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O N E

Introduction

E . P A U L D U R R E N B E R G E R

There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success. The fertile earth, the straight tree rows, the sturdy trunks and the ripe fruit. And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange.

STEINBECK, 1939:477

Steinbeck was writing of California. We write about the world as the processes he described in *The Grapes of Wrath* have overtaken the planet. He outlined the processes (1939: 324–325):

And the great owners, who must lose their land in an upheaval, the great owners with access to history, with eyes to read history and to know the great fact: when property accumulates in to few hands it is taken away. And that companion fact: when a majority of the people are hungry and cold they will take by force what they need. And the little screaming fact that sounds through all history: repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed. The great owners ignored the three cries of history.

The land fell into fewer hands, the number of dispossessed increased, and every effort of the great owners was directed at repression.

In the twenty-first century the processes have become globalized, as Paul Trawick discusses in his paper in this volume. And now the dispossessed in California come not from Oklahoma and Arkansas as they did in Steinbeck's day, but from Latin America where great corporations have replaced the great owners of Steinbeck's time and have exacerbated all of the processes he described. Today we cannot even find the face of the owner, for it is a corporation. And, as Griffith discusses in his work in this book, it is no longer just California that receives the refugees from corporate rapacity but many other areas of the United States as well as other lands.

Wherever ethnographers do fieldwork, we see these processes at work. We see them in the great cities as the burgeoning informal economy (Smith 1990; Hart 1973, *in press*) or young peasant women working in factories in China and Southeast Asia (Pun Ngai 2005; Mills 1999; Wolf 1994) or Mexican people reorienting their lives from production on their own land to industrial agriculture (Zlomnicki 2010) or factories (Heyman 1991) and in whole regions as they adjust to the new economic structures (Narotzky and Smith 2006).

The global flows of capital escape ethnographic attention because they are not localized to any one place for us to see (Durrenberger 2004; Durrenberger and Erem 2010). But we see the results wherever we look (Lewellen 2002; Truillot 2003; Nash 2007; Nordstrom 2004, 2007). When we can look ethnographically at Steinbeck's "batteries of bookkeepers to keep track of interest and gain and loss," (1939:317) as Gillian Tett did, we can see their thought processes at work if not the results of their actions as they try to create wealth out of nothing (Tett 2009). These financiers succeed in benefiting themselves richly at great cost to the rest of us, leading to increased global repression, hunger, and war as the works of Carolyn Nordstrom (2004, 2007) graphically illustrate.

In increasing the disparities of wealth and income both within countries and among them, the processes of globalization have highlighted the distinctions between the local and global owning and working classes. Corporations have become more powerful as they control not only local and national economies but global processes (Bakan 2005; Anderson, Cavanagh, and Lee 2005). In the United States they have forged a cul-

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tural revolution to make these processes appear to be natural and inevitable (Doukas 2003; Fones-Wolf 1995) and to encode these tenets in a mindless media state (deZengotita 2006). The owners have learned the third of Steinbeck's historical lessons. While one of the chief instruments of mind control of ancient states was to insist on belief in counterexperiential religious doctrines (Durrenberger and Erem 2010), modern corporations rely on media manipulations of reality that they can own. Classes vanish in this fog, and all too often contemporary scholars willingly follow the corporate lead.

WHY STUDY CLASS?

Today's globalized political economy accentuates the inseparability of class and culture. As anthropologists who want to understand the nature and dynamics of culture, we must also understand the nature and dynamics of class. The way people understand life is determined by their daily experiences, which are in turn determined by their class positions in their political-economic systems. As Marx famously put it, the windmill gives us feudalism while the steam mill gives us capitalism. The microchip gives us a global economy and a global class system.

The place where I lived in central Pennsylvania in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States is a graveyard of dead economic systems, its landscape cluttered with stone ruins of iron-smelting furnaces, canals and systems of locks, lime kilns, and place names incorporating the words "furnace," "port," and "mill." More recent artifacts such as the mammoth Bethlehem Steel plant go the way of the water-powered weaving factories of Lowell, MA, becoming museum artifacts on a greater scale than the pyramids of Egypt and leaving behind the appellation of "rust belt" for a whole region. The displacement of such a massive industry as steel making—which seemed such a permanent fixture of the landscape and the economy—left a region in shock with a generation of unemployed workers. When US white-collar workers began losing their jobs in the 1980s, awareness of a new economic system slowly began to spread.

In the past some such changes have been so slow that they did not become obvious within a generation. The much accelerated pace of change that has accompanied the microchip revolution reveals these processes and connections more clearly and swiftly, and a generation has entered the

twenty-first century with no expectation that they could follow their fathers into the mine or mill for a lifetime of work, a job.

Now not only in the rust belt but all over the United States and much of the rest of the world, both parents work “outside the home” in unstable employment situations to try to make enough money to sustain their households. Neoliberal rhetoric has become the language of expectation as a generation has been taught that it is natural and legitimate to think of people and jobs as disposable and that people need to be flexible to meet the demands of markets, while loyalties of class, family, kinship, region, and other groups are at best passé and at worst an unrealistic and illicit betrayal of self-interest in a neoliberal market system. When everything is a market commodity, there are no collective interests, only individual ones. It is difficult for people who have grown up in the neoliberal “ownership society” to imagine that it was through collective action that preceding generations achieved the work conditions, wages, and benefits that they look back on with envy and perhaps resentment. They may then turn that resentment on unions as somehow causes of their misery rather than potential liberators.

