

privacy, and implicitly supports the system which exploits those rights to preserve an intolerable situation.

In spite of these tensions with Housing Departments, Social Workers or Voluntary Workers, the Health Visitor, working with Bed and Breakfast clients, has become the pivotal source of information, a mediator. She is viewed by each group as a main source of pragmatic information. This position allows her free contact with each group without risking either professional confidentiality or her own position of supposed impartiality. There is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence to suggest that each group uses the Health Visitor as a surrogate information carrier in situations where direct contact (between, for example, the Housing Department and Voluntary Workers) would call professional impartiality into question. Thus we see the continuance of a professional charade with unspoken signals being sent between various parties for various actions in various settings. The root of the Health Visitor's central, mediating position is her constant and continuing contact with the clients. This is the case not just in matters of housing priority with Housing Departments, or with regard to specific problems, as with the Social Worker, or even with regard to broad political objectives, as with the Voluntary sector, but by a blend of all these.

The Health Visitor is drawn into discussing a variety of problems outside her immediate professional concerns; i.e. supplementary benefit payments, housing points and their allocation, schooling and nursery provision. Yet to ignore them would inevitably have repercussions on the health of the clients. Thus it is that a chain of contact is engendered as various services are drawn into the problem solving. The contact is not always harmonious, and differences in interpretations and attitudes to situations can lead to strain between the groups mentioned. With each participant expressing the situation in different terms the pre-eminent strains identified are the Health Visitor's attitude to Social Workers, to the Clinical Nurse Manager (her superior) and to the Housing Officers. Yet those strains notwithstanding, the Health Visitor's abilities as a mediator offer for many residents in Bed and Breakfast accommodation their main chance of recognition, particularly in areas such as Earls Court or Brighton, where the evils of Bed and Breakfast accommodation are particularly prevalent.

*(John Austin Locke has recently completed his MA at the University of Sussex)*

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## Applied Anthropology: Some Comments from France

Jean François Baré

*(We are very pleased to publish this article by Dr Baré; he visited Britain last October when he met BASAPP members and made contact with SfAA; he will be bringing a group of colleagues to the SfAA Conference at York. We look forward to increasingly close collaboration with practicing anthropologists in France.)*

These lines cannot pretend, of course, to be an overall synthesis of the problem of 'applied' anthropology in France. They can reflect at best a few positions collectively shared in our research group (a joint venture between two French research institutes, C.N.R.S. and ORSTOM, the French Institute for Development), or by other colleagues involved in the issue. What is implied by 'applied' anthropology is the confrontation between anthropological knowledge (social and cultural anthropology) and the demands of social and economic actors.

Everyone in France, either in research institutes or at a university, would at least agree that there has been in the last few years, an upsurge of collective reflection and involvement in the 'application' of anthropology. This is a fairly new phenomenon and worth commenting upon.

This situation seems at first glance to be related to national specificities; but these specificities may themselves be related to traditions of thought. A comparison with the two Anglo Saxon countries, USA and Great Britain, dominantly productive of anthropology and of anthropologists, seems illustrative here.

In the United States not only is there the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) with its hundreds of members dating back to the late 1940s; there is also the AAA which counts its members by the thousands and keeps the issue alive. But, in France there is no such thing as an association of applied anthropology; indeed there is no association of social scientists which can be compared in size to the (comparatively) huge American or British ones. What seems to be an Anglo-Saxon tendency and capacity for producing sizeable professional associations allows 'visibility'; it goes with the very specific cultural activity of lobbying. Speaking more generally the very existence of these associations could also be related to another lasting Anglo-Saxon cultural principle, the club, totally foreign as far as I know to French anthropologists (the French version of a club is more political, at least since the Revolution). Of course one can live without huge professional associations; they have their drawbacks. These are simply comments about the 'French way' as it were.

The Association Française des Anthropologues (AFA), whose main goal in any case is not applied anthropology and which certainly cannot be compared in size and influence to the American AAA or to the British ASA, dates from the early 1980s. No French university has any specific training course devoted to 'applied' anthropology, whereas a quick survey of the US allows one to spot dozens of them, and a few exist in Britain too. On the other hand it is worth noting that France has established, since the early 80s, the office of 'ethnologue regional' (these few posts are attached to the Ministry of Culture) which does not exist, as far as I know,

either in Great Britain or the US.

