

POLITICAL SYMBOLISM¹

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Much of the recent literature that bears directly on political symbolism has already been surveyed for the *Annual Review of Anthropology* in two excellent papers, the one on "Symbolic Studies" by Turner (65), the other on "Political Anthropology" by Vincent (67). In this paper I explore a number of key conceptual, analytical, and methodological issues that are involved in this topic, covering some of the more recent publications, including relevant Marxian literature. A good deal of the discussion will be concerned with unfolding the political implications of cultural symbols. This is because many, indeed most, of the symbols that are politically significant are overtly nonpolitical. Often, the less obviously political in form symbols are, the more efficacious politically they prove to be. The greatest contribution of sociocultural anthropology to the study of politics has been the analysis of the political functions of symbolic, nonpolitical institutions like kinship and religion.

It is the very essence and potency of symbols that they are ambiguous, referring to different meanings, and are not given to precise definition. The most dominant symbols are essentially bivocal, being rooted, on the one hand, in the human condition, in what may be called "selfhood," and on the other in the relations of power. Forms that are clearly and formally political tend to be signs, not symbols; they lack ambiguity and are thus unidimensional. Some of them do in time become efficacious, but only when they acquire nonpolitical, existentialist meanings in addition to their formal connotation.

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EXTENSIVE DEFINITIONS

These are categorical statements which make a number of basic assumptions that are highly controversial. First among these is the statement that politics refers to the distribution, maintenance, exercise of, and struggle for power within a social unit. Power is analytically conceived as an aspect of nearly all social relationships. Even such primary relationships as those between husband and wife, father and son, or friend and friend have their own power element and thus form part of the political system in any society.

Some political scientists would object to this extensive definition of politics, principally because it makes the study of politics coextensive with the study of all society. This objection is methodological rather than theoretical and is met by most social anthropologists by focusing their studies on one small area of political life at a time. Besides, the more restricted definition of politics, which covers only activities related to state institutions, is inapplicable to the study of the political organization of those tribal, preindustrial societies that are acephalous and non-centralized. In such societies law and order are generally maintained by a balance of power between segments of groupings of equal order, sometimes assisted by the mediation of formally nonpolitical, ritual men.

The term "power" is an abstraction referring simply to relations of domination and subordination. These are either economic relations, arising in the course of production, exchange, and distribution, or "purely political," deriving ultimately from command over organized physical force. These two types of relations, though distinct in many respects, are interrelated and in many situations inseparable. Nearly everywhere in small-scale preindustrial societies the system of land tenure, client-patron relationships, exchange, and the distribution of goods are inseparable parts of the political order. In many centralized tribal societies, the chief holds the land in trust and allocates it to his people; in exchange he is given allegiance and part of the produce, which he then redistributes. In many uncentralized societies, mythologies of kinship that are often articulated in the form of elaborate genealogies regulate the distribution of land and define political groupings at one and the same time. Similarly, in the advanced industrial societies the relationships between property owner and user, employer and employee, producer and consumer, and a host of similar relationships are maintained and regulated by the laws of the state. Economic and political interests interpenetrate each other and react on one another. They continually exert pressure on the state and the state continually exerts pressure on them.

Some Marxists would object to these formulations on the ground that all relationships of power derive from the relations of production and that the

state itself is but an instrument used by the economically dominant class to develop and protect its interests and maintain the relations of production by organized coercion. Thus in their celebrated metaphor of the superstructure and infrastructure, Marx & Engels (50) placed politics and law in the superstructure, not in the economic base. This view of the state and of politics was no doubt greatly affected by the conditions prevailing in industrializing European societies during the nineteenth century. But the state is now almost everywhere, in capitalist as in communist societies, a power in its own right, regulating the increasingly complex public services, running industries, and becoming to a large extent autonomous, and it is not simply the agent of one class or another. There is no evidence that it is "withering away" in communist countries.

On the other hand, as Anderson (6, pp. 46–48) points out:

the aftermath of the Second World War also saw the establishment, for the first time in the history of bourgeois rule, of representative democracy based on universal suffrage as the normal and stable structure of the State in all the main capitalist countries—West Germany, Japan, France, USA, England, Italy.

These are conditions unaccounted for by classical Marxism. It is probably a reflection of these developments that Althusser (4, 5) has modified the Marxian metaphor, giving a relative autonomy to politics and law which is separate from the superstructure (see also 52, p. 51). This is not to deny that the state, while attending to universalistic functions for the society as a whole, both internally and externally, is at the same time and to a larger or lesser extent also particularistic, serving the interests of one power group or another.

The two types of power, the economic and the political, are of course distinguishable in many respects. But for heuristic purposes most social anthropologists have concentrated on the common denominator between them, namely power relations. When anthropologists study economic activity, their ultimate aim is to discover the relations of power that are involved in production, exchange, and distribution.

Power relations are objectified, developed, maintained, expressed, or camouflaged by means of symbolic forms and patterns of symbolic action, both of which are referred to here as "symbolism." In most of the systems that anthropologists have studied, kinship and ritual have been the main form of symbolism; they are deployed alternatively, or combined together as articulating principles that are dialectically related to power relations. There are of course other symbolic forms that are similarly related to power. Indeed the whole of normative culture is involved here. "Culture," writes Raymond Williams (70, p. 76), "is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." It is a highly ambiguous term which is

extensively used in many different senses and is thus too wide in its various connotations to be useful in sociological analysis. What is astonishing is that anthropologists who specialize in the analysis of culture should continue to use this term in the global, ragbag definition formulated by nineteenth century writers. In its current usage in social anthropology, the word often covers both utilitarian and normative traits, both objective and subjective phenomena.

Marxist writers use the term “ideology” as a substitute. Indeed, as Anderson (6) points out, Western Marxists since the end of the First World War have been principally concerned with the analysis of ideology or superstructure. Literally hundreds of books and articles have recently been published on the subject, mostly attempting to define what ideology is and what Marx and his followers have said about it. The most systematic comprehensive analysis in this respect to date is that of Althusser (3–5). But what is clear from reading Marxist literature is a complete lack of consensus about what ideology is and what functions it plays in society. What makes the subject more confusing is that Marx himself and even Althusser changed their views about ideology in the course of their careers. The result is that the concept is now as confused, if not more so, as that of culture. Ideology has been conceived as an epistemological concept, as the way men know their world; as a systematic body of values, norms, and beliefs; as synonymous with all culture, including ritual and ceremonial beliefs and practices. It has been described as “false consciousness” (47), inspired by the ruling classes to mystify people and prevent them from uncovering exploitation, and as such it exists only in class societies (50). Althusser (3, pp. 231–36), on the other hand, emphasized that ideology is an organic part of every social identity, that it is indispensable in any society, communist or capitalist. Some writers conceive ideology as expressive of, or determined by, the relations of production; others—including Althusser—regard it as relatively autonomous and as instrumental in recreating the relations of production.