In the United States we hear much about a middle class that, after the economic crisis of 2008, was increasingly guarded about its prosperity. Around the world, we hear much of starvation and the major part of the global population that lives on meager incomes. But the middle class of the global North and the sweatshop workers of the global South are linked in a single global system. The privileges of the one are contingent on the misery of the other, though paradoxically, they have more in common than is immediately apparent to either because they share the same structural position with respect to capital.

To understand these similarities, though, we have to be able to see beyond what is obvious to the people inside the systems, what Marvin Harris (1974) called the cultural dreamwork that obscures the realities of their lives. While some cultures may leave this dreamwork to individuals or make it collective, in the United States it is an industry (deZengotita 2006). Americans live in—and in terms of—a culture that has been manufactured during a long and hard-fought cultural revolution to propel market sensibilities, the gospel of wealth—that capital creates wealth—into consciousness and to erase from that same consciousness such realities as class and the gospel of work—that labor creates wealth (Fones-Wolf 1995; Doukas 2003; Durrenberger and Doukas 2008).

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Anthropologist Sherry Ortner (1998, 3–7; 2005) participates in the dreamwork when she recognizes the reality of class but then dismisses it as objectivist discourse and discusses it as “a culturally constituted identity.” To insist on focusing on the manufactured “native categories” is to contribute to the problem, not its solution. Such a rhetorical move is akin to the magician’s trick of directing our attention to what the left hand is doing while the obscured right hand does its magical work to deceive the eye. This sleight of hand leads Ortner into long discussions of other identity issues such as race and gender, which, while they may also be economically constituted (Brodkin 2000), are not equivalent to class any more than any other issue of identity is.

To say as Ortner does that, culturally, race eclipses class is to ignore, as Schwartz (1998, 15) put it, that “class is no less real than the moon when it is being eclipsed.” For Magellan to infer the shape of the earth from its shadow on the moon required that he focus on the earth that cast the shadow and not get lost in the shadow itself. If we want to understand the dietary practices of Hindus, we must understand the ecological and economic role of cattle, not their role in the dreamwork of sacred cows (Harris 1974). If we want to understand class in the United States, we must understand its role in the structure of the political ecology and not its role in the American dream. Thus, what Americans think, if anything at all, about class is not relevant.

To break out of these ideological “native” constructs requires the kind of conscious empirical and theoretical work that the contributors to this volume have done. We mean this book to make class visible to anthropologists and to move toward an adequate anthropological treatment of class both theoretically and empirically.

The contributors have worked together using the classic means of anthropology—ethnographic and archaeological description, holism, and cross-cultural and cross-temporal comparison—to address a series of issues in terms of their separate ethnographic and archaeological experiences to explicate the relationships among people’s daily experience and how people understand their worlds—consciousness—and how each of these relates to class—their position in the economic system. Thus, class and consciousness.

The work we make available here in one place brings together historical and ethnographic reference points for meaningful comparisons. While the contributors span the globe from Mongolia to China to Iceland, Mexico, and Brazil, most of the works are anchored in the United States. This moves

anthropology away from the comfortable sites of exotic peoples and remote times into the everyday worlds of many of our readers.

Because class is ideologically so prominent, especially by its energetic denial in the United States, China (Pun Ngai 2005), and other contemporary state societies, we all focused on the distinction between the outside realities of class—the etic—and the internal views of class—the emic. In this volume we explore the processes by which class is related to culture and how people think—what we call *consciousness*.

THE INVISIBILITY OF CLASS IN THE UNITED STATES

Discussing matters of class in the United States, editor Lewis Lapham (1988, 3) said:

Within the free-fire zones of the American language the uses of the words ‘money’ and ‘class’ shift with the social terrain, the tone of voice and the angle of the sales pitch. Few words come armed with as many contradictions or as much ambivalence.

In 1901 at its organizing convention, the Industrial Workers of the World proclaimed there were but two classes, the employing class and the working class, which had nothing in common. By the 1950s, the claim that there were any classes in the United States had been labeled as communist-inspired ideology to be avoided at the risk of being un-American. The official American ideology proclaimed a classless society, and people who thought otherwise could be persecuted from their teaching posts and rejected by publishers (Ehrenreich 1989, 25). Some anthropologists today act as though it might still be dangerous to discuss class or to understand it.

Ironically, this was one ideological component that the United States shared with communist nations, which saw any discussion of class to be anticommunist. Sociologists could not deny inequality and could discuss stratification and socioeconomic status along with “roles” that were characteristics of individuals, like gender and occupation. Whether one was a bank president or a janitor was a matter of one’s choice of role. At the same time, while American sociologists, with few exceptions, denied the existence of class as a meaningful category, they described various socioeconomic statuses and gave us the endearing term “socioeconomic status” or SES as a proxy. Their reference point was their own shared experience of the mana-

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gerial middle class in terms of which all other class or role behaviors were somehow deviant (Ehrenreich 1989, 25–29).

By 2005, as the rich became much richer and the workers became poorer (but with wider access than ever to consumer goods produced by even poorer workers around the world), the United States appeared less class bound than ever because religion, race, and possessions were not sure guides to a person's place in the social hierarchy. But statistics showed stark class contrasts. Class had become a clear predictor of lifespan, health, residential location, choice of marriage partners, and of who got into universities, much less "good" ones (Keller 2005, xi). As class divisions were becoming greater and more apparent to those who were looking, class became more invisible to most Americans. The stronger the phenomenon, the more we have denied it.

