

The Ambiguity of Rapprochement

Reflections of anthropologists on their
controversial relationship with missionaries

Edited by

Roland Bensen, Hans Marks, Jelle Miedema

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Introduction to a Slumbering Debate

Roland Bensen
Hans Marks
Jelle Miedema

The professions of anthropologists and missionaries¹ have some similarities on which basis the representatives of both disciplines can debate with one another. Strangely enough, in the past, discussions hardly took place, but recently there has been a change in attitudes. After years of mutual neglect and indifference anthropologists and missionaries began talking and writing about each others work. In an effort to get to grips with this phenomenon and to understand more fully the issues which the participants in this debate discuss, we will present some introductory remarks about the background to this, at first sight, seemingly strange debate.

Characteristic for both anthropologists and missionaries is their professional occupation amongst and with people of different cultures, especially different from their own culture. In this case 'own' should be read as 'Western'. Although, nowadays, not all anthropologists and missionaries are born in a Western society, still characteristic for both parties is their commitment with peoples of other - non-Western - societies. Most of them, and certainly the leading spokesman in the debate, are trained in a predominantly Western cultural and intellectual tradition. They have learned from this background to experience and to understand the meaning of their common 'otherness' vis-à-vis other peoples. Thus, both their common experiences in the field, and their Western inspired rationality by which these experiences are incorporated, constitute the basic similarities between the two professions.

This affinity in a material and methodological sense between the two professions is not only expressed in their frequent meetings

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in the field. It is also visible in the necessity that they often have to cooperate. Anthropologists and missionaries use each others presence, facilities, and knowledge. Although the anthropologists mostly make no mention in their publications of their contacts with missionaries (Stipe 1980: 165 and Geest 1985: 215), and missionaries more often have great doubts about the insights anthropologists gather in a relative short stay, they cannot talk round each others knowledge. Therefore, one should not be surprised that both can go into discussion with each other. But, although the conditions for a rapprochement were present, it only recently emerged. The reason for this postponement deserves some thoughts.

After years of working in places all over the world, the presence of anthropologists and missionaries in those countries is nowadays no longer obvious. Political reformations, which came with the proces of decolonization, tried to make an end to direct Western influences in the young states. The search for an own, 'modern' identity, and the emphasis on own cultural values became the priority of most new governments. Anthropologists and missionaries do not always fit in here. The former have a tendency to stress the more traditional manifestations of a given culture², whereas the latter try to impose cultural values, particularly religious, which are rooted in Western cultures. In this way both remain³ the representatives of a foreign culture, and in many cases also of a past these countries want to get rid of.

Taken into consideration the role anthropologists and missionaries played in the past, their contemporary attitudes towards culture, and the fear that they integrate into political issues, it is understandable that authorities of the young states more often hesitate to give the scientists or development-aid workers permission for entry into a country. In any case, nowadays it is necessary that anthropologists and missionaries give a more explicit explanation for their objects, aims and methods. In other words, they have to justify their work to the people they work among. These changing policies and enforced openness not only bring the similarities between the two professions to the surface, but also make it possible to bring their aims and methods up for discussion. You can even say that they are forced to do so.

In the past there was no necessity for a confrontation between anthropologists and missionaries about their activities. They could neglect or even condemn each others work without great consequences for their cooperation in the field. In their native countries

they had their own institutions and discussion-platforms at their disposal, which coexisted without much mutual interference. This was possible because the aims of anthropology and those of missiology were almost implicit, and, above all, different. Outsiders had no free access to these institutions and could not play an important role there; their opinions were not of any interest. Mostly, even criticisms from within the disciplines were not accepted.

This paradigmatic picture of closeness, internal consensus, and self-satisfaction ended in the sixties and the seventies. The process of decolonization and the different political strategems of the newly established states forced anthropologists and missionaries to change their attitudes. In an attempt to retain the traditional fields of work or research both disciplines were forced into defence. They now had to learn to accept criticism from the inside as well as from the outside. Other disciplines, like sociology and history, could bring up their viewpoints. Self-criticism, restudies and criticism on methods became popular and the time was there for the so called critical theories. The boundaries between the scientific disciplines became blurred. Anthropologists had to exchange their ideas with sociologists, historians, and psychologists, but also with the new fieldworkers like development-aid workers, journalists and medical care personnel. Even ordinary tourists could develop their own opinions on anthropological writings about the countries they visited. The monopoly on knowledge about 'strange people and cultures' came to an end. Not only the 'natives', but also the 'readers', the 'audience', the 'homefront', or whatever the general public from the missionaries' and anthropologists' homelands may be called, started to talk back. Both disciplines, anthropology and missiology, had to go through this phase, which became generally known as 'the crisis'.

The developments forced the anthropologists and missionaries to change their attitudes. Many missionaries switched their emphasis from conversion to education and medical care. Anthropologists were forced to give more attention to modern and practical problems of the local people. In this way applied anthropology became side by side with critical anthropology the new opus magnum for students of anthropology.

Another effect of all these developments was that anthropologists and missionaries came closer to each other. They were confronted with a lot of similar problems in the field as well as at home. The resemblances could no longer be denied. Rejecting or ignoring this could do harm to each others position in the field and

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to the scientific base on which the work of both are founded. The rapprochement was unavoidable.

An opening for a debate was brought in by anthropologists. They presented the self-critical observation that in their writings anthropologists incline to ignore the role which missionaries played during their research (Stipe 1980: 165)⁴. Anthropologists normally confine to the one-sided condemnation of missionaries as ethnocentric and destroyers of indigenous culture. It is basically a negative attitude towards missionaries⁵. They are depicted as agents of cultural change for whom religion is the ultimate justifying goal. For most anthropologists religion is at the most an object for study, not something to propagate. A religious anthropologist, in the sense of carrying out a belief, is easily suspect.

These accusations are for a great deal brushed aside. Anthropologists acknowledge that missionaries can have a sophisticated view on indigenous cultures. But they also that they themselves were involved in the misunderstanding of contemporary culture with disastrous results. Anthropologists also acknowledge that many missionaries do a lot of good work under difficult and, not seldom, dangerous circumstances. In other words they have discovered the missionary as a development-aid worker and/or as a medical specialist. Some missionaries even go further; they call themselves anthropologists and indeed, there are missionaries who have a degree in anthropology.

Most issues in the debate stress these points; the similarities seem to be greater than one should expect at face value. Although nobody cites examples of anthropologists who became missionaries, the other way round is more general. These anthropologists, in so far as they maintained their religious belief - let's call them religious-anthropologists - play an important role in this debate. Because of their own commitment in religion they can more easily accept the position of the missionary and from there point to the similarities between the two professions.

This discussion about similarities diverts the attention from the old issue of religious belief and preaching. Of course, many missionaries do not talk anymore about preaching. But religion is still a motivation and one of the foundations of their work. It is the cornerstone of missiology. Anthropologists continue to stress this as the bench-mark of the differences between them and the missionaries.

The NSAV-Focaal debate was a confirmation of the above mentioned viewpoints and issues, as reflected in the contributions in this volume. The articles can generally be divided into two different approaches. On the one hand, the first four authors derive their ideas about the issues at stake from fieldwork and personal experience. On the other hand, the last three authors discuss more general and epistemological problems concerning the sociology of knowledge.

In the opening article, Droogers argues, with the help of his own personal career and the developments in Latin America, that the hidden resemblances between anthropologists and missionaries when promoted openly, become programmatic for the cooperative relationship between social scientists and missionary workers. He, although, recognizes that the antagonism between the two disciplines are still alive.

In his contribution, Trouwborst scrutinizes some of the ethnographic works on Africa written by missionaries. The history of ethnography has very much been influenced by the missionaries' religious convictions and their political position in colonial society. He shows how he himself as an anthropologist at different times in his career, has reacted differently towards the question of the value of ethnographic research by missionaries, from mere rejection towards reserved admiration.

Miedema takes us to the 'ethnographic present' in which the confrontation between native and Christian conceptions is paramount, a field of study which has been neglected by anthropologists and missionaries as well. He reveals the reasons why both disciplines payed no attention to this confrontation, and furthermore argues what the importance is of this field of study, both for missionaries and anthropologists in their study of the dynamics of religion and culture in West New Guinea.

In his contribution about the Mesoamerican Maya, Ploeg shows, in a historical perspective, how anthropologists and missionaries reacted towards the marginalization of the Indian people and their knowledge. In his case study on Belize he argues that, although the representatives of both disciplines hardly got involved with one another, they both tried to act as guardians of native culture and were thus involved in the process of marginalization.

Pels in his historical evaluation about the activities and works of anthropologists and missionaries, points out one of the important resemblances of both professions, summarized in the concept of mission. Especially anthropologists are studied in their

context of the professionalization of their discipline, and Pels thereby reveals the political and disciplinary reasons why both disciplines have grown apart. But he also claims that, especially after the 1960s, the differences between anthropologists and missionaries are more or less manipulated within a professional strategy to claim boundaries, just at a time when the actual relationship between the two seems to thrive in the field.

In the 'culture in-between' van Beek shows this connectedness between the disciplines. He points to the resemblances which are due to the fact that missionaries and anthropologists form and share a 'culture in-between': that is to say, they are a separated group of people between their own native countries and the people and countries they study. His argument is that this intermediate culture can lead us out of some epistemological problems. He argues that the quest for emics and empathy leads towards a systematic cultural relativism which destroys one's own theoretical position and makes it impossible to appreciate the culture one studies. A restricted relativism is according to van Beek one of the possibilities and luxuries of the intermediate fieldsituation of both missionaries and anthropologists. A relativism which renders their work fruitfull.

Many questions asked in the aforementioned contributions come together in the article of Abbink. He argues that almost all differences and resemblances between anthropologists and missionaries are minor compared to the overall problem of value orientation in science and personal life. A problem which is epistemological as well as existential. In his critical evaluation of epistemological stands, Abbink finally concludes that the anthropological self-image owes few new insights to missionary critiques, but most to its own critical traditions. Furthermore, a rapprochement between both disciplines will always be hampered by fideist argumentations.

Thus, an unambiguous conclusion from these contributions is not possible, as 'ambiguity' is the hallmark of the relationship and 'rapprochement' between anthropologists and missionaries. Though the traditional picture of 'the' anthropologist and 'the' missionary is attacked and it is shown on which various grounds a discussion is possible, the (Dutch) debate did not bring about a fundamental breakthrough. This is not a missed chance, but an actual state of affairs. However, as a breakthrough was hardly expected given the epistemological differences between the disciplines concerned, the

question becomes valid in what direction the debate can carry on, or rather, in the context of the NSAV-Focaal conference, what anthropologists can win continuing the debate.

As far as the contribution of missionaries is concerned, almost forgotten seems to be the question of religious beliefs and practices. As many missionaries do not talk about preaching anymore, they should ask themselves again whether their own religion can be the starting point and the ultimate aim for their involvement with people of other religions and cultures.

Anthropologists, on the other hand, should pay attention to the following, from the debate distracted, problem:

If conversion to a theistic position automatically makes it impossible (or even unlike) for a person to be objective about religious questions, do only atheists or agnostics have the ability to be objective, or would those who have been raised with a theistic viewpoint also qualify as 'objective observers'? (Stipe 1980: 178).

Most anthropologists would affirm that conversion to a theistic position makes it difficult to maintain an objective viewpoint and that propagating this is even forbidden (Kloos 1986: 204). Simultaneously, however, this raises the question to what extent anthropologists also have a belief, namely the belief in Western rationality based on the conviction that for all phenomena there are explanations. The problem connected with this rational viewpoint is the observation that

...some ontological questions are not susceptible to rational inquiry. We must accept on faith our own existence, the existence of an external reality, and some correspondence between the reality and our perceptions of it. If we deny these things, our inquiry will come abruptly to a halt (Feldman 1983: 114).

In other words anthropologists also have to live with metaphysics.

The problem evoked by Stipe also brings up the claim of missionaries and religious-anthropologists that their own religious experiences make them more amenable, more sensitive to other religions. Having a religious belief is in this view an advantage or even a necessity for understanding the religion of other people. Anthropologists can object that religious convictions influence the

observations in a negative sense. They can also stress that accepting the proclamations of faith from a believer as a reality belonging to his or her life, makes every interpretation impossible. If they do not accept this relativistic viewpoint, they interpret the faith convictions from other people as inferior to their own. Missionaries must accept that they have a superior belief; that is after all the ultimate reason for their being there. A religious anthropologists shall more likely stress the importance of accepting other peoples faith as a social and cultural reality in which these people live. For them religion is a personal conviction that cannot be understood from the outside. In this debate the most non-religious anthropologists and also some religious-anthropologists accept the possibility of having an own religious belief, but tend to stick to a methodological atheism or, maybe in this sense better, a methodological agnosticism.

Although the debate did not bring a fundamental breakthrough, it is not a missed chance in yet another aspect. It has to be realized that the debate is not lastly an infighting between anthropologists. It is an expression of the self-reflection of anthropologists, and of the methodological discussion popular in current anthropology. As such, the anthropologist-missionary debate is a contribution to the introspection of anthropology. It is not merely intended to serve the rehabilitation of disturbed and annoyed relations.

Notes

* We thank Tim Disney for editorial advice.

1. The term 'missionaries' denotes all the representatives of Christian churches. The Dutch language distinguishes *missionarissen* (representatives of Catholic organizations) and *zendelingen* (representatives of Protestants organizations).
2. Remember the much heard remark about the progressive anthropologist at home, who is a conservative abroad.
3. In the past anthropologists and missionaries mostly worked under the protection of a colonial power. The presence of a military force was in many cases even a necessary condition.
4. The discussion was seriously started with the contribution from Claude J. Stipe (1980) in *Current Anthropology*. It continued in this magazine until 1983, a remarkably long period. In one of the comments Delfendahl came up with the now much quoted contrast that a missionary goes

out to teach mankind, while the anthropologist wants to learn from them (Delfendahl 1981:89).

In the Netherlands a reflection of this discussion can be found in the magazine *Wereld en Zending*, 1986, No. 3, under the title *Missionarissen, Boodschap en Cultuur. Antropologische en missiologische verkenningen*.

5. Stipe remarks that students of anthropology learn that missionaries are to be regarded as enemies.

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From Antagonism to Partnership: Social Scientists and Missionary Workers in a Latin American Perspective *

André Droogers

Introduction

Many churches have changed their views on missionary work. This has affected the discussion on the relationship between anthropologists and missionaries. In the course of time anthropologists have come to have a specific notion of the 'typical' missionary. Nowadays, this image is stereotypical and outdated, at least with regard to some sectors of the churches.

The debate must now move to other themes, also since the partners taking part in it have changed. Expatriate anthropologists are no longer alone: local colleagues have joined in. Moreover, colleagues from other social sciences have also entered the field. In much the same way, foreign missionaries have been joined by local pastoral workers. The missionary task itself is also defined in a different way. This means, practically speaking, that more and more an appeal is made to the social sciences. Therefore, the debate between anthropologists and missionaries should now be replaced by a discussion of interdisciplinary cooperation between social scientists and missionary workers.

The clearest examples of these tendencies are to be found in Latin America. There the 'hidden resemblances' (Van der Geest 1987) between anthropologists and missionaries are not only openly recognized, they are promoted. They have, in fact, become programmatic for the relationship between social scientists and missionary workers.

In the following section, these general tendencies will be illustrated by an account of my own activities in Brazil, where I worked as an anthropologist in missionary service. In 1980, I was sent to Brazil as an anthropologist employed by the mission boards of the

two largest Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. I was to lecture at the Seminary of the Lutheran Church (Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, IECLB) at São Leopoldo in the southern state Rio Grande do Sul. I spent a total of five years at the Seminary. I was to lecture in the Science of Religion and the Sociology of Religion. Furthermore, it was my task to advise the church on questions of interreligious dialogue, especially regarding the popular spiritist religions, in which spirit possession is a crucial ritual.

In the third section the general change in the views on missionary work will be discussed. This will be illustrated in the fourth section by a description of some of the tendencies in Latin America, followed by a personal account of the way in which Christian as well as anthropological normativity inspired my work, and how this was received. In the conclusion the consequences for the debate on anthropologists and missionaries will be summarized. The old controversy should be replaced by new forms of cooperation.

Missionary anthropologist employed by the Lutheran Church of Brazil

In order to understand the context of my work, the reader should know a few things about the Lutheran church I worked for. The IECLB is the result of German immigration to Brazil. In a way, the church is an exception in Brazilian Protestantism, since almost all the other churches are the result of missionary work and, in turn, became missionary themselves. For a long period in its history, the Lutheran church was not missionary at all, in either of the senses of the word.

The first German immigrants came to Brazil in 1824. Their first settlements were founded in the south of the country. After an initial period in which the Protestants among them provided their own pastoral care, German pastors came to Brazil. For a long time, the Protestant immigrants were organized in regional autonomous churches with only a loose federal link, or at times with no link at all. It was only after the Second World War that a common seminary was founded to train Brazilian pastors. It was to become the seminary where I worked in São Leopoldo. In 1968, the present organizational form of a united Lutheran church was adopted. Its name became Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil.

At the moment, about 90% of the four hundred odd pastors are Brazilians. The church has about 600.000 members, 53% of whom live in rural areas. At the seminary, about three hundred students take a five and a half year course to prepare for pastoral or theological work.

For a long time, the IECLB has been a rather German church. In a way, it turned its back on Brazilian society and was focussed on developments in the German church. It was a clear example of how an ethnic church and religion was instrumental in maintaining the immigrants' identity in a foreign context. Even today, one can still hear the descendants of German grandparents who already had the Brazilian nationality, speak of Brazilians as a foreign people.