One way of overcoming some of the difficulties and ambiguities involved is to apprehend culture or ideology in their manifestations in symbolic performances that are objective and collective and hence observable and verifiable, indicating normative patterns of action, in sharp contrast with utilitarian and technical patterns.

It is obvious that there is a great deal of oversimplification here, for there are significant differences between symbolic forms such as those between kinship and ritual. But symbols are highly complex sociocultural phenomena and can therefore be classified according to a variety of criteria, depending on the purpose of the classification, which in turn depends on the theoretical problem that is being investigated and the variables that are considered in the study. In political symbolism various types of symbols are

analyzed in their involvement in the relations of power, and this would call for a type of classification which is often at variance with that provided by the cultural traditions of which they are a part. It would often entail lifting a ceremonial performance out of its ordinary phenomenological sequence to examine it in relation to political functions such as authority or the boundaries of groups.

Power relations and symbolism are present in all social relationships. This broad conception of political symbolism led me to conclude a paper on "Political Anthropology: The Analysis of the Symbolism of Power Relations" (12) by the statement that "political anthropology is nothing other than social anthropology brought up to a high degree of abstraction." This view drew sharp criticism from some colleagues, and it will be instructive to discuss some of the arguments involved, as they will highlight the central theoretical issues in the study of political symbolism.

Firth (25, pp. 205–6) describes this approach as "autologic to a considerable degree." He states:

Cohen goes so far as to say that in social anthropology we are interested in symbols mainly in so far as they affect and are affected by power relations. I think this is a reductionist argument—that a great range of expressive symbols at life crises, for instance, are not power symbols; and that status symbols, which are equally a concern of the anthropologist, should not be merely equated with power symbols.

Turner (66) makes a similar criticism and suggests that I should pay as much attention to "action semiotics" as to "power relationships."

POLITICS AND THE SYMBOLISM OF LIFE CRISES

It will be important in many ways here to take Firth's example of the symbols of life crises and to inquire whether they are in any sense politically significant. For here we seem to be dealing with purely individual psychological and existential problems which are formally remote from politics.

If we consider the crisis of death, we shall immediately be struck by its universality and pervasiveness. "Why are we born and why do we die?" is a problem that has confronted all people in all societies at all times. It is a perennial problem in the sense that it can have no scientific solution. There have been, in fact, almost as many "solutions" as there have been cultures, and no one can tell which solution is more scientific than which. Everywhere the crisis is marked by symbolic patterns of action. The crisis is thus and to that extent irreducible; it is universal and is probably the most crucial factor in the human condition generally.

But if the symbolism of death is purely expressive of a universal, perennial human problem, we would expect it to be ceremonialized *in equal intensity* (although allowing for differences in symbolic forms) throughout humanity.

A quick comparative survey of the literature, however, will immediately show considerable variations in the degree of ceremonialization. In some societies, or groups within large societies, death ceremonials are simple and brief; in others they are highly elaborate and extensive. In some cases death is considered terminal and the dead are thought to be gone forever; in other cases death is regarded as a phase in the biography of persons, after which the dead resume existence as spirits which interact with the living and affect their life in a variety of ways. In this latter case the dead, or some of the dead, are revered and feared, and extensive recurring rituals are performed for them.

A comparison between different groups will also indicate that the intensity of the ceremonials of death and of the dead is not related to the level of education or to so-called civilization. Even my own very limited ethnographic field studies demonstrate this clearly. Neither Middle East peasants nor indigenous African traders nor West Indian proletariat in London show a fraction of the elaborate cult of the dead which is practiced among the highly educated and sophisticated Creoles of Sierra Leone. Indeed, among these the cult has been considerably intensified during the last three decades as more and more Creoles acquired higher education and joined the professional elite of the country.

This is not the place to give a detailed discussion of the variety of cults related to death and to the dead. What is evident from the ethnographic literature is that the intensity of the ceremonialization of this motif is closely related to fundamental politico-economic factors. The ancestors' cult reported for numerous societies, including the Chinese (2, 32), the Tallensi (26), and the Lugbara (51), has been shown to be instrumentally related to the structure of the lineage system, to political alignments, territorial divisions, and the organization of authority. Among the Creoles of Sierra Leone (17), the intensification of the cult in the last three decades is related to the political cleavage that has developed between them and the provincials over political power and public employment, but more particularly over control of vast freehold land and housing estates in the Freetown peninsula. Comprising less than 2 percent of the population of the country, yet dominating the civil service and the professions, they believe that as long as they maintain their control over land in the most politically and economically strategic part of the country, they can maintain their privileged position. But Creole landlords are under constant pressure and sometimes temptation to sell housing and land at ever mounting prices. The only force stopping them from doing so is their fear of the dead who bequeathed to them most of this property, where the spirits of the dead continue to dwell.

In all these cases, the cult of the dead is a collective representation which constrains individuals—sometimes against their conscious wills and private

interests—and its symbolism is charged with political significance. Thus the question of “why are we born and why do we die” is embedded in the very core of human nature, but the symbolic beliefs and practices that are developed to deal with it are rarely individual constructions; they are often collective and always loaded with meanings and functions that develop and maintain the interests of the group.

There is no reductionism here. On the contrary, the problem of death is such a deep-rooted and powerful human issue that power groups everywhere seize on it and exploit it for their ends. This is true of all societies, including the modern, officially secular communist societies. The cult of Lenin is an eloquent example. Lenin’s body was embalmed, mummified, and put on display in a special mausoleum in Red Square, which is the center of all major national political gatherings. Millions of people from all over the Soviet Union go on pilgrimage to the shrine, queuing up for hours in long rows, silently watching the change of the guard, then file up to view the body in awe and respect. It was of course initially a *consciously* institutionalized cult aiming at commemorating and glorifying “the Father of the Revolution” and unifying his people behind the party that he founded. The authors of the cult might have been highly rational men who planned “scientifically” the whole procedure. But such innovators are few in number and for the millions of ordinary people, young and old, the cult is powerful principally because it is also mystically related to something rooted in their very human nature. For the leaders, the body might have been a political “sign” with specifically defined meaning, but for the masses of people it is a symbol with different connotations, some of which touch some of their innermost thoughts and feelings.

