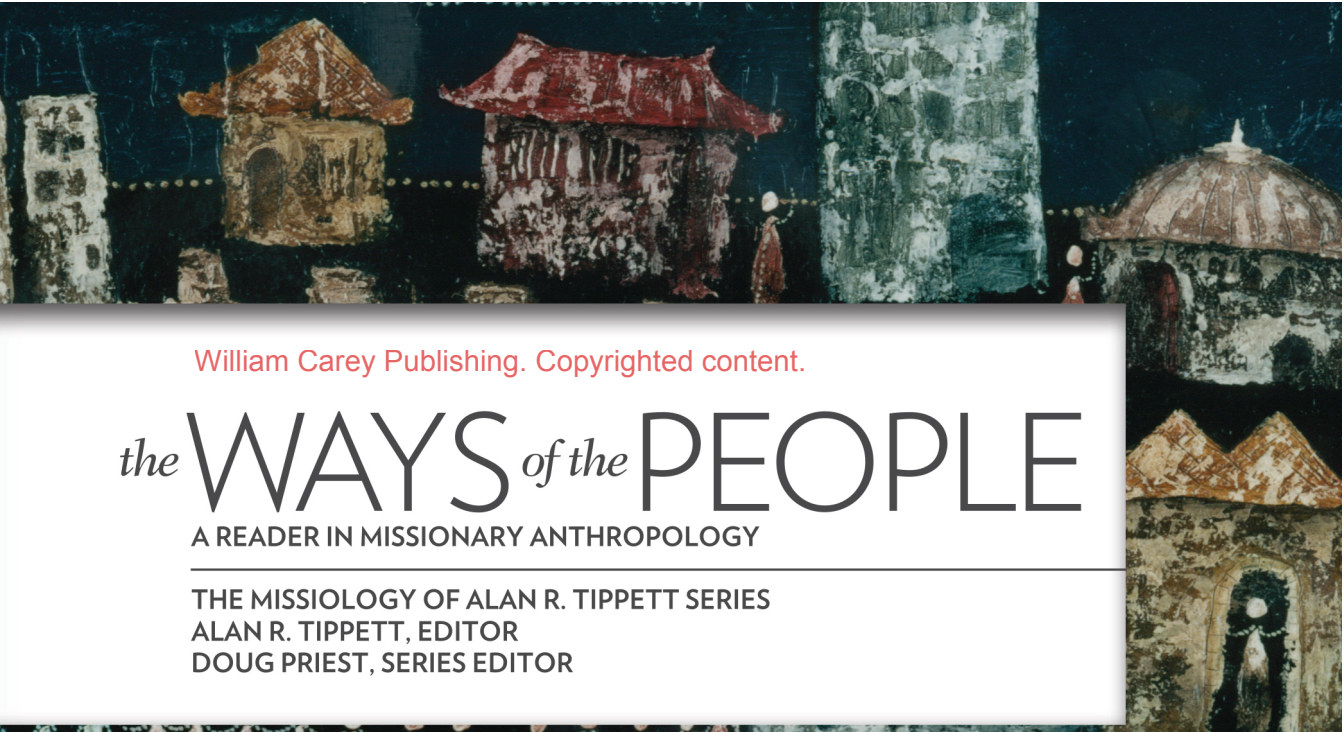


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the WAYS *of the* PEOPLE

A READER IN MISSIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY

THE MISSIOLOGY OF ALAN R. TIPPETT SERIES
ALAN R. TIPPETT, EDITOR
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The Ways of the People: A Reader in Missionary Anthropology
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Published by William Carey Library, an imprint of William Carey Publishing
10 W. Dry Creek Circle
Littleton, CO 80120 | www.missionbooks.org

Francesca Gacho, editor
Brad Koenig, copyeditor
Pourio Lee, cover design
Josie Leung, interior design
Wisnu Sasongko, cover art, courtesy of Overseas Ministries Study Center

William Carey Library is a ministry of Frontier Ventures
Pasadena, CA 91104 | www.frontierventures.org

23 22 21 20 19 Printed for Worldwide Distribution

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The ways of the people : a reader in missionary anthropology.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-87808-467-8
1. Missions--Anthropological aspects. I. Tippett, Alan R. (Alan Richard), 1911-1988, editor of compilation. II. Priest, Doug, 1952- editor of compilation.

