

deciding exactly which societies may truly be said to constitute "house societies." Also included are transcripts (somewhat fragmentary) of discussions held by the contributors, who are members of a CNRS research team in the comparative ethnology of Southeast Asia.

What then are the essential features of a "house society"? The salience of the concept of "house" within indigenous categories must be one, as Carsten ably demonstrates in her paper on the Malays of Langkawi. An ideal of permanence is another, which raises questions in the Borneo context about whether it is the longhouse itself, or the apartments of which it is constituted, which in any particular case act as an enduring corporate body and should properly be regarded as "houses." Furthermore, does the passing on of names, goods and titles through houses necessarily mean that "house societies" must be hierarchical? This is implied in Lévi-Strauss's writings, but is nowhere specifically addressed by him. While Guerreiro sees rank as an essential feature of a "house society," Sellato notes that in some egalitarian societies such as the Iban and Selako, longhouse apartments also form units which pass on heirloom wealth and are not supposed to die out. He concludes that, although the majority of Borneo groups cannot really be seen as "house societies," it is not exclusively to the stratified ones that the concept may be applied. Given the ambiguities of the Iban case, one must address the possibility that the features attributed by Lévi-Strauss to the "house" could be distributed over more than one unit of the society: there are some contexts in which the household acts as a unity and others in which the entire longhouse, or even a group of longhouses, does so. In such a case, it is problematic to decide which one of these is the "house." Again, the relation between a "house," in the sense of a group of people, and the house as an architectural structure, is in practice variable and requires to be carefully examined. Fox points out that in different domains of the island of Roti, the concept of "house" (*uma*) is applied at different levels of social organization. A provocative note is introduced by Rousseau, who denies that the concept of "house" has any heuristic value at all. The clearest and consistent analysis in this volume comes from Bernard Sellato, particularly in his concluding paper, which provides a thought-provoking examination of the relations between house organization and political hierarchies in different parts of the archipelago. This is a stimulating book, which perhaps raises more questions than it answers; it is a pity that its production should be marred by such an extraordinary number of misprints.

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MOSER, DIETZ-RÜDIGER. *Fastnacht-Fasching-Karneval. Das Fest der verkehrten Welt* [Fastnacht-Fasching-Carnival. The celebration of the reversed world.] Graz/Wien (Austria): Verlag Styria, 1986. 382 pages. 406 plates, 85 of them in color, bibliography, indices of names, places and subjects. Cloth DM 98.—or öS 695.—; ISBN 3-222-11595-8. (In German)

Where Asians appear in this book we are clearly faced with instances of that illfamed "orientalism" which *imagines* Asians rather than really looks at them. But this is not the author's attitude, he does nothing but show how Asians (Japanese, "Moriscos")

etc.) were, or at times still are, one impersonation of a structural aspect of carnival as far as they represent the non-Christian and therefore the foolish world. Such a clearly biased statement brings us immediately into the main theme of Moser's study of central European carnival in its historical and ideological foundations and some of its contemporary forms. His thesis could be formulated approximately as follows: Carnival, as it is celebrated in central Europe, is an eminently Christian celebration, which has its ideological roots in St. Augustine's concept of two opposite reigns, the heavenly city and the earthly city.

Celebrated at an important junction of the liturgical year when the Church is about to enter a period of fasting in preparation of the pivotal feast of the Resurrection, carnival is the period of licence, debauchery and excessive merriment which are the hallmarks of the earthly city, and thus has no lasting value. In the face of the heavenly city such behavior is doomed and so only a fool could persevere in it and believe this state could last for ever. Therefore, in spite of all its extravagance and vulgarity, carnival has an eminently moral message because it would teach people that although to make mistakes is part of the human condition, not to recognize this as a situation in need of redemption is the sign of a fool. Moser shows, among other things, how this idea is time and again expressed in the notions of the "ship of fools" and its counterpart, the "ship of the Church." Those who miss the right moment to transfer to the "ship of the Church," which alone guarantees safe conduct to a secure harbor, are the hopeless fools.