The political significance of this kind of cult can be seen even more dramatically in the development in our time of a similar practice surrounding Mao Tse Tung in China. For about three decades the communist authorities have waged a relentless war against the traditional Chinese lineage which had been the basis of regional political organization, often competing and sometimes challenging the authority of the central government. This meant an attack on the ancestors’ cult which expressed and maintained the corporateness and the organizing principle of the lineage. However, the sentiment relating to the dead is not itself suppressed, but is now partly channeled to what may well become the most massive cult of the dead in history, as the communist authorities have planned and actually set up a mausoleum for Mao which would dwarf that of Lenin.

This manipulation of dead corpses to serve as dominant political symbols is successful, not for purely rational considerations. For if that were the case, a memorial picture or statue, or any monument to the dead, rather than a decaying corpse, would have been sufficient. But the sight of the corpse by the masses of visitors, amidst strictly observed silence and solem-

nity, the association of the mausoleum with supreme state power, the guards of honor, reverence and admiration for the deceased, all these combine significantly with the enigmatic problem of life and death to conjure up in the minds of the pilgrims a complex psychic experience which can add further to what political philosophers call "political obligation."

Other societies or groups, though, do not neglect the motif of death, but seize on other life crises to infuse power into the symbolism of political authority. Significant among these crises is the initiation of the young to adulthood. In many small-scale preindustrial societies, initiation is dramatic in the sense that it transforms, within a brief period, children into adults. It is also collective in that a whole group of children go through the process at one time. Thus almost overnight, a new generation of men or women comes into being and begins to compete with the established adults over authority and control of resources, in effect threatening to and eventually succeeding in supplanting their parents' generation. The crisis of initiation is thus essentially not individual but social. This is why it is highly ritualized and why its symbolism is of such great political potential. In some societies the crisis serves as a perpetual basis for the organization of political authority and for politicking generally. Thus in Sierra Leone and Liberia alone, there are numerous tribal societies where the initiates become incorporated as permanent members within a secret society: the Poro for men, the Sande for women. Indeed, the importance of the Poro is so pronounced that one anthropologist, d'Azevedo (18), has labeled the whole region as "the Poro Belt."

The political significance of this cult can be seen from the way the cult is practiced among the Mende of Sierra Leone (14-16). Here, Poro initiation is the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. It takes place in the "secret bush," where the boys are taken and placed under the custody of Poro officials. Rituals are performed to signify the death and subsequent rebirth of the initiates, who in the process undergo physical pain and become imbued with the fear of the horrors that may be inflicted on wrongdoers by the masked spirits of the society. At the same time, the novices are instructed about sex and the procreation of children, duties to one's tribe and obedience to its elders, and the meaning of life and death. In this way the anxieties caused by passage to adulthood, physical pain, dramatic rituals, and the horrors behind the masks combine to leave in the initiates a deep psychic experience which remains a source of emotional and sentimental agitation that can be triggered and kept alive by the repetitive display of the symbols of the society and the performance of its rituals.

In the process, a powerful bond of loyalty is created in the initiates toward their Poro masters, who are thus loved, revered, feared, and obeyed.

While most of the initiates remain ordinary members of the Poro all their lives, a small minority continues to pursue a ritual career by undergoing further courses of instruction and being subsequently initiated into higher ritual degrees within the order. To achieve this they have to pay high fees and costs, and this means that only the wealthy and influential will rise up in the hierarchy of leadership, at the apex of which stands the "inner circle," whose members are in effect the arbiters of chiefly authority, supporting it and sometimes checking its excesses even to the extent of deposing the incumbent. Little (45, 46) says that among the Mende, the Poro provides the mystical element to the otherwise purely secular authority of the chief. The two hierarchies, the ritual and the secular, are in fact overlapping in roles and in personnel. The powerful men in the one tend to be the powerful men in the other.

This makes the Poro into a significant weapon in the hands of chiefly families who use it in some situations, particularly when their own interests are threatened. Such use has actually occurred on a number of occasions during the colonial and postcolonial periods (9, 40, 62). Thus, Poro organization and loyalties were manipulated in the planning and conduct of the Hut Tax War in 1898 against the British and in the organization of the riots of 1955-56. When the British established the franchise and the country gained independence, Poro institutions were used to mobilize votes in elections. Sierra Leone political parties at the time were loose coalitions without any kind of organization in the provinces and thus relied on the provincial chiefs for the mobilization of votes for them.

A similar organization is based on the initiation of females into the Sande secret society, though because political power in the area is mainly in the hands of men, its political significance is less pronounced. [For some details see MacCormack (48).] Poro and Sande cults are also found extensively in Liberia (18, 37, 38, 43). Many other societies in other parts of Africa and elsewhere seize on the crisis of initiation and politicize it in the service of one interest or another.

In industrial and postindustrial societies, initiation is gradual and diffused, though it is no less politicized. Here the rising, maturing young men and women are on the one hand socialized and trained in the dominant culture of the established order and on the other radicalized by the counter-cultures of discontented groups. When they finally graduate, they begin to compete with the more senior cohorts over employment, control of resources, and political power generally. Tension is particularly high in societies increasing in population, where more men and women reach adulthood than retire or die.

Another type of life crisis that is intensely politicized is that of sudden unpredictable misfortune resulting from accident, illness, loss, and calami-

ties of all sorts. A whole system of symbolic beliefs and practices is developed to diagnose, explain, and compensate for the misfortune. This system is concerned not with the *how* but with the *why* of the singularities of misfortune. The Azande (22), for example, know the natural process by which a man is killed when a tree trunk falls on him; their concern, however, is not with the immediate natural cause but with the power that brought about such a unique combination of factors and circumstances that led this particular man to pass through that particular spot near that particular trunk at that particular moment, and so on. In many societies this singularity of misfortune is explained not as an accident but as the mystical work of witches, and no redress can be realized until they are discovered and brought to justice. Divination is called for and the witch, often a person innocent of the particular crime in question, is eventually punished. In the not so remote past, witches in Europe, North America, and Africa were even put to death.