In the past twenty years, however, an important transformation has begun to take place in this church. It discovered its missionary task. The name adopted in 1968 is indicative of this discovery: the church must be Brazilian. Negative experiences as a German church during the Second World War contributed to the slow process of recognizing the church's responsibility in Brazilian society. Besides, theologies of liberation stimulated this change¹.

The introduction of the Science of Religion and the Sociology of Religion to the curriculum of the Seminary of the Lutheran Church should be seen in the context of the discovery of missionary responsibility. Since no Brazilian was available to teach these disciplines, and there was contact with Dutch missionary boards, it was requested that a Dutch lecturer be sent to Brazil. Though I had been an Africanist up to then, I applied for the job and was accepted. The fact that religions like Umbanda have a strong African background made it easier for me to make the seemingly unnatural move from one continent to the other.

It is characteristic of the changing conception of missionary work that it was viewed as perfectly normal to hire an anthropologist as a missionary worker with a lecturer's assignment. Before accepting my applications, the Seminary did want to know what an anthropologist had to offer as a lecturer in this field, but the answer did not lead to a rejection of the candidate².

For my inaugural lecture, I chose syncretism as a topic. Much of what is happening in the Brazilian religious field seems to be syncretistic in nature, and as a rule it is condemned as such by theologians, who view it as heresy. In that lecture (Droogers 1981b) I sought to show that syncretism is evident in most religions, including Christianity, that it has links with certain conditions in

society, and that symbolic anthropology can be useful if one wishes to understand its form and content.

In the normal work teaching classes, various themes were on our agenda, always with the purpose of preparing the students for their future as pastors. The spiritist religions were amply discussed, as were pentecostalism and popular religion, the latter also in its Lutheran forms. In order to have an accompanying text for the students, I wrote an introduction to the study of religion, in which the interdisciplinary approach (science of religion, sociology of religion, anthropology of religion) was combined with Brazilian illustrations (Droogers 1984a).

Every semester, the seminary organized a series of public lectures on a general theological theme, of interest to students as well as professors. In several of these series, I was asked to describe the approach from my own field. As an anthropologist, I was thus able to convey to a theological audience what anthropology might be able to contribute to a more strictly theological debate. In that way, I gave lectures on the concept of spirituality, on the sociological conditions of a pastoral strategy, and on the alternatives Christians have in their evaluation of other religions (Droogers 1983a, 1984b, 1985a).

I also wrote several articles especially for the lay members of the church. One was on *benzedouras*, popular healers who are also found among the members of Lutheran parishes. In the past, there was a campaign by German pastors against their healing work (Droogers 1983b). I wrote a small book on Umbanda (Droogers 1985b), addressing church members who come into contact with that successful Afro-Brazilian spiritist religion. I also contributed to a guide for inter-religious dialogue, which was published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Brazil (Guia 1987). Together with a Dutch photographer employed by the Dutch Missionary Council, I made an audio-visual program on Umbanda, in a Portuguese as well as a Dutch version.

When I started my work at the seminary, I asked my colleagues for research advice. I presented three possible topics for fieldwork: Umbanda, Kardecism (another form of spiritism) and Lutheran popular religion. My colleagues expressed a preference for the third subject. In a practical sense, this meant that I invested most of my - limited - research time in that project, though without neglecting the other two, as they were important in my lectures. My research data on Lutheran popular religion were the subject of a book written for pastoral workers (Droogers 1984c).

I will now broaden the perspective and show the link between some of my experiences and the changes taking place within certain sectors of Christianity. These changes have consequences for the debate on the relationship between anthropologists and missionaries.

Changes in the view on missionary work

Van der Geest (1987) describes what missionaries and anthropologists have in common: both are guests in a foreign culture, interested in ethnography and sharing a colonial past. The anthropologist exhibits unexpected missionary traits: he is theoretically prejudiced, he cannot escape the inevitable ethnocentrism and, whether he likes it or not, he is the cause of cultural change. While not every anthropologist will be charmed by this portrait, missionaries will be pleased to read Van der Geest's appreciation of their position: they have every chance to be a better anthropologist than a real one. The missionary generally has a good command of the language. He stays in the field for a considerably longer period than the anthropologist. Furthermore, he is convinced of the importance of taking religion seriously rather than explaining it away. Lastly, he is really interested in the people and moved by their situation. In short: according to Van der Geest, the anthropologist and the missionary surprisingly have a great deal in common.

Changes in the Latin American churches, especially the Catholic church, have contributed to the rapprochement between the two trades. In a way, similar developments have taken place in other parts of the world, also in Protestantism, especially in circles related to the World Council of Churches. Various missionaries and missionary workers have, in fact, proved to be good - and sometimes better - anthropologists or sociologists. The same changes have facilitated the access of trained social scientists to church work. In the process, the objective and purely scientific anthropologist has become a bit more subjective, whereas the subjective missionary has developed more objective and scientific attitudes. Wherever this has happened, the controversy between the two professions has become much less fierce.

These profound changes have certainly not occurred in all the churches and missionary organizations. One sometimes wonders whether it would not be better to speak of two Christianities, carrying the same banner but marching in opposite directions.

People might come together and worship in the same church building, using the same words, but the differences can still be enormous. Let us examine what has changed so profoundly and describe the consequences this has had for the view on missionary work. Three changes can be distinguished.

First of all, there has been a shift from an interest in the church and its growth to a commitment to a solution to the world's problems and a focus on the coming of the Kingdom of God. The interest has moved from the means to the goal. No longer are the founding and expanding of churches the central concerns, but social commitment, consciousness-raising and the promotion of justice (in the wider theological sense). The main interest is no longer in saving souls, but in healing bodies. The causes of suffering and affliction should be eliminated. For missionary work, this means that where a Western church type was formerly introduced, thus reinforcing Western influence, now the immediate goal is to reduce the damage caused by the Western impact on third world countries. Words like conversion and sin are still used, but they have a new meaning, pertaining to the conversion of society and its sinful social and economic structures.

Another development, related to the first, is the growing emphasis on contextuality. The interest in societal problems has greatly stimulated the concern with the adaptation of the Christian message to the particular culture. Some speak of the incarnation of Christianity within a certain culture. The Western version of Christianity no longer has a monopoly. Believers are stimulated to seek their own forms of a living faith, proper to their culture, and also to try and alleviate the problems confronting their society. With the exception of feminist theology, the third world has taken the most initiative in the innovation of Christian theology and church life. As a consequence, a profound transformation of the Western type of Christianity is being realized. This would have been impossible without the knowledge and consciousness of the uniqueness of one's own culture. The contribution the social sciences can make to this process has gradually been recognized and invited.

A third development with consequences for the debate between anthropologists and missionaries is the growing interest in a dialogical attitude towards other religions. Pagans have gradually become believers. The dialogical position is by no means uniform. Theological presuppositions influence the point of view regarding other religions, and therefore the agenda of the proposed dialogue. For example, a greater theological emphasis on Christ will lead to

a reinforcement of Christian identity and thus enlarge the differences. If, on the other hand, the main emphasis is on God, there are more chances for dialogue, especially if the resemblance between the Christian God and the God of the other religion is recognized. But even if the dialogue assumes a wide range of forms, the accompanying attitude of the patient listener - the typical position of the anthropological fieldworker - is an absolute prerequisite. Here too, one can come across theologians who are indeed better anthropologists.

As a result of these three developments, missionaries have become much less involved in the direct propagation of the Christian message. Nowadays, many of them are specialists in their own fields, offering assistance where the partner churches in the Third World are not yet able to. Besides, missionaries are no longer exclusively theologians, they also come from secular professions including those connected with the social sciences. The term missionary has been increasingly replaced by *missionary worker*.

The Latin American case

The clearest examples of the above mentioned tendencies, both of the new commitment of the churches to the local culture and society and of the expansion crusade of more conservative Christians, can be found in Latin America. I will confine my discussion to the progressive, oecumenical type of Christianity. In its Latin American form, it has been an example to Christians in other continents, stimulating or reinforcing local initiatives. In this section, I will mention three features of the Latin American situation. The first needs somewhat more explanation than the other two. It can be said of all three that, to a social scientist, they represent a challenge to make his own contribution.

The first feature is the central role of praxis as a starting point. The theologian is no longer only inspired by written sources, sacred or otherwise. His first source is the pastoral situation. From an armchair scholar, he has become a fieldworker. More important, perhaps, is the role change from an expert to a patiently listening pupil. A fundamental role inversion has taken place. The laity has been rehabilitated, and popular wisdom and experience are now viewed as being of great value. I shall now give two examples of this tendency.

The first example is the work of Carlos Mesters (e.g. 1983), a Carmelite friar of Dutch origin who, through a prolonged experience, has become a Brazilian to the Brazilians. His field is biblical exegesis. Without denying the value of academic work, he takes as his starting-point the experience of the common people. He listens to the stories they tell and sees how they read the biblical text. He is especially interested in the meanings they discover in it, reading it from the angle of their own often miserable situation. He is a good example of a 'better' anthropologist. Without knowing it, he works as an anthropologist. In this way, he shows that the 'humble' people, as they are called in Brazil, discover new meanings in texts about which the collected exegetes have long been unable to produce new opinions. As a rule, Mesters publishes his findings in small booklets written for the common members of the church, thus giving back to the people what he has learned from them.

Another example is the attitude towards Indians recently developed in the Brazilian Catholic church, and also adopted in some of the Protestant churches (Suess 1981, 1983). This attitude hardly differs from that of the anthropologist. The theological presupposition is that within Indian societies, more signs and characteristics of the Kingdom of God can be found than in modernized Western society. The consequence is a fundamental inversion. The missionary worker no longer comes to bring the Christian message, but to receive it by way of its discovery in Indian society and culture. The evangelist is thus evangelized. The missionary worker makes an effort to adopt a respectful, listening and serving attitude. Together with anthropologists, he seeks to protect Indian cultures from destructive Western influences. The culture under missionary influence is much more that of the missionary worker than that of the missionized, precisely because Western culture destroys life. In this case, the Kingdom of God is more important than the foundation of new churches.

The consequence of the emphasis on praxis has been that, more than ever, theologians have become interested in the social sciences, in a thematic and a methodological sense. Their view on society is usually that of the dependence theory, notwithstanding the fact that some of the creators of that theory have since modified their position. The discourse adopted by many pastoral workers is a simplified version of the original theory on dependence.

They also exhibit a particular interest in oral tradition and the possibilities of studying it, also with the purpose of rewriting church history, this time 'from below', as perceived by the common people

(for an example, see Hoornaert 1974). Thus church historians are conducting research anthropologists have generally failed to do.

There is another example where the theologians' emphasis on praxis led them to do work neglected by social scientists. In the Brazilian context the fields of the sociology and anthropology of religion have, with only a few exceptions, hardly been explored by regular sociologists and anthropologists. This has largely been done by theologians, who, through their own experience or under the influence of new theological insights, became interested in the social and cultural background of religion (Alves 1979). This initiative then influenced anthropologists and sociologists, who only then came to see their task. The 'better' anthropologists and sociologists set an example for the real professionals. Research on popular religion, for example, has been immensely stimulated by theologians. They were particularly interested in forms of popular religion that played a liberating or protesting role. The religion of the common people was rehabilitated in relation to the prestigious official religion of the clergy. Another result has been the recent insight that if development policies do not take religion into account, they are much less effective (Droogers and Van Kessel 1988).

Related to this first feature, the central place of praxis, there is the second feature: an emphasis on power relations. If the church takes its responsibility to society seriously and the experience of the common people receives attention, questions about power distribution cannot be avoided. Many of the problems Latin American societies are confronted with are due to inequality in the access to power. It is interesting that this approach in terms of power is also applied to religion and to the internal structure of the churches. The leading example in this field has already been mentioned: Maduro's book on *Religion and Social Conflicts* (1982). Wherever the basic communities are numerous, the question of who is entitled to produce religion is always at stake. In the study of popular religion, the same question also receives attention.

The third feature is the attention devoted to the margin of society and the marginalized groups. This is translated theologically into a deep sensitivity to symbolic expressions of marginality in the biblical message. A forceful image is the liberation of the Jews from Egyptian slavery and Babylonian exile. Life in the desert and the conviction of being on the way to the promised land are important ingredients of the ideology at the basis of much of the work done in the progressive church sector. Traditional customs like processions and pilgrimages have been reinterpreted in the

light of this view. The land occupations carried out by church groups of landless farmers in Brazil constitute one example. The resemblance to the people of Israel on their way from Egypt to the promised land is clear to all, not only due to the fact that these farmers, like the Jews, live in tents. The biblical example of a marginal people fighting for land serves as a legitimation of the group's goals. Without being familiar with the work of Turner (1969), many church workers have discovered the symbolic significance of liminality and of *communitas*, of structure and anti-structure. They are more conscious than Turner was of the fact that power relations, the second aspect mentioned above, influence the position of people in the margin and their symbolism. Without hesitation, these people recognize today's pharaohs.

The three features mentioned above are certainly not typical of Latin American Christianity in general. But even though only certain forms of pastoral and missionary work can be described this way, it should be sufficient to open a new chapter in the discussion on the relationship between anthropologists and missionaries.

A personal account

In view of aforementioned activities as an anthropologist in missionary service, I found myself in a situation that did not seem to be in keeping with the images anthropologists generally have of the two professions when they discuss their relationship with missionaries. As an anthropologist, I was firstly a lecturer, though I also performed administrative tasks, so that only in the remaining time could I be the fieldworker anthropologists prefer to be. On the other hand, I differed considerably from the picture of the missionary drawn when his relations with anthropologists are discussed. I had no direct pastoral role and was not supposed to increase, through my work, the membership of the church I worked for. Yet, I was paid by missionary organizations and was considered a missionary worker.

In my work, I had to deal with the two kinds of subjectivity or normativity mentioned above. I was inspired by Christianity as well as anthropology. My choice of themes was determined by the setting I was working in: a Christian institution of higher theological education. In my research reports, I wrote for my theological colleagues and for the pastors and other members of the church maintaining the institution. Yet, I tried to work as a social scientist,

not as a theologian. The themes were dealt with in a social scientific manner. I will mention five aspects of my work in which this anthropological normativity became clear.

First, I tried to stimulate my audience to look at people of other religions or other subcultures from the perspective of the particular religion or subculture, if only as an experiment. This, of course, is the approach proper to participant observation. In particular, one's view on the syncretist spiritist religions can change fundamentally if one tries to understand the people of that religion from within. As a consequence, one should not formulate an opinion on that religion until one understands what is really at stake and why those people believe and behave as they do. The initial label of 'diabolic' or 'heresy' is then not automatically given to the spiritist religions and the amazement at the 'madness' of the rituals can be changed to respect for the richness of another person's religion. This need not lead to a negation of differences of opinion, but it opens the possibility for a dialogue. Moreover, it can make a church member more conscious of the weakness and strength of his own church. He might wonder: "What positive aspects do these religions offer that our church does not?"

In this connection, a second point should be mentioned. People were often surprised to discover that other religions could not be reduced to an autonomous, isolated set of ideas - as if dogma and religion were one and the same - but that convictions and rituals had a social and cultural context, which helps to explain why people think and behave as they do. Continuing along the same line of thought, students were able to discover that this was also valid for their own beliefs and rituals.

The distinction between ideal and reality was a third point. Theologians have a tendency, consciously or not, to stress the ideal, especially if their own ideal can be contrasted with the failings of the other religion or believer. It is a useful experiment to change places, and judge the reality of one's own religion by the ideal standard of another religion.

The fourth aspect I stressed whenever I could was the role of man as a 'meaning-maker' (Crick 1976). To theologians, it may come as a shock that, essentially, their work is a serious kind of playing with words and meanings. When discussing the alternatives Christians have regarding their attitude towards other religions, this was an important point. Questions 'of principle' may be reduced to a way of dealing with (biblical) words or meanings. As was suggested above, in syncretism, generally condemned by

theologians, this same playing with symbols and meanings takes place. The Lutheran church wanted to be Brazilian and therefore had to deal with the question of how to evaluate Brazilian culture. This too was a way of playing with symbols and meanings.

The final point I would like to make pertains to the power dimension of religious groups and of the production of religion. My students read Maduro (1982) and generally did so to their own benefit. They learnt how to apply Maduro's approach to their own church. Between the clergy and the laity, theology students occupy an intermediate position. If used well, this position can determine their future functioning. Of late, the image people in parishes have of the ideal pastor is changing. The pastor steps down from his pedestal and teaches the members to be responsible for each other. Besides, many Lutheran pastors now teach their flock to promote justice in Brazilian society. In some parishes, this has led to the formation of basic communities (*comunidades de base*), following the example of the Catholic church.

I spent some time explaining my activity in Brazil in order to make it clear that an anthropologist can function well in missionary service without violating the ideas central to his profession or to the Christian faith. On the contrary, he might even be challenged to produce something new, as the theologians he has as his colleagues may pose questions he has never thought of. In doing so, he certainly has something - equally unexpected - to offer. I often defended the thesis that every theological seminary should have at least one non-theologian on its staff, preferably someone from the social sciences.

Not everyone, however, is pleased with the anthropological contribution. It is often in the theologians' interest to maintain the impression that what they are doing is useful and effective. In the Brazilian context, with the large-scale influence of the theologies of liberation, these interests are often of an ideological nature. If then, as happened to me in connection with consciousness raising work (*conscientização*) by pastors, the anthropologist, from his luxury observer's position, concludes that a particular kind of work is not that effective, this research result is viewed as a betrayal of the cause. I was seen as an intruder in theologian territory, an unwelcome stranger.

It also happened that I was not accepted by my fellow Western anthropologists, who felt I was a theologian. It was like sitting in between two chairs. This reminded me of an elderly informant I had in Zaire. In telling a fable, he compared me, an anthropologist not

really like white people, nor like Africans, to a bat: it flies, but is not a bird, it has fur but is not really a quadruped. Therefore, when it dies, no one comes to bury it (Droogers 1980c: 377, 378). Being an anthropologist and a missionary worker means that one is twice as marginal to one's own culture and subculture. This can be a most inspiring position, because the margin frequently offers a surprisingly new view of one's own profession and of that of others.