In the US, acceptance of contract-hunting seems almost obsessional to French eyes. This has obviously been partly due to a less secure job market than has, until recently, prevailed in France. An apparent trend in the US leads, as one knows, a good number of academics with or without permanent positions to work on any conceivable subject external to purely academic issues: from San Francisco gay communities to human adaptation in space for NASA. I am told that the practice of 'applied' anthropology, sometimes considered as less noble, is (or was) 'abandoned' so to speak, to the less 'prestigious' US universities; and the same can be said about other countries. Still, a good number of US anthropologists occupying pre-eminent positions do not mind accepting contracts with, let us say, 'the rest of the world'; they are infinitely more than in France. This is not merely a professional or institution-related question.

In France there was until recently something frankly pejorative about an anthropologist accepting a contract outside the university. The British situation might be closer to the French one, but at the same time 'applied' anthropology can seem as old as anthropology itself in the UK: dating back to the forefathers - Radcliffe Brown in South Africa, Evans Pritchard in the Sudan, Audrey Richards in the then Northern Rhodesia, and also Malinowski himself. The current British trends, as so lively represented in BASAPP, involving anthropologists in very specifically expressed subjects like 'community welfare' can seem related to a long tradition, more or less explicit according to circumstances. The position of the anthropologist as a 'social ombudsman', was even explicitly argued by the late Richard Salisbury.

It is true that some well known French anthropologists of the previous generation were individually involved in applied projects (especially in Africa). But this attitude was more related to individual choices than to a collective thinking. The very idea of 'applying' anthropology, or that anthropology could be useful to something, was of almost no concern in France until recently, and moreover the term was pejorative. Knowledge was for the sake of knowledge, and involving it in any kind of practical goal was somehow impure. One could observe the almost unthinkable difficulties of all kinds encountered by those with a very sound professional background, simply to defend 'applied' programmes; or the need for discretion requested by confirmed and even renowned anthropologists in implementing applied projects, as if they had something to hide, still having something to fear from the hierarchy. Without speaking of course of actual sanctions (!) this kind of work was generally met with a very particular kind of indifference, and at any rate no specific support; there would be no institutional way to help in defining, channelling and/or implementing these projects. In the end, the lack of incentive and support by the peer group is a form of punishment.

So, until recently, mathematical treatments of the Murngin kinship systems, Indian theories of the varnas, controversial interpretations of African witchcraft vs. sorcery, were majestically argued in front of student audiences, who were no less majestically propelled into a job market with a very vague idea of the relationship between their knowledge and the 'real world' and where - aside from some university departments - nobody had ever heard of the Murngin. Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose work I am quoting here as a testimony - given all the misinterpretations and aggressiveness it had to bear - could write for instance in *Anthropologie Structurale* (in the late 70s) that "one should give much to social sciences and not hope for much in return". Right or wrong, the French

way would seem a resolutely 'ivory towerish' way. It was "la republique des clercs".

Let us note, however, that one could not describe this situation merely as a contrast between a so-called Anglo-Saxon pragmatism and a so-called French intellectualism; since the very ideas and skills which could appear as the most intellectual a few years ago and were considered, rightly or not, as French anthropology's specific contributions, such as symbolism, or more generally the cultural shapes of identity and action are now in demand.

Still the issue is not on the general relevance of these skills, but on their confrontation with 'practice', at least in some kind of consultancy or involvement with the social and economic spheres; and the answer, very generally, was: "no way".