Studies of witchcraft in a number of societies have shown that the *incidence* of accusations—i.e. who accuses whom—is not haphazard but occurs mostly between certain related categories of persons. Thus in some matrilineal systems (see 49, 55) accusations are often made by a man against his mother's brother, from whom he would eventually inherit property and whom he would replace politically. This relationship is always fraught with tension and quarrel. When the total incidence is considered throughout the extent of the society, it will emerge as the manifestation of a struggle for power between one generation and another.

In some patrilineal societies like the Zulu (see 35), most accusations are directed against married women by their in-laws. The Zulu tend to live in extended families consisting of father, mother, and married sons. When the father dies the sons continue to live within the same household. However, as time passes by and the families of the sons expand, the division of the household becomes inevitable. But because of brothers' solidarity, no one would dare suggest such a division. When a member of the household becomes ill, one of the wives (who because of exogamy are strangers from outside the lineage of the husbands) is accused of exercising witchcraft, and this enables her husband to claim that in order to save his brothers from her wickedness he would move with her to live in a separate household; the other brothers seize the opportunity and hive off, each to establish his own separate household.

There are many other variations in the pattern of the incidence of witchcraft accusations. In some tribal systems the chief is endowed with, among many other mystical powers, witchcraft in order to enhance further his authority. In some changing social systems, the ideology of witchcraft

serves as a basis for the formation of political factions that are mobilized as *antiwitchcraft movements* whose purported aim is to combat the evil designs of witches, who are in fact their political enemies (see 57).

In some systems the emphasis is not on redressing but on averting misfortune. This is the case, for example, among a Hausa community based on long-distance trade in Nigeria (11). This trade is full of pitfalls and perils because of numerous factors and circumstances whose combination cannot be predicted by the trader. As a result, almost every trade expedition hovers between success and disaster. In the absence of insurance, banking, modern means of communication, swift and effective procedures of adjudication and hence security of contract, an effort is made to divine the likely outcome of every enterprise. Thus every trader has his own *malam*, a ritual specialist, whom he regularly consults. Consultation is not exclusively about the prospects of trade but also about every affliction or important stage in life. For example, when a new baby is born the parents consult the *malam* about the most propitious name to give to it. *Malams* thus have a strong hold on their clients. They form an order of their own, with a ritual hierarchy which is almost parallel to the political hierarchy, largely made up of the landlords of the trade, of the chief of the community, and of his advisors. All landlords and senior *malams* have the title *hajji*, gained after pilgrimage to Mecca. They regularly meet with the chief to deal with problems affecting the community as a whole. In these meetings decisions are conveyed to the more junior *malams*, who duly translate them and pass them on as ritual advice imparted to their clients. Thus the ritual activities of the *malams* uphold the authority of the chief and ensure the compliance of his subjects to his decisions.

Other crises of life are similarly dramatized and politicized in differing degrees of intensity. Marriage is everywhere related to the distribution of power between groups, and every marriage is thus a political event of the first order whose elements are symbolized in the ceremonials. In some systems its symbolism serves as an articulating principle of social organization, such as in the caste system or in lineage systems of different sorts (see 14, pp. 110–18). Even the birth of first son is an occasion for both rejoicing and anxiety for the father, and in many systems there are elaborate customs of avoidance between the two throughout life in order to relieve tension and inhibit violence (29). Among the Hausa, almost invariably a relative of the parents would by custom take the first born to raise in her or his own home. The conflict between father and first born son is caused by the potential competition between the growing son and the father over property and authority. Fortes (29) emphasized that in addition to these causes—in fact underlying them—there is a more fundamental source of anxiety felt by the

father after the birth of his son. The latter transforms him into a parent and this, while being cause for rejoicing, is also a sign that a biological replacement of him now exists.

All crises of life are interrelated and form the basis of the human condition. In all societies nearly all crises are ceremonialized, but often unequally. In some societies one crisis is emphasized and made to serve as an articulating idiom of political organization; in others two or more are equally emphasized. In the same society an affliction can be attributed to different mystical causes such as the anger of the dead or the wicked activities of witches, and it is the insight of the diviner that decides which is the relevant cause in each particular case.

THE OBLIGATORY IN SYMBOLISM

Why is the symbolism of life crises so universally manipulated in politics? First, it deals with perennial problems that are not amenable to scientific solutions and is therefore essentially ambiguous, not given to immediate searching scrutiny. This is why it is often said that one cannot argue with a ritual. For the same reasons, symbolic forms and practices are highly manipulable. The employment of dramaturgical techniques such as music, dancing, poetry, costuming, and alcohol drinking at most life crises ceremonies plays on the sentiments of the participants and sways their belief and action in this direction or that. Often in these circumstances it is not belief that gives rise to ceremonial but ceremonial that conjures up and gives definite form and structure to belief. It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad once said that what concerned him was that a Muslim should pray five times a day; as to what went on in the mind of the worshipper, it was between him and Allah.

All this points out that the frequent and repetitive performance of ceremonials related to a crisis of life within a group would raise and enhance the consciousness of its members about the existential problem involved. For example, in a society where for some reasons death is not intensively and extensively ceremonialized, the reality of death is for most of the time absent from the minds of its members. In contrast, where death and the dead are heavily celebrated, as among the Creoles of Sierra Leone, the problem of existence is frequently on people's minds. For this reason it is difficult if not futile to look for basic common psychological denominators across cultures, because the intensity of feeling is itself a variable. The symbolism of life crises is like a rectangle which by definition has two dimensions, one existential, the other political. Both dimensions are to some extent manipulable. But if one dimension is reduced to nil, the shape will

cease to be a rectangle and the whole reality of culture will disappear, which means that the phenomenon one is investigating would slip away. All normative culture is two-dimensional and is thus irreducible to either politics or psychology.

The second reason why the symbolism of life crises is so universally politicized is its intrinsic potential for becoming an impelling force, a valence, a categorical imperative, an "ought" that can move women and men to action spontaneously "from the inside," without the immediate incentives of reward or the threats of punishment from the outside. This feature of symbolism stands in sharp contrast with patterns of action that are contractual, utilitarian, and rational, and are implicit in purely political relations, though both types of action, the symbolic and the political, are interrelated. When a political group cannot coordinate its collective action by means of a formal association, it resorts to an informal type of organization that relies for the compliance of its members on the obligatory instead of the contractual. The obligatory, whether moral or ritual, pervades all social life. Even the most formal associations rely, in one organizational function or another, on some forms of obligation. The difference between formal and informal, between the associational and the communal, is a matter of degree. Thus, social order in a modern society, whose framework is maintained by state institutions like the police, courts, laws, and the ultimate threat of physical coercion, is largely effected in day-to-day living by moral and ritual obligations that are developed, objectified, and maintained through symbolic forms and symbolic action.

