

Music of Indonesia 8: Vocal and instrumental music of east and central Flores. Smithsonian Folkways, 1995. SFCD 40424

Music of Indonesia 9: Vocal music of central and west Flores. Smithsonian Folkways, 1995. SFCD 40425

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DANIEL, VALENTINE E. *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence.* Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. xii + 252 pages. Maps, illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$49.50; ISBN 0-691-02774-9. Paper US\$15.95; ISBN 0-691-02773-0.

Since 1983, Sri Lanka has been experiencing a storm of terrorism as never before. In the past seventeen years, an incumbent president, a presidential candidate, and a number of influential politicians have all been murdered during election campaigns; reverberations of the terrorism even led to the murder of the former President of India, Rajiv Gandhi, in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, scores of soldiers of the Sri Lankan army as well as Tamil guerrillas—many of them mere teenagers who had a future to look forward to—lost their lives in the fighting. This current state of affairs has resulted in a serious depletion of the population to the extent that even if the fighting stops immediately, the manpower needed to support the future of the country will be lacking.

The present volume is an ambitious attempt to build an anthropological theory of violence based on the unfortunate interethnic struggle in Sri Lanka. The author, Valentine Daniel, is an anthropologist born in Sri Lanka but active mainly in the United States. His earlier work, *Fluid Signs* (1984), about his complicated upbringing as the child of a Christian English mother and a Hindu Tamil father, attracted attention as a trenchant work that broke the mold of traditional anthropological monographs with its unique use of description and reflection. The present work will also attract attention for being controversial. Any controversy that may arise, however, I hope will not undermine serious consideration of the author's deep sympathy for the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka and his sharp criticism of modern Western civilization.

The neologism "anthropography" in the book's subtitle is a term the author purposely uses to distinguish his work from "ethnography." A distinction is important to the author because for him "ethnography" would "parochialize violence, to attribute and limit violence to a particular people and place" (7). This choice of words reflects the author's strong desire not to dismiss the violence occurring in Sri Lanka as a phenomenon characteristic of a non-Western society. On the contrary, the author is committed to uncovering and criticizing the occasions of violence in modern Western civilization in light of the situation in Sri Lanka.

The significance of this book lies in its analysis of Sri Lankan violence as a means to critique Western civilization and even all of humankind.

The volume consists of an introduction and seven chapters. The introduction and chapter four are original contributions while the remaining chapters are revised versions of articles published between 1989 and 1996. As the author admits, "Unlike the chapters of a conventional book, [the chapters of this book] do not march to a single point; they barely sustain a consistent thesis" (6). The chapters are arranged in the chronological order in which they were published as articles. Although originally published separately, the continuity and consistency among the chapters gives one the impression that from the outset the author intended to publish them together in a single volume. This impression is enhanced by the similar issues that pervade every part of the volume.

In the short introduction, the author states his fundamental standpoint on the issues. In chapters one, two, and three he introduces the basic information and the general frameworks to be used in the later discussion. In each chapter, the author introduces first the framework for his analysis and then proceeds to apply that framework to concrete incidents of violence against the Tamil of Sri Lanka. In chapter four, in an attitude of reflective awareness, he discusses the meaning of "narrating" and "writing" a local culture for ethnography, and in particular for his own anthropography.

The analytical frameworks the author proposes are ones that postmodernists should consider. The discussion proceeds from the beginning with rather complex rhetoric and frameworks interwoven with examples of violent events in Sri Lanka. This sets the general tone of the book. It is the same method as the one applied in the earlier publication *Fluid Signs* and aptly reflects Daniel's personality.

In chapter one the author compares the Sinhalese majority with the Tamil minority. He contrasts the Sinhalese inclination to reconstruct an ideological "history," with the Tamil inclination to hold a culturalist view emphasizing "heritage." He further indicates the unique position of the Estate Tamil, a minority among the Tamil who were transplanted from Tamil Nadu by the British Colonial Government in the nineteenth century as plantation laborers. He distinguishes the Sinhalese orientation towards history from the Tamil orientation towards heritage by using Pierce's "formal semeiotic terms" such as "dicisigns" (dicent signs) and "rheme" (thematic signs); in other words, he understands them as "signs whose effects are seen to have been actualized in some 'here and now'" (dicisigns), and as "a sign that has a qualitative possibility as its significant effect" (rheme) (27). He concludes by saying that "[of] all three ethnic groups, the Estate Tamils are most aware of their nonessentialness, that they are beings in the making, sheer concrescence in the meeting of history and heritage" (42).