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A HISTORY OF MISSIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY

Introduction

A whole generation of professional anthropologists—E. B. Tylor, Sir James Frazer, R. R. Marett, and others in Britain, and Lewis Henry Morgan in America—depended on missionary material as their databases. They established firm connections, and much of their correspondence is extant. They developed their anthropological theories by the use and misuse of hard facts observed by missionaries. This is how the world came to hear of Codrington, Fison, Scudder, Osborne, and many other field missionaries. Frazer in particular has been criticized for this by a later generation which has generalized that all missionaries are unreliable for source material. But if there is one thing that cannot be done, it is to stereotype the missionary. No one was more aware of this than Morgan, Tylor, Frazer, and Marett. Hays tells how Frazer put it to Fison (and also to Baldwin Spencer, who acknowledged Fison and Howitt as his masters):

> The books of Fison and Howitt and Spencer and Gillen broke ground in many ways. They remained classics of field observation. They were the first unbiased, closely observed, general treatises of a particular culture made by men with a scientific point of view who had attained some familiarity with native languages and had gained the confidence of their informants . . . Frazer's final judgment was: "Books like mine, merely speculation, will be superseded sooner or later (the sooner the better for the sake of truth) by better induction based on fuller knowledge; books like yours containing records of observation will never be superseded." (Hays 1964:99)

Take, for example, Morgan's *Ancient Society*. His study of the consanguine family could never have been worked out but for missionary assistance. [I use the 1963 paperback reprint edition of Morgan's 1877 work.] The Rotuman tables (1963:428–32) were supplied by Osborne, a contact Morgan had from Fison; his Tamil tables (456–61) came from the missionary Scudder; his Tongan and Rewan tables (1871:568–83) were supplied by Fison. Whatever modern anthropologists think of Morgan's theories, they cannot escape the validity of this data, as Frazer pointed out.

Now it would be just as wrong for me to stereotype the early missionary as "a good anthropologist," as it is for the critics to regard him as a "narrow-minded bigot." The fact

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is that missionaries are people, and should be treated as people. Their psychological and intellectual types are very much the same as those of teachers and doctors of the same cultural context and generation. Missionary records have to be subjected to the same tests of reliability and used in the "historic sense." Certainly as far as the internal documentary evidence of reliability is concerned there is no trouble. Currently we are developing a technique of missiographical criticism, and it is, therefore, foolish to ignore the fact that some early missionaries would have been fine anthropologists were they alive today with today's research methodologies.

Where there are biases, they are transparent. In my time I have studied thousands of missionary documents and books, and I think one can be confident about a few claims:

(1) Almost all the missionaries were primarily on the field *as missionaries*. They were concerned with presenting a gospel for acceptance, in the belief that it would lead their converts to progress and happiness.

(2) Many, but certainly not all, of them were pietistic to such an extent that they were not concerned with saving anything of the cultures of the people to whom they went. They did not destroy the cultures but expected their converts to do so. They spoke of everything of the old way as "dark."

(3) Others (and they were quite numerous especially in the pioneering period) in spite of their bias towards Christianity and civilization (an unfortunate combination) were very perceptive of the native values, and honestly tried to preserve what they felt was good in a culture. This type of missionary decreased in the late Victorian Age.

(4) Many of these early missionaries of the second type were good observers, kept clear field notes, learned the languages, described the cultural features—religion, economics, aesthetics, values, social organization, and so on. For the contact period, frequently these are the only descriptions we have, and they are essential for any study of culture change. In his study of the customs of Dobu, Malinowski had access to a little material published by the missionary Bromilow. Bromilow and his colleague, Gilmour, both had knowledge of "the *kula* ring," which was one of Malinowski's prime interests. (1967:165, 184)

(5) Most of the language work—reducing unwritten languages to writing, preparing grammars and dictionaries (under the motivation of translating the Bible)—was done by missionaries. Many of them learned and spoke well, using the finer nuances. Most professional anthropologists for the first half of the twentieth century used missionary grammars and dictionaries for their fieldwork. For example, Malinowski used the grammar and vocabulary of missionary W. G. Lawes for the

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Motu (1888) language and W. J. V. Saville's for Mailu (1912). He called Saville "stupid," but he built on his research. Saville's work had been published by the Royal Anthropological Institute (1912). Later on, Saville offered Malinowski the use of some of his manuscripts (1967:5, 25, 44). Malinowski also discussed problems of the language with missionaries, e.g., with Gilmour. (ibid., 183)

(6) The same two types of missionaries are reflected in missionary publications. There are the books published for the consumption of those who sponsor the missionary cause. These were appropriate only for their precise purpose, and need to be evaluated for what they are. But there are other books—and they are very numerous—in which missionaries have set out to describe the cultural mores of the people with whom they work. These are of great anthropological value, and it is from these that I have drawn the material for this book. In some cases, like *Fiji and the Fijians* by Williams and Calvert, we have one volume of Fijian customs and another of mission history. This compartmentalization is a good arrangement.

(7) The anthropological type of missionary volume may be a full book-length monograph, like Fox's *The Threshold of the Pacific* (1924), or Junod's two-volume study, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1912), or in more recent times my own *Fijian Material Culture* (1968), a diachronic ethnohistorical reconstruction. Even more numerous are the technical articles written by these missionaries, like Fison's research paper on the Nanga of Wainimala (1884) or Gill's many writings on Polynesian mythology, or Harrison on the religion of the Haida (1891). All these items are pure anthropology and, brought together, they would fill a whole series of volumes. Many of these were published either in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, the *Proceedings of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, or the *International African Institute.*

(8) There is one other kind of missionary writing. I speak of the biographical volume of missionary experiences. Many of these contain choice anthropological passages buried in the pages. For example, several fine passages are buried in John Williams' *Missionary Enterprises* (1837), and an account of Evans' Cree alphabet may be extracted from Egerton Young's *By Canoe and Dog Train* (1891), and a description of appropriate behavior in the presence of a Maori chief, from James Buller's *Forty Years in New Zealand* (1878), to mention just a few.