To probe deeper into the nature and the dynamics of political symbolism, it is therefore essential to explore the source of the obligatory in symbolic action. Why does political man—shrewd, calculating, utilitarian—also have to be symbolist man—idealist, altruistic, nonrational? How are purely political interests transformed to the most intimate moral and ritual obligations that impel man to action without exterior constraints? This is a problem with which I have dealt in a paper (15) from which I give here a few points.

The nature of obligation has been the subject of extensive discussion and controversy among philosophers over the centuries. Two schools of thought have been evident in the continual debate: the intuitionists, who uphold the uniqueness and irreducibility of obligation, and the utilitarians, who deny this uniqueness and explain it away in terms of egoistic calculations of consequences aimed at maximizing benefit. In social anthropology the controversy has appeared in a number of theoretical issues. For example, is kinship an irreducible principle of social organization, as Fortes (27) maintained, or is it only an idiom standing for political and economic interests,

as Worsley (71) and others have argued? Is society a natural system that can be studied scientifically, as Radcliffe-Brown (59, 60) and Fortes (28) have contended, or is it a moral system whose study can therefore never be scientific, as Evans-Pritchard (23, 24) and others have argued. More recently, the utilitarian stand has received powerful support from some orthodox Marxists who interpret all normative culture as the ideology or the mystification of a dominant class, and from the anthropologists of the transactionalist school who reduce moral action to egocentric strategies directed toward the maximization of personal benefit.

But the majority of social anthropologists remain essentially two-dimensional in their orientation regarding the obligatory and the contractual as different variables intimately involved in all social relationships. Kinship relationships, for example, have both moral and utilitarian strands, and the main task of the anthropological inquiry is to isolate the one variable from the other and to show the nature of the causal or dialectical relation between them. Thus, within the main paradigm of social anthropology, the obligatory in symbolism is a phenomenon *sui generis*, having its own impelling force which, though always interrelated with the political constraints of the collective, remains essentially irreducible.

One attempt to identify and define the source of the valence, the impelling force, in symbolism is implicit in Turner's (64) well-known distinction between the sensory and the ideological poles within the structure of the ritual symbol. In the course of ritual, the symbol effects an interchange of qualities between the two poles. Norms and values become saturated with emotion, while the gross and basic emotions aroused by the sensory pole become ennobled through contact with values. The irksomeness of moral constraint is transformed into the love of goodness. Ritual symbolism is thus a mechanism which periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable.

This is a very illuminating analysis of the manner in which symbols operate. But it is mainly concerned with the working of symbolic techniques such as color, music, dancing, and the use of the human body, and not the obligatory in symbols. What is more, not all symbols have material representation, and some of those that do are not particularly pleasing or desirable.

Another formulation is provided by Moore & Myerhoff (54), who, in a discussion of secular ritual, suggest that the hold of ceremony on participants derives from its "traditionalizing effect"—a phrase they borrowed from Apter (7)—from its potentiality for making new material traditional as well as perpetuating old traditions. Ceremony does this by employing some formal properties that mimic its message. These properties include

repetition, acting, stylization, order, evocative style, and the presentation of a social message by its very occurrence. They go on to explain (54, p. 8):

In the repetition and order, ritual imitates the rhythmic imperatives of the biological and physical universe, thus suggesting a link with the perpetual processes of the cosmos. It thereby implies permanence and legitimacy of what are actually evanescent cultural constructs. In the acting, stylization and presentational staging, ritual is attention-commanding and deflects questioning at the time. All these formal properties make it an ideal vehicle for the conveying of messages in an authenticating and arresting manner. . . . Even if it is performed once, for the first and only time, its stylistic rigidities, and its internal repetitions of form or content make it tradition-like.

Again, this sheds further light on the way symbolism operates by indicating the dynamic nature of the symbolic process, though it does not deal with the inner source of obligation, with the uniqueness of "ought." The formulation may be sufficient for the practical purposes of field study and of sociological analysis, and it may be that any further search may only lead to sheer speculative discussion. However, because the issue is so crucial for social anthropology, the inquiry is worth pursuing, as it may affect further advance in our discipline, particularly as we seek to understand *how* our two major variables are interrelated and how a change in the one affects the other.

In an attempt to probe further in this rather meta-anthropological direction, I have focused on the dynamics of selfhood (15) in relation to power and symbolism. Selfhood, the "I," the oneness of an integrated psyche, is not innate in man, but is achieved in the course of interaction with significant other human beings and of developing a body of symbolic beliefs and practices, forming a world view. Almost by definition, symbolic action involves the totality of the self and not a segment or a role within it. We achieve selfhood through continual participation in patterns of symbolic activities. These are for most people provided by the interest group to which they are affiliated: the lineage, tribe, ethnic group, caste, class. When for some reasons groups cannot organize themselves as formal associations based on contract, they attempt to organize informally through the mobilization and manipulation of the obligatory, moral or ritual, in conduct. To that extent, the pursuit of the group's aims will be ensured, not by contractual mechanisms that operate on the individual from the outside through reward and punishment, but by moral and ritual obligations, by "oughts," operating from the inside and involving the total self. The self reacts to this in a variety of ways, including the creation of new symbolic patterns that are free from utilitarian interests. In time the new patterns are exploited by new or old interests and the search for new patterns can be resumed.

A PARADIGM FOR ANALYSIS

What the above discussion indicates is that much of the traditionalizing effect of ceremonial and of the symbolic process generally derives from some basic existential and political imperatives. In all societies people are involved in networks of primary interpersonal relationships: parenthood, marriage and affinity, friendship, brotherhood, ritual kinship, cousinhood. These relationships are developed and maintained by a complex body of symbolic beliefs and practices. People also engage in symbolic activities purporting to deal with the perennial problems of the human condition. These symbolic activities may have different forms and employ different techniques of dramatization in different social groups, or in the same group at different historical periods, but the basic themes are the same, though the intensity of involvement may vary from case to case.

At the same time, the same people are the members of interest groups with some basic organizational needs such as distinctiveness and authority. These groups may differ in size, composition, and aims, but they tend to have the same organizational requirements which, when for some reasons they cannot be met by means of formal associations, are met by some basic symbolic constructions.