In chapter two he analyzes logically the process by which the Sinhala orientation towards history became tied up with "national violence"; in chapter three he considers in minute detail some examples of the situation pertaining to the Estate Tamil as they are part of Sri Lankan society. In these two chapters he again makes full use of coupled (binary) oppositional terms (e.g., "seeing/being," "the ontic/the epistemic," "historical/theoretical," "agricultural/agronomic") in a brilliant analysis (46-47).

In chapter four, which is described as "transitional" (104), the author considers violence more fully and reflects on the workings of writing his book and its various narratives. First, he likens the procedure for writing his book to the procedure of constructing a tetrahedron where the three sides each have three triangular planes (104). This chapter's title "Mood, Movement, and Mind," applies, as the author asserts, Pierce's "Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness." Furthermore, he examines what it means to speak of violence or describe it as an anthropologist. He says that he originally began the chapter with the intention to relativize

the master narrative on violence but wound up concluding that the description of the various narratives itself is for the author a human endeavor or a procedure to become human.

With chapter five begins the second half of the book. Here he contrasts beauty with pain, and, by using Pierce's opposite terms "qualisigns (qualisignificant)/sinsigns (sinsignificant)," he categorizes the pain that comes with violence. In chapter six he shifts his focus of study to refugees who went to England from Sri Lanka. He points out that for refugees the nation-state is not "the ultimate unit of protection," as it is generally thought, but functions as a device of oppression and violence. In the seventh and final chapter, the author strongly emphasizes that reflection on violence is no longer a reflection on a particular problem but is a reflection on human beings, or more precisely, on human beings who have undergone the process of civilization.

As the author himself asserts, this volume's content is complex like a tetrahedron composed of many sides. Although readers will be intrigued by the variety of analytical terms appearing in each chapter and by the author's brilliant rhetoric, I suspect that they will find it considerably difficult to grasp the points the author tries to make in his arguments. There will, most probably, be disagreement about whether a scheme of binary or ternary oppositions as the author likes to use them really helps to better understand the issues involved.

As compensation for the complexity encountered in the reading of this book, powerful "ethnographic" descriptions are given. Perhaps the author felt such compensation was desirable when describing at the end of the book a meeting between a Tamil gentleman and a Kandyan Sinhala woman (211–12). Ironically, it is the ethnographic descriptions of events in the book that have the power to reveal the anthropographic problematic addressed and to criticize the very structure of the present world.

It should be added that Sri Lanka's strife cannot be solved any longer as an internal affair; it is situated in a web of intricate international relationships, behind which the dark structures of the present world come in and out of sight. This strife, furthermore, is related to factors that are all inextricably linked with capitalism: Sri Lanka's historical contacts with India, and Sri Lankan relations with terrorist leaders based in foreign countries and with countries exporting arms. Criticism of the strife in Sri Lanka, therefore, must be seen as a criticism of the capitalist system and implicitly of all capitalist societies.

In conclusion, it can be stated that what the author calls "anthropography of violence" can only emerge through a discussion that is philosophical and speculative as well as historical and political.

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HONKO, LAURI. *Textualising the Siri Epic*. FF Communications No. 264. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1998. 695 pages. Hardcover FIM 300; ISBN 951-41-0812-4. Paper FIM 275; ISBN 951-41-0813-2.

HONKO, LAURI in collaboration with CHINNAPPA GOWDA, ANNELI HONKO, and VIVEKA RAI. *The Siri Epic as Performed by Gopala Naiḱa*. Part I. FF Communications No. 265. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1998. lxx + 492 pages. Hardcover FIM 250; ISBN 951-41-0814-0. Paper