By our inattention to these processes and by our complicity with the process, some anthropologists have contributed to the denial of class, to making it invisible as it becomes more undeniable. With this book, we hope to help reverse that process.

Capital is wealth that does not have to be consumed, that can be used to produce commodities that can be sold on markets. Some people own capital; most do not. By expanding the meaning of the term *capital* metaphorically to incorporate knowledge (cultural capital) and social relations (social capital), we have performed an ideological magic trick akin to the financiers' magic of creating wealth out of nothing—we have made capital seem universally available.

Everyone has some knowledge and some social relations. If knowledge and social relations are forms of wealth, or forms of capital that can produce wealth, everyone has some and everyone is an owner of capital, a member of the capitalist class, and class divisions disappear. But we are left with the nagging facts of disparate health, longevity, residences, and security not to mention opportunity (Durrenberger 2002, 2006). In the traditional sense of the word, there are still those with disproportionate access to and control of capital, but they have become camouflaged among all the other owners of capital, just like everyone else, not a separate class with distinct interests.

August Carbonella and Sharryn Kasmir (2006) argue that for a historical moment in the second half of the twentieth century, the industrial workers of the United States merged into a culture of consumption that successfully

bought them off and disguised their subordinate status with the appearances of prosperity.

Ehrenreich suggests (1989) that the “middle class” is that part of the working class to which the capitalist class has granted perquisites and privileges in return for managing the work of the others. The ideology of meritocratic individualism assures these people that they deserve their privileges because of their talent, hard work, good individual choices, or other measures of merit. At the same time, the less privileged deserve their fates because of some lack of merit or bad individual choices. The work of Katherine Newman in the 1980s (1988) shows how this self-justifying ideology supported those who fancied themselves denizens of this middle class to justify their own access to privilege and then betrayed them when they lost their jobs. Thus, people who thought of themselves as members of this middle class participated in a cultural illusion, part of the dreamwork created to distract them from the realities of their own and others’ lives.

Also in the second half of the twentieth century, scholars discovered poverty, defined it as a topic of inquiry, and described the cultural characteristics of the poor as pathologies relative to the life-models of the managerial middle class to which such scholars belong. These works contrasted affluent workers with pathological, racialized ghetto dwellers. Poverty—rather than their structural position in the political economy as unemployed—was a characteristic of the poor: a status, an identity. These studies distanced the affluent working class who were pleased to refer to themselves as middle class, from the inherently poor (Ehrenreich 1989).

In his discussion of the ways that newspapers perpetuate the myth of classlessness, Benjamin DeMott (1990) shows what can happen to ethnography when we don’t make these connections. In a special report, a *New York Times* reporter cites ethnographic work on drug dealers by anthropologists from the University of Colorado Medical School, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and San Francisco State to suggest that the drug dealers chose to reject secure jobs with training, Social Security, pensions, health insurance, and other benefits familiar to the managerial middle class in favor of short careers dealing drugs that result in death, jail, or both. From the point of view of the managerial middle class, this choice is simply stupid.

DeMott concludes that the purpose of this *Times* story is not to elucidate the interior views of the lives of people involved in the drug trade or

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how their experience of school initiated them into the awareness that they are fated to be losers facing no meaningful job or training opportunities. The distinction the article establishes is the distance “between the middle [class] and mental darkness” (1990:115). Once the *Times* writer establishes that distance, it is appropriate to chide and rebuke those involved in the drug trade. Such stories reassure the meritocratic middle minded that there are no differences of class, only differences of brains, merit, status, and identity—good choices (of the middle class) and bad ones (of the poor). The stupid deserve what they get, as do the meritorious.

Thus the ideology of the managerial middle class is as closed and self-referential as Evans-Pritchard’s (1937) description of Zande magic. It makes reasonable all kinds of deficit theories—the idea that some individual deficit is at the root of any problem an individual suffers and the person can remedy it with appropriate effort or help (See Rubin 1994; Durrenberger and Erem 2010). All plane crashes are the result of pilot error.

In this book we make those connections, though they take us into times past and distant places. We show the connections among the denizens of haute couture beauty shops and the primitives living romantically environmentalist lives outside the range of nature-ravaging capitalism—and how these images are part of a corporate campaign to seduce women to purchase simulated experiences of “greenness.” We show how the people of the periphery see through the forms of control to formulate populist responses to the realities of corporate global degradation to realize the nightmare scenario of Steinbeck’s large landowners. We move class to the center of anthropology and join June Nash (2007) in moving anthropology into the realm of the global nexus.

HOW CAN WE MAKE CLASS VISIBLE?

From an abstract theoretical anthropological perspective, it may not be difficult to define classes in industrial societies, whether capitalist or communist. These orders are first and foremost state societies. The cultural ecologists of decades past taught that states are the institutional forms that guarantee one class privileged access to resources in a system of unequal access that defines classes. Whatever the form of the state, there is a privileged class that is set apart from the rest, and the asymmetry is enforced by more or less disguised use of force on behalf of the ruling class.

Eric Wolf (1999) discussed several ways a ruling class may extract economic value from other classes, including kinship and tribute. In kinship and tribute orders, classes may be more readily visible as there is no particular interest in disguising class distinctions, and typically there are reasons to *accentuate* them. Thus they become visible to archaeologists in succeeding ages.