There are a few signs that the state of minds and of things are changing. The titular holder of a prestigious anthropology post at the Collège de France recently agreed to preside over a national committee devoted to the AIDS question. The young Association Française des Anthropologues (AFA) recently devoted two special issues of its Bulletin to 'applied' and 'freelance' anthropology. It is worth noting too that its then president said in his introduction that "the uses and implications of anthropology need to be debated, and that this need should be obvious". Some noticeable research projects involving CNRS researchers (the biggest French Institute devoted to fundamental research) include applied issues like French agricultural problems and the EEC policy, or cancer prevention. The CNRS management itself, whatever the government in power, keeps encouraging academics to communicate more with 'industry' and those in social and economic fields. Despite some reforms and counter reforms, ORSTOM (the French Institute of Scientific Research for Development through Cooperation) whose goals (development) although vague, have always had an applied slant, has kept a full scientific status equal to CNRS; its social science teams have been able to develop a scientific reflexivity on applied issues, such as, for instance, anthropological problems in economic aid, anthropological approaches to the informal economy, medical anthropology etc. In the early 80s, an anthropologist, who was not able to enter CNRS established himself as a 'freelancer', creating a small scale business with a staff of one, himself; this received wide comment. One of the major anthropology university departments in France, at Paris X, welcomes 'freelance' or 'applied' anthropologists to brief its students (perhaps about what is awaiting them outside).

The distrust for anything other than the purely academic was certainly due to a quasi-theological belief in the prerequisites of academic work, which are not questioned here; it was certainly no less due in part to the painful and lasting memories of such episodes as the Algerian war, the very specific leftist ideology of the 1970s - widespread in intellectual circles (with, for example, the rather questionable discussion of the relationships between anthropology and imperialism).

The generation of anthropologists which is now in its mid-thirties has fewer reasons for remaining in this state of mind, given that the world has changed, and not always in a way convenient for ideological presuppositions; it has on the contrary very good reasons to be involved outside the academic world.

Until the 60s and the early 70s, almost every French doctorate could find a permanent position either in the research institutes or the universities. In 1989, the applications to enter CNRS have been around 70 for each post, and about 20

at ORSTOM; amongst these, at least 5 applicants for any one post are very good professionals. The training system and job market undergo a very heavy strain; and surprisingly enough there is still, in general opinion, a lot of laxity in conferring MAs and PhDs. Thus, paradoxically, the French situation converges, following a totally different route from the UK and US ones. (I am told that out of 10 Berkeley PhDs two now find an academic job; in 1978 in his AAA Distinguished Lecture, Paul Kay was already expressing his concern about 'massive professional unemployment'.) The French academic institutions are loath to reach out to the world; but the world is coming to them.

One should have no doubt that this new trend will increase. But it will probably do so following French contemporary culture, where analysing and/or ideologising is always present in doing. One can wonder whether there will ever be a French Anthropological Association able to carry much weight on the job market, or at any rate to get and circulate regular information about job opportunities. Still, the involvement of French anthropologists in society, although scattered, begins to cover a variety of fields. In France, people are beginning to find employment mainly with public services and institutions, like town councils, *sociétés d'économie mixtes*, *eco musées*. Some small and big private corporations seem also interested due for example to the recent popularity of a notion like 'la culture d'entreprise'. More generally there is, in my opinion, a lot to learn in the practice of the anthropology of organizations, regarding the needs of corporations for information on their own way of functioning. An anthropologist is now working for one of the biggest European corporations in the field of artificial intelligence. There is still, indeed, a lot to spell out – on both sides: society and anthropologists. Outside France too, people are mainly involved with state contracts for development related issues: food and agricultural production, fishing resources, ecological issues etc. As one might expect, the variety of consultancy is as broad as the variety of social and cultural contexts. In the field of applied projects ORSTOM, which a few years ago was considered a less prestigious institution than CNRS, has had a notable experience, which is still undervalued.

Of course, all this does not pass without problems, and issues to debate and define; it needs, in short, a sort of applied research about ... applied research. To take it from its origin source (the university curriculum), the training system has to be investigated. Applied anthropology does exist only because there is ... anthropology. So it is more of a state of mind to be infused, than a specific content to be taught. Dealing with the Murngin MBDs is useful in knowing how to deal with the elders of South Western France, so important in the transmitting of land rights, in fact the one does not go without the other. The various conditions of communication between the two parts have to be investigated. For instance, what does 'applied' mean exactly in 'applied anthropology'? A colleague found out that in Brazzaville (Congo Republic) child malnutrition has something to do with polygamy. Now, to 'apply' this knowledge, what should 'one' do about polygamy, and who is the 'one'?