Thus, despite drastic changes in power relationships and the almost endless variety of cultural traditions, there are basic symbolic forms that tend to recur in different sociocultural systems and at different historical periods within the same system. The symbolic repertoire of culture is therefore not unlimited. Furthermore, both sets of basic requirements, the existential and the organizational, tend to be met by the same set of symbols. For example, the symbolism of an exclusive cult would articulate the various organizational functions of the group, provide the members with solutions to basic existential problems, and express and maintain their interpersonal relationships. Again, kinship relationships would provide members with primary, affective, moral links with other members and would thus be instrumental in the creation of their selfhoods. At the same time, the relationships may be instrumental in articulating organizational functions such as the definition of the boundaries of the group or the provision of channels for the communication of group messages.

This is indeed the very essence of normative symbols, that they cater at one and the same time to the two types of requirement. Normative symbols are thus essentially *bivocal*, satisfying both existential and political ends. This bivocality is the very basis of the "mystery" in symbolism. A man performing a ritual or participating in a ceremonial is simply unclear, mystified, as to whether his symbolic activities express and cater to his own inner needs or the organizational needs of the group to which he belongs.

At times he may be inclined this way, at others that, but often he is unaware of the issue altogether. And it is this ambiguity in their meaning that forges symbols into such powerful instruments in the hands of leaders and of groups in mystifying people for particularistic or universalistic or both purposes.

There is thus a high degree of continuity of symbolic forms, even amid substantial changes in the disposition of power. But their functions within the new political context may be different. This change in function is usually effected through changes in their recombination within a new ideology. In the process they will undergo change in their weighting, when the significance of some forms will be heightened and exaggerated and that of others deemphasized. It is through these subtle changes in symbolic forms, in their restructuring within new ideologies, that a great deal of organizational change is effected, though a few new forms may appear here or there. Thus a great deal of organizational change is often effected through continuity of old forms.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it is possible to develop a tentative outline of a paradigm for the study of political symbolism. In such a paradigm, normative culture, as expressed in symbols, is considered in its relation to political organization on different levels. To simplify the discussion, a model of an interest group, such as a power elite in a contemporary state, can be taken as an example (16, 17). The members of such an elite perform functions that are both *particularistic*, pertaining to their own sectional interests, and *universalistic*, pertaining to the public interest. Both types of interests are developed and maintained by means of an *organization*, which is usually complex in its structure, being partly *associational*, based on formal contractual lines, and partly *communalistic*, based on informal primary relationships [for these terms see Weber (69, pp. 136–39)]. The associational part is clearly visible and its observation and study pose no methodological or analytical problem. It is the communalistic part that poses a challenge to the sociological imagination.

To deal with this part methodically and empirically, we can study it in its manifestations in symbolic patterns. These can be analyzed in terms of *symbolic functions*, *symbolic forms*, and *techniques of symbolization*. A symbolic function, such as the achievement of communion between disparate individuals or groups, can be achieved by means of different symbolic forms, such as a church service, the celebration of the memory of an ancestor, or the staging of extensive ceremonies among overlapping groupings within the elite. Similarly, a ritual performance can employ different techniques of symbolization, such as poetry, music, dancing, commensality. Different organizational functions such as distinctiveness and communication can be achieved by the same symbolic form such as kinship. On the

other hand, the same organizational function such as authority can be achieved through a combination of different symbolic forms, such as kinship and ritual, as in the power of elders derived simultaneously from their genealogical position and from their monopoly of intercession with the dead on behalf of their offspring.

Such a paradigm can be significant for further meaningful research in two main directions. First, it facilitates comparative analysis across cultures and subcultures. It makes it possible to see how different symbolic forms and techniques of symbolization can be developed to achieve the same symbolic functions, and how different symbolic forms, functions, and techniques achieve the same organizational functions.

Second, it is probably a most promising device for the fruitful study of the dynamics of politico-cultural change and hence of the nature of politico-cultural causation. For although power relations and symbolic patterns of action are intimately interconnected, they differ sharply in their process of change. Marxists would refer to this as "the principle of uneven development." Changes in the relationships of power are often effected by means of symbolic continuities, not by means of new symbolic forms. An example is the manipulation of the local traditional Poro symbolic beliefs and practices in modern national election campaigns in Sierra Leone. Similar use has been made in modern contexts of such traditional forms as lineages (10, 39), castes, and ethnicity. On the other hand, a change in symbolic forms need not indicate a change in power relations. Thus, under some new political circumstances, interest groups that in the past articulated their organizational functions in terms of ethnicity may now resort to religious symbolism as a substitute to articulate the same functions. Again, some apparent change in symbolic forms may be due only to change in techniques of symbolization. For example, facial and bodily markings to indicate sex, age, and status differences may give way under new circumstances to the adoption of different types of dress to indicate the same lines of differentiation without necessarily indicating any fundamental changes in the distribution of power or in symbolic functions.

The comparative study of such situations and developments will make it possible to probe deeper into the analysis of politico-cultural causation. Analysis in social anthropology generally has so far tended to be in terms of sociocultural correlations. We often juxtapose the social and the cultural and state that the two are interdependent without going deeper into the nature of mediation between them. But two processes may operate together epiphenomenally without any necessary direct causal connection between them. It is thus essential to attempt to show how the two variables act and react on one another.

One way of doing this is to explore the dramatic process underlying the rituals, ceremonials, and other types of symbolic activities in social life. For it is mainly in the course of such key dramatic performances that the symbolic order and the power order interpenetrate one another, so to speak, to produce, and repetitively reproduce, the bivocality and hence the mystificatory nature of the major symbolic forms. In these performances, selfhood is recreated in terms of the symbolic forms that articulate the changing organizational needs of the group; and organizational needs are thereby transformed into categorical imperatives that impel the individual to action through the inner dynamics of selfhood. In this way, the study of sociocultural causation and change becomes the analysis of the creation or transformation of dramatic forms, their production, direction, authentication, the techniques they employ, the process of acting them out, living them through, and the transformation they bring about in the relationships between the men and women involved in them.

The sociological importance of the analysis of the dramas of ritual and ceremonial has been stressed within social anthropology by a number of writers, among them Gluckman (33, 34, 36), Turner (63), Peters (58), Mitchell (53), and Frankenberg (30, 31). Turner in particular has developed dramatic analysis into an effective method for the study of the dialectical relations between politics and ritual action. It is possible that further advance can be made in this direction through a more systematic isolation and definition of the variables involved and through the application of the method to the study of symbolic action generally. This will also have the effect of rendering the vexing controversy about the difference between ritual and secular ceremonial irrelevant.