From the residues of actions that archaeologists recover and interpret in terms of historical and ethnographic analogies, we can make inferences about such reasons. Reasons motivate action and are based on cultural logics that define what is culturally possible and impossible, what is imaginable and unimaginable, what is desirable and undesirable. But these systems of reasons aren't free-floating configurations infinitely variable through time and space as Ruth Benedict might have suggested (Salzman 2001). Rather, they are determined by people's experiences, and people's experiences are determined by their positions in their economic systems. Thus an emperor might marry his sister to guarantee the purity of the blood of his successor, whereas such a match would be incestuous for a peasant. An aristocrat might ride a "high horse" while a peasant might be denied such a lofty mode of transportation. The differences of experience determine the different systems of reason available to each and thus the different reasons each can develop and the different actions available to each.

Reasoning and reasons are forms of consciousness, forms of thought that are determined by people's experiences, which in turn are determined by their positions in economic and political systems and which proceed to inform their actions (Durrenberger and Erem 2010).

Consciousness emerges from action in the social and material world—employing available resources to do things with other people to achieve substantive goals. As class systems constrain people's actions in the world to provide a sense of structure, they also form people's consciousness, their cultures, and their sense of both means and ends—of what is important and ways to achieve those things. Hence the class difference in the assessment of dealing drugs versus holding down a "respectable" job, of incest versus an acceptable marriage, or of acceptable modes of transportation, fishing, irrigation, remuneration, or broadly living their lives. As people act in the world, they also change it (Salzman 2001).

Thus do people exercise agency, interacting with others to achieve their objectives, and thus does agency contribute to change. Agency is a function of goals that our modes of thinking or consciousness define as reasonable.

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Finally, experience shapes consciousness. Thus we have a more or less transitive cascade of relationships from experience to consciousness to goals to action in the world and on the world and back to experience.

DeMott provides a compelling analysis of these relationships in his discussion of a US working-class surrogate mother who contracted to be artificially inseminated and carry to term an infant for a couple of the managerial middle class in return for remuneration. When she reneged and wanted to keep the infant herself, a judge awarded custody to the middle-class couple. The court case and related events received considerable press attention in the United States. A frequently posed question was: “What kind of woman would consent to bear and sell her child?” (DeMott 1990, 96).

Lawyers called on psychologists who described her as suffering from various individual deficits from schizophrenia to multiple personality disorder. There was no issue of class, but there was one of occupation (a bio-chemist and pediatrician versus a garbage truck driver and former barroom dancer), all of which counted in favor of the better-off couple and highlighted the deficits of the less well-off surrogate couple. The language of the experts, the psychologists, described the “surrogate” mom as somehow deranged.

DeMott suggests that the freedom to credibly speak the language of class might have made a difference. Breaking her contract and kidnapping her baby landed the surrogate in court. The prosecution presented her as unstable. The defense argued that she was a victim of social injustice, that “it will always be the wife of the sanitation worker who must bear the children for the pediatrician” (DeMott 1990, 97).

The surrogate broke her contract, DeMott explains, because when she discovered that the couple that had hired her thought of her as an employee, she responded from the experience of people in her class position—people who are accustomed to being the employees of others renting out their bodies as surrogates to do things for their betters, whether it be making steel or babies.

The surrogate did not think of herself as a person engaged in making money, as an employee—in the trade of her body for lucre—but as a person engaged in helping another person who was in need. Experience taught her that people without health or other insurance or reserves of money sacrifice to help one another. Her own mother had had only sporadic employment and called on poor but generous neighbors for help (for ethnographic

examples see Stack 1997). The surrogate and her husband had likewise helped friends who suffered accidents or emergencies. We anthropologists call this *reciprocity*, and it seems familiar to us from our study of noncapitalist social orders but somehow out of place in capitalist orders based on rapacity. The surrogate envisaged a desperately troubled couple, threatened by the wife's self-diagnosed multiple sclerosis, who could not cope without her help.

She had seen people in distress turn to others helplessly, had herself been turned to previously; in her world failure to respond was unnatural. Her class experience, together with her own individual nature, made it natural to perceive the helping side of the surrogacy as primary and the commercial side as important yet secondary. (DeMott 1990, 99–100)

This and similar examples show that media and law separate actions and motives that are unfamiliar to the managerial middle class from their social grounding, because the only language available to understand the connections between actions and backgrounds is the language of class, and that is not allowed, or likely even considered. Science and law conspired to see this woman through the lens of individual diagnosis rather than class and thus remove some people from the perceptual sameness of all people to become, like the drug dealers, incomprehensible, nearly a different species (DeMott 1990, 101).

Katherine Newman (1988) provides another example of these relationships in her comparison of American white-collar and blue-collar workers. Because blue-collar workers have been subjected to layoffs and recalls their whole lives, they know that a layoff has nothing to do with them personally. If the plant is closing or laying off workers, they know it is because of something about management, not about them. Perhaps the plant is moving to another country; perhaps it is shutting down production temporarily; whatever the cause, it has nothing to do with the workers.

In contrast, white collar workers of the late twentieth-century United States expected more or less continual employment with the same employer. Their ideology of meritocratic individualism was based on their schooling and made it obvious that achievement was a function of individual effort and talent; that the more meritorious one's behavior, the higher one would rise in the ranks of the corporation. When these people were laid off due to downsizing, they reasoned that it must have been because of something

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about themselves. They must somehow be at fault, though often they could find no fault in their work efforts. This conviction repeatedly led to their personal dis-integration because the realities of their lives were no longer predictable by the logic of meritocratic individualism, the ideology that had offered them justifications and refuge while they were employed. Blue-collar workers experienced no such disorientation when they were laid off.

