

Derek Freeman versus Margaret Mead

(cf. Paul Shankman, *The Thrashing of Margaret Mead, Anatomy of an Anthropological Controversy*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 299 p.)

I would never have imagined playing any role in the polemic discussions between these two authors, although I have gathered more knowledge than many about the circumstances. I have known personally both authors and have had good relations with both over the years, and I can add some details to the file, now that almost all the beans have been spilled.

I did not find in professor Paul Shankman's study anything of importance I did not know, but a great mass of detail I was not aware of, and which brings quite an amount of explanations to questions dealing with both interested parties. I am grateful for this new and so much up to the point knowledge. The early and student life of Margaret Mead were quite unknown to me.

They were an indication of the revolution to come inside the U. S., which has not really be paralleled inside Europe, where our social structures were at the same time more solid and more tolerant. The sex revolution in France found its limits rather easily, it was the will of not doing anything which would appear gratuitly provocative, if not ridiculous (throwing away the bras was seen as perfectly silly). The problem about abortion was the resistance of the medical profession, at the time very catholic, and the traditional population policies of the French State, for military reasons.

But the Samoans can be nastier towards Margaret Mead than even Derek Freeman, the more so those with university degrees. I saw dr Fana'afi Le Tangaloa, Ph.D. in Education, London University, in Honolulu, attacking viciously Margaret Mead at the end of a public lecture. Mead did not care to answer. She could not, in front of an American audience, feed a quarrel with a true Samoan girl. Fana'afi explained that when she had a date with a British student of her generation, he would first run to the library, so as to read Mead's book, and then try to practice on her what he had read, and she had each time to fight him back. Physical strength was not on the side of the British lad, but it was a constant annoyance for her.

I tend to think Ruth Benedict's influence was not a plus, with her tendency to theoretical inspirations usually so far away from facts. Nothing much of what she wrote has stood the stress of time. Writing *The Chrsanthemum and the Sword* without having been to Japan was not the best possible demonstration of intellectual integrity.

Gregory Bateson suffered from the two banding together against him and trying to impose on him Ruth Benedict's ideas. He came from too good a scientific stock to accept and could only resist, but it was evidently hard on him. Many a useless and dif-

difficult to understand page inside the second part of *Naven* testifies to this underground war of nerves.

But the truth of the situation is that Derek Freeman, when he was writing his denunciations of Margaret Mead, was raving mad.

The Canberra Faculty was glad with the Mead development, and silently even encouraged him in this new mania, as it took Freeman away from being a nuisance to his colleagues and other University staff and students. His recruitment had been a bad mistake. But the constitution of the University had nothing written inside it which would cover the case of a professor having become mad. Freeman had a good legal advisor. He very well knew what was the official problem about himself, so he was looking for a way to ease the tensions, and Margaret Mead fit nicely everybody's wishes. She was far away, she was American, she could easily defend herself, but would not be well received in an Australian court, where her style of life would be openly put to shreds. And he could justify in this way his professional status.

They had to keep him, lacking any authorized way to retire him forcibly, but he had to have his mind occupied. There was a general agreement to keep him focussed on Margaret Mead. Everybody played that game in Canberra, in a way or another. But no one would admit it.

Margaret then had a bad name in Australia, even or essentially among women. Men tended to be uninterested. It seems that the sex revolution had struck Australia earlier, before Mead came in, and that the Australian women did not need her help to assert themselves, but that they did not want to degrade their men as much as she openly practised. They just came out of a war where all their men had been swallowed up by the military machine, and they did not like it. And homosexuality was a bad name in Australia. The more so for militant homosexuality, in Mead's fashion.

Freeman was a pre-war member of the New Zealand Communist Party. During the war, he was an officer in the N.Z. Navy and was known to be always much more strict than necessary and accused of loving to punish subordinates, even in cases where the fault was not really established. I heard this from Harry Maude, who, through his career inside the British High Commission in the Western Pacific in Suva, knew every one of any one of note around the islands and every thing there was to be known about them. As professor in Canberra, Derek Freeman terrified students with his tongue lashes in seminar, when they had to explain in front of him the results of their nascent field researches (he never spoke of his).