I am aware that the kind of interest I have in the anthropological aspects of missionary work is frowned upon by many of my Western colleagues, because I tried to study them as a Christian anthropologist, in the setting of a Christian university or seminary. To me, it is evident that the anthropologist should be aware of his own subjectivity and should make it explicit, in order to examine how it influences his research (see also Kloos 1988). In this way, subjectivity, whatever its nature, is not ignored or hidden, but can be dealt with in an open and constructive manner. The easiest way to do so is to determine at just exactly what stage this subjectivity influences the research and may even be useful. I do not suggest that this is necessarily the case at all the stages of a research project. One might think of the selection of the research theme, of the institutional framework within which the research is carried out, of the models used to explain the phenomena observed, and of the target group and form of the final report.

In this way, a Christian anthropologist can be influenced by his religious normativity. On the other hand, there can also be such a thing as anthropological normativity, which widens the horizon of the missionary view. I have described my efforts to activate both of these forms of normativity during my stay in Brazil. The unexpected 'hidden resemblances' between anthropologists and missionaries (as referred to by Van der Geest 1987), were perhaps evident in my work as an anthropologist employed by a missionary organization. This is clear from certain themes dealt with in my classes, research and publications. I have mentioned these themes and indicated how - what I called - anthropological normativity influenced my way of handling these themes.

Conclusions

In view of these developments, the debate on anthropologists and missionaries cannot continue to be based on the traditional images of the two professions. With respect to all the situations where the above mentioned transformation has taken place, they are out-moded: in these contexts there is no longer a confrontation, but rather a form of cooperation. It is not just focussed on persons, but has become an interdisciplinary relationship. Anthropology is not the only partner in this dialogue, but other social sciences as well. The newly discovered responsibility of churches to their society not only concerns tribal societies, but also urban and peasant contexts. The central themes in this interdisciplinary relationship are development, contextuality, oppression, human rights and inter-religious dialogue.

While the anthropologist and the missionary are no longer competing foreigners, each defending his own interests with regard to the preservation or change of the local culture, cooperation has now become a necessity and a real possibility. The anthropologist is no longer a fieldworker, but perhaps a lecturer or consultant. His colleagues from other social sciences have come to offer their specialized services. Local colleagues play a leading role.

The actors are different, the play is a new one. Yet, the echoes of the former - often dramatic - controversy can still be heard. Besides, interdisciplinary contact can sometimes lead to Babylonian confusion. Another source of misunderstanding and confusion is the inevitable inner dialogue of the various participants: the social scientists with regard to their faith, the theologians because of the confrontation with secularizing academic values.

One can not, however, fail to recognize that in many parts of the world, the old antagonism is still very much alive, especially in tribal contexts where missionaries are active in the sectors of Christianity unaffected by the developments noted above. In recent years, these sectors of Christianity have expanded much more than the others. This has often happened with financial support from the United States and with an explicit anti-communist motivation.

The image the missionary and the anthropologist have of each other should be drastically altered, at least in so far as certain situations are concerned. The missionary worker, not exclusively in the role of theologian or pastor and not only a foreigner, might very well be an anthropologist. The anthropologist, in turn, might become a mission's employee. Other social scientists, not only

expatriates, have entered the field. Their role is no longer confined to that of fieldworker. The context in which they work is not restricted to tribal societies. They are no longer culture conservationists, but take part in the struggle for a more just society. The much debated controversy has been replaced by forms of cooperation. 'Hidden resemblances' have become explicit and consciously promoted. Developments in Latin American churches have been instrumental in this respect. A new view on missionary work has emerged, with an emphasis on the promotion of justice, a consciousness of contextuality and an effort to create an open dialogue. Themes that were hitherto the exclusive territory of the social sciences have been studied by researchers from the churches. Besides, the new responsibility of the churches has posed new research questions. Anthropologists have been challenged to no longer confine themselves to 'pure' scientific work and to reflect on their own subjectivity. In Latin America, there is much more at stake than the recognition of 'hidden resemblances', important as they may be. Since missionaries and pastoral workers have become social scientists and sometimes trendsetters in the sociology and anthropology of religion, the resemblances have been replaced by an open and public identification.

Notes

* The author gratefully acknowledges editorial advice by Sheila Gogol.

1. Theologies of liberation take the Biblical exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt as a model for the liberation of oppressed people from modern forms of slavery. This is accompanied by an analysis of Latin American society, based on direct pastoral experience and on a selection from neo-marxist views. For more information, see Benavides 1987 and Robertson 1986, 1987.
2. Ever since I studied at Utrecht University, I have had a special interest in anthropological issues related to missionary work. I wrote a long paper on missionary work and polygamy in Africa (see also Droogers 1975). From 1968 to 1971, I worked at a Zairean Protestant university where I lectured at the Theological as well as the Social Science Department. Part of my research in that period was on the Africans' adaptation of the Christian message to their own context (Droogers 1977, 1980a and b, 1981a).

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- 1984c *Religiosidade Popular Luterana, Relatório de uma pesquisa no Espírito Santo, julho de 1982*. São Leopoldo: Editora Sinodal.
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Missionaries and Ethnography

A.A. Trouwborst

As an introduction to my argument I will first present a few anecdotes. During my first stay in Burundi (Eastern Africa) in 1958 I met a White Father who asked me, not unfriendly, what the purpose of my research was, as he knew already all there was to be known about the culture of the area¹. I must confess that I was taken aback a little by the question, as it was true that he was right to some extent. He had lived in the country for many years and had acquired a tremendous knowledge of the culture and the language of the people of Burundi. I rather feebly responded that I was interested in other matters than he would be as a missionary. In the case of Rundi marriages, for instance, I would study not so much the customs involved, but rather the kinds of people present, their mutual relations and the way in which social structure would become manifest at such occasions. The father seemed satisfied: those indeed were no matters he was interested in.

Later on the same father gave me a beautiful head-dress made from the skin of a colobus monkey used by the members of a spirit cult which was vehemently opposed by the missionaries. Every time I showed the object to my informants they shrunk back in fear having been told that this was the work of the devil. No wonder that it was difficult for me, known as a frequent visitor to the mission, to induce my informants to talk about this cult.

Both anecdotes may serve as an illustration of the problems I want to discuss in this article: the way in which the ethnographic works written by missionaries have been influenced by their religious convictions as well as by the position they occupied in colonial society. The question is appropriate with the present interest in problems concerning the history of ethnography and the process of interaction between missionary ethnographers and the peoples whose cultures and societies they study. An insight in these

matters contributes to a better understanding of this kind of ethnography, which - as we should not forget to a large extent determines the image we form of many non-Western societies.

Missionaries and their mission

Missionaries have a mission to fulfil, they bring a message. It is easy to understand that this generally implied that they considered their messages superior to the beliefs they found in the faraway places they went to. This at least was the notion that was supported by the anthropologists in Leiden when I studied there at the University between the years 1945-1950. Amongst us students an attitude existed of sharp criticism by condemning every form of ethnocentrism missionaries were suspected of. As a matter of fact I now realize that we as students could also be said to have felt a mission and a message i.e. the message of cultural relativism. I remember that we - all members of the Leiden *ethnologische dispuut W.D.O.*, a well known debating-club - forming a 'Juvenile committee for cultural anthropological propaganda', drafted a declaration signed by the Professors de Josselin de Jong and Hofstra, as well by Dr. Locher and Dr. Nooteboom, at the time directors of the anthropological museums respectively of Leiden and Rotterdam. In that declaration dated 25th of January 1951 we stated as our conviction that a "deepening of cultural-anthropological insight in all circles of our society and not at least amongst youngsters of mature age, could contribute to the solution of urgent practical problems with which mankind at present is confronted". It was our intention to hold lectures on this subject at secondary schools. Not much came out of this initiative, but it illustrates our attitude at the time. Also, one should not forget that most of us were students in what was called indology and had been preparing for a future in the civil service of the Netherlands Indies. It was our deep conviction that anthropology could do much good in the work we had hoped to perform. Unfortunately for us, the independence of Indonesia made an end to at least part of our expectations.

Both, anthropologists and missionaries (see also Van der Geest 1987, Borsboom 1988 and Peter Pels in this volume), considered themselves as people with a mission though there were of course many differences in aims, contents and methods of their respective messages. One of those concerns the way both approached the beliefs of the people amongst whom they worked. Very generally

speaking one can say that many missionaries had the tendency to depict these beliefs in a negative way and to contrast them with their Christian pendants. Anthropologists on the other hand took a more positive attitude and tried to place those beliefs in their own context and translate them without expressing a value judgement, in what they thought were neutral scientific terms.

These generalizations must of course be qualified. There have always been many kinds of missionaries and many kinds of anthropologists. Besides, some missionaries were or had become anthropologists. Furthermore, in the course of time opinions changed both amongst missionaries and anthropologists concerning the way in which ethnographies should be written. In the following section I will go into these matters in more detail.

Missionaries and their preconceptions

It is quite understandable that missionaries, when describing other cultures, easily had recourse to familiar Western, especially Christian, concepts. For instance, the German White Father Gaßdinger working in Burundi, designated Kiranga, the main spirit in the cult mentioned in the introduction of this essay, as the devil, a designation as we saw, which was adopted also by the local population (Schoenaker and Trouwborst 1983: 33).

Missionaries always tried to find a concept which could be used as a translation for the notion of God. Discussions on the exact meaning of native terms as a translation for Christian religious notions continue up to the present day (Schoenaker and Trouwborst idem).

A telling example of the confrontation of Christian and native i.c. Indonesian concepts is the inaugural address of Prof. Vroklage at the University of Nijmegen in 1948 about the notion of sin with the Belunese of Central Timor (*Het zondebesef bij de Beloenezen van Centraal Timor*). The orator came to the conclusion that "primitives as a matter of course do not possess very clear concepts" so that in their case we should not speak of 'a concept of sin' (*zondebegrip*) but at the most of a 'notion of sin' (*zondebesef*). According to him, this notion was essentially different from the Christian concept of sin.

It should be added that Vroklage was a man of science, a disciple of Wilhelm Schmidt, his "great teacher" at the "the unforgettable university of Vienna" (p.13), but also a priest and member

of the missionary congregation known as the S.V.D. (Societas Verbi Divini). The members of this congregation have been very active in the field of ethnography which was explicitly said to be executed in the service of the mission. One might even say that the great initiator and founder of the institute Anthropos and the journal with the same name, Father Schmidt (1868-1954), himself also a member of the S.V.D., developed something like "a kind of official Catholic ethnology" (Van Uden 1988: 30). No wonder that at that time only a man like Vroklage could be appointed as a professor of ethnology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen.

The tendency existed, among anthropologists in the Netherlands at least, not to take the work of Schmidt and his followers very seriously. It was thought to be influenced too much by Roman Catholic biases and therefore scientifically of little value. Such a judgement appears in the comment of the late professor Fahrenfort of Amsterdam in his discussion of Schmidt's theory of *Ur-Monotheismus*. It is even reflected in the recent remarks of Köbben, who ironically suggests in a reference to the expedition of Father Wilhelm Koppers S.V.D. (one of the prominent representatives of the *Kulturkreislehre*) to the Yagan of Terra del Fuego, that the 'good father' in no time did find what he wanted to find: "a native and original monotheism" (Köbben 1988: 83).

And yet there were also more positive opinions on the supposed bias of Schmidt and his followers. Lowie, unsuspected in this respect, even speaks of a "unfair criticism" and adds: "...let him that is without bias cast the first stone" (Lowie 1937: 193). Another critic, much later, concludes that despite the fact that Schmidt, though, according to him, at heart an apologist, "has a right to be contested on exclusively scientific grounds" (Van Baal 1971: 108).

The same could be said about Vroklage as has been done by the American anthropologist R. Kennedy who, though he rejects the *Kulturkreis*-concept of this author highly praises his book *Die Sozialen Verhältnisse Indonesiens* (1936) (see Bornemann 1953).

Indeed, the question arises to what extent did the prejudgements of the missionaries, the academically trained included, have a negative influence on their ethnographic work. One answer might be that everyone is more or less biased but that the advantage in the case of the missionaries is that they are very explicit about their standpoint. Such an answer is suggested by Moyer in his study of the literature on Bengkulu (Sumatra, Indonesia). He states that, as regards the early authors, British and Dutch civil servants, the biases and personal visions are so outspoken and clear that they

were easily controllable. Trouble starts according to Moyer as soon as one has to do with academically trained authors: "Here the theoretical biases of writers (both civil servants and anthropologists) influenced their interpretation of phenomena to such a degree that reinterpretation is usually difficult and hazardous if not impossible" (Moyer 1975: 9). I would like to remind the reader of the fact that in the days that Vroklage published his books and articles both functionalism and structural-functionalism very loudly claimed a high degree of objectivity but later also were accused of ideological prejudice.

In any case it is important to investigate with care into the exact ways in which biases and prejudgements have influenced the ethnographic work of missionaries. It is of course impossible now to go into this question exhaustively, but I want to point out certain aspects we should well pay attention to.

First of all, I am of the opinion that it is not in itself objectionable to study other cultural concepts as for instance religious ones in terms of a comparison with our own Christian concepts. As we all know it is unavoidable for an anthropologist to use Western concepts like God, or Spirit or divination which implicitly necessitate comparison. Is it true that the whole business of anthropology is based on implicit and explicit comparisons and that we should be well aware of it? Is it also true that we as anthropologists pretend that by contrasting concepts from various parts of the world we can contribute to their understanding?

Much depends on the way the comparison is made. It must be admitted that many missionaries did take for granted the superiority of Christian concepts and depicted native religious ideas in a very negative way. Such an uncritical approach is of course scientifically unacceptable.

A clear case are the writings of Father Gaßdinger, I referred to before. The comparison this author makes between Kiranga and the devil is quite inappropriate and does not provide any insight into the character of this spirit. On the other hand, such a naive approach by a missionary in a part of Africa at that time only recently explored is quite understandable. Besides, as soon as Gaßdinger starts to describe concrete cult rituals he witnessed with his own eyes, he appears to be a good observer and has interesting things to tell.

In later publications a more differentiated attitude towards Kiranga is taken. Zuure (1929: 45) for instance, though insisting as Gaßdinger did on the fear that Kiranga inspires among the people,

shows clearly that there were many benevolent aspects to the character of this spirit and expressly rejects the idea of his being a kind of 'Lucifer' of Kirundi.

Another problem is that one of the demands of an anthropological approach is said to be that cultural phenomena should be put in their own context. This would imply that anthropologists in contrast to most missionaries prefer to avoid taking Christian or Western concepts and beliefs as the standard for comparison and providing the terms in which the comparison is made.

Therefore, even at the time Vroklage delivered the address cited before, at least outside the small circle of ethnologists from which he came, his method was considered a very representative one in the eyes of most anthropologists. That Vroklage used it, however, is easily understandable from his position which was that anthropology (in his time *volkenkunde* or ethnology) should contribute to the pastoral task of the missions. To be able to work fruitfully among 'primitive' people one should study them thoroughly (Vroklage 1948: 13-4).

From a purely ethnographical point of view, I want to make two comments. The first one is that the way in which Vroklage critically contrasts Christian and Belu ideas of morality, and sometimes even shows how he arrives at certain conclusions while questioning his informants, is in itself scientifically quite acceptable. He fails in his interpretation of the native concepts in their own right.

The privileged position of missionaries

It is sometimes suggested (Van der Geest 1987) that missionaries are advantaged by having more affinity with the people among whom they worked than the unbelieving anthropologists. This suggestion is difficult either to prove or to disprove. My impression is that most missionaries felt that the differences between their own convictions and the beliefs of the people they were supposed to convert were so great that they were repulsed rather than attracted. They admitted at the most that 'their' people could be credited in a general way with a deep religious sentiment. Only a few of them were really interested in native religious ideas. Therefore, when it is said of Father Bartels, a missionary who worked among the Oromo of Ethiopia, that he shows insights that "only an investigator with a religious and or poetic sensibility could

have had" (Baxter on the cover of Bartels' book 1983), I think that it is a recent and exceptional case of someone who, by the way, has studied anthropology. Besides not all anthropologists are a-religious and even if, they sometimes can be supposed to have a feeling for the religious sense of others.

Father Bartels is also an example of someone who though he is very clear about his own religious intentions, nevertheless, very explicitly stresses the views of his informants, allowing them 'to speak for themselves'. According to him, God is at work in all religions. This means for him that "every religion is a holy ground where one has to take off his sandals, as Moses was ordered to do in front of the burning bush" (Bartels 1983: 40). Such a view allows him successfully to give an insight in the way in which his informants formulated their beliefs in their own terms. Of course, this is a kind of presentation also based on a judgement, but it is one which is quite different from the ones discussed before.

Another advantage missionaries have been said to benefit from was the long duration of their stay in the field, owing to which their knowledge of language and culture was far greater than that of most anthropologists. This enabled them also to really participate in the lives of the people they resided amongst. Both considerations are certainly true, but one should realize that only a few missionaries could take advantage of their privileged position. As Bartels has noted "...the immediate claims of their work (...) left (...) rarely any scope for enquiries into the cultural backgrounds of their people." (Bartels 1983: 39). This is one of the reasons why outstanding ethnographies written by missionaries are relatively small in numbers.