Making abundant use of a great variety of documentary sources the author traces the roots of such seemingly nonsensical contemporary behavior as dressing up in cloths covered with colorful patches, or appearing in animal disguise or even impersonating death. According to his interpretation the patches are to signify the sins which disfigure a human being as the dark spots on the soul. The animals are the symbols of unbridled vices as pride (peacock) and sexual desire (goat). All of these are to be overcome by the faithful if they are to celebrate Christ's Resurrection. Even death fits in here logically, because it is the strongest warning against taking all this merriment too serious. Moser mentions that many participants in today's carnival have forgotten such meanings, but his argumentation does not merely uncover the astonishing consistency and tenacity in the use of basic symbols over the centuries, it also makes carnival emerge as an eminently paedagogic means used by the Church in order to have the faithful become aware of their precarious albeit human situation. From this point of view it becomes understandable why the Church, although always warning against excesses of the celebrations, never forbade them outright, except for her priests and religious. They, by the force of their vows, definitely belonged already to the heavenly city and could therefore not partake anymore in the activities of the earthly city, the foolish world.

The author does not claim that celebrations of a "reversed world" are particularly Christian. He does say, however, and supports his statements with findings from the history of the term "carnival" and its German equivalents, that the *term* signifies either renunciation of meat (carnival) or the night before the fast (Fastnacht) begins, which is characterized by refraining from meat. Accordingly, these are neither old Germanic terms for pre-Christian rites as it has repeatedly been claimed, nor a derivation from "*carrus navalis*," a "reconstructed" term which supposedly meant a float carrying a ship in the procession of Dionysos and therefore would be proof for the non-Christian roots of carnival (see RECTOR 1984, 39 for a recent example). Moser shows that all attempts to link the terms for this celebration to pre-Christian rites or times lack a base in linguistic evidence. Yet still more decisive are the facts he amas-

ses to prove how this celebration in fact is thoroughly grounded on medieval Christian thought and worldview. In this sense Moser's is a study with clear limitations, treating as it does carnival as a celebration of this-worldly futility, but aimed at inculcating more lasting values. However, as a result of this he arrives at a clarification of terms with a wider theoretical implication.

Although Moser does not spell it out directly, his study is a strong reminder that in the analysis of celebrations of a reversed world in general the term "carnival" ought to be used with more circumspection than it has often been the case, if the term is to be successfully used as an analytic tool in scientific discourse. If his analysis is correct, and I think it is indeed, then not every kind of behavior that reverses everyday order is a carnival in the strict sense, although it may exhibit carnival-like features and therefore could be called "carnavalesque." "Carnival" in the strict sense would be restricted to the milieu it originally came from, i.e. to the framework of a Christian ideology. Here the reversed world is more than a parody of order, it is an incentive for personal renewal and the rebirth of a lasting order (see BAKHTINE 1970, 19-20). On the other hand there are celebrations which aim at the renewal of the world by celebrating its reversion without referring to a Christian ideology. In order to account for the difference between the two kinds of celebrations and still retain their structural similarity we might learn from Turner's distinction between "liminal" and "liminoid." This is to say that in light of Moser's argument it seems to be more reasonable to use a term like "carnavalesque" for such behavior and to reserve the term "carnival" to incidents of ritual inversion with a Christian interpretation.

This is a fascinating book in many respects. Along with a wealth of material it offers inspiring insights into the amazingly diversified ramifications of thought and representations concerning carnival. And all this is presented in a form and language which makes reading a pleasure throughout. To crown it all, the publisher has been most generous with wonderfully produced plates which by themselves alone make the book a valuable source of easily grasped information about the pervasiveness and importance of the idea of carnival in central European culture. The book is rewarding for any student of ritual, and this at a most reasonable price. The fact that it is in German does not limit its significance to the German speaking public.

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