He treated me to dinner after having been thrown out of Sarawak : he was put on the plane by the local police — I was under the impression that his wife was always expecting the worst — and then to a picture description of his invasion, breaking the door open with an axe of Tom Harrison's house, then empty. The pictures were about the native Iban carvings with bulging sexes hung over the doors in the house, the more bulging ones being over the toilet. He gave me a copy of his report, the conclusion of which was that there was a phallic cult inside the Sarawak government, the priest in

chief of which being the Colonial Secretary. Nobody in his wright mind would write such stupid allegations. This meant that Freeman would never be able to go back to work among the Iban. He had to fall back on Samoa, and exercise his cannibal instincts on Margaret Mead.

I have known Tom Harrisson as a systematic liar, who relished making other people accept his inventions. He had made himself known as having built during the war inside Borneo an anti Japanese underground movement, until the British army chief of Staff in Sarawak, who had taken him first as an adviser during the Indonesian «Confrontatie», found out that this was a big lie — he had lied in the same way about his antics in the New Hebrides, not as a well trained ornithologist inside the Baker Oxford expedition, but about his very imaginative anthropological ravings on the side. He lied about where he had been and what he had done, on Malekula, but mostly not on Espiritu Santo. I checked every one of his moves on both islands.

But these carvings were really harmless, only meant to look a wee bit scandalous. The whole story was laughable, but Freeman has lost any sense of humor. As an intellectual, he was coming down to the level of the present day Tea Party people, with as much bad faith in his utterings.

Margaret Mead has been a victim to Derek Freeman's apparent uncontrollable need to express himself in an antagonist way against an imaginary foe.

I have known Margaret Mead over the years and had good relations with her. I had rewritten — with her own words, which I knew rather well, she had quite a style of her own, — the parts which her French publisher had unhappily imagined to cut out, without even asking her agreement, in her popular «Sex and Temperament in three primitive societies». She had threatened a court case and the publisher was terrified.

I went to her home in New York, on the day opened to students and visitors, on the very day where Marshall Sahlins came back from Fiji to New York, after only four months on his island, in the midst of a nervous breakdown. He never went back to any field whatever. She came to dinner at our house in Paris, with Father Patrick O'Reilly. She drank with the Father, pushed him to drink and went away, arm in arm with the good priest, into the French night on the latter's vespa. My Melanesian wife found this scene highly humorous. Margaret and her crooked stick sitting behind and she putting her arms around the Father. Any psychoanalyst would have loved viewing the scene.

Margaret Mead had the kindness, entirely on her own initiative, one day in Honolulu, on the occasion of a Pacific Science Congress, to convey a special meeting to let me expand on my views over the parallel patrilineal societies and chieftainships in Fiji, West Polynesia and East Melanesia, local societies being variants of the two more general models, one of a ranked patrilineal hierarchical chiefly model (Tonga, Fiji, Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia), the other of a succession to rank by choice inside a system of titles (Samoa, Central Vanuatu, from Efate to Epi), which can change over the years, the grade taking hierarchies themselves being a very specialized and relative.

vely recent variant. Which means that the cultural differentiation between Polynesia and Melanesia is non existant. Many true Austronesian languages inside East Melanesia share a great mass of common vocabulary with Polynesian (Na Makura and Na Kanamanga in Central Vanuatu ; Qene Drehu, Lifou language, in the Loyalty islands).

Margaret Mead even sent me students in Paris, as I was one of the rare people having elected to focus on the dynamics of the prophetic movements inside Melanesia. Which had not been one of her best points before the war, she may have taken Cargo Cults then just as an irritant.

I may have been one of the very first authors, immediately after the war, to look at these movements politically, as the first steps of an island nationalism, and to consider them as an authentic and valid subject for research, in anthropological and historical terms. For me they were introducing a perfectly rational behaviour, seeking the fizzling away of the colonial rather feeble local institutions, and making use of classical political tools to that aim (organization and propaganda). The myth and theology behind, implicating the world of the dead and the ancestor's cult, was calculated to irritate the white settlers, traders and so on, and even to try to create a local white man's panic, who ended believing in their own lies and got afraid of being put to the pot. At the time that was evident, to me. But for so many people, missionaries and administrators, it was only a police problem. Put the leaders in jail and that will be the end of it.