There were also other obstacles involved by the position of missionaries in the field. Bartels, for instance, tells us that his informants were of the opinion that "...a priest should not be concerned with their pre-Christian customs, moral norms and all kinds of situations in the sensitive field of marriage and descent". They found therefore that as a priest he was less good than they hoped for" (Bartels 1983: 38). His informants were also afraid sometimes that Bartels would pass information they wanted to keep secret to the other missionaries (Bartels 1983: 51). As a result he did not get the full cooperation he had expected.

In my own experience in Africa, missionaries were so fully occupied by their daily tasks that they had little time and energy left to occupy themselves with systematic ethnographic studies. Furthermore, I can say that most of the missionaries I met, were

loved and respected by the people and were often taken into confidence by them. Still, I am sure that many informants were hesitant in talking to me about their ancient beliefs because of my close association with the mission, where I went to church and visited the missionaries.

Missionaries and their power position

One last point I want to make concerns the social position the missionaries occupied. It leaves no doubt that in many countries this was a position of economic and political power in many fields. Because the missions were active in the fields of education and medical care, they, as employers, often were only second after the state (for Burundi see Hilgers 1967: 60). The missions had therefore important interests to defend and were much involved in colonial politics. Desforges (1969), writing about their position in Rwanda, has called them 'Kings without Crowns'.

The aims of the colonial authorities and the missions sometimes followed a parallel course, sometimes however, there were conflicts. The anthropologist Van Baal, at the time a civil servant in Dutch New Guinea, has written about the missions in the area that they were more than only defenseless servants of the gospel but also the representatives of political interests (Van Baal 1986: 115). This certainly applies to many other places. The missions and the colonial authorities needed each other, but they were also competitors. Thus, Van Baal notes, "...the government needed the help of the missionaries very much for the pacification of the area by providing the local people (Van Baal is referring here to the Marindanim of Southern New Guinea) with the means to find a new sense of life" (Van Baal 1986: 272-3). But at the same time he also notices the competition between the two: "both tried to control the population, each from its own point of view and own interests. Sometimes the missions had the overhand: they had, owing to a network of village teachers, a much better hold on the area than the government" (Van Baal *idem*).

The question is, to what extent is it possible to presume that this position of power has influenced the writing of ethnography by the missionaries. As a first answer to this question one can note the fact that the missionaries were well organized and generally had the financial means for the publication of a great variety of books, booklets, journals, reports. In these publications a certain view,

some would call it an ideology, was formed concerning amongst others the native peoples amongst whom the missionaries worked. This at least was what has happened in the case of Burundi.

Thus, according to the French historian Chrétien and some of his African students, the missionaries working in the area did develop a theory about the history of this country which was a legitimization of the policy followed by the Roman Catholic mission in collaboration with the colonial government. This policy was directed at the strengthening of the position of the King, the royal family and the Tutsi-aristocracy at the detriment of the Hutu population. This theory, a local version of the famous Hamitic theory 'legitimated' the policy introduced by the Belgian government. The theory found support also among African members of the Rundi elite. Chrétien even speaks of a *cachet officiel* which he thinks the theory had obtained (Chrétien 1984), through what Mworoha (1987: 118) calls an ideological manipulation of the legends (i.e. the myths of origin of the dynasty). It missed, according to Chrétien and his disciples, every empirical foundation and had dangerous racist connotations².

This summary of Chrétien's argument does not do justice to all its nuances, but I hope that it illustrates sufficiently the way in which the involvement of missionaries in practical politics could be of influence on their ethnography. It should be added that the missionary writings dominated ethnography in general for a long time. As happened elsewhere, professional ethnologists came in the area years after the missionaries and to a lesser extent civil servants and military personnel had arrived. In Burundi, for instance, in the period before the Second World War, ethnological field research was done by only two professionals: H. Meyer, a geographer in 1911 and G. Smets, an historian in 1935 (see Trouwborst 1979 and 1981). Both associated closely with the missionaries and were very much influenced by them.

When in the post-war period other anthropologists entered the field (Jan Vansina, Ethel Albert and myself), they did not immediately attack the old certainties, which by the way were not all false. It was only gradually that new insights were developed.

Concluding remarks

It is still very difficult to generalize about the ethnographic work of missionaries. Big differences have always existed in aims, inten-

tions and quality in different times and places in the work of representatives of different missions presenting their views on native peoples. Also, one should not forget, as I have already indicated before, that the missionaries have used a wide variety of genres to publish about their experiences and ideas: novels, juvenile books, journals, annual reports, travelogues and articles in different kinds of magazines, many of them addressed to the public at large. All these publications constitute a very rich source of information for anthropologists. They do not only present a wealth of ethnographic observations but also give an insight in the way they collected their data.

A good illustration of the diverse ways in which a missionary could get involved in publication is the Dutch White Father Bernard Zuure who worked in Africa from 1911 until 1929, mostly in Burundi. This priest, though he did not have any anthropological training - he took a doctorate in Rome, but in philosophy - wrote two books *Croyances et pratiques religieuses des Barundi* (1929) and *L'Ame du Murundi* (1939) which were, at least at the time of their appearance, ethnographic studies of a good scholarly standing. He also wrote articles in the scientific journal *Africa* and *Anthropos*. Besides this, he even published a large number of articles of a more popular nature in the mission journals *Grand Lacs* and *Nieuw Afrika*. Last but not least he acquired quite a reputation in the Netherlands by a number of books, among whom five in a series called *Afrikaanse Vulp en Krassen* (1921-1923), all, more or less written in the same facetious style and clearly with propagandistic intentions.

These books contain personal reminiscences of Zuure's life as a missionary, reflections on his work, anecdotes, and casual descriptions of native customs. The special interest of these books lies in the fact that they were not written for a scientific public and therefore gave spontaneous impressions of the way the author associated with the people and thought about them. Interesting, also, are the description of meetings the author had with many kinds of people, some of them playing in important role in Burundi politics.

This kind of literature has almost entirely been neglected by anthropologist but I think that it would be worthwhile to pay more attention to it.

As a last point I want to touch upon a positive aspect of the relationship between anthropologists and missionaries. As has been noted elsewhere in this book, apart from mutual criticism there has always been an attitude of mutual esteem. Anthropologists have made amply use of missionary resources whereas missionaries

profited from the advices and suggestions from anthropologists. The White Father van der Burgt for instance, who was the first to publish substantial ethnographic reports on Burundi, worked in close collaboration with famous ethnologists of his time like von Luschan and Weule and even wrote a chapter in the book of Meyer *Die Barundi* (1916) (Trouwborst 1979).

Another aspect of the relationship is that anthropologists helped missionaries in editing their manuscripts and getting these published. A good Dutch example is Van Baal who did much in this respect, as in the case of the book of Father S. Hylkema o.f.m. *Mensen in het Draagnet* (People in the Carrying-bag, 1974) on the Nalum, a people living in a mountain area of western New Guinea. As Van Baal points out in the introduction, parts of this book could have been written by a professional anthropologist, adding that the author restores an old and almost forgotten tradition of missionaries sometimes writing important ethnographies (1986: VI-VII). Unfortunately, this book will be one of the last in its genre. Soon the time will have come that there are no missionaries staying for a long time in the midst of their people. We can only hope for more and more native observers prepared to carry on the old and valuable tradition.

Notes

1. I have been in Burundi several times since 1958 and have always benefited from the hospitality, support and friendship of White Fathers in various parts of the country. I want to express here my sincere thanks. I will restrict myself in this paper to the work of Roman Catholic Missionaries because I have had mostly to do with them.
2. It is an ironic circumstance that Chrétien and Mworoha in their turn are accused of putting their scientific activities into the service of the present regime (Botte 1979:401). The discussion concerns of course the politically very delicate question of the relation between Tutsi and Hutu.

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Anthropologists, Missionaries and the 'Ethnographic Present'. The Confrontation between Native and Christian Religious Representations in West New Guinea¹

Jelle Miedema

Introduction

The debate that has been taking place in recent years between anthropologists and missionaries is characterized by a curious discrepancy between doctrine and practice. Though religion is the outstanding field of interest of anthropologists and missionaries, as a rule both are hardly concerned with the confrontation between native and Christian religious representations. This is remarkable because precisely this confrontation is supremely characteristic of the ethnographic present of the communities with which anthropologists and missionaries are concerned in the field. Regarding the debate, it may seem self-evident that both sides avoid a subject that does not hold their attention, but their lack of attention for the subject concerned is not in the least self-evident. Consequently, in this paper I wish to illustrate why the confrontation between the belief systems concerned is, of rather, should be an important field of study for both anthropologists and missionaries, given the respective aims of the disciplines.

However, first I shall concentrate on the problem why subsequent generations of anthropologists and missionaries have neglected the aforementioned confrontation. This implies, in turn, that I have first of all to deal with another neglected topic: the diversity of the figure of 'the' anthropologist and 'the' missionary as such. Though, on the one hand, it can be said that thanks to a discussion about epistemological and methodological issues (cf. Abbink and Van Beek in this volume) prejudices on both sides are becoming increasingly more objectified, on the other hand it can also be claimed that a focus merely on fundamental differences

renews stereotyped traditional ideas about 'the' anthropologist and 'the' missionary. And though I agree with Abbink (cf. this volume) that, from an epistemological point of view, the stereotypes concerned are still valid, seen from a sociological and historical point of view they are not of current interest as they hardly cover the professional divergence within both occupational groups. The figure conceived of in the debate is one that fits in better in a (pre-) colonial rather than a post-colonial era. The - Western - anthropologist and missionary are still represented as persons who are of central importance in the processes of opening up, developing or studying a tribe or a region. Therefore, since in regions where anthropologists and missionaries have traditionally been active the rise of independent states and churches has taken place, I shall first consider what consequences these developments had for the position and activities of subsequent generations of anthropologists and missionaries - including their non-Western colleagues (as far as the missionaries are concerned, as there are far more of them than non-Western anthropologists, and their influence is much greater).

In the above I have tried to outline the framework within which this paper should be placed. The central subject of this paper is, as stated, the confrontation between native and Christian religious representations. Firstly, I shall focus on the problem of the underlying reasons for the neglect of the aforementioned confrontation, secondly I shall deal with the question as to the importance of this confrontation.

Yet to be able to deal with the aforementioned subjects satisfactorily it would be necessary to carry out a comparative study for different times and places, based on relevant and recent material, derived from different categories of anthropologists and missionaries. Because such material is scarce, however, I shall mainly restrict myself in this paper to the results of my own research, to my own experiences, dating from and limited to the years 1975-81, when I was employed as a teacher of anthropology, as ethnographer and development-aid worker for the largest Protestant church of West New Guinea/Irian Jaya, the *Gereja Kristen Injili di Irian Jaya* (GKI)². In addition I shall focus my attention on the *tribal* situation of Irian Jaya. This situation is by no means representative for more complex situations in the urban centres of Irian Jaya, let alone for urban centres elsewhere in the world (cf. Droogers in this volume). In view of these restrictions I do not pretend to be able to give exhaustive answers to the questions stated above. I would only

like to point out that the conclusions at the end of this paper may be of noteworthy significance.

Anthropologists, missionaries and counterparts

Nowadays sending out (Western) anthropologists and missionaries to work elsewhere in the world usually takes place at the request of or in close consultation with a counterpart organization. The subject, location, duration and aims of a work contract are matters that are generally attuned to the policy of the counterpart, which in its turn often has to take account, to a (too) great extent in the view of the Western colleague, of non-scientific or non-religious priorities, or of great contradictions in a central policy or its implementation.

The successors of the government anthropologists and missionaries of former times are concerned not so much with forming policies as with implementing them, at least in the category of anthropologists and missionaries who are employed in specialist work (teaching, development of local church communities, directing an agricultural project, medical work) on a contract for 4-5 years in association with a foreign university or church of which the organization - and thus the policy formation - is in the hands of non-Western colleagues. This category of anthropologists and missionaries could be called *free-lance professional anthropologists* and *missionary temps*, respectively. Placed on a scale with anthropologists on the right and missionaries on the left, the above-mentioned representatives of the two occupational groups lie fairly close together in the middle of the scale. The poles are then formed by the *university (professional) anthropologist* on the one hand and the *old-style missionary* on the other (according to the image that anthropologists like to use; see Van der Geest 1987). Those belonging to the former category usually stay for a relatively short period to carry out a research project (1-2 years), or to fulfil a task in a consulting capacity (from several weeks to a few months) in the field, or are at most indirectly involved in the 'development' of a region; those belonging to the latter category usually stay longest (10-40 years) and are directly involved in the welfare of the population within which they live and work.

Nevertheless a subdivision of the latter category ('old-style missionaries') is necessary. For within this group we find both the Roman Catholic missionary and the fundamentalist Protestant missionary (the moderate Protestant variant I shall disregard here,

as this has almost become extinct). It is true that the sub-types mentioned, the *stayers-on*, have one important thing in common in that they work for an organization of which the leadership has remained in the same (Western) hands³. But in terms of the form and orientation of the organization there are extremely great differences between them: an episcopal versus a presbyterian and synodal organization, representing a synthetic versus an antithetic attitude, respectively, towards the other culture and religion. In addition there are differences as regards the location of centres of activities, like the coast versus the interior, and the primary social context of which one forms a part, like the celibate way of life versus the family context⁴.

To put it briefly, missionary temps - and hesitantly also free-lance professional anthropologists - are to be found especially in both the moderate Protestant (mission) churches and the Roman Catholic (mission) churches, while missionaries of the classical type are to be found exclusively with the - now independent - (Roman Catholic) mission churches, and with the so-called fundamentalist mission societies or the churches established and looked after by their representatives.

Conversely, a native (missionary) cadre with full theological training, or a training lasting several years for lay pastors or evangelists, occurs most often - in executive positions - in the moderate Protestant (missionary) churches, while in the Roman Catholic and fundamentalist Protestant church such persons have a much less prominent place.

With the above-described broad overview of shifts in positions and tasks of anthropologists and missionaries (limited to the area of their mutual relations), I have tried to show that notably on account of the differences that have arisen among them in each professional group a simple division into 'anthropologists' and 'missionaries' is no longer realistic. Such a simplistic division is a hindrance in assessing the newly arisen positions and tasks of a specific category of anthropologists and missionaries, as well as the position and tasks of the similarly non-uniform category of the (non-Western) counterpart.

Anthropologists, missionaries, counterparts and the 'ethnographic' present of religious developments

Only a few decades ago, under the influence of the then prevailing functionalistic and structuralistic paradigms, it was considered that the anthropologist should present as pure a picture as possible of the original culture. In practice this often meant that the ethnological research carried out focussed either on an 'isolated' tribe, 'not yet influenced by the outside world', or on a projection back in time of the 'ethnographic present' of the culture and society concerned to the time before the arrival of the government official, the missionary or the anthropologist himself. On the basis of the idea of a 'timeless ethnographic present' attempts were made to reconstruct fundamental structures and behaviour patterns. The contemporary confrontation between native and Christian religious representations, which had often arisen already before the arrival of the first missionary or evangelist, lay outside the field of view and field of interest of the anthropologist. What missionaries were doing was neither popular nor relevant (cf. also Quarles van Ufford & Schoffeleers 1988: 4). But even if anthropologists had been interested in what missionaries were doing, this would not have been enough.

The first generations of 'missionary-workers' (a more appropriate name for them would be 'missionary-traders') on West New Guinea achieved very little, because of the trouble they had in making themselves understood⁵ and in staying alive (Kamma 1976). Yet in the 1930s their successors were involved in a fairly sudden and rapid change to the 'new adat', including Christianity. This was accompanied by rapid territorial expansion and competition with neighbouring mission organizations. The missionary underwent a transformation from *father-figure* to *ressortbeheerder* (church community official), and was even less often in a position to make a serious study of language and culture as his predecessors had been (cf. Swellengrebel 1978: 120). The actual missionary work was undertaken more and more by Ambonese trained for this task and later by native lay pastors and evangelists. Consequently, in the colonial period the average missionary was not immediately involved in the continuing confrontation between native and Christian religious representations.

Now, several decades later, it can be said that anthropologists and missionaries are even more out of touch with the actual confrontation between native and Christian religious represen-

tations. Anthropologists, under the influence of historical anthropology and neo-Marxism, have launched the idea of a 'timeless ethnographic present'. In the course of time they have become more and more interested in developments on a long-term basis as a framework within which correlations and associations between relatively long-lasting phenomena and structures should be compared and made plausible. But in the field of historical anthropology very little attention is paid to (tribal) religion, while within Marxist structuralism the keyword is 'production'. And although we are concerned here with the production of goods, relations, and ideas, it is not fully clear how this production of ideas stands in relation to the other production processes. It is clear that the present-day point of departure lies in the material sphere, giving the impression that the production of ideas - which I take to include 'religion' - is a derivative of this. Unfortunately it is a derivative that is hardly given any attention as far as the confrontation between the native religious and Christian representations are concerned (see for example Feil 1987 and Strathern 1988).

An exception in this respect is formed by the studies of messianic or revival movements, brought about by both anthropologists and missionaries, or by a combination of the two (Kamma 1972). It is remarkable, however, that while such movements still occur (Giay 1986) they hardly attract attention any longer. A second exception is formed by a specific specialization within anthropology, namely religious anthropology, but here the focus of interest has shifted, according to Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers, to a "religious symbolism divorced from its political context" (1988: 4). As an example these authors indicate the study of myths, that is dominated by an essentially ahistorical structuralism. The recent appearance of studies on a historical subject, or symbolical systems deprived of their political context, is ascribed by the authors to the potentially political sensitive aspects of revival movements ("legitimation of the nascent mass nationalism in the Third World"), and to the desire of researchers to avoid trouble in getting a research clearance (1988: 5).