There is also an important deontological issue which is open ended. One should not accept contracting whatever the condition, but only if the conditions are good - but what are good conditions? This is judged within a specific context, that of French law. The ethical and jural guidelines (as amongst other issues the interpretation of the 1957 law on 'propriété littéraire', the nature of and clauses within contracts, etc. must be identified and discussed. These research

topics certainly include identifying cultural schemes in activities where (as in business activity) they are not known or accepted.

Hence the task I mentioned at the beginning of this article. If it succeeds only in publicizing the various issues implied in the practice of applied anthropology in France – and in the EEC countries in a comparative way – and so contributes to setting out these issues more explicitly, it will have achieved one of its goals.

(Jean François Baré is Directeur de Recherche, ORSTOM, Paris)

## Research Reports

### The Organization of Appetite: A Socio-cultural Approach to Student Foodways at the Lausanne Federal Institute of Technology.

Mary Ellen Chatwin

My 80-page thesis submitted to the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland in French, is the result of research carried out over two years, and was prompted by an initial study, also made by me and contracted by the Social Services of the Lausanne Federal Institute of Technology (LFIT), to examine the hypothesis that students were not being properly nourished in the campus refectories. The conclusions of the short initial study pointed to other, more important, factors which influence student nutrition, and situated the relatively high standards of the institutional refectory within a wider context of foodways available to students, or restricted to them for different reasons.

The first chapter, 'Methods and Theories in Foodway Research', examines the epistemological possibilities for the cultural study of foodways, and favours the method developed in the US by T. L. Whitehead (in Douglas 1984). This approach permits the systematic examination of foodways through 'channels' which are incorporated at three levels of organisation: behavioural, ideational and social. These levels of analysis correspond to organisational culture approaches such as that offered by E. H. Schein (1987). The purpose of comparing the two approaches is to situate the members (here, the students) of the organisation in the various institutional contexts where foodways are pertinent.

The second chapter, 'The identity of disciples' alitus', explores pitfalls in the identification of this population, including nostalgic references to what a student 'should' be (including journalistic, 'May '68' references) and the perils of statistical identification. The population of the LFIT, a skewed group of approximately 85% males, includes many foreign students (one-third of the student body). 'Indigenous' students, or those originally from the French-speaking, local culture, make up only 44% of the whole population while German- and Italian-language Swiss and foreign nationals comprise 56%. The wide cultural and social diversity

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# BASAPP

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## BASAPP's First Year and the Future

Sue Wright

BASAPP was launched a year ago and we have just held our first Annual Meeting. This seems an appropriate moment to reflect on what we have done and where we are heading.

BASAPP was formed as an umbrella for the several organisations concerned with anthropology in policy and practice in Britain. The idea was that if BASAPP employed a part-time administrator to computerise the joint membership details and computer type-set and produce a joint Newsletter, the quality and efficiency would improve. The energy of the voluntary organisers of each affiliate would be released from administrative chores, so they could develop their programmes of activities.

This has worked. Through the four issues of this Newsletter and through the activities of the organisations affiliated to BASAPP in the last year, anthropology is developing a stronger profile in policy and practice in Britain. In the process, we are discovering new areas of activity for anthropologists and collaboration with other practitioners in overseas development, community care, and the operation of formal organisations.

To meet this potential, BASAPP has run very successful training courses for anthropology students to acquire the additional skills needed to work in policy and practice. It is these areas of training, research, collaboration and potential employment that I want to review here, and to look forward to the future possible ways BASAPP can be organised.

In overseas development, new spaces for anthropologists are opening up. No longer are anthropologists just dragged in at the end of a project to find out why the people have objected to their 'development' by an international funder and a large company. This was the way development was characterised ten years ago. I am not suggesting that it does not still go on. The difference is the role anthropologists can play in the process. Some anthropologists resisted involvement on those terms on ethical and political grounds. Others over the last decade have strategised inside national and international aid and development organisations to bring in anthropologists at an earlier stage in the process (Conlin 1987). In the last issue of BASAPP News, Ros Eyben and Michael Cernea showed how anthropologists are being involved at the project design and formulation stages in the British Overseas Development Administration and the World Bank. This gives anthropologists a greater chance to negotiate with all the other professions and interests involved and