A drama is a limited sequence of symbolic action, defined in space and time, which is formally set aside from the ordinary flow of purposeful social action. In this sense the drama is not an imitation of life but a symbolic construction. It is also in a sense timeless. Ordinary social life consists of complex processes of events involving a multiplicity of actors, themes, variables, issues, and purposes in a never-ending sequence. In contrast, the drama selects a few elements that are not obviously related in ordinary life, indeed that are often contradictory, and integrates them within a unity of action and of form, a *gestalt*, that temporarily structures the psyches of the actors and transforms their relationships.

This usage of the term drama is thus narrower than the metaphorical sense in which "all the world's a stage" and the ordinary phenomenological flow of ongoing social life and social crises are treated as "theatrical" events. Turner's (63, p. 19) "social drama" encompasses both a series of actual events occurring over a long period of time and involving a number of

people in their daily quarrels and alliances, and the performance of ritual dramas in the narrower sense of the term, within an overall analytical framework for which Gluckman (36) coined the term "extended case method." I am here using the term in its more restricted sense in order to highlight a number of issues involved in the analysis of sociocultural causation. The two senses of the term "drama" are of course not opposed to one another but mark differences in emphasis. For even a "pure," formalized, highly conventional drama like a church service or a wedding reception or a ball is always interpenetrated in its procedure by nondramatic events that are not formally designed as parts of the original dramaturgical script.

Politico-cultural causation operates in a continual series of dramatic performances on different levels of social organization. These performances objectify norms, values, and beliefs; interpret the private in terms of the collective, the abstract in terms of the concrete; confirm or modify relationships, temporarily resolving contradictions; and always recreate the belief, the conviction of the actors in the validity of their roles in society.

The work of the anthropologist in such analysis is akin to that of the dramatist in the Brechtian tradition (see 3, pp. 129–51; see also 41) whose play would take a familiar, everyday event out of its ordinary ideological sequence and "throw it into crisis" by placing it in the context of a power struggle in society. In a recent study (17) I attempt to do this by demonstrating how ordinary symbolic performances—a dancing ball, a university graduation ceremony, a funeral service, a wedding festivity—repetitively reproduce or modify power relationships and how they combine in a culture which functions instrumentally in transforming a category of senior civil servants and professionals to an interacting, cooperating, and cohesive power elite. In a more recent study I focus on a West Indian annual carnival in London, showing how in the course of about 14 years a cultural performance originally staged by a few hundred people has evolved into a massive politico-symbolic drama, mobilizing in its preparation and staging hundreds of thousands of black unemployed and semiemployed for political action.

The analysis of cultural performances as dramas is only the last stage of a long, sustained, and demanding research procedure. This is because the paradigm requires a *holistic coverage* of the social and cultural life of the group one would be studying. In order to discover the relations of power, one has to study economic and political institutions and to analyze the interconnections between them; and in order to discover the symbolic order, one has to study the major symbolic institutions because these are often complementary and interchangeable. It is only after identifying the two major variables that a final analysis and presentation of dramatic perfor-

mances can be made, although a more preliminary analysis of them would have to be made in the process before this stage is reached.

This holistic coverage of both the total culture and the total power structure of a collectivity distinguishes social anthropology from other social sciences like economics and political science, each of which tends to be concerned mainly with one institution which is abstracted from the total social reality. In this respect it is not open to the charge, often made by Marxian writers against "the bourgeois sciences," of compartmentalizing knowledge and of thus preventing the student from comprehending and apprehending sociocultural totalities.

But because the method is so demanding, social anthropologists are forced to confine themselves to a small area of social life at a time, though without losing sight of the fact that that area is a part of ever-encompassing social units that form a total structure. How to delineate such a small area of social life, and within which total structure to consider it, are methodological problems that have been hotly debated in the literature. One systematic attempt to deal with them within social anthropology can be found in Devons & Gluckman (19).

A more elaborate discussion of the issue is given in recent Marxist literature, including formulations by some of those Marxists who still regard themselves as anthropologists. On the whole, these writers are opposed to the study of such social units as status groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, elite groups, neighborhoods, and villages, on the ground that by concentrating on these the anthropologist would wittingly or unwittingly reify them, present them as given "in the nature of things," and thereby in effect legitimize the capitalist system which has created them. Since a true Marxist is a person whose theoretical work is related to the *praxis* of struggling against world capitalism, nothing would be valid short of the study of the total structure of world capitalism, which is supranational, cutting across all boundaries. However, some of these writers would concede that a smaller unit must be delineated, and the current tendency by many Marxists is to study a "social formation," a unit defined in terms of both mode of production and the ideological institutions that are related to it. But the application of the concept is far from easy and clearcut, and writers have been using it in a rather loose fashion, sometimes applying it to a small-scale area of social life, sometimes to a whole complex nation-state, and sometimes even to the whole world (see 56, pp. 367-68). Some Marxists even use the term "ideological formation" [see, for example, Adlam et al (1, p. 27)] for a discipline like psychology. A more pragmatic approach has been to recognize the present nation-state as a meaningful unit (see 68) in such studies. This is particularly so as even those societies that

have a "communist mode of production" today form separate nation-states which are sometimes even in conflict with one another, like the Soviet Union and China, indicating that often national interests override class interests.

In my own work (10, 11, 13, 16, 17), I have dealt with communal groups within the framework of nation-states and advocated this explicitly as a research strategy. To operationalize this for anthropological research one can adopt, *as a heuristic device* at least, a pluralistic view of the nation-state as consisting of a multiplicity of power groups based on economic and political interests, including groups organized on the bases of age, sex, ethnicity, religion, occupation, locality. This concentration on the study of sociocultural groupings need not entail, as some Marxists fear, a subscription to pluralism as a political ideology, although the communist parties of Western Europe have now publicly declared their abandonment of the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat and their intention to uphold the pluralistic nature of their societies. Even Marx conceived of classes as each consisting of a plurality of different interest groups, not as simple overarching global entities. It was in this sense that I once stated (14, p. 17) that classes are a figment of the imagination of sociologists, a statement which predictably drew some caustic remarks from some commentators.