But apart from the political context also missionaries have become more detached from the contemporary confrontation between the adat religion and Christianity. As a result of the 'territorial expansion' it became necessary, in anticipation of or in imitation of processes of state formation, to devote increasingly more time to the development of the native church and the training of a native cadre. The work at the basis was taken over by the first

generations of native pastors and lay pastors. The missionary had more and more administrative and coordinating work to do (the situation in many Catholic churches) or was put in a position as a specialist in a *semi-missionary* field (theological teaching, development of local church communities)⁶. In this connection, however, it can be said that 'territorial expansion' has made way for 'expansion of development projects', the new field in which anthropologists and missionaries have come to be involved with each other once again. This situation has arisen not only because of the financing of development projects via i.e. non-governmental organizations, often with an emphatically religious background, but also because of the nature of many projects.

Meanwhile it will be clear that the involvement of also the missionaries in the confrontation between native and Christian religious representations has decreased. It can also be said that the definition of 'mission' has become broadened in the course of time, but this does not alter the fact that at the present time the original missionary work is being done for the most part by native pastors, lay pastors or evangelists. Of these, however, only the native pastor can be regarded as the successor of the former missionary. But the autochthonous pastor has to do with administrative matters even more than his Western predecessor, while he is usually even less able than his predecessor to know what to make of traditional religious representations, especially if he has been trained in an antithetic missionary tradition⁷. Moreover, in those cases when such pastors have been appointed not by a church community but by the committee of a synod, they are usually not very enthusiastic about being sent to a missionary (viz. inland) church community, having grown up near the coast as a general rule. And even if they do take an interest in the 'superstitions' of the members of the church community, they are hardly able to make a study of the local languages and cultures because of limited facilities and training. This means in fact that the contemporary confrontation between the adat religion and Christianity is out of view of both the anthropologist and the missionary, the latter meaning not only the foreign specialist but also the native counterpart-successor of the former missionary. And even though the successor may be becoming increasingly aware that "evangelizing is not a matter of filling empty bottles" (Irian map ZNHK 1983: 23), not much more is achieved than this. Below I shall give an example of this, before concentrating in section IV on the confrontation between native and Christian religious representations as a continuing process. During

a church community development course the various participants, including lay pastors, elders, deacons and evangelists, were given the task of translating a biblical passage from Indonesian into their own language. In the passage the word *dosa* (sin) occurred, which was translated by the term *sasar*. This word was indeed recognized by the course instructors as a Biak loan-word, but there was no deeper knowledge than this of the local language and culture⁸. When the question was put whether there was a word in the native language for 'sin', neither a negative nor an affirmative answer was given, upon which the course instructors continued with matters with which they were more familiar (the explanation of bible texts, instructions about tasks of elders and deacons). I myself had just returned from a trip (and had not been involved in such course work - not much has changed since the time of G.J. Held⁹), and that same evening I went to the temporary lodgings of the course members and began a conversation about conceptual oppositions in the creation myths. Via the concepts 'high' and 'low', 'light' and 'dark', 'omnipotence' and 'impotence' - referring to a coherent system of complementary oppositions - I casually asked what concept was opposed to *mafun* (the local term for 'perfect', 'pure', 'without evil'). I was given an immediate reply: *wandièk* or *oska*. (Following this, the counterquestion was raised whether the terms concerned, that had to do with misdeeds in the adat sphere, could simply be substituted for the biblical *dosa*; this led to a discussion about the contextual meaning of the terms *wandièk* and *oska*). This example illustrates the fact that without at least some knowledge of the local language and culture it is almost impossible to have a conversation or 'dialogue' about the native's experience of changing over to a 'different' belief.

The confrontation between native and Christian religious representations

On the basis of various case-studies I have typified the transition to Christianity as "a change in the object of belief, not in the way of believing" (Miedema 1984: 208). Biblical figures have taken the place of mythical figures, while churchgoing and prayer have replaced traditional ritual activities. What has not changed is the idea that a *continuous*, dynamic 'balance' in the sacral sphere is a precondition for a continuous balance in the profane sphere, and vice versa (Miedema 1986: 33). Here the term 'balance' is meant to

signify a kind of reciprocal 'obligation': wherever we (people) are striving towards a continual good relation with higher powers, *yang diatas* (the ones above) are also expected to do this. This finds expression both in the words of an evangelist "they come not for the sermon but out of fear of punishment 'from above' if they do not come", as well as in the reaction of a Papua pastor's wife on the death of the Papua anthropologist Ab in 1984 "why has this happened to us, have we then prayed wrongly?" Also "negative evidence" (Oosten 1987: 27) is discernible in the myths. They show what happens if people do not respect the order striven after by the cultural hero.

The previously cited remark that "evangelizing is not a matter of filling empty bottles" can be used in another way to elucidate the *process* of the encounter between the adat religion and Christianity. Evangelists and lay pastors are concerned not only with already 'filled bottles'; also the 'refilling' - to continue in the style of the same Papua pastor - is not a one-sided process. As regards organization as well as content the actual 'objects' of conversion to Christianity play an important role, that is insufficiently emphasized in the anthropologist-missionary debate. In the Bird's Head region not only are there well known examples of requests for an evangelist coming from the local population (Miedema 1984: 27, 114), but also 'natives' are currently in a position to play off different church or missionary societies against one another (previously mentioned in Zwier 1981: 7). Also missionaries and anthropologists can be manipulated. The discussion about the balance of power between the missionary and anthropologist on the one hand and the 'native' on the other requires a reassessment of views.

But also in terms of content the above-mentioned 'refilling' is not a one-sided process. What is seldom revealed by anthropologists and missionaries, at least in the debate going on between them, is the fact that the 'natives' themselves incorporate elements of 'the new adat', including the new religion, into their own myths and cosmology without the involvement of any outsider. Conversely elements from myths are in turn incorporated into the 'new' - in Geertz's terms - model "of" and "for reality" (Geertz 1973: 93). It is interesting to note that in this process different emphases are laid in different regions, and that selection occurs either consciously or subconsciously. Here I shall restrict myself to one example from the Bird's Head. While trickster stories occur in both the Western and the Eastern Bird's Head, it is remarkable that in the Western Bird's Head the biblical figure of Jesus is seen from a *trickster* perspective,

while in the Northeastern Bird's Head it is the comparison to the *cultural hero* that is conspicuous.

In this way the confrontation between native and non-native religious representations shows retrospectively which mythological figures (trickster beings, cultural heroes, water demons, women with vital and lethal power, anomalous animals) are most dominant in a particular culture, and also how the various mythemes are related to one another. These differences in mythemes can in turn be correlated with structures and developments as characteristics of the *social order* of a culture (the kinship system, the development of systems of exchange). In this way it is possible to obtain insight not only into specific *historical* processes, like differences in tribal involvement in e.g. the former slave-trade in the Bird's Head (Miedema 1988), but also into contemporary behaviour patterns involving the reaction of population groups to new developments. Thus it is clear why nowadays also development-aid experts uphold the view that "Culture, including its religious dimensions, seems to be the keyword in filling the gap between the technocrat's vision of reality and the people's aspirations for positive changes" (Verhagen 1987: 143, *my italics*), and why the title of a recent volume with contributions made by various categories of anthropologists is called "*Religion and Development. Towards an integrated approach*" (Quarles van Ufford & Schoffeleers (eds.) 1988, *my italics*).

Conclusion

On the basis of the preceding sections the following conclusions can be drawn. Section II: Anthropologists and missionaries show themselves in the debate to be relatively closed professional groups. By placing the mutual confrontation centrally too much the debate acquires a dated character. Insufficient justice has been done to both the differences that have arisen within each occupational group, and to the cooperation with counterparts. Section III: both anthropologists and missionaries devote selective attention to the phenomenon of religion. Just as anthropologists have neglected the ethnographic present of the native religion (as being in confrontation with Christian religious representations), so have missionaries in their turn neglected the ethnographic present of the Christianity that they have brought (as being in confrontation with native religions). Section IV: the confrontation between native and

Christian religious representations provides a comparative perspective within which new insight can be acquired into thinking patterns and thus into the specific dynamics of a culture.

This last-mentioned point reveals the relevance of the confrontation concerned for both anthropology and missiology. Cultural change is a process of selective adaptation of new developments, within which relatively persistent thinking patterns operate as 'filter-mechanisms'. Therefore an anthropologist who is interested in the production of ideas or a missionary who wants a real dialogue simply cannot afford to leave unexplored the field of confrontation between native and Christian religious representations. If this does occur then a formal and fundamental point of departure for both anthropology and (modern) missionary activities is being neglected: the serious consideration of the 'object' of research and of conversion to Christianity, respectively, as 'subject'.

This implies that also fundamental points of departure on the part of the 'subject', the counterpart, should be taken seriously. One of these points of departure is the important principle of *reciprocity*. The question that then becomes relevant is not only to what extent one party should take the other seriously from an epistemological viewpoint (cf. Van der Geest 1987, Abbink in this volume), but also to what extent it is possible to give content to a "moral obligation" (Quarles van Ufford & Schoffeleers 1988: 1).

Notes

1. I am indebted to Mrs. S.M. van Gelder-Ottway for the translation of the text into English.
2. The *Gereja Kristen Injili di Irian Jaya*, that was established in 1956, was largely a result of the missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church, which is not an 'evangelical' church.
3. Also as regards 'organization' it is not possible to simply compare churches in Irian, of which many members in remote regions are only second or first generation Christians, with churches elsewhere in the world.
4. Having children enables the fieldworker to have a special, non-professional relationship with the local population.
5. The widely held view that the 'classical' missionary is well acquainted with native languages is contested by the linguist, ethnologist and 'missionary cultural attaché' Dr. G.J. Held, who initially worked for the Dutch Bible Society in New Guinea in the 1930s. He is of the opinion that the Numforese-Biak dialect, used i.e. by the Van Hasselts (father

and son), is a very simple Numforese with some Biak influence, which the missionary can use "in practice (...) to communicate with both Numforese and Biak people, even though there may be objections against this, of course, from both sides". The missionaries were too busy with other work "to be able to acquire a thorough knowledge of the native language and mentality" (Swellengrebel 1978: 129, my translation).

6. Schoorl thus describes the Roman Catholic mission post Ayawasih in the Birds's Head: "So far there has not been a fundamental confrontation of cultures. In areas beyond the immediate reach of the mission post the traditional culture continues to exist in ways about which the fathers and sisters know very little. The desire to understand more about the Ayfat culture is certainly present, but simply the tasks of providing basic assistance and looking after themselves fill up their 16-hour working days so much that they have no time or energy left over for furthering their knowledge in this respect" (Schoorl 1979: 152, my translation).
7. Also within the missionary movement (and the later GKI) there are of course exceptions to the rule. One of these is the Moi time in cooperation with i.e. the missionary pastor and ethnologist Dr. F.C. Kamma - who in this connection was also a unique figure in the missionary world.

Yet it has to be said that although in the last few decades ethnology or anthropology has become a standard part of the training for missionaries, a thorough knowledge of the other culture has never been integrated as a very important or necessary element in missionary fieldwork. In missionary circles systematic attention for the other culture and for non-Christian religious representations has always been nothing more than the (expensive) hobby of the very few, sometimes respected as such but usually regarded with distrust. By 'missionary circles' I mean here the cadre of both foreign and native churches. It is true that in Irian Jaya students - fourth and fifth generation Christians - at the theological college of the GKI are much more open-minded about their native culture, including pre-Christian religious concepts, in comparison with the present-day generation of (native) pastors.

8. This is meant only as an observation, and not as a value judgement. The team concerned were given the - almost impossible - task (...) of arranging church community development courses for both urban church communities, often with university-educated cadre, and for church communities on the coast and inland, widely different in terms of distance and culture, with cadre that very often had followed only a few years of junior school and an occasional course.
9. Having returned from a trip to the Waropen region, in the coastal village of Manokwari Held, became involved, not through the missionaries - cf. note 5 - but through the government officials, with preparations for a discussion between government officials and missionaries "about whether or not Papua dancing parties should be permitted to take place" (Swellengrebel 1978: 123, my translation).

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Mission impossible? Missionaries, Anthropologists and the Mesoamerican Maya

Rien Ploeg

I didn't say anything. Whether the Church was working for the poor, as in El Salvador, or supporting the government, as in Spain, it was still, in my book, up to its neck in politics. But it didn't seem polite to pursue the argument (says private detective V.I. Warshawski in Paretzky 1987. 28).

Introduction

Missionaries and anthropologists form an integral part of Mesoamerican history. Like in most other regions of the world, relations between them are complicated and become even more complex when viewed within a time perspective (Antropólogos 1986, Kloos 1984 and 1986, Van der Geest 1987).

Looking at these relationships, as it stands, one notices that the most outstanding feature which both of them demonstrate is their genuine interest in people and knowledge. This interest started an ongoing inquisition in which both missionaries and anthropologists see themselves, at least potentially, as guardians of Indian cultures. So far, however, this guardianship is paired in general to a pronounced marginalization of Indian cultures.

Here a description is given of how missionaries and anthropologists have dealt with this situation of marginalization of Indian cultures since post-Conquest times in the Mesoamerican Maya area. Concentration is not so much on the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists (Ploeg 1984) but on how they historically react to the deterioration of indigenous cultures, and also to what extent their quest for knowledge and people is a

contributing factor in this respect. The first two parts, therefore, qualify the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists in a diachronic perspective focussing first on missionary activities during the contact and colonial period, and thereafter on anthropologists during the fifties and seventies of this century. To redress the image as drawn in the first two parts, the third part of this contribution illustrates present relationships between missionaries and anthropologists in the Maya area in the case of Belize.

In the beginning

Historically missionaries entered Mesoamerica 400 years before the first professional anthropologists. At the time of the Spanish conquest in 1520 missionaries of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders walked into the area to play their part in the God and Gold deal. The quest for knowledge and people was not a walk-over for every region. For example it took two years to conquer the Aztec. Whereas after twenty years the conquest of the Maya was far from complete. Eventually it was about the end of the seventeenth century that most Maya were brought under Spanish control (Bricker 1981: 19, León-Portilla 1984). But since then, and up to this century control of the Maya, living in an area encompassing the Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala, Belize, parts of Honduras and El Salvador, is still a hot issue (Fried et al. 1983, Jones 1977, MacLeod and Wasserstrom 1983, Riese 1972, Roys 1943, Scholes and Roys 1968, Warman 1985).

The efforts of foreigners to control Maya people and culture were far from peaceful. Ever since Spanish conquerors like Cortez, Montejo and Pizarro set foot in the Americas, violence and marginalization of Indian cultures form a substantial part of (Meso-) American history. Violence and cruelties are not new in Meso-american culture-history, but a special quality of ferocity is added as soon as the Spaniards introduce their methods of Christianization (Clendinnen 1982a and 1982b).

In this new atmosphere of violence missionaries could see themselves either as cruel or as peaceful pacifiers. To put it simply, those opting for a self-image of peaceful pacification and Christianization can be regarded as the first anthropologists. For Central Mexico and the Maya region the most famous are Father Bartelomé de las Casas and Bishop Diego de Landa. Like anthropologists they believed that the best strategy to reach their goal was

to inquire into the beliefs and customs of the people. Or as Las Casas would say:

...the only way to conquer man is to conquer his mind and this could only be done through patience, persuasion, and kindness (Bricker 1981: 33, Saint Lu 1982).

Patience, persuasion and kindness were certainly the key words Landa used to describe the way in which he converted Indians. In reality, however, he was accused of severe cruelties committed against the Maya. It is interesting to see how in this respect missionaries had to face contradictions. In their efforts to Christianize, Indian beliefs and customs had to be viewed as paganism. But as they got to know Indian beliefs and customs better, persons like Las Casas were very much impressed and appreciated Indian cultures to such an extent that they started to accuse fellow missionaries of destroying Indian cultures. Thus in this way, despite ongoing destruction of Indian cultures, they saw themselves as guardians of the Indians and their cultures. Bishop de Landa forms a notorious example of this. As a Provincial of the Franciscan Order:

...he realized that the task of converting the Indians to Catholicism would not succeed until every vestige of idolatry has been extirpated (Bricker 1981: 20).

His method of inquisition not only aroused considerable unrest among the Indians but also prompted letters from priests to the Spanish Crown to report Landa's activities. For this he had to return to Spain to account for his behaviour. Being thus accused of cruelties he wrote in his defence the famous *Relación de las cosas Yucatan* (Tozzer 1941, Cámara 1986). This work, together with the works of Las Casas and other missionaries, can be regarded as salvage anthropology in describing vanishing Indian cultures. The image Landa creates of himself in describing Maya culture in those days is not of a destroyer but rather of a guardian of Maya culture (Tozzer 1941). The theme of destruction and protection of Indian cultures kept discussions and accusations going throughout the centuries. Today with anthropologists and missionaries working in the area things are basically the same as 400 years ago. Moreover, at the time there is an overall marginalization of Indian cultures in a setting of spiritual and physical conquest of many kinds. In some

cases, this can even be characterized as genocide and ethnocide (Pérez n.d., Berryman 1984, Hvalkof and Aaby 1981).

Stories about cruelties continued and can be still told beyond imagination (Fried et al. 1983). However, there is an enormous difference to the extent in which missionaries now see themselves as guardians of indigenous cultures. During the contact and colonial period they had more power because they were one of the leading forces in the combined spiritual and physical conquest of the Indians. Now, due to more state and military involvement, they are themselves marginalized in their power to support the Indian people they work with.

So in the days of Diego de Landa missionaries could see themselves as destroyers or guardians of indigenous cultures. Today most missionaries in the Maya area do not have much choice but to see themselves as guardians of those cultures when seen in the light of the more powerful governmental and military oppression of the church and Indian cultures (Fried et al. 1983, Kendall et al. 1983).