DeMott (1990) like anthropologist Jules Henry before him (1963) points to the ideologies and practices of schools as creating a false sense of equality and inculcating a sense of individual merit. Jean Lave (1988) points to the relationship between schooling and meritocratic individualism and suggests that cognition incorporates understandings of the individual's past, expectations of the future, formation of goals, and assessments of available social and material means, all of which are functions of class position. The trick is to be able to see the importance of that class position in a society that denies its existence in the courtroom, diagnosis, media, and schools. For that, the characteristic means of anthropology are appropriate: ethnography, holism, and comparison.

THE ROLE OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography gives us first-hand observations. Holism shows how those observations are connected to others. Comparison allows us to see similarities and differences of systems. When the people have perished, we use archaeological evidence. Archaeology contributes a wider comparative view, and the comparative view allows for more detailed archaeological and ethnographic interpretations. It also distances us so we can speak of classes, ruling classes, and states without censure or embarrassment—something American anthropologists have found difficult or impossible to do when describing our own social order.

As capitalist production expands to all corners of the globe it incorporates people of all lands and joins them in the same structure of production. The well-paid unionized dockworkers of Charleston, South Carolina (Erem and Durrenberger 2008), are part of the same system as the Chinese factory girls (Pun Ngai 2005) who produce the container loads of goods the black longshoremen in South Carolina unload en route to Walmarts to supply the culture of consumption of American workers.

As Marshall Sahlins points out (2000), people of different places and times relate and respond to the global system in terms of their own understandings and their own local practices and realities. So there is not a uniform response to globalization, but many different ones.

While we may have produced detailed ethnographic descriptions of various pieces of this global system, anthropologists have ignored the connections among the parts and said little about the relationships of power and force that create specific hierarchies (Carbonella and Kasmir 2006). At one moment capitalism brings people into it as, for instance, it incorporates village women in China. And at the next, capitalism turns upon them as, for instance, when it moves production from the United States or Mexico to China, leaving American or Mexican working people without jobs and with lower incomes—and clamoring for the cheaper goods from Chinese workers inexorably fueling the relocation of the next factory to China (Heyman 1991).

Carbonella and Kasmir (2006) suggest that by drawing these connections we can move anthropology from our historic identity as the ones who study “primitive” people beyond the reach of capitalism and challenge the traditional academic division of labor that has relegated the study of class formation, the working class, and labor unions to sociology. At the same time, this delocalizes anthropology, shifts its vision from the worm’s-eye view of ethnography to a global view in order to understand the causal forces that determine the lives of the people we see in the ethnographies. It shifts our focus from the exotic to our homelands in the global North.

Since the explosion of identity politics and cultural studies, ethnography has been appropriated by a wide range of disciplines from English to marketing to sociology (e.g., Fantasia 1988; Burawoy 1991, 2000). Usually, however, what passes for ethnography, even in sociology, is quite distinct from what anthropologists do as ethnography.

Anthropologist Harry F. Wolcott (2008,71) suggests that ethnography is directed at learning about culture. The underlying idea is that *“culture is revealed through discerning patterns of socially shared behavior”* (italics original). He admits that there may not be satisfactory resolutions to questions such as how much sharing or agreement is necessary, but others have given formal and methodological answers to such questions (see especially the works of Romney and his colleagues: Romney 1999; Romney et al. 1996; Romney and Moore 1998; Romney et al. 2000; Romney, Moore, and Rush 1996).

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It seems that most appropriations have dislodged ethnography as a set of techniques from the larger conceptual framework that gives it meaning in anthropology (Wolcott 2008). Wolcott suggests that articles in the journal *Contemporary Ethnography* and its mission statement indicate the idea of ethnography as “anything that can be studied through a fieldwork approach” (71). For some, it is any qualitative approach and does not entail quantitative methods. Anthropologists such as Romney, on the other hand, seek ways to integrate quantitative methods into ethnography to increase its validity and reliability.

Anthropologists Patricia Sunderland and Rita Denny (2007) argue that in consumer research, ethnography has been appropriated as simply another psychological method in an implicit paradigm “that assumes individual motivation and make-up are the key to consumption practices” (2007, 14). Notice, importantly, how this approach is a projection of the middle-class ideology of meritocratic individualism. Anthropologists may never live up to our ideal of cultural relativity and etic awareness, but we attempt not to project our ideologies. While there are manuals for “doing ethnography,” Sunderland and Denny offer a series of case studies meant to indicate by example “how to apply and appreciate cultural analysis in the practice of consumer research” (15). In sum, they “want to show that the real magic and difference of ethnography lies in the cultural approach and analysis, not in a different kind of data gathering” (15).

We agree, and we offer these studies in a similar vein as examples of the ethnographic understanding and study of class and its relationship to consciousness. As anthropologists, however, we extend the time horizon via archaeological interpretations and the geographic horizon to all people.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CLASS

Morton Fried (1967) provided a way of thinking about the evolution of social orders. Egalitarian forms have as many positions of prestige as there are people capable of filling them, and all have equal access to strategic subsistence resources such as land and water. Egalitarian societies would include foragers and some horticulturalists such as Lisu and Gumlao Kachin in Southeast Asia and Tsembaga in New Guinea.