These extracts selected for inclusion in the Reader have been drawn from all these types of missionary writing. I have not made any conscious effort to cover every region of the world, but rather to select a wide range of anthropological topics, regardless of where they happen to come from. I have certainly not sought any denominational scatter of the

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missionaries, except that I decided (with some regrets) to confine myself to Protestant missionaries. I am sure that a similar volume could be prepared for the Roman Catholic fields, but it should come from a man who knows Catholic missiology.

Putting this Reader together has been anything but a game. It is meant to meet an urgent felt need—some kind of a collection of readings for seminaries and Bible colleges where missionaries are being trained, and where anthropology is a part of the curriculum. Often there is a resistance against it even being in the curriculum at all. So this book has the latent motive of pressing home to Christian institutions the notion that the missionary cause has produced many fine anthropologists, and that one does not have to be a materialist or an agnostic to be an anthropologist. The more immediate and manifest intention, of course, is to provide a collection of readings to go with a course on social and applied anthropology as it might be most profitably taught to people about to enter the cross-cultural experience.

This book has been inspired by the decisions of "The Curriculum Committee on the Training of Missionaries," which met at Milligan College, Tennessee, in April 1974, and which issued the following statement:

> (1) The training of cross-cultural missionaries for the changing times and conditions of the mission fields of the world in our day, requires more and more understanding and empathy. For many years the discipline of anthropology (especially such aspects as social and applied anthropology, acculturation, cultural dynamics, the phenomenology of religion, and ethnolinguistics) has been inadequately utilized in the majority of educational institutions where missionaries are trained. With the availability of this kind of education in our day, the sending forth of missionaries untrained in anthropology is no longer justifiable.
>
> (2) We recognize that the missionary situation in the world has changed dramatically since World War II, and that the old methods need revision, and the training provided for missionaries needs to be more relevant to the new situations. This requires a reevaluation of missionary methods and a reconsideration of fields of concentration in any missionary training curriculum. Although many institutions are no longer training missionaries, we recognize that as long as missionaries do go forth, under whatever auspices, they need to be trained within a well-developed and cross-cultural curriculum.

With this resolution in mind I have tried to select suitable readings to accompany a course in social and applied anthropology. The arrangement of the selections is supposed to suggest the structure of such a course. The component parts are life history and enculturation, kinship structure and relationships, social organization, aesthetics and economics, communication, religion, magic and ritual, culture contact and cultural dynamics,

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social values, urbanization, ethnopsychology and ethnotheology, methodology, and applied anthropology. Some of these relate directly to Christian mission, like the items in cultural dynamics which deal with the development of indigeneity, the phenomenology of conversion, and applied anthropology in mission. But I submit that these are also legitimate anthropological subjects for the study of culture change. Otherwise this is a book of anthropological readings, pure and simple. The editor hopes that readers about to plunge into cross-cultural situations will find profit from the readings in this book and help in identifying the main themes of social anthropology. It is not so important that you look at New Britain or Samoa or Zululand, but it is important that you understand how different social groups function, maintain their equilibrium, and organize their daily lives. Any stranger from the outside may throw a group into disequilibrium if he does not understand the role of the out-group person, as the in-group people conceptualize it. As Shakespeare said, "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

The necessary arrangement on a basis of subject matter demands some kind of historical survey of the evolution of the place of anthropology in Christian missions, so that the Reader may place the selections in their respective regional and historical contexts. This long, accompanying essay is simply a "History of Missionary Anthropology"—the story of the struggle between those who saw paganism as entirely dark and those who sought cultural values and stepping-stones for bringing pagan men face to face with Christ, and ultimately to become new men in Christ. *This is a matter of attitude, not of theology.* It is essential for the reader to understand at the outset that both conservatives and liberals have been found in each camp.

This raises the whole question of the relationship of anthropology to missiology. Missiology is the scientific approach to the business of Christian mission. Sometimes it is called the "science of mission." It concerns *the method of carrying out* the divine commission (Mt 28:18–20). The anthropological components of missiology bring us face to face with the problems of social organization, social disequilibrium, cultural voids, functional substitutes, syncretism, meaning, and dynamic equivalence. The cross-cultural communication of the Christian message to a people who have never heard it involves the missionary in a number of anthropological problems. Missionary anthropology is thus concerned with (1) making missionaries aware of their needs for cross-cultural communication, (2) providing a theoretical frame of reference for understanding those needs, (3) suggesting practical ways of demonstrating that understanding so that the scriptural norm and the regular behavioral norm may not be in conflict to such an extent that the society falls into a state of disequilibrium, and (4) helping missionaries to live as people among people with empathy. To these ends missionary anthropology comprises *research, theory,* and *application.*

The anthropological problems confronted by the missionary are:

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