": Encounters with Clifford Geertz and Jero Luh in Bali*. Paper presented at the 5th EASA conference, Frankfurt am Main

GUPTA, Akhil and James FERGUSON (eds.)
1997 *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press

HABIG, Barbara
1996 "Interessengeleitete Interpretation von Geschichte. Eine Fallstudie zur Geschichte des Häuptlingstums in Nordwest Ghana", *Sociologus* 46:51–77

KARAKASIDOU, Anastasia
1998 *National majorities, ethnic minorities: the crisis of representation in the ethnography of Greece*. Paper presented at the 5th EASA conference, Frankfurt am Main

KJAERHOLM, Lars
1998 *Anthropology and ethnicity in the Philippine Cordilleras*. Paper presented at the 5th EASA conference, Frankfurt am Main

LENTZ, Carola
1989 "Feldforschung als Interaktionsprozess. Erfahrungen in indianischen Dörfern in Ecuador", *Sociologus* 39:123–151
1993 "Histories and political conflict: a case study of chieftaincy in Nandom, northwestern Ghana", *Paideuma* 39:177–215
1994 "A Dagara rebellion against Dagomba rule? Contested stories of origin in north-western Ghana", *Journal of African History* 35:457–492
2000a "'Tradition' versus 'politics': succession conflicts in a chiefdom in northwestern Ghana", in: Joao de Pina-Cabral and Antónia Pedroso de Lima (eds.), *Choice and Leadership in Elite Succession*, 91–112. London: Berg
2000b "Colonial constructions and African initiatives: the history of ethnicity in northwestern Ghana", *Ethnos* 65:107–136

MAKRIS, Gerasimos
1998 *Reconstructing the Sudan: in whose image?* Paper presented at the 5th EASA conference, Frankfurt am Main

OBEYESEKERE, Gananath
1992 *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific.* Princeton: Princeton University Press

PODA, Eavriste
1994 *Les Dagara du Burkina – quel système de filiation?* Approche anthropologique d'un débat. Ouagadougou: CNRST (unpublished manuscript)

RATTRAY, Robert S.
1932 *The Tribes of Ashanti Hinterland.* 2 volumes. Oxford: Clarendon Press

SAHLINS, Marshall
1995 *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, for Example.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

SCARDUELLI, Pietro
1998 *The Padanian identity: ethnogenesis as a political strategy.* Paper presented at the 5th EASA conference, Frankfurt am Main

SHOKEID, Moshe
1997 "Negotiating multiple viewpoints: the cook, the native, the publisher and the ethnographic text", *Current Anthropology* 38:631–645

TAIT, David
1958 "The territorial pattern and lineage system of Konkomba", in: David Tait and John Middleton (eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems*, 167–202. London: Routledge

ZITELMANN, Thomas
1998 *Creating a "we-race": Makonen Desta and anthropological foundations of imperial policy in post-Italian Ethiopia.* Paper presented at the 5th EASA conference, Frankfurt am Main