Rank-ordered societies have fewer positions of prestige than people capable of filling them but maintain equal access to resources. These would

include “big man” social orders such as those of New Guinea, Gumsa Kachin, and Trobriand Islanders. While some people may organize production for short-term goals such as prestige-granting feasts, there is no compulsion.

Stratification rests on some group of people having privileged access to resources. Sooner or later, the privileged group will develop the mechanisms of the state to maintain order by inculcating in all a respect for law, an ideology that inequality is natural and inevitable, and a bureaucracy to keep track of people, places, and things. Stratified social orders include all of the familiar modern states as well as ancient kingdoms and chiefdoms.

Fried suggests the definition of class as those groups defined by differential access to resources in stratified orders. Some have privileged access to resources and others do not. All of the contributors to this collection used this starting point to address the question of how class shapes culture.

Across time and around the world anthropologists have documented the development and working of many kinds of hierarchical social arrangements. Many share certain features that Morton Fried isolated in 1967 as differential access to resources. That is, some people have privileged access to resources. Classes are groups of people in the same society that do not have the same rights to use resources. Fried suggested that such social orders could not long endure unless they developed the apparatus of states to maintain order by physically and culturally controlling those without privileged access and convincing them to accept their disadvantaged positions.

What counts as a long time varies with perspective, but such stratified societies, even in the absence of states, are remarkably tenacious over at least hundreds of years, as the papers by William Honeychurch on Mongolia, Doug Bolender on Medieval Iceland and Ann Hill on Nuosu of the Southwestern frontier of China all indicate.

A related notion of class favored by Wolf (1999) is that it is defined by place in the process of production. Class position defines who does what to whom and who gets what. This is similar to some definitions of politics, and class is just as much a political as an economic fact. This is the reason that anthropologists who wish to develop comparative understandings of economic and political systems often refer to a political economy—to suggest the necessary linkage between the two spheres.

Inculcating the belief that some people naturally or supernaturally have more power and prestige and rights to use certain things than others results

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in compliance to hierarchy. Thus class and consciousness—peoples' ways of thinking and acting—are linked. Because the shaping of culture is never complete, people may more or less successfully resist—and change—these institutions and conventions, while others may fight to uphold and reinforce them.

Josiah Heyman, David Griffith, Kate Golterman, Sharryn Kasmir, Dimitra Doukas, and Barbara Dilly suggest, in their chapters about dimensions of class in the United States, that global processes link local class arrangements to more inclusive organizations that are more or less coercive. As cultural anthropologists have confronted the consequences of globalization in our ethnographic work (see Nash 2007), we have tried to understand the workings of complex systems beyond villages and tribes and how they change through time. As archaeological data have accumulated, we have been able to expand the scope of our understandings beyond locales and regions as Honeychurch does in this volume. One of the emerging conclusions of both of these lines of inquiry is that the dynamics of class systems and structures is central.

In the middle of the twentieth century, anthropology moved beyond its early focus on islands and tribal groups to consider peasant villages and nations and more recently to the global systems that link the planet today. For instance, as Kate Golterman shows, a corporation links affluent Americans with Native Americans via the commodities upon which all focus. Paradoxically, as factories began to replace peasants' fields and tourism and industrial agriculture began to intrude into foraging peoples' domains, it is anthropology's insistence on fine-grained ethnographic understanding of people in locales that forced us to consider global contexts.

CLASS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

From the beginning, culture has been a central topic of anthropology, but class has not often been considered a central element in shaping culture, people's awareness of their social and natural worlds, or consciousness. This book develops that topic in relationship to class in several contexts from the prehistoric in Mongolia (Honeychurch) to the historic in Medieval Iceland (Bolender) to the ethnohistoric in the frontiers of China (Hill). Trawick situates the understanding of class squarely in the global political economy. Other papers focus on the fine-grained ethnography of a beauty salon in the

United States (Goltermann), the relations between General Motors and the United Auto Workers as the corporation self-consciously set out to change workers' consciousness (Kasmir), the broad sweep of American history as it affected farm women (Dilly), the complexities of the border with Mexico (Heyman), the details of immigrant workers' lives (Griffith), and developing ideological patterns of the mostly white rust-belt (Doukas).

Why do armed mobile collectives of mounted herders capable of political independence participate in a large-scale asymmetric system? William Honeychurch makes critical use of archaeological, ethnological, and documentary materials as well as anthropological theory to suggest that while the various states that would become China were warring among themselves in the Warring States period (475–221 BC), a process of crisis, social disruption, militarization, and centralization was leading to the development of the Xiongnu polity across the complex environments of what we now know as Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, southern Siberia, eastern Kazakhstan, and Xinjiang with a widespread ideology and a centralized ritual to mediate between heaven and earth. Along with greater mobility that optimized livestock and surplus production came greater social stability and more predictable productive conditions that favored local groups, so that system of stratification did not have to rely on coercion though it could amass it if conditions warranted. Honeychurch shows how individual and group productive decisions and ideologies coalesced into a thriving system that challenged China for the next four hundred years and whose successors reverberate through history from that time forward.

While archaeology can never reveal the ideas or consciousness of people to us, it can show us the consequences of their actions, especially those actions that were repetitive and widespread enough to show up as patterns of artifacts or other material remains. In the third chapter, Bolender uses such evidence to reconstruct the process of class formation in Iceland.