And then there were anthropologists

For anthropologists the situation is not much different. Only they do not see themselves as missionaries. Unlike missionaries most anthropologists show in their work a tendency to value Maya culture as it stands without taking substantively into account the ongoing marginalization. This is quite evident in their choice of topics to study. Mostly structuralist-functionalist in their approach, they choose themes like 'cargo-cults' and 'shamanism', which belong to the religious and economic domains of Maya culture. But while admitting that these fulfil a function in the present day, they basically view them as continuities from pre-Conquest times onwards. In doing so, most anthropologists do not really focus on Maya culture as being part of a larger national state society (Browman 1978, Medina 1986, Tedlock 1982). Generally the attitudes anthropologists expose in these studies is one of eagerness to learn something from the Maya instead of the other way around. The work of Redfield seems an exception. In his concentration on problems of the impact of technology and the decline of old religious faiths and traditional values, he is of the opinion that indigenous societies will dissolve because people

...have no choice but to go forward with technology, with a declining religious faith and moral conviction, into a dangerous world (Redfield 1970: 178).

But generally, though anthropologists recognize the aspect of disintegration of Indian culture they do not incorporate this as a major topic in their studies. Similarly to the missionaries of the early sixteenth century, post World War II anthropologists showed different reactions when faced with this aspect. In the 1950's, anthropological studies expressed the idea that since post-Conquest times Indian communities lost their

...wellsprings of autonomous cultural creativity experiencing at the same time a deepening cleavage between Indian and non-Indian (Wolf 1983: 41).

Anthropologists like Redfield, Wolf and others thought that, though prospects looked miserable, Indian communities would be able to adapt to new circumstances, especially in this age of new production relations and technology. With these modest optimistic prospects anthropologists mainly concentrated on the adaptive elements of Indian culture (Press 1975). In their approach interaction between Indian communities and the outer world would be mutually benefitting.

As Indian communities became more and more marginalized the idea of mutual benefits was hard to hold. Studies on adaptability were abandoned. One would expect anthropologists to study the how and why of marginalization, concentrating on current power relations of Indians and non-Indians. Thus far, community studies dominated, often viewing the Indian community as an isolated, bounded entity insulated from macro-social processes and structures (Schwartz 1983: 340). In addition to these studies others became more problem oriented in which socio-cultural change was studied from the angle of urbanization, industrialization, acculturation (idem: 341).

Especially during the 1970s the shifts in anthropological studies in Mesoamerica were "from acculturation to power", "from culture to strategic poses" and "from community to the state and marketplace" (idem: 356). Though claiming in these studies a manifest sense of responsibility toward the people of the Mesoamerican area, anthropologists admit that they still have to find new approaches and directions to fulfil their mission (idem: 358).

Today they generally view their mission as an ongoing inquisition with a continuing deep concern for knowledge and for people. For the Maya area, it seems, anthropologists are expressing a deep concern for knowledge while avoiding the harsh realities in which many Indian communities try to survive. This deep concern for knowledge is expressed in the many ethno-historic and semantic-religious studies in which cultural continuity is stressed as being basic and vital to the Indians involved (Browman 1978). Concern for knowledge can express concern for people, but one can ask whether the anthropologists of today are the missionaries of post-Conquest yesterday. Although in a different age anthropologists too claim to have a mission. Like the missionaries, they are of the opinion that concern for knowledge is a good way to support the people they work with. But, in comparing thirty years of anthropological inquisition in the twentieth century with post-Conquest missionary inquisition in the sixteenth century, it seems that concern for knowledge does not necessarily lead to a concern for people.

Looking at the processes of marginalization then and now, it seems as if the quest for knowledge is a mission impossible as far as the concern for people goes. Then and now, prospects did not seem bright for the participants after they were contacted by people who saw themselves as good-willing. And in showing their goodwill, their quest for knowledge and people generally, set in motion first by missionaries and later by anthropologists, had contradictory and often fatal consequences. Thus one may wonder about the importance of self-images, because the consequences which are likely to follow from acts of inquiry - regardless of self-image (Berkhofer 1979, Hanke 1975) - are not very rewarding in either way (Antropólogos 1986).

Mission Belize

Every picture tells a story. The impression of the general picture is not very hopeful for the future. Some corrections are therefore necessary. The case of Belize is an appropriate one to accomplish this. Here the story is told about missionaries and anthropologists and their activities in relation to each other and the Maya population in Belize.

Belize is a small country on the mainland of Central America situated on the eastern side facing the Caribbean sea. It is bounded

on the north by the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, on the west and south by the Peten region of Guatemala and the east by the Caribbean sea. It covers 22,963 square kilometers and the length of the country runs north-south for 280 kilometers while its width is 109 kilometers at its widest point. The vegetational cover ranges from mangrove and scrub pine in the east to tropical rain forest in the west. The area comprises valleys and falls with swift-flowing and not always perennial rivers and streams on the narrow coastal strip. Belize's climate is sub-tropical knowing a dry season extending from February to May and a shorter dry season around August. As of the 1986 census there were 171,000 people living in all of Belize. The main ethnic groups in the country consist of creoles (originally a mixture of African and European), Mestizo (originally a mixture of Spanish and Maya), Garifuna (originally a mixture of African and Carib Indian) and the Maya (Amerindian). Other ethnic groups consist of German-origin Mennonite communities, Arab descent peoples, East Indian descent peoples, Chinese and various people of Europe and other origins (Branche 1988).

This setting provides all the ingredients for an environment in which missionaries and anthropologists can thrive. Belize is of particular importance historically, because by 2,500 BC the first evidence of the Maya anywhere is established here through archaeological research. It was not until 1618 that records show the presence of Europeans on Belizean soil in the form of Spanish missionaries who were intent upon converting the Maya at Tipu in western Belize, where a church was built. Furthermore, as records show, the history of the Maya in Belize is also a history of migration and refuge. And up to the present Maya Indians still seek refuge in Belize. Thus migrations are known of Mopan Maya across the border from the Peten Guatemala into Belize in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Under British colonial rule the Maya, though discriminated by this rule, coloured Belizean history in the nineteenth century through their contributions in the field of economy as pioneer settler-agriculturalists and through their military activities changing British policies in the colony in the form of a major constitutional change. In this period Frederick Crove introduced an ambivalence in the perception of the Maya. Attached to the Baptist mission in Belize he wrote in 1850:

In disposition, their leading characteristics are docility and timidity. When aroused, however, they are fierce, cruel, and implacable. General industrious, though not aspiring,

they often amass wealth. In their dealings they are shrewd, but not dishonest. Long subjection has thought them a cringing servility and low cunning, probably foreign to their original character (Crowe in Bolland 1987: 93).

Before this time the perception of the Maya by missionaries was filled with ambivalence too. The spiritual conquest of the Maya, largely being an account of the Franciscan order, started in 1618. The first attempts to evangelize were made when the Franciscans Bartolomé de Fuensalida and Juan de Orbita travelled overland to Tipu River. Being well received first setbacks were soon followed in 1622 and 1624. Spanish authority and prestige was effectively dealt with by the Maya by driving the missionaries out of the area. Another Franciscan effort along the coast of Belize in same period ended equally in a disaster. Thus in 1643 the Franciscans had to face a total failure of their Belize mission. Though confronted with harsh realities, missionaries kept trying to settle in Belize with Dominicans entering from Guatemala in addition to the Franciscans.

At the time the Spanish lost their strongholds to the English the first wave of incoming Catholic missionaries ended too. The net result of the Spanish *entradas* in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, with a few vain attempts at converting the Maya in the Belize area, was one of non-disturbance compared to the more disruptive effects British colonial rule initiated (Bolland 1987: 73). But like the waves of the sea missionaries kept coming in a second wave starting from 1832 onwards with the activities of a Franciscan coming from Honduras. Still being in turmoils the Catholic Church managed to establish itself all over the country of Belize. It did not take long for Jesuits coming from England to settle in Belize too. In 1889 the first North American Jesuits came to the area. Despite all the external pressures the Maya managed to preserve a degree of autonomy during the British colonial period with much missionary activity. An autonomy which persists until the present day.

In comparing this account of the Maya in Belize with the general picture it looks like that there is no such thing as marginalization of Maya in Belize. At the turn of the nineteenth century missionaries and British colonial rulers were joined by a new group of pioneers; American and European archaeologists starting to work in the

Maya area. From that time onwards Belize can be regarded as a promised land for scholars coming from a variety of scientific disciplines. Recently Belize is 'baptized' as the 'turning point', because it is considered as one of the last resorts on earth to preserve the unique wildlife in tropical forest setting, coastal lagoons, river valleys, pine ridge forests and ethnic traditions of the population; a situation that might alter easily if the tourist-industry expands too rapidly and in case logging and agriculture extends in an uncontrolled manner (Belize 1988). But, as always, nothing new is under the sun. Ecology being an hot topic now, it was likewise at the turn of the century. In those days Thomas Gann wrote in 1926:

Manatee are getting rare and rare every year and will probably before long be added to the ever-extending list of extinct animals, (...) they are gradually driven to more and more remote fastnesses by the advance of civilization, to which they must inevitably succumb in the long run. The Mexican Government, realizing this fact, and being unwilling that the manatee should be exterminated (...) have (...) recently taken legislative measures to deal with the situation (...) The intent is admirable (...) for this huge mammal - last survivor of another age - is absolutely harmless (...) if not interfered with, it rapidly becomes very tame, and great droves of them (...) forming an extremely interesting and amusing spectacle, not perhaps to be witnessed anywhere else in the world (Gann 1972: 29).

Although this quotation is elaborate, one could expect opinions expressing a same concern for the Maya. In those days the first archaeologists perceived the Maya in their ethnographic accounts as harmless, extremely interesting and perhaps a kind of people not to be witnessed anywhere else in the world. In this way these archaeologists set the trend which lasts up to the present. A trend in which the vulnerability of the Maya culture is the object of study. A concern missionaries and anthropologists share, though from different ideologies and pragmatics. Anthropologists being late-comers with respect to missionaries who expressed this concern about 400 years ago before the first anthropologist was able to do so. Still anthropologists are late-comers. In his search for the traditional Kechi Maya in Belize, the North American anthropologist not only discovered that the Kechi were not traditional, but they were already visited by missionaries too. On his way to an

isolated Kechi village missionary activity played the tune at the background. First of all he wanted to compare an isolated village with other communities where among other things missionaries were having a modernizing impact. Second, on his way from civilization to his isolated village "the feeling of having left the modern world behind was overwhelming", but, "That night I stayed with a missionary family". Third, traveling through the area he was associated with a Mennonite missionary. Last, but not least, reaching his village he discovered that missionaries already had made some converts, had built a new church and through a joint church/state primary school children were exposed to all but traditional ideas and desires (Wilk 1987). Thus the anthropologist's mission to study tradition faded and turned out to be a mission impossible. Whatever the circumstances, this case shows us that in this time and age missionaries and anthropologists will happen to meet each other in the field. Not only they meet in the field:

My first encounter with the missionaries had been two months earlier. I had met a group of charismatic Southern Baptists building a concrete church with a zinc roof at Maya Center, nestled among the thatched huts. (...) I saw several of their children trying to kill birds with slingshots. "I'm studying the jaguars in this area," I told them. "We might even try and have the area designated a preserve. Would you please ask your children to stop trying to kill birds." "We save souls," one of them replied. The rest just looked at me. (...) They visited the Cockscomb Indians shortly after and showed them a movie depicting sinners burning in hell. They told the Maya to repent. I became angry at their methods and self-righteous behaviour and tried to bar them from Cockscomb (...) They turned my anger against me. I was used as an example to the Indians of how the devil works through people to prevent the saving of souls. Though most of the Indians liked and trusted me, some of the more fervently religious ones became frightened of and even angry with me. The missionaries promised the Cockscomb Indians a new church similar to the one they were building at Maya center if they could obtain legal ownership of the land. They instructed Margarito, Cockscomb's Baptist preacher, how to go about this. It was soon after this that I learned that the lands commissioner was receptive to the idea of

giving them title to some land in the basin. If that happened now, there was no way the area could be made a Jaguar preserve (Rabinowitz 1987: 169).

This passage, though not an anthropologists account, gives a good characterization of the central dispute between anthropologists and missionaries, i.e. preservation or as anthropologists would say 'tradition versus modernization', and missionaries would say 'saving souls'. In this respect the role of missionaries and anthropologists is undergoing some changes in Belize.

Before short anthropologists and missionaries worked relatively undisturbed from each other while at the same time viewing the Maya as an isolated, static and traditional ethnic group. In the last decades, however, the Maya are seen more and more as being part of the larger Belizean society thus being pervaded by its social, economic and political life (Palacio 1976). At the same time, one realizes the unique cultural history and cultural survival of the Maya, with which the topic of tradition and modernization has been reviewed currently by both missionaries and anthropologists. Whether anthropologists see themselves as contributors to the conscientization of the Maya with the missionaries seeing themselves doing the same with the evangelization, it seems that in Belize both have the intention with their interventions to provide means for the self-determination of the Maya "as a cultural viable, continuously reproducing social unit" (Hvalkof 1981: 177). Their interests may not seem the same initially, but it will be hard for them to avoid each other eventually in a small country like Belize, especially if one pretends to work in the interest of the Maya too.

As shown in this case-study the American anthropologist constantly meets with missionaries or their activities, but he hardly gets involved with them. Basically because they do not share perspectives as to treating or studying the Maya. This attitude of avoidance on the side of the anthropologist fits into the general pattern in which one tries to evade conflicts with each other. To keep good relations in the field with missionaries, non-commitment is one of the strategies on the side of anthropologists to avoid conflicts which might easily set in motion all kinds of undesirable events which can interfere unpleasantly with their fieldwork.

In the communication between anthropologists and missionaries three elements are basic, i.e. reciprocity, identification (association) and independence. In this case this is illustrated too. North American anthropologists, before their contacts with Maya in the

field, were supported in a mental, material and instrumental way by the missionary family where they stayed overnight. In terms of reciprocity anthropologists return only in the form of socializing. The other theme of identification (association) is evident too, as he is recognized as a missionary by the Maya. Thus being identified with a group of people he would preferably distance himself in the field. Avoiding the association with missionaries does not stimulate contacts between anthropologists and missionaries. But this kind of behaviour is regarded as important in order to produce the 'best' conditions for anthropological fieldwork. A corollary of this is the theme of independence. Thus in this case the anthropologist, not only because of his research proposal, tried to do fieldwork in an area as remote as possible from modernization including missionary activities. Avoidance in this case is also ignoring observations about the same Kechi Maya written down in 1962 (eighteen years before his own fieldwork):

The old customs are dying (...) One can only hope that the Kechi will meet the challenge to change as successfully as the Maya of northern British Honduras and Yucatan seem to (Rambo cited in Wilk 1987: 82).

In this respect Belize looks like a promised land not only for the Maya but also for missionaries and anthropologists. Overall, it does not seem that the missionaries and anthropologists have exploited the situation to their own advance on the expense of the Maya (compare Hvalkof 1981: 185). There does not seem to exist "a strange marriage of convenience between foreign missionaries and nationalist politicians" to the detriment of the Maya (compare Rus and Wasserstrom 1981: 164). Moreover, for the anthropologists the situation seems beneficial too as they are less likely to be confronted with distressed Indian communities as known elsewhere in the Maya area. Anthropologists in Belize can still study viable Maya communities. A viability which is due to particular historical developments in this part of the Maya area.

Conclusion

It is precisely the history which should be a concern for anthropologists and missionaries. In the quest for knowledge and people the Belize case presents them with an intelligible story about the

nuances, regional differences and complexities Maya culture went and is still going through. In the colonial days the Spanish missionaries were the first to realize that the Spanish efforts to destroy all expression of Indian culture would not further Christianization of the Maya. Only by knowing thoroughly the Indian religions an effective Christianization could be achieved. Knowing the past would be the way to understand not only the present but it will also give insights to improve Christianization. Now almost 500 years later anthropologists discover the same 'truth'. Especially through ethno-history one is aware of the differences between Maya societies, their viability and the processes they are involved in. Again anthropologists are late-comers in this respect too. But as the saying goes: Better late than never. Being separated for a long time historically, missionaries and anthropologists meeting now and here can learn from the devastating effects of their quest for knowledge and people in the past. The general picture was not too positive about the effects on Maya culture of missionary and anthropological activities, but Belize and possibly other regions in the Maya area, can be a turning-point and hopefully not an exception once missionaries and anthropologists start to realize that a viable Maya culture is by no means a one man's struggle, but one in which many parties are heavily involved though occupying different power positions. To conclude, one has also to fight old myths and stereotypes about Maya cultural continuity and identity as they were developed and still used by scholars, politicians and others. What matters is not the analytical prove of a highly continuous and viable Maya culture. It is more important that missionaries and anthropologists are sharing directives from the conviction that Maya people living in Maya communities have to decide on their own way of life and the contents of their ideas (compare Kloos 1986).

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Anthropology and Mission: towards a Historical Analysis of Professional Identity¹

Peter Pels

From certain recent discussions about the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists, one gets the impression that this relationship is to be judged by an 'essential' difference between the two. Some say that the missionary cannot be equated with the anthropologist as the former comes to teach, while the latter comes to learn (Abbink 1985, Beidelman 1982: 16 n. 34, Delfendahl 1981, Hughes 1978: 65). Often, the next step in the argument is that the missionary is guilty of a form of cultural imposition characteristic of colonialism (Beidelman 1982: 5-6).

It is striking that in these discussions the concept of 'mission' is never made explicit; that both anthropology and mission, as *professions*, are usually not studied in any theoretical depth; and that the historical transformations of both enterprises are often ignored and even explicitly denied in the case of missions (Abbink in this volume, Beidelman 1982: xv). It might be worthwhile to consider whether in the history of the discipline anthropologists have always perceived such an essential difference with missionaries. I propose to do this by means of an approach governed by the theory of professions.