My view, and I got it applied in Vanuatu, negotiating successfully with both the French and British side in the Condominium, was to take the leaders out of jail and treat them fairly, for what they were, *bona fide* political leaders. They did not have the answer and stayed quiet from then on. We obtained in this way ten years of political calm, in a way free of charge. This policy, which planters and the usual colonial riff raff did not understand, did not cost a penny to the local exchequer. And I gained good friends, because they knew I was the one who had proposed to reverse the traditional colonial policy : «In the name of law and order, put them into jail, by Jove !» They were back home, after ten years jail for some, and were grateful. Their greatest anxiety had been the idea that they may die far from home and not be given the traditional burial, looked after by their own direct kin.

I do not consider, nevertheless, Mead's work on Samoa as being anything else than a freshman's job, laden with exaggerations and the search for potential popular themes. The data published does not really justify her generalizations of the time. The mixture of unexploitable psychological tests and anthropological field techniques did not really fit. It never did, to the end. Applying later the Rorschach test to Melanesians could not bring anything of any use whatsoever, she never managed to demonstrate any scientific value for the idea. It looks more like a bit of theater for the general public.

Her Samoa of the time had already hosted quite a heavy literature in German and in English, but Mead acted as if she was the first author on the spot, theoretically refusing to read the well known German books, so as «not to be influenced by them». She acted in the same way in New Guinea and the Admiralty islands, and taught it as an article of method to her students.

Margaret Mead, since this early study, wrote as if she had been part of each of the villages studied over a number of years. Many of her generalisations can be queried as being given as certain, where they can be of quite an uncertain nature. Some are of a so general nature that they would be valid anywhere on any coast inside the South Pacific area.

Some are bizarre, if not wrong, such as fishing for eels on the reef. There is here an error on the name. Mead's eels are in fact moray eels (*Murenae*), mightily dangerous creatures, who attack and can clamp their jaws and cut a hand. Mead does not seem to know the real story. Killing only one of them is not an easy feat. Fishing for them is no fun which a young girl could relish. Diving for them would be unthinkable, except for very experienced divers having the knowledge of the very specific techniques adapted to the capture of the *Murenae*. And stocking these dangerous creatures inside a young boy's lavalava does not make any sense. They bite at anything around. Apparently, no author has raised the point, which means that present day anthropologists have forgotten the pioneer's tradition of being well trained in ethnography. Using children to help and put their hands in the holes inside the coral outcrops, so as to oblige the eels to come out is much too dangerous for them. This detail is pure imagination. Who is the descriptor of such an apparently tranquil scene? Catching these so called eels with a rope and a knot, a lasso in the very words of Mead, needs a detailed explanation, which is not provided, so as to become believable. Real eels are not found inside holes of coral outcrops. They can only be fished inside a river or while passing on the reef on their way to or from the local rivers.

A lady in Tahaa gives quite another story, which she saw as a kid. The fisherman who wants to deal with *Murenae* lashes to his arm a piece of metal with some flexibility, then rolls around it a number of copra bags held by a strong rope. Only then does he push his well protected arm inside the hole. The eel bites and clasps its jaws on the arm. He pulls the whole lot out and with a violent jerk of his arm throws the fish inside the canoe. *Murenae* are equally difficult to fish because they are often carriers of *Ciguatera*.

But Mead's later descriptions of what was going on inside each island village's married couple is each time a little perfection as a vignette. She did not manage them as well yet when she was writing on Samoa. She had thus to create from naught a new art in anthropological writing, which made her books so readable. She must have thought a lot about the value of such presentations, and exercised until she got to the point where it appeared to be cool and so truthful. But how did she manage it and how much time did it take her? In Manus, her description of the leader Paliau was made on the basis of one interview and a very few days observations. She did not need more and closed the matter.

My observations of a number of young colleagues, of all nationalities, and of myself, is that it takes ten months, on a *first* field trip, to start collecting good and fair data, all what has been reaped in between can be put to the waste paperbasket as being unsound, superficial or even often mistaken. Some authors do not manage to separate the good information from the bad and give us later the whole lot at the same time. There is no problem of hoaxing from any side, but only of people waiting for the re-

searcher to come of age, anthropologically, and get over the fact that he is lost, lacking any training for the field whatsoever.