He discusses how differential access to rights in land defined land-owning aristocrats who commanded the labor and products of others via rental and wage agreements: renters whose access to land depended on the goodwill of landowners but who commanded the labor of others, and wage workers whose labor was at the command of aristocrats and renters.

Recognizing the limitations of documentary evidence for understanding the process of class formation, he indicates that archaeological evidence shows a three-stage process. First, large, complex, independent

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farmsteads composed of chieftains, dependents, and slaves settled in the second half of the ninth century. Within a hundred years all land was controlled by larger and smaller more and less powerful households, each dependent on its own power to defend its land as there were no overarching state institutions.

Second, in about the year 1000, large landowners substituted direct control of labor inside their households for indirect control of labor through rental arrangements on small subdivided farms to increase production and the number of people the land supported. Third, after the Icelanders ceded authority to the King of Norway, the Church became a major landowner, concentrating land ownership in fewer hands without the formation of new households. By the end of the seventeenth century, all land including Church properties belonged to only 5 percent of the people, and a small aristocracy commanded the labor and product of a mass of tenant and dependent farmers.

The ethnohistorical approach to Nuosu of the fourth chapter is intermediate in its time scale and relies on the testimony of the living, which sometimes poses problems of interpretation. Morton Fried (1967) argued that without some institutionalized means for keeping order, those without privileged access would repudiate the system of stratification and institute more egalitarian forms in which there is no differential access. Ann Hill tests these conjectures against ethnographic and ethnohistoric data. As in Mongolia, on the southwestern frontier of China, Nuosu aristocrats have privileged access to resources, but the system has remained in place, though neither uniform nor unchanged, for at least several hundreds of years. Furthermore, she argues, states and empires themselves are not inherently stable as they experience social and political upheavals such as the Communist Revolution in China and subsequent regimes. Thus while class systems are inherent in states, there may be other means to maintain class systems and stratification.

Hill shows that different Nuosu historical trajectories in different locales resulted in slaves owning property and renting it to aristocrats, aristocrats joining immigrant communities of commoners, and other anomalies. Add to this the complexities of the Republican period, the Communist Revolution, and postrevolutionary incorporation of Nuosu into the Chinese polity, and Hill argues that Nuosu represent a complex and long-lived system of stratification without a state.

Paul Trawick's chapter, the fifth, is pivotal because it provides the global perspective that is necessary for the chapters that follow. He points out that globalization has produced a new global class structure. The fossil-fuel-based mass consumption of the North has two consequences: the impoverishment of the South and global warming. The global capitalist class promotes the idea that unlimited economic growth is an unmitigated and general good that informs the ideology of finance capital, the idea that money, itself *symbolic* of value rather than real value, can increase infinitely. Thus they layer symbol upon symbol without creating any real value while impoverishing the planet. The solution, he suggests, is an ancient one that people have invented time and again when they find themselves dependent on a scarce and finite resource such as water: equal and fair sharing of a common pool resource.

Since the working class of the Global North benefits from current arrangements—with cheap food and manufactured goods—it accepts the global capitalists' fantasy of infinite growth. This ideology is equivalent to what Doukas (2003) calls the “gospel of wealth,” whereas the views of the Global South are more aligned with what she identifies as the opposing “gospel of work,” which seems to have survived among sectors of the US working class, if only as an informal ideology (Durrenberger and Doukas 2008).

In the sixth chapter Doukas focuses on a specific dimension of the ideology of wealth creation or finance capital and its elaboration into various class-based scenarios of an American crash, collapse, or catastrophe. Doukas pays careful attention to the distinction between the external realities of class and the conceptions of class that people share as cultural constructs.

She suggests that narratives of impending catastrophe illustrate class differences that would otherwise remain hidden in a society whose ideology is heavily committed to the denial of class—each class conceives its catastrophe in terms that reflect class position. In exposing an inaccessible and contemptuous global elite, working-class stories of the conspiratorial New World Order reveal an awareness of the differences between owners of capital and those who work for them. The dominant class reveals this awareness in its own way, predicting a crash in terms of the logic of the finance capital it hopes to preserve (the symbolic value Trawick discusses) against the claims of the working-class “mob.” On the border between these two classes, the middle class—those of the working class that the capitalist

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class hires to manage the rest—maintains the self-congratulatory ideology of a classless prosperity for all that disguises its class position. It discusses peak oil and other resource crises as natural catastrophes that can cause the collapse of the global economic system, again in terms similar to the ones Trawick develops.

In the seventh chapter Dilly outlines the dynamic relationships among the evolving realities of class in the United States, young farm women's conceptions of them, and how they informed their decisions about their lives. She explores the class consciousness of young American farm women. Here regional variation is perhaps even more complex than that Hill describes for Nuosu in China. As other writers in this book indicate, race, religion, and immigration status interact with capitalist social and economic structures. Here, these interactions defined gendered divisions of farm labor that limited young farm women's patterns of behavior and thought so that farmers could exploit the labor of their daughters for a wide range of productive and reproductive tasks in the expansion of American agriculture on the frontier as they either resisted or aided in the transformation from household to commercial production. A romantic ideology of kinship, labor, community, and yeoman farming disguised these oppressive practices, which in some ways appear to be analogous to the initial stage of intrahousehold stratification that Bolender discusses for medieval Iceland.