Mission

In discussions about missionaries and anthropologists, the concept of 'mission' is often taken to be self-evident. However, it carries various meanings ranging from a synonym for 'religious mission' to a gloss for colonial enterprises in general. This vagueness obscures an ambiguity in the use of the word which is, I think, central to the understanding of any mission, and which I hope to clarify by

juxtaposing a Roman Catholic view of 'mission' with some non-religious uses of the word.

In the Christian sense, mission means the divine task of the church to spread the message of the gospel everywhere. In daily use, however, the concept is more specific. In the Catholic context, the canonical sense of 'mission' applies to the act of investing a certain person with the juridical authority of the church (*missio canonica*). One can distinguish between the *sacrae missiones* for the conversion of sinners and the confirmation of the just, and the *missiones externae* for the spreading of the faith among unbelievers and heretics (Mulders 1950: 14-5). In theology, the emphasis is not so much on juridical authority but on the effort of communicating the gospel, and 'mission' is usually reserved for *missiones externae*, the planting of the church in those areas where it has not yet been established (Mulders 1950: 16)².

The concept of 'mission', however, is not restricted to religious contexts: bombers fly missions, French bureaucrats are *en mission*; a group of United States officials sent to the Netherlands to find out how badly drug-traffic is handled by the Dutch authorities are on a mission, just as a group of Dutch officials sent to Palestine to find out what kind of Dutch import is possible from there³. Maybe the most pernicious sense in which this concept is used is the application of the word to the research activities of the U.S. Department of Defense in Thailand, meant to aid the assurance of 'stability' there (that is, the repression of factions hostile to USA interests) with the help of anthropologists (Wolf & Jorgensen 1970).

The religious and non-religious uses of 'mission' are at least congruent: in both cases the concept refers to an activity in a peripheral region in which problems, defined in the centre, are dealt with. One may argue that there is a difference: most of the non-religious examples are research missions, while the Catholic mission is as practical as a bomber's (and for some anthropologists, as destructive). However, Christian missionaries are all too often taken to be merely practical activists; the fact that Christian missions have always had a research component is often ignored. Conversely, the ultimate goal of the research missions mentioned is to bring about the desired changes in practice: to stop drug-traffic, to import goods from Palestine, to replace more deadly forms of counter-insurgency, in Thailand or elsewhere, by 'peacefare'.

Therefore I do not think that the juxtaposition of research and practice in the use of 'mission' makes a decisive difference. In both cases, 'mission' refers to an activity based on a definition of a

problem produced in the missionary centre and not acknowledged in the mission area. It is crucial, however, to see that research and practical missionaries may be in disagreement about the politics of the mission in general. This potential conflict between research and applied specialties is present in professional institutions, too.

Profession

The sociology of professions has moved beyond the stage in which it emphasized a conception of 'profession' close to the image the professional was likely to uphold for himself. The view of a profession as a community with shared role definitions, professional autonomy, a shared ideal of service and mutual control guarding the quality of that service (Goode 1957) did not survive studies of, for instance, internecine warfare within the profession (Bucher & Strauss 1961), of the "conspiracy against the laity" (G.B. Shaw, in Johnson 1973), and of the breaking down of professional autonomy (Freidson 1984).

However, a minimal characterization of a professional as someone combining a certain technical competence with an ideal of putting this competence at the service of others (Wilensky 1964: 138) might still be of use if we take these two characteristics as necessary elements of professional strategies⁴. These strategies can be directed at several different audiences. The argument that the professional possesses a technical competence absent in others will usually be directed against possible competitors (rival professions, charlatans) and students. The argument that they feel the duty to put it at the service of others can fulfill the same functions, but also identifies others - clients - as people in need of the commodity (health, justice, salvation) the professional claims to offer. Lastly, both strategies can be employed to convince third parties that it is necessary to provide the funds or the institutions the professional needs, or thinks he needs, to conduct his business.

It is in the use of these strategies that the professional can become missionary. Towards his clients, for instance, the professional claims to be able to define their problems on the basis of his superior knowledge or doctrine. In Christian terms, one speaks of 'ministry' when the clients acknowledge this inequality in competence by accepting the professional's authority (the *sacrae missiones* referred to above). One speaks of 'missionizing' when clients are unaware of the fact that they are clients, in other words, when the

authority of the professional is not taken for granted (*missiones externae*). One of the crucial elements in the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists is that at a certain period in the history of anthropology, the mission of the latter is directed at the former, in other words, that anthropologists have tried to convince missionaries of the fact that they were the clients of the anthropological profession.

There is a second sense in which a profession can become missionary: towards potential rivals or benefactors. These, too, have to be convinced of the fact that the definition of the problem the professional can give is superior to other definitions. Thus, a new segment of a profession has a 'sense of mission' towards other segments of the profession or towards third parties providing its funds, because it has to establish its definition of the problem among those who do not yet endorse this definition (Bucher & Strauss 1961: 326-7). This also applies to the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists: the latter have had to show that their competence in diagnosing cultural problems was superior to that of the missionary ethnographers; especially when trying to convince colonial officials of their need of anthropological expertise, anthropologists have had to claim that their missionary rivals were not up to that task.

Nevertheless, by using these strategies the professional may also commit himself to identifications that contain a potential source of dissent. To be able to deliver a service, one has to have technical competence ready at hand, as a tool. During its use, one does not question the adequacy of the tool. On the other hand, the professional claim for technical competence should be constantly renewed and adapted. One should be in touch with developments in the academic field where the adequacy of the technical arsenal - whether the tool works - is checked and revised. To identify oneself as a member of a profession, therefore, may result in a double bind: on the one hand, the professional may feel the practical necessity of commodifying his technical competence in order to be able to deliver professional services. On the other, he has to face the research necessity of resisting this commodification by questioning the adequacy of his technical competence in order to uphold the claim that his professional service is as advanced as it should be. This partly explains why academic segments of a profession can come into conflict with those who are more committed to practical implementation of professional skills (for an example from the medical profession, see Bucher 1962).

Thus, professional work shares with mission work the same potential division in research and practical activities. The majority of anthropologists can be said to be more committed to the research specialty. It should be clear, however, that anthropological research nearly always takes place within the political structure characteristic of any mission: anthropologists do research on problems defined in the centre of learning which are not usually acknowledged in the research area. This suggests that anthropological research is a form of "scientific colonialism" (Galtung 1967). The main difference is that a research mission is directed at enlarging the knowledge of the missionary centre, while practical missions are aimed at changing the problematic situation which is thought to afflict the mission area. During the professionalization of anthropology, anthropologists' missions have often been directed, not at the mission areas of the Christian missionaries, but at the Christian missionaries themselves. In doing so it meant that these anthropologists had to endorse - be it passively - the civilizing mission in which the Christian missionaries participated⁵.

The nineteenth century: partners in mission

I do not know of any systematic study of the historical relations between missionaries and anthropologists. To historians of anthropology 'mission' is rarely a subject of study⁶. Thus, it is difficult to give a comprehensive account of the professionalization of both enterprises. The following is merely a sketch of phases in the history of the attitudes anthropologists have adopted towards missionaries, and a parochial one, too, because of its concentration upon the history of British anthropology. That implies that, for instance, the enormous amount of work done by missionaries in linguistics (more acknowledged in the U.S.A.) is not taken into account. The first phase in this history, the second half of the nineteenth century, seems to be one of compatibility of mission and anthropology. This is illustrated by the following story.

Around 1840, T. Fowell Buxton was the leader of a large humanitarian faction in the British House of Commons which directed its attention to new goals after slavery had officially been abolished. Under Buxton's chairmanship the African Civilization Society was formed. It supplied the scientific staff to the Niger Expedition, a large-scale research adventure which was also meant

to support the combat of slavery, the spread of Christianity, and the promotion of commerce (Curtin 1964: 298-303).

Shortly before the expedition, in 1835, Buxton formed a House Committee for the protection of the Australian aborigenes, for which a professor of anatomy, Thomas Hodgkin, acted as an informal advisor. The latter, a friend of the anthropologist J.C. Prichard, founded the Aborigenes Protection Society in 1838. This society had a dual purpose: to save the aborigenes from possible extinction and to study them before they disappeared. It was from this merging of anthropology and humanitarian concerns that ethnology, both in Britain and France, grew in the nineteenth century. Hodgkin suggested to a friend to form the Société Ethnologique in Paris in 1838. In 1843, Hodgkin and his scientific colleagues decided, for the sake of organizational efficiency, to meet separately from the APS as the Ethnological Society of London (Curtin 1964: 329-31, Reining 1962)⁷. Prichard was one of most important members of this group; he drew his data preferably from mission sources, as missionaries stayed among natives longer than others and could claim mastery of native languages (Stocking 1983: 74). This shows that at that time, ethnology was part of the research mission that accompanied the practical mission of British Christian culture⁸.

These relationships between government, mission and anthropology were to continue until the demise of evolutionist anthropology in the beginning of this century. Before the advent of the professional fieldworker, British anthropologists mainly used data collected by government officials and missionaries, while a segment of the missionary movement drew on ethnology as a tool in developing missionary methods. E.B. Tylor, for instance, depended for information on reports from missionary ethnographers such as Lorimer Fison; he had Codrington as a student. When he set up the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada with Horatio Hale, they appointed a Reverend Wilson as their agent (Stocking 1983: 72-4). F. Max Müller was invited to give a lecture before a missionary audience, in which he justified missionary expansion by identifying a missionary religion with health and non-missionary religions with stagnation. In this lecture, Müller also put forward a selective critique of mission methods, denouncing the policy of some missionaries to destroy native customs as ineffective (Müller 1873). This latter approach, the selective critique of missionary methods by means of ideas drawn from the study of culture, was central to the ideas of elite segments of the missionary profession. Protestants like

Gustav Warneck, and the papal letters from Gregory XVI's *Neminem Profecto* (1845) onwards, stressed that indigenous culture should be respected as much as possible (Kasdorf 1980, Kieran 1969)⁹.

The seeds for dissent between missionaries and anthropologists were also sown in the period of fused humanitarian and scientific interests. Prichard, though nominally a defender of the monogenist view which saw humanity as descending from a common ancestor (i.e. Adam), was very much influenced by the debate with polygenists, those who maintained that humanity's ancestry was multiple. The latter view was more common with those uninhibited by religious orthodoxy (Stocking 1968: 39-40). This possible point of divergence between missionaries and anthropologists - religion - was to be developed further by evolutionists, especially Frazer, whose *Golden Bough* can be read as a critique of religion in general by means of the intellectual backwardness diagnosed in primitive religion (Evans-Pritchard 1959). However, it seems as if this point of debate remained on the level of theoretical argument until the professionalization of anthropological fieldwork in the first decades of this century.

Rivals and clients

As seen from the perspective of anthropologists, the professional relationship with missionaries in the first decades of this century is ambiguous. For the promotion of their professional interests, anthropologists had to point to the fact that they could deliver services (i.e. research competence) of use to missionaries and government alike; on the other hand, they had to show that they could deliver these services better than any other professional. The latter strategy was mainly directed at missionaries, especially those who were, like Father Wilhelm Schmidt, co-founders of the discipline (see below).

Anthropology needed the missionaries. The shift from the amateur ethnographer to the professional fieldworker, embodied by people like Franz Boas, A.C. Haddon, W.H.R. Rivers and W.B. Spencer, was not possible without the help of missionary ethnographers in the field (Stocking 1983: 74, 76, 78). Missionaries were also needed as *clients* in the attempts to expand anthropological teaching facilities at the academy. A committee appointed

by the British Association for this purpose in 1914 reiterated the central elements of anthropological professional identity:

An accurate acquaintance with the nature, habits, and customs of alien populations is necessary to all who have to live and work amongst them in any official capacity, whether as administrators, executive officers, missionaries, or merchants, because in order to deal effectively with any group of mankind it is essential to have that cultured sympathy with them that comes of sure knowledge (Proceedings 1914: 58).

Obviously, the anthropologists claimed to be the only ones capable of delivering that service.

A year before that meeting, W.H.R. Rivers had written in a new edition of the *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* that the anthropologist should be a specialist, as missionaries and colonial officials had little time after their ordinary duties, had insufficient training, and occupations which brought them into conflict with native ideas and customs - to the point of wanting to destroy them altogether in the case of missionaries (Stocking 1983: 80). In diffusionist circles, however, this did not amount to anything like a principled attack on the missionary enterprise in general. In 1920, Rivers would repeat the selective critique of missionary enterprises already announced by Müller in 1873 and endorsed by the culture-conscious segment of the missionary profession: some missionaries have destroyed native life and produced a psychological epidemic of apathy in native peoples. Anthropology should teach the missionary that "lowly forms of religion" are not the work of the devil but the preparation for higher forms (Rivers 1920: 211-2, 215). In Rivers' perspective, the missionary is more a client than a rival or colleague of the anthropologist. The critique of missionary methods is not combined with a critique of their religious motivations. The theme of the improvement of missionary method by anthropological expertise recurs in both anthropological and missionary writing of the time (see Hocart 1914, Smith 1924).

But those who were eventually to replace the 'speculative history' of evolutionists and diffusionists in the British anthropological establishment had already had their first skirmishes with missionaries. Radcliffe-Brown had a discussion with Father Wilhelm Schmidt, since 1906 the founder and editor of the journal *Anthropos* ("with the cooperation of numerous missionaries"). By

means of *Anthropos*, Schmidt wanted to promote the ethnographic work of missionaries by giving them a platform for publication. Schmidt was not himself a fieldworker, but he was to promote professional fieldwork at the Anthropos Institute (Brandewie 1983a, 1983b).

In the fourth year after the founding of *Anthropos*, Schmidt felt compelled to respond to a critique of Radcliffe-Brown on one of his sources, the Andaman missionary E. Man. Brown argued that because of his Christian background Man was not able to understand the nature of Puluga, the highest being of the Andamanese. Schmidt answered that Man had lived on the Andaman Islands for 11 years, and Brown not more than a year. Moreover, Brown did not speak Andamanese while Man did; Brown spoke to his informants in Hindustani which was not well mastered both by himself and most of his informants. To Brown's claim of Christian bias, he responded that Brown himself had an evolutionist bias and was therefore not prepared to accept a High God among the 'low' Andaman Islanders (Brandewie 1983b: 111-2). Schmidt did not often counter the allegations of Christian bias; though he did argue that a believer actually had an advantage of a non-believer in understanding religion (1983b: 116).

In those same years, Bronislaw Malinowski was building up his "hatred of missionaries" (1967: 31). Working in the field, his first departures from the model of fieldwork done on the veranda of the mission post were merely prompted, it seems, by the fact that the missionaries from whom he hoped to get his information were not present (Stocking 1983: 92, 98). On the other hand, he was truly vexed by the missionary Saville:

Saville's underhand dealings with Armit annoy me, as well as the persecution of people unfriendly to the mission. Mentally I collect arguments against missions and ponder a really effective anti-mission campaign. The arguments: these people destroy the natives' joy in life; they destroy their psychological *raison d'être*. And what they give in return is completely beyond the savages. They struggle consistently and ruthlessly against everything old and create new needs, both material and moral. No question but that they do but harm (1967: 41).

Stocking suggests that Saville provided the model for "the minor cast of cramped minds" figuring as an antithesis to "the Ethno-

grapher" in the first chapter of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1983: 123). However that may be, in *Argonauts* the missionary is one of the "average practical men" full of biased and prejudged opinions - though there are exceptions (Malinowski 1922: 5-6). As we will see, Malinowski himself did soften his attitude towards missionaries when expedient. But his students internalized the view presented in *Argonauts*. In *We, the Tikopia*, Raymond Firth pays respect to the sincerity of the missionaries' vocation, but nevertheless questions the justification of the missionary enterprise as a whole (1936: xxiii, 49-50). To the students of the Malinowski seminar in the late twenties.

...missionaries were an enemy, except for Edwin Smith and H.A. Junod, who apparently were more interested in learning about the tribal peoples than in converting them (Powdermaker 1966: 43).

This is a considerable shift in attitude: from an overall agreement on the necessity of a civilizing mission to criticizing the disruption of an "adjustment to life (...) which has been on the whole a satisfactory one" (Firth 1936: 49)¹⁰.

Several explanations may be offered for this. Malinowski's personal 'hatred' may have been important; the holistic perspective of the functionalists may also have made them generally suspicious of social change, while the relativist admonition to study the 'native point of view' may have led to doubts about missionary premises (see Stipe 1980). But it is at least plausible to suggest that we deal here with professional strategies when the fact is acknowledged that though missionaries were an enemy, colonial officials were apparently much less so. In Malinowski's seminars, officials on leave were allowed to participate "so as to make them less disrespectful and less disruptive of native life" (Powdermaker 1966: 43). The slow establishment of professional anthropology at the British universities saw colonial officials, not missionaries, take chairs at Cambridge¹¹.

This suggests that the development of professional identity of British anthropologists in the interbellum was directed at missionaries in particular. They were a convenient rival profession, as is witnessed by Radcliffe-Brown's and Rivers' attempts to show that missionaries were not capable of the task anthropologists wanted to keep to themselves. In a context where it was hardly convenient to question the political relationships in which anthropology was

set and on which it thrived, anthropologists could comfortably identify themselves as the brokers of the "native point of view" (Malinowski 1922: 25) *against* those whose religion seemed to predispose them to ethnocentrism. Only in this way, it can be explained that Malinowski took the 'minor cast of cramped minds' as his target while condemning missionary ethnography to the status of being an 'exception'.

This suggestion is confirmed by the fact that anthropological professional strategies were not maintained against all odds. In 1935, Malinowski published an essay in the *International Review of Missions* on "native education and culture contact". This was partly a critique of mission schooling in Africa. His attitude to missionaries is apparently softened:

...if the missionary and the anthropologist could, as matters stand, see eye to eye, they would not have much to learn from each other. As it is, the future of their co-operation must involve a greater sympathy on both sides and, incidentally, a reform of anthropological methods and outlook from the old antiquarian point of view to a much greater interest in the psychological and cultural difficulties of the changing Native (1935: 495).