It is also a regular occurrence that around the fourth month there comes a psychological crisis, the would be anthropologist asking himself if what he is doing is of any real interest, and will be of any use to anybody, and why in the devil is he here. He usually gets over this passing phase, but Marshall Sahlins, Mead's student, had a nervous breakdown at that very time.

Margaret could not have obtained, in eight months only, the knowledge about the Samoan society she pretended having through her writing. She took it elsewhere and talks as if it was her own. This is done often. Authors then pretend not having read anything so as to keep only to their own material. It happened to me about Tanna. A geographer took all I had written, and I had been the first to bring about a complete presentation of the culture, and published it anew under his own name, adding a lot of useless phrasing and false information to hide the fact (he had been manipulated by a small group of informants with important land tenure ambitions who tried making use of him to lay their hands on a vast depopulated land area in north west Tanna ; they failed). He did the same with W.H. Rivers material on marriage in North Pentecost.

In matters of sex, one comes inevitably against at the same time banter and bragging. Not only in Samoa.

Outside Paris, during the forties and fifties, one could come across apparent situations of free sex life among adolescents. In fact, contrary to the town situation, and due to the constant biological models shown in the everyday incidents of farm life, adolescents knew a lot about sex. The result was that the girls were very controlled, accepting sex banter and petting, up to a point : they did not want to take any risk of becoming pregnant. On this, they were adamant, and strong willed. So there was an appearance of things, but reality could be quite different.

Inside the more traditional peasant communities elder brothers were always interfering and trying to control their sisters. They would easily threaten violence against the latter's suitors. The same ones would be bragging about their own sex conquests, with the sisters of other elder brothers. There is here a statistical problem. Of all the bragging by young men, and of all the accusations thrown against the local girls, only a small part can possibly be true.

If all the female students were easily sexually accessible, there would be no «panty parties».

In his third voyage, Captain Cook wrote that, in his experience of having in his charge young men in port towns all over the globe, that Tahitian women were not easier nor more difficult than anywhere else, which does not quite fit with Mead's description, nor with the one of M. de Bougainville.

The description by Mead of young Samoan's sex life is inserted inside a pseudo samoan discourse, but in fact it is near universal, with such and such factor, here and there, receiving a greater weight than next door. She described a situation which did just differ somewhat from the one inside the States. The real Samoan girls came after, as an illustration.

The variables are found everywhere. Here an unmarried mother will be sought for in marriage, because one is thus sure of siring other children with her. Elsewhere, since the Victorian decades, she will become a pariah and will have to go and seek a job in town, so as to feed and educate alone her child. Here, we will find a solid tradition of «honor murders» (even among the Turks living in Germany). Elsewhere, we find the number of recomposed families increasing, no one really worrying about who is the real genitor of who, some of these families being even marginally polygamist, in fact, but not in name, this being a sort of everyday answer to otherwise difficult financial matters. Sharing responsibility and cost is a perfectly rational way of solving a problem, although it can be fraught with difficulties inside some cultures, if it does work in some cultures better than others. Sex communes have been a passing phase not only in America. There have been parallels, elsewhere, at different times (some aspects of the Mormon Church in the last century, the «baby farms» in Bougainville island, North Solomons, half a century ago).

With such a small sample as Mead offers, 62 girls of all ages, one is obliged to consider that the amount of variation in the Samoas remains unknown, and that her analysis, if confirmed — there should be a great number of children born out of wedlock, who could be counted, if she is right — is only the one of this small sample and cannot be generalised. She may have been dealing with more bragging than she could account for. It would be necessary to know if later these women, those who did not have any children out of wedlock, except for a few of them, apparently, had children later. If not, it would be an indication of the development of gonorrhoea stemming from the US naval base and its sailors. A potential correction of the situation was the knowledge by the women of all abortive plants in all the islands.

A curious thing, in the South Pacific, is that official sailors from military navies carried gonorrhoea all around, starting in the 19th century (the Bounty mutineers, contrary wise, left children everywhere), but that the sailors jumping whale ships did not, as they usually sired numerous families dispersed all over the place.

