

The two chapters that are concerned with economic activities (Dessaint and Dessaint, and Hoare) address directly and at length the changes that have been taking place in the hills since the late 1950s. The same chapters also question (as does Walker's chapter on Buddhism among the Lahu) the well-known hills vs. plains dichotomy based on geographical, ecological, cultural, and religious criteria, and take into account the current interethnic relationships in the area. This approach has proved fruitful in recent research, and indeed has become inevitable in the face of the rapid changes taking place in the hills of North Thailand.

That the two chapters which directly address the issue of change are both concerned with economic factors is perhaps understandable in view of the fact that the changes are most readily apparent in economic activity. Yet since traditional life-styles encompass such activity, changes in the economic situation would most certainly be accompanied by changes in the way a people views its tradition. Economic and cultural aspirations cannot be isolated in considering the rapidly changing conditions in the hills. Hoare's chapter is a case in point. If, as Hoare concludes, it is because traditional life-styles are not sufficiently remunerative that the Lahu are approaching lowland life-styles, and not because of any changes in cultural aspiration, why is it that a Northern Thai-style house is becoming a coveted status indicator?

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INDONESIA

STEEDLY, MARY MARGARET. *Hanging without a Rope: Narrative Experience in Colonial and Postcolonial Karoland*. Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, and History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. xvi + 306 pages. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$49.50; ISBN 0-691-09461-6. Paper US\$16.95; ISBN 0-691-00045-X.

Over the past decade, narrative analysis has formed one of the principal currents of the postmodern anthropological approach; through their study of narratives, anthropologists have attempted to explore what classical anthropology either ignored or was unconscious of. In *Hanging without a Rope*, Mary Steedly focuses on narrative experiences in an attempt to elucidate power relationships in colonial and postcolonial Indonesian society.

Following Bakhtin and Bourdieu, Steedly distinguishes between two types of historical representation: official history and unofficial history. She defines official history as "public representations of past experiences" (238) that are monolithically ordered by those who are dominant. Official discourse strengthens the relationship between the dominant and the subordinate; the dominant attempt to regulate activities and events into generic and "socially accepted" representations. Those activities and events that the dominant reject are contained by reducing them to the realm of the "private" and "scandalous." Unofficial history, on the other hand, is a more personal version of past experience, one that is partial and multivocal. It refuses generalization and is potentially subversive to the official order. Official representations are closely related to political authority, while unofficial representations are linked with subaltern experiences.

For the author, narration includes not only the expression of life experience but also the living out of stories. Experiences in narratives, and the narratives themselves, are always shaped through discourse with the audience, narrative convention, and the deformation of the narrative convention. Subjectivity is constructed through narration.

Although the book contains an explicit discussion of narrative theory that cites the

ideas of several literary critics, the author does not develop an adequate political theory. This inadequacy is reflected in her discussion of the subject of experience and ideology. Steedly cites Althusser's theory of dominant ideology (and ideological state apparatuses), noting that ideology makes individuals recognize themselves as subjects whenever they are hailed or undergo experiences. She claims that ideology recruits all individuals, even though they may not recognize this themselves. Thus, she writes, "subjects may work by themselves in unexpected and perhaps unintended ways — though always with the risk of being hailed as 'bad subjects'" (27). In her discussion, ideology is closely linked with subject construction. She does not, however, theoretically examine ideology any further. She alludes to the existence of ideologies other than the dominant or state ideology in her ethnographic description, but she never discusses the relationship between the dominant and nondominant ideologies. Nor does she explain how subjects are constructed under plural ideologies, or how Althusser's theory of ideology — which is "specific to the bourgeois epoch" (EAGLETON 1991, 149–50) — applies to colonial and postcolonial Indonesian society.

Furthermore, Steedly's theoretical discussion is sometimes at odds with her description of the narratives. Although she says that narrative experience is shaped through negotiation with the audience, nowhere except in chapter 6 does she give any indication of the audience's reaction to the narrations (and even in chapter 6 she only mentions brief questions from the audience). As CRAPANZANO (1980) notes, the audience's reactions and questions are often alien for the narrator, and may cause a new self-consciousness to arise in him or her. In Steedly's ethnographic descriptions we miss an account of the process in which the narrator's new consciousness is constructed.

Steedly's discussion of experience and representation extends to ethnographic description, and she criticizes new trends of postmodern ethnography, especially the approach of self-reflexivity. She claims that this approach "unself-consciously" resituates "the iconic author" in the text and tries to reproduce the "transparent" subjective experiences of the ethnographers. (She notes that field experiences are different from ethnographic representations of the experiences.) And, she continues, such ethnographies "efface . . . all subjects except for the author/narrator" (19), implying that an original subject, or a subject besides the author, can exist in the ethnography.

She does not, however, really address the claim of postmodern ethnographers that reality in the field is subjectively perceived and experienced by the observer. In other words, she does not address the question of how she as an ethnographer understands others.

In spite of these criticisms, Steedly's work comprises a significant contribution to Batak ethnography, helping to alleviate the dearth of analytical studies of Batak narrative. Studies of the perspectives and narratives of women are particularly needed, since women's voices are absent in Batak ethnographies (except for BOVILLE's descriptions of Toba Batak women's views of marriage in urban contexts [1986]).

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