The study of the total structure of world history must certainly be the goal of all social science. But if this study is not to be merely an ideological doctrine imposed by a monolithic political party in the name of *praxis*, it will unavoidably have to depend all the time on the cumulative findings of numerous studies of various formations, aspects, and levels by different people with different interests, experience, knowledge, and training. World society today is a colossal and complex system and its study cannot possibly be accomplished by jacks-of-all-trades. Thus the study of international capitalist corporations will require knowledge of extensive bodies of facts and figures as well as methodological skills that can be acquired only after long training. The same applies to the study of law and the judicial process or to the study of international relations. The student in such studies may not have the interest, the training, and the time for the comparative study of the forms and workings of ideologies of cultural performances. The argument by some Marxists in anthropology (see 20) that such specializations are only mystificatory bourgeois strategies cannot really be taken seriously. One can do *original* research in only a limited field at a time, but the findings can be systematically related to the cumulative findings of others. All true development of knowledge proceeds from the parts to the whole and from the whole to the parts.

In the study of political symbolism, the anthropologist can thus apply microsociological techniques to the holistic study of a relatively small area

of social life, which is systematically considered within the framework of the nation-state, relying on the findings of other students for knowledge about the economic, political, social, and cultural institutions of the wider system.

TOWARD A UNIVERSAL DISCIPLINE OF SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

What is clear from the foregoing discussion is that the symbols of normative culture are almost by definition bivocal, being simultaneously both political and existential. They are not politically neutral. One result of this for the anthropological enterprise is the difficulty of establishing a science of cultural symbols, a symbolic anthropology, which seeks to study pure "symbolic systems" by discovering regular relations between symbols without systematic reference to the dynamics of power relations.

Some serious attempts to overcome this difficulty have been made by a number of anthropologists whose findings have been reviewed recently by Turner (65). A few of these schools of thought explain the symbols of culture in terms of a system of logic which is ultimately rooted in the structure of the mind or of language. A survey of their literature will so far yield only a few, rather axiomatic, general formulations. For example, numerous studies in this field seek to demonstrate the truisms of binary or complementary oppositions: right-left, white-black, and so on. A good example can be found in a recent book, *The Reversible World*, edited by Babcock (8), containing a collection of studies arguing the universality of symbolic inversion in all human activities, including literature, art, religion, play, relations between the sexes, systems of classification, the marking of group boundaries. The idea of inversion is also brought to bear on political action by some of the contributors. Thus Rosaldo (61) shows how colonizers sought to enhance or justify their control of the Ilongots by attributing to them traits that are the inversion or negation of what they regarded as their own traits. The individual papers in the collection are interesting and important, each in itself, but the general argument does not add much to what was said earlier by many other writers.

A different orientation in developing a science of symbols is represented by the formulations made by Dolgin, Kemnitzer & Schneider (21) in their lengthy introduction to a recent volume of readings. The collection contains 28 papers by different writers, including C. Geertz, D. H. Hymes, H. Marcuse, K. Marx, M. Sahlins, D. M. Schneider, and V. Turner. Many of the works are well-known masterpieces on different topics; all deal with issues involving symbolism. But the introduction seeks to develop an analysis of the common denominator between the papers, namely symbols and

their meanings as considered on their own, and to offer a definition and outline of "Symbolic Anthropology." The result is a series of astonishingly obscure and mystifying formulations that in many places defy understanding, purporting to show in the end that symbolic action can be understood only in terms of other symbolic action. The confusion is not so much a reflection on the editors as on the nature of the enterprise. This is perhaps symbolized in the title of the Introduction: "As people express their lives, so they are . . ."—an out-of-context quote of a half statement made by Marx in *The German Ideology* (50, p. 42), in effect inverting the founder of dialectical materialism into a tautologous idealist!

The endeavor to develop a science of symbols and meanings has attracted some of the most brilliant, original, and imaginative minds in anthropology. This has been its strength and also its limitation. Its strength stems from the *individual* creativity displayed in works of contemplation and vision, covering topics from art, literature, logic, linguistics, philosophy, theology, and psychology, marshalling stimulating quotations and apt illustrations, making witty statements and observations, and conjecturing meanings for symbols. Leach (42, p. xvii) once said that Lévi-Strauss inspires him even when he does not understand what Lévi-Strauss is saying. In a similar fashion different readers find different points of interest and inspiration in the works of these symbolologists. But when one finishes reading a work in this genre, one begins to wonder where the exposition would lead and how the inquiry could be developed further from there. So far, the different individual contributions in this field do not seem to add up to a *discipline*—a discipline in the sense of the recognition of a clearly defined problematic, a clear methodology, and a clear procedure for cumulative effort—discipline in the sense that students can acquire the knowledge and the skills that will enable them to make their own original contributions to the collective enterprise. There are of course those who argue that the study of human society generally cannot lead to the development of a discipline of this kind. But many others believe that it can, or at least postulate such a possibility as a guide for systematic research.

Power and symbolism are the two major variables that pervade all social life, and social anthropology already has the possibilities for developing the study of the relations between them into a promisingly cumulative discipline with a working paradigm to guide a fairly open-ended research. What it needs further as a discipline is to be truly comparative, covering the study of urban as well as rural, industrial as well as preindustrial, communist as well as capitalist systems, demystifying in the process ideologies of all sorts, particularistic and universalistic, rendering conscious what is essentially nonconscious, and thereby throwing new light on the nature of man, society, and culture.

There are Marxists who deny the possibility of objectivity in such research [see for example(20)]. They are of course right in that all students of society bring to their intellectual activity, knowingly or unknowingly, their own sectional interests, prejudices, sentiments, and ideologies. But the remedy is not to abdicate from our intellectual effort and surrender our reason to the dictates of a monolithic ideology in the name of *praxis*. The remedy is in a never-ending, constructive criticism directed at our findings, in classes, seminars, conferences, journals, papers, and books. The potentialities for such a permanent, institutionalized tradition of criticism already exists in many centers of sociocultural research. In these centers the training of a social anthropologist involves continuous, rigorous, and relentless criticism, often made by students and teachers and general readers who hail from different social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds, including Marxism. Indeed, as Anderson (6) points out, Marxism itself, as a living critique of society and of thought, exists today principally in Western or Western-oriented universities; in the Soviet Union it was eradicated soon after the death of Lenin, when Stalinism took over. I would go further and say that as a discipline that aims at the analysis of political symbolism in all the various aspects discussed here, social anthropology is essentially the child of Marxism, for it was Marx who initiated the systematic analysis of culture in relation to the power structure.

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