A lesser known factor is that there is almost no syphilis introduced by the European military, the reason being that Pacific islanders all had yaws, or had had yaws which were spontaneously cured at adolescence. Yaws and syphilis being carried by nearly the same agent, are mutually exclusive. If you have, or have had, yaws, you cannot have syphilis. Yaws are contracted in walking barefoot, and are in no way a sexual disease.

This was shown before the last war by my father, professor of tropical medicine in Lyon. I came into the Pacific knowing it. According to Margaret Mead there were yaws in American Samoa, which were treated with injections of the German Salvarsan, but she does not discuss sexual diseases among the Samoan girls. Due to the presence of the naval base, and having sailors going all round in government ships, this looks like a methodological mistake.

A real problem is that samples inside the sample here are too small. Percentages given in such cases are statistically meaningless. And inevitably, the situation changes from village to village. There is no Samoan situation as such. If the pastor is well liked and a strong man, well looking after his flock, there might be a few more virgins

around, for a time. But isn't this type of research slightly ridiculous ? Is it really anthropology ? Why not go on to research statistically sneezing, or farting, etc.

No other author in this debate has given us statistics about sex diseases and in particular the occurrence of gonorrhoea, which would be scientifically more fruitful. Gonorrhoea resulting in women having no children, has been for decades past a heavier and more meaningful social factor, dealing with unmarried sex, by both men and women. But a subject apparently ignored by anthropology.

This situation has been changed by the consequences of the WHO 1960-62 campaign against yaws, which obtained the eradication of this age old disease in the Pacific Islands, but at the same time the one of gonorrhoea.

The demographic surge everywhere in the islands stems from the results of this campaign. Villages nearly devoid of children became full of them, full of laughter and song. It was a revolution in fact, that social sciences in the area entirely disregarded. Anthropologists are usually quite ignorant of medical problems, which they do not imagine can influence in any way their field of research.

But a society and culture inside an unhappy demographical situation, where numbers are drifting away and where the sex ratio is climbing dramatically, work in a different way than a society and culture which does not have anymore any problem of numbers lacking, except that these are growing spectacularly and create other problems. All political difficulties inside the South Pacific stem from the variations of the demography, changing, after two centuries of quasi disintegration, from stale to dynamic, the sex ratio back to normal in a matter of very few years.

In a situation, pre 1960, where there were too few children in each generation, the occurrence of a birth out of wedlock did not bear the same signification than if the population was steadily growing in numbers, as of now. It may be accepted, because one more child was so precious, but well hidden.

The making and the day to day translation of the life of cultural traits is built on two roots, the state of the demography and the medical situation. Through ignorance, anthropology, cultural or social, and even the new school of Pacific History, rarely considers the importance of these two essential factors.

Missionaries have been murdered as an answer to an introduced medical factor having a deadful impact on the demography (Eromango). Would be settlers have made use of the willful introduction of smallpox, so as to create an area void of native people where they could settle easily and without opposition (south-east Espiritu Santo). The demographic surge in Melanesia has created a situation by which white settlers just had to abandon the land they had grabbed and meekly go away (Malekula, Espiritu Santo, Epi). Along the east coast of New Caledonia, white settlers suddenly left without resistance, or married their Kanak mistresses, abandoned their extensive land claims, and stayed as traders and technicians, all this without any official administrative interference. Just the consequences of the silent acknowledgment that they were no more the dominating demographical factor, and that to resist was no more an option.

A factor usually ignored by anthropologist is that during the two centuries of the

decline of the demography in the islands, more than one name and often many more, were put on the head of any child who managed to survive, which meant as many social and land tenure status. His job as an adult, would be later, if the occasion arose, to share these statuses between the members of a maybe more numerous generation, so that there would be again one man, or one woman, for every empty status. People may have had to wait more than one generation before they were able to redistribute what they had been entrusted with. During all this time, they never confided to any white man, be he a well disposed administrative officer or a missionary, that they were keeping on hold in this way their society, culture. . . and land tenure. Neither did they confide to any anthropologist around. Once they could start redistributing these statuses and privileges on the heads of new born babies, some began to talk, so satisfied were they of the positive issue awaited by so many generations.