In the eighth chapter Griffith continues the theme of rural labor in the contemporary US Midwest and South. If Trawick develops a global analysis, Griffith sees similar processes from the ground up. Based on his ethnographic study of diverse locales in Iowa, North Carolina, Mexico, and Honduras, Griffith argues that consciousness of class is based on the shared experience of class. The fragmentation process creates opportunities for workers to become entrepreneurs while their household consumption demands require multiple sources of income.

The experience of immigration can also fragment people's social lives along the lines that Heyman discusses such as language, nationality, dress, food preferences, race, and immigration status. Immigrants form entourages based on loyalty and obligation to translate social relations into economic and political gain. People experience similarity and difference not in their economic positions, but in consumption. The semblance of upward mobility that results from earlier immigrants providing services to new immigrants or managing their labor together with the fragmentation of

work drive people into identity practices, employer paternalism, and multiple economic roles that militate against the shared experiences that would result in consciousness of class.

In the ninth chapter, Heyman explores the complexities of the United States–Mexico border to unravel the role of class among the many dimensions of social concepts about people. He discusses the long history of economic and political relations for organizing people as labor and how regional social and political arrangements are rooted in larger capitalist processes. The relationships of class and consciousness are convoluted as class intersects with generation, race and citizenship status, nationality, and gender to provide the strategic categories people use as they order their lives for work as factory and agricultural labor, technicians, professionals, government and domestic workers, and in the informal economy across the border.

The tenth chapter is an ethnographic account of the role of class and class consciousness in General Motors's (GM) Saturn plant. Sharryn Kasmir describes the details of the factory, how Saturn workers negotiated contracts that split them from the national-level agreements of the United Auto Workers (UAW), and how GM tried to develop a new worker consciousness based on cooperation with management and a concept of their own elite status within the ranks of GM workers. As insecurity of workers in the Saturn plant increased, they rejected management moves to reaffirm their association with the national UAW and rejected the sense of privilege that GM proffered. Like Hill, Kasmir recommends that we understand the formation of classes and class consciousness in terms of such local details of evolving relations between capital and labor.

Situating the lives of urban beauty shop patrons in their global and class contexts, in the final chapter Kate Goltermann examines class relations in a hair styling salon and their connections with class ideology as well as global commerce. She situates the salon in a network of contradictory perspectives and interests—associations with other salons, media, Native Americans, governments; with the parent corporation and its ideologies, practices, and products; as well as with NGOs and other elements of the global political economy. Paradoxically, while being remade to a certain image, women understand the distance between what they are and male-dominated ideals of beauty, especially with respect to the process of aging. Thus, the experience of the salon, while offering relaxation and prestige, also confirms insecurities. As clients are processed through the salon in a standard set of

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procedures, the operatives also ratify the ideology of meritocratic individualism and convince their clients that they are unique and deserving. In the meantime, reinforcing their own insecurities, the operatives measure the distance between themselves and their clients socially, economically, and physically. In products branded as Native American, often with only flimsy ties to indigenous cultures, the clients perceive authenticity. This suffices to persuade them that they are participating in “green” practices without having to trouble themselves to recycle trash or care about people of color. Consumption of commodities becomes consumption of a system of values and a fantasy of the eternally youthful environmentally aware and authentic person.

CONCLUSION

The papers in this volume show in specific ethnographic and archaeological contexts how class and consciousness are related and how and under what circumstances people may develop consciousness of class. People become aware, develop consciousness, learn their cultures by the experience of growing up when and where they do. Far from being free-floating configurations of ideas, cultures are anchored to the material conditions of existence that determine experience. When the kinds of historic processes that Honeychurch, Bolender, and Hill discuss result in people having differential access to resources, class becomes a crucial determinant of experience, and experience determines consciousness.

States guarantee asymmetric access to resources: classes. One of the means they use to do so is the manipulation of consciousness, the creation of dreamwork to obfuscate the realities of these inequalities either by proclaiming them to be natural, obvious, and necessary as between aristocrats and commoners, or by denying that they exist as communist and consumer capitalist orders do. This book breaks away from the comfortable conformity of some American anthropologists with our cultural dreamwork to show just how the inequalities of class structure experience and awareness across cultures and within them.

It is all too comfortable to project the consciousness of the managerial middle class and depict a world of individuals making self-interested choices and living the lives that their merit confers on them whether they be of wealth or of poverty. Many American anthropologists have done so. We

break from that tradition and return to the tradition of breaking through the dreamwork to depict the underlying realities of etic relationships, positions in economic systems, and how those structure experience and hence consciousness.

In doing so we take anthropology the next step, incorporating global perspectives without sacrificing our strength—empirical description, whether it be ethnographic or archaeological. Our comparative analyses allow us to move beyond the confines of any single system to more general understandings of class and consciousness so that we can see the workings of our own cultural constructs and how they blind us to realities. We don't simply construct realist narratives or objectivist discourses; we describe realities to replace those accounts which have repeated rather than repudiated the dreamwork of meritocratic individualism and the classless middle class. We show that those same self-satisfied denizens of the middle class are etically in the same class position as the sweatshop workers of the global South who produce the consumer goods that the more privileged demand to live out their identities as consumers in a world of goods.

We believe that replacing obscurantism with clarity will not only contribute to more adequate analyses but will also provide a basis for changing those aspects of such systems that are not only no longer adaptive but are endangering our species. To continue to participate in the myth-making not only detracts from the credibility of anthropology; it is ethically reprehensible and politically irresponsible.

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