Then they started, silently, to plan for getting rid of the white men around, whose stolen land they wanted to get back. They did not have to wait for very long. Slowly settlers, after talking of resisting by taking to arms, found out that they were so outnumbered that they had only one possibility, leaving their cherished plantations. Some were particularly hated by the people. They were surrendered by hundreds of men in arms (Malekula, Ragha) and had to be fished out and evacuated by the very last colonial authorities.

The story does not say that they had themselves sold the guns, many of those coming from the wars of the last century in Europe. They had not calculated that the Chinese traders would find in China somebody ready to make cartridges for these museum pieces, which were strong and became mighty dangerous. The Kanak, hunters of wild boars and wild cattle, potential warriors, opened the cartridges, melted the shot in one mass and carefully put it back. They had become very good at playing with military rifles. One of the untold reasons of the independance of Vanuatu was that, all over the islands, each man had a gun, and sometimes more than one, many of quite recent makes. They had been slowly building up their provision of cartridges, thanks to the Chinese traders, who never reported the fact.

During all that time, the Kanak society was kept working, in many different ways, christian, reborn or heathen. But the guns were there, in each village of each island, and the ammunition too. I checked everywhere on that point but, in this issue, kept to my own counsel. I have been during the war in the underground, and knew how a potential successful revolt is prepared. They knew too. They acted openly each time where they could muster overpowering numbers and create a panic, so as to win without a shot, nor losing a man. Elsewhere, they were ready to start again murder by stealth. It was not necessary.

This type of situation is beginning to become dangerous elsewhere, all along the coast of northern New Guinea, where Chinese sailors are making money on the sly by selling US or Chinese assault rifles. These rifles are finding their way among the treasures exchanged in marriage or funeral feasts, and being present further and further from the coast. One day the situation will have become uncontrollable.

The situation where the kin of the founder of Papua New Guinea independance, Michaël Somare, asked me — I had rented a canoe and its crew from them — to buy

cartridges and to hunt for them on the Sepik river because they did not have the right to do it themselves — I had happily learned to shoot, with Lee-Enfield British Army heavy rifles, as an adolescent boy in a public school in England — is evidently long past.

Those factors are part of field work and have been there for a long time. But who did recognize their importance and has been, as I did, systematically and silently checking on the state of every gun around the place? Social status and prestige competition are linked to that information. The Highlands of New Guinea, that is the immediate future of a few million people, depend today also on that type of data, which is locally very sexy. It has the potentiality of destroying the political constructs left by the colonizing countries in all the area. No one has been able to control that trade. It also means that potentially, anthropology may be obliged one day to forget about New Guinea and most of Melanesia.

It could be no one will be able to settle, from the field, the next controversy about Margaret Mead.

Another illuminating factor is that in some island chieftainships, one finds junior lines where children born out of wedlock are carefully included. If an unmarried *first born* sister of a high chief from Tonga, or elsewhere (the Loyalty islands), has a child, it will be inscribed in such a junior line. The mother does not lose any prestige. But this is the structural opposite to Samoa's theoretical infatuation with virginity. The incident will not be kept secret, but talking about it will be considered bad manners, if not forbidden. Although, in Samoan myths, the *taupou* falls prey to the sexual advances of a visiting hero, who can be Tongan.

As regards the *moetotolo*, the description by Margaret Mead of which so irritates Samoans, I can tell, having observed the state of things over the years and listened to the interested people, a story in Tahiti about it, showing how things can become bizarre in an otherwise well documented contact situation, parallel to the one in American Samoa.

This institutionalized rape, the young man's body covered with coconut oil so as to allow him to escape, had taken on a very special aspect during the early fifties. These young men were neither under the influence of alcohol, or *paka* (drug), or both. They only raped white women, if found alone inside a house in town. The white women were duly terrified. The queer thing was that these rapes were supported by the Tahitian girls, who were making use of their men-folk for getting their own back over the white young women, who were at the time the only ones accepted for the official Misses. The Tahitian girls were furious. When the contest became open to the Tahitian girls, late in the day, in 1963, and there was an obligation of speaking the Tahitian language, and they won, the institutionalized theatrical rapes against white females suddenly dropped out of sight.

There was no specific reason for that, no special police and judicial action which

might have managed to contain the problem. The Tahitian girls had conquered what they had wanted so much and did not want to be brought into any new problems by their men-folk, during the long process bringing to this annual event. They had used them to good effect and told them now to stay quiet. When they are not drunk, Tahitian men are easily manipulated by their women-folk, when the latter act collectively and are of the same mind, which was the case.

The Tahitian prophet and politician Puvana'a O'opa's prestige rested first and foremost on his popularity among Tahitian women.

Another moot point is that throwing an interview protocol to the face of unsuspecting islanders is not anthropology. It may be psycho-sociology. But this method suffers of heavy defects, the worse being the temptation by the islander, or by anybody anywhere, of answering what he thinks the whiteman, or woman, or the specialist coming from the town, would like to get as an answer.

The rule which should be applied, and is very difficult to respect, is that no question be phrased in such a way that the interviewed person finds in it a potential answer, which he then sends back with glee. The protocol and the interview are in my judgment the worst fieldwork method in anthropology, a bad answer to the necessity of scientific precision. My experience is that the best method is never to ask any questions at all, except in technical situations where they can be non ambiguous, but to lead an easy conversation around the broad subject of the day and to reap answers without any questions having been phrased. Spontaneous information is the best one available. Margaret Mead found that on her own too.

Some subjects can only be worked on in going to the precise spot where the people can and will talk. One does not work on land tenure inside a house, interviewing elderly people, sitting in comfort, but on the spot, plot by plot, rock by rock, tree by tree, cove by cove, mapping every one of them, and obtaining a comment on each from the very persons who holds the traditional right to such an expression of local knowledge, never from an institutional ignorant doing his most to try to please the *palangi*. Myth is the same. It must be obtained, for each instance, in the exact spots where the mythical actors were walking, or doing anything else, and their itineraries carefully mapped : myth is nearly always land tenure at the highest level.

My apparently well-shared view is that Margaret Mead was fundamentally not after making a big name in American anthropology, but better, and with an extraordinarily greater ambition, from the start, after playing a role in the transformation of the American life scene. Anthropology of far away people was only a tool for that particular aim. On this point, I tend to think she won, hands over. According to her daughter, she even bullied the famous doctor Benjamin Spock, who was her daughter's physician, into taking over her own ideas about what should be a child's education. They were not always the best of ideas, but they won the day, for a time. We are only now trying to escape from their so very heavy negative consequences. We have brought up a generation lacking any kind of social discipline. Her daughter, whom I thought was a badly educated brat when I met her as a kid, refused her mother's project to visit her

in the Middle East, so afraid was she of Margaret Mead trying to impose her ideas on the young couple, the husband being a Greek Orthodox Syrian, not at all attuned to Mead's ideas about free love.

Her best anthropological work has been on Manus, maybe written under the influence of the better intellectually equipped of her husbands, Gregory Bateson, who was also the one who published the best study, «Naven».

Her book on Manus revisited after the war is the all best in my view, although it shows how quickly she forms a judgement and writes it down as being definitive. Once she has coined a near perfect phrase, she passes to another subject.

Her monograph on «Kinship in the Admiralty Islands» is also professionally her best. She put in evidence a situation in front of which British Social Anthropology at the time carefully shut its eyes. Anybody could organize his kinship ties as he really wished, each individual person being related to everybody in so many ways. That was anathema to Radcliffe-Brown and his pupils.

Experience at that time prevents her happily from saying stupid things, or imagining what did not exist (such as the pre war Mundugumor warrior girls, which were there to fit a theoretical model in her demonstration : I have been in a canoe on the Yuat river, the villages were exactly as described, but the black Amazones were nowhere to be seen).

Mead and Bateson's later work on Bali was too much in advance of the scientific ideas of the time. There was no technique then available allowing for the systematic exploitation of visual data. These techniques are only now beginning to appear. But she must have been bitter about the failure to make in this way a mark on Psychology and Anthropology, and put the onus on Gregory Bateson, who had acted in the event as one trained first in biology.

She did have some good and common sense ideas. Her paper on «Cultural stability in Polynesia» was excellent.

But one is always astonished by the precision of the interaction between individuals she describes everywhere else. How does she know, not speaking the language? Is it a description based on facts, or an elegant illusion ? In its way, it is a social analysis which nobody tends to criticize, so brilliant is the writing. I tend to give her the benefit of the doubt, but this is the result of admiration in front of a way of seeing things from the inside no one author has been able to emulate. It looks so much like the real village life, nearby or somewhere else, but it takes us poor professionals years to learn as much. There is the workings of some magic here.

Her previous husband, Reo Fortune, wrote a bad book on Dobu, a kind of failed missile sent over by Radcliffe-Brown against Malinowski, later a better one on Religion in Manus, then he became a nervous wreck, completely alcoholic. I saw him in front of his former wife in Canberra, trying to express his view that she had written things on the Arapesh which were, according to him, completely wrong. She looked down at him as if he was a despicable object : he was drunk, and did not even answer.

She strode off. Regally. Living with an Amazon, even a psychologist may become lost for ever.

Professor Claude Lévi-Strauss tells about a reception he organized in his Paris home in honour of Margaret Mead, where he put her in front of the well known feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre's egeria, the author of *The second sex*. The two women never spoke to each other, staying each at a distance of the other, and each of the two queens having their own court huddled around them, as if the one was a danger to the other.

She was in a way a real destroyer of men, Freud's *dentata vagina* made woman. That was Derek's real problem with her. He seeked a revenge for his own gender. He had wanted to destroy Tom Harrisson. Now he wanted to destroy her. That is what came out of our discussion on this theme. He really had a messianistic streak, but like so many would be messiahs, he was mad. Dangerously, and in a destructive mode for himself, and for anybody close to him. Some Pacific Islands Messiahs are mad, but they can be kind and gentle.

Inside the French University scene, he would have been left free to act in the same way, for the very same reasons, because there was no legal way to prevent him, unless he killed his wife, or anybody else, as did a well known Marxist theoretician, one of the fathers of the 1968 Student Revolution, who thus had been insane all these years without anybody knowing of it. He introduced his students to mad ideas which brought them politically nowhere.

Academic wives should be trained to find out about such developments early, and get out in time. There are other mad hatters around. They are difficult to find out. Unbalanced sex life is not even a valid criteria, as Freeman has shown, being the opposite.

The answer might be a problem of degree. All academics may be slightly mad, very slightly autists (Asperger's syndrome according to professor Simon Baron-Cohen, University of Cambridge). Freud was certainly. Anthropologists might be the more bizarre of the lot. Malinowski was really very strange in his everyday behaviour. Margaret Mead was in fact much less mad than Derek Freeman, although in quite another way. When she had an idea, everybody was meant to agree with her. She would go to great lengths so as to obtain this result, eventually inventing arguments on the spot.

I contradicted her once in public over one of her assertions. She answered in quoting the results of recent research by US colleagues. This research didn't exist.

The difference between the two is she did fit into her time, bringing answers to real problems, although the quality of the answers might not have exactly been what was really needed. He did not, constantly going into reverse gear.

A Messiah must be ahead of his time. Margaret was, in a way, a female Messiah, a better one than Derek Freeman, who became insanely jealous of her. Why? Because he was so mad that he could only do insane things. One should not look for rationality where there isn't any. The controversy has been a great loss of time.<

Note. Derek Freeman's wife and daughter were always looking at him as if they were afraid of some eventual (violent ?) action, as if they knew what should be done, but kept silent, pleased that somebody else was for the time being holding his attentions. He could be charming.

If he had been retired on health reasons before his time, his family would have been in great financial straits. As long as he was a professor, eventual costly medical care was the financial responsibility of the University. He knew well there was a line he should not cross. But, in the waiting, he could make people close to him very unhappy.

One technical problem was that, in the British law tradition, the marriage partner cannot divorce a wife or a husband declared insane. His wife could not take that road, even if she had wished. She could not run away from her problem. She would have found herself devoid of any means of living, she and her daughter.

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