It seems surprising that the 'enemy' is now treated with such deference. But in the situation of British anthropology of that time, cooperation was strategic: the critique of 'antiquarianism' was directed at the remaining members of the diffusionist persuasion around Elliot Smith and others, who were competing with the functionalists for the money of the Rockefeller Foundation (see Stocking 1985). In 1929, Malinowski joined forces with J.H. Oldham of the International Missionary Council. In response to an initiative taken in 1924 by mission leaders critical of native policy in Africa, Oldham had founded the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures in 1926 with the cooperation of other missionaries (Father Dubois, Edwin Smith, Paul Schebesta, Wilhelm Schmidt) and colonial officials (like Lord Lugard, the architect of Indirect Rule - Kuper 1983: 105, Lugard 1928, Stocking 1984: 166, 1985: 123). Malinowski participated in seminars with missionaries and colonial officials to discuss culture contact in Africa, while both he and Radcliffe-Brown participated in drafting the IAI's five-year plans (Kuper 1983: 106, Stocking 1984: 166). The Rockefellers' support to British functionalists gave them the lead

over competing professional segments in anthropology (Stocking 1985: 125 ff.).

Thus, in the second phase of the professionalization of anthropology in Britain the functionalist anthropologists' desire to establish themselves led to a renewed cooperation with missionaries. In Malinowski's first contribution to the Institute's journal, *Africa*, on 'practical anthropology' he lays down the typical claims for competence and service of a professional. The anthropologist has knowledge which is needed by 'practical men in the colonies', missionaries included. Though he can give advice, he is not to judge how this knowledge is used (1929: 23). But it must be clear that the reports of administrators, missionaries and other amateurs are "essentially erroneous" (1929: 31). The anthropological knowledge needed is not constituted by the circular route via the priestly king of Nemi and other "sensational and antiquarian interests", but by the direct observation by the *functionalist* anthropologist (1929: 25, 27, 38). The vocation of the anthropologist to criticize ethnocentrism, and thus to question the goals to which his knowledge is put, is subordinated to the practical interest of establishing anthropology as the instrumental rationality of colonial administration and Christian mission. The "expansion of one form of civilization over the whole world" is more or less taken for granted (1929: 36).

The reaction of missionaries to functionalist claims was as ambiguous as the attitude of the functionalists to the missionaries. It is clear that the latter did not simply accept the anthropologist's claim to professional authority. We already saw that Father Schmidt tried to put the scientific competences of the missionaries at the service of professional anthropology instead of the other way around. Others tried to soften the demand for professional training: "In reality, the most important thing is to have an observant eye for the life going on all round" (Westermann 1931: 166), or ventured a redefinition of the anthropological profession more congenial to the missionary (Junod 1935).

On the other hand, missionaries like Smith accepted that professional mission work could not do without anthropology (Smith 1924). And at times, missionary ethnography could become a form of self-critique of the missionary profession. This is most apparent in the career of *Aequatoria*, a journal founded in 1937 by two missionaries of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart posted in the former Belgian Congo. As its editor, Gustaaf Hulstaert, wrote:

...Aequatoria has always defended the principle that individuals, families, clans, nations are not in the service of the colonizer, but that on the contrary the state, the economy, charity, schools and missions should be at their service (cited in Vinck 1988: 96 - translation mine).

The Apostolic Delegate was disconcerted by the resulting ethnographic publications, which were denounced as "pornographic", "apologies of pagan infamies" (Vinck 1988: 88). Only after submission to the diocesan censor was the journal able to continue its often troubled course.

In the meantime, from 1930 to 1960, the public occasions where anthropologists would confront missionaries and vice versa seem to have diminished. The former acknowledgments of missionary help (by Firth, for instance) were often deleted from ethnographic accounts. The dependence of the anthropologist on the missionary during fieldwork was obviously not a boost to anthropological professional identity, so it is not surprising that in those years "the missionary factor" was suppressed in ethnography (Van der Geest n.d.), a fact which made missionaries angry at times (Nida 1966). But the image of the missionary as enemy conjured up by the Malinowskian establishment probably continued as oral tradition within most anthropological circles.

Missiology grew rapidly in those years (Müller 1980). This was partly recognized by the larger anthropological establishment, where Eugene Nida and Kenneth Pike were acknowledged as accomplished scholars. But the professional anthropologists working with Practical Anthropology, the Summer Institute of Linguistics or Wheaton College, were usually missionaries-become-anthropologists, and the 'increasing interaction' between missionaries and anthropologists since 1945 described by missiologists seems to have been a rather one-sided affair (see Hiebert 1978, Smalley 1963 - the same goes for the early career of the *Anthropological Quarterly*). In all publications, anthropology is never more than a important tool, an 'auxiliary science' for the communication of the gospel (see Luzbetak 1961, Nida 1959: 843, Taber 1967: 9).

Simultaneous political upheavals

As we have seen in the case of *Aequatoria*, critique of the political relationships between the professional centre and the people in the

mission area itself was possible before political decolonization but remained an exception (for anthropology, the exception is Leiris 1950). But the normal relationship between anthropologists, missionaries, and the colonial government, was that the latter was able to profit from the work done by the former two.

During and after the wave of decolonization (and the cultural upheavals in the West that followed it) this questioning of political relationships became possible. It was partly an initiative of the colonized. In Africa and among native Americans, both the missionary and the anthropologist were lumped together with the colonial administration¹². In Africa, this resulted in the near-removal of anthropology from the national universities (see Chilver 1977: 107) and a stream of publications denouncing the role of missionaries in the establishment of colonial rule (Ajayi 1965, Ayandele 1967, Ekechi 1971). But there were also members of both professions who acknowledged the value of the critique and who tried to reduce the inequality characterizing the definition of professional problems. There were two ways in which this could be done: a *reversal*, the initial definition of the problem should be the work of the people served, no longer of the one to serve them; and a *decentralization*, the professional gave up total control of the way problems should be defined.

In anthropology, the reversal appeared in the attempts by anthropologists to study *themselves*. The historiography of anthropology became a respectable specialization at the same time that an 'anthropology of anthropology' or 'reflexive anthropology' came into being (see Hymes 1969, Scholte 1966, Stocking 1968). Reflexivity was intimately associated with critique of the politics of anthropology (see Scholte 1969). This critique led to suggestions of alternatives that were meant to decentralize anthropology. A radical version of this was 'action research' (Gough 1968, Huizer & Mannheim 1979: passim) in which the anthropologist's research should be at the service of the people among whom research is done. Another version was the critique of the ways anthropology had served the ends of the colonial powers (Asad 1973, Goddard 1972). More recently, the critique is directed at the ways in which anthropologists create their objects and define their problems unilaterally (Said 1978, Fabian 1983), or it calls for a more decentralized presentation in ethnography: 'dialogue', or 'polyphony' (Clifford 1983, Dwyer 1977). Obviously, such an upheaval is accompanied by severe blows to professional identity; it is not surprising that most anthropologists commonly refer to their

profession as being in a 'crisis' since the late sixties. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the newer developments exist side by side with those anthropologies they have tried to criticize and surpass.

As André Droogers shows elsewhere in this volume, missionary circles have dealt in similar reversals and decentralizations. The experience of 'crisis' is present here, too: Droogers speaks of "different Christianities" that do not seem to be the same religion anymore. The missionary has also lost important props to his identity (Boberg 1979, Hesselgrave 1975). One notices the same kind of fragmentation of the profession: new initiatives exist side by side with older practices.

Conclusion

From this historical sketch, it becomes apparent that the perception of missionaries by anthropologists depends very much on the professional context in which it is caught. Before the professionalization of anthropological fieldwork, the missionary ethnographer was in frequent contact with anthropologists and was perceived by them as a useful scientific assistant. But when the professionalization of anthropology is well under way, the missionary ethnographer becomes a rival. Anthropological perceptions of missionaries in that context stress their lack of research competence, their nefarious influence on the natives, and anthropologists question the justification of efforts towards cultural change based upon Western religious motives. On the other hand, missionaries in general are potential clients; perceptions of anthropologists in that respect reduce missionary work to practical work, ignoring missionary ethnography. But to have missionaries as clients implies an at least passive agreement with the goals the missionary has set; thus, when expedient the question of the justification of the missionary enterprise in general is ignored.

After the political upheavals in the sixties, when both anthropology and Christian missions were in a state of identity crisis, another perception of missionaries seems to have grown. Instead of the lack of anthropological competence of the missionary it stresses his 'essential' commitment to a different form of activity: teaching instead of learning. This 'essence' on which the critique of anthropologists is based is no longer religious but political, denouncing the power differences of missionary and professional

relationships in general. But to perceive missionaries as essentially different in this sense, anthropologists have to abstract from the actual relationships existing within and between the two professions by means of a double reduction. First, they reduce professional activity to fieldwork, ignoring the fact that the anthropologist comes to learn mostly for the profit of his own career and professional peers. They also ignore the fact that what the anthropologists 'learns' is usually based on problems not defined by the people from whom he learns. Only in this way the activity of anthropological 'learning' can become politically innocent. Secondly, anthropologists ignore the historical parallels with missionaries by reducing their activity to a form of religious imposition characteristic of a period in which anthropologists, themselves, passively endorsed this sense of mission. In a period where mission in some circles has gone in reverse this can not be justified either. The conclusion can only be that to proclaim an essential difference between missionaries and anthropologists is more a part of present day anthropological professional strategies than a studied assessment of the relationship between the two.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Nil Disco for giving me an introduction to the sociology of professionalization, and Johannes Fabian for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper. All remaining errors are, of course, mine.
2. For the sake of the argument, I refer here to a Catholic concept of 'mission' used shortly after World War Two; in the section on post-1960 missions it will, I hope, become clear that this is not the only concept of 'mission' possible.
3. The last two examples are taken from the *NRC-Handelsblad*, 1987-8-11 and 1987-11-13.
4. 'Strategy' refers to something different from 'ideology'. The use of the concept of ideology suggests a discontinuity with reality, a distorted representation of the latter by the former. A Marxist notion of ideology, for instance, stresses the alienation of the self in support of the glorification of an external force (Bloch 1987: 48). But professional strategies do not just distort reality, they (partly) *shape* it. They are directions a professional may take to produce or reproduce a reality which fits his orientations and interests in the world (see Bourdieu 1972). Here, the 'self' is not a hypothetical reality denied by ideology but a professional *identity constituted* simultaneously with the 'external force'.

5. Jon Kirby SVD and Albert de Jong CSSp pointed out to me that it is unfair, and partly incorrect, to try to reduce the work of the missionary to the language of professionalism. I acknowledge that criticism; in fact, I wanted to elaborate the limited use of the strategy adopted here, but was not able to because of the admonitions of stern but righteous editors. For an analysis of the way in which the missionary profession has to revise its occupational boundaries, see Huber (1988).
6. Missionary ethnography is not taken into account in most histories of anthropology except when Father Schmidt is discussed (but see Clifford 1982). This does not happen always (Evans-Pritchard 1981, Leaf 1979), but when he is mentioned, his missionary background is usually not considered to be of any interest (Honigmann 1976, Kuper 1983, Lowie 1937: 193, Voget 1975). The obvious exception is Harris (1968: 389), but he is an adherent of a rival religion.
7. Reining argues that the academic faction of the APS disagreed with the missionary faction because they preferred to study native races instead of immediately bestowing on them the privileges of civilization (1962: 593). However, he fails to give sources for this assertion. Curtin does for his argument that there was no serious disagreement between the two factions, so I preferred to accept the latter's scholarship.
8. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the polygenists, who were in conflict with monogenists like Prichard and split off from the Ethnological Society to form the Anthropological Society of London in 1863, claimed that they were able to produce practically relevant knowledge (Reining 1962: 594). It might be a good guess to say that they thereby tried to keep up with the monogenists, whose more religiously orthodox point of view was in line with the practical anthropology of the missionary movement.
9. These repeated admonitions to missionaries, however, were made because most of them did not follow this 'culture conscious' elite. Publications that paid sufficient attention to missionary ethnography were swamped by those that stressed the savagery and primitiveness of the natives in order to gain (financial) support for the missions from the Christians at home. These publications in their turn influenced the missionaries sent out to pagan lands (Curtin 1964: 324, Kieran 1969: 348).
10. This is not to imply that all British anthropologists shared this distrust. In *The Nuer*, Evans-Pritchard repeatedly shows his indebtedness to the members of the American Mission at Nasser (1940: vii and passim). I wish to thank Fred Spier for drawing my attention to this passage.
11. The first William Wyse Professors at Cambridge were T.C. Hodson and J.H. Hutton, both former members of the Imperial Colonial Service. Only in 1953, they were succeeded by a professional anthropologist, Meyer Fortes (Fortes 1953).
12. Nkrumah possessed a painting in which a colonial official, a missionary and an anthropologist are fleeing before the black giant breaking his bonds (Verstraelen 1986. See also Declaration of Barbados 1973, Deloria 1969: 83 ff., 105 ff.).

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The Culture in-between: Anthropologist and Missionary as Partners

Walter van Beek

In his challenging identification of missionary and anthropologist, Sjaak van der Geest (1987) touches upon several fundamental issues in the anthropological discipline. For some reason the similarities (and differences) of both types of fieldworkers are at the core of our anthropological definition of the self. Commenting on the similarities, I shall try to unravel some factors behind them, as there seems to be a fundamental contradiction between the two disciplines: opposite goals with similar outputs. One major difference, as Van der Geest sees it, has to be dealt with first, i.e. how 'seriously' we take religion, or in my terms, the question of *emics*. I try to show that this quest for emics is theoretically a dead end, as it is both epistemologically impossible and unproductive through the demand for comparison. This leads us to the question what are the limits of our empathy and sympathy of belief.

Returning, then, to our main theme, the roots of similarities and differences between anthropologist and missionary, it will be shown that the field situation of both has the following things in common: empathy, sympathy of belief, a gentle comparison and a definite search for emics. This is what I call the 'in-between' or 'intermediate' culture, shared by anthropologist and missionary alike.

The problem of emics

Do anthropologists take religion seriously? One complaint of Van der Geest (1987) is that anthropologists refuse to take informants statements on religion at their own value, routinely translating them into the scientific jargon (the *Metaphor*). Thus, one essential

element, the 'religious', is lost. This common anthropological practice, he argues, stems from a deep negation of any religious or metaphysical matter in anthropology, rendering an anthropologist a 'blind man speaking about colours'. The missionary, on the other hand, has the one major advantage of a true empathy with his informant.

This thesis needs revision, at least a *retouch*. Is 'true empathy' that productive? As an example we shall look into a discipline that explicitly puts this 'co-believers empathy' at the heart of its methodology, the phenomenology of religion. As a major hallmark of its heuristics, this tradition within the history of religion considers each religion as a phenomenon *sui generis* (of its own kind), abhorring any reduction of religious phenomena into 'lower order factors'. Since the epoch-making work of Rudolf Otto *Das Heilige* (1917), the phenomenology of religion has been searching for a productive balance between an empiricist approach and a method which preserved the true value of religion. In this vein Van der Leeuw, Eliade and Widengren wrote their seminal works, to mention a few culture-heroes. This tradition always has retained a strong link with theology (Sharpe 1975: 234 ff.), even warranting an accusation of being a 'handmaiden of theology' (ibid: 264).

Be it or not, for our argument one thing is clear: a well-developed discipline explicitly aims at a sympathetic understanding of any religion against the background of its own context and history, while retaining the full value of the religious phenomena as well as respect for the believing other¹.

So much for its program, now for its results. What has been the particular productivity of this phenomenological method of *epochè*, the study of religious matters with full suspension of value judgement? In what measure has it been possible to study religious matters without translating them into other values? Two traditions can be discerned, which I have dubbed the 'quest for essence' and the 'quest for form' (Van Baal & Van Beek 1985: 202, 211).

Following Otto, theoreticians of religion have searched for those elements and aspects of religion deemed essential for a generic understanding. Otto's notion of the numinous, Schleiermacher's *Gefühl des Schlechthinnigen Abhängigkeit*, the concept of 'hierophany' (Eliade 1961: 34) and in a way Van Baal's characterization of a religious attitude as a 'groundseeking groundlessness' (Van Baal 1972: 61) may serve as examples. These authors deepened our understanding of the generic notion of religion; still,

in this discussion within phenomenology personal and theological arguments had a substantial role.

From this tradition a severe criticism has been voiced towards the general methodological stance of social-scientific study of religion: methodological atheism. Rooted in the work of Zijderveldt (Towler 1974: 184), this concept has been popularized by Peter Berger in his sociology of religion. As the truth or falsehood of religion cannot empirically be verified or falsified, Berger argues, the correct scientific method, which he prescribes, is to explain the religious phenomenon as much as possible through observable factors, like social organization, economics, political process; in short using non-religious variables. This, of course, is the standard anthropological approach of explanation or translation. Witchcraft is 'explained' by pointing at tensions within society. Nuer Ewins are not truly birds (Evans-Pritchard 1965: 315) but this expression gives shape to the special relation of 'normal' Nuer to twins. Against this methodological atheism, Eliade argues that the research of religion puts itself on a 'naturalistic' point of view, studying any religion as an entomologist studies a weird insect: from a great distance through an intricate instrument². Two arguments can be raised against this stance.

Firstly, Eliade argues, that the distance between observer and observed is false. Only a historical accident (place and date of birth) separates scientist and 'object' of study. Secondly, through this artificial distance the researcher denies himself a unique opportunity: as a fellow human the scientist can feel himself in the others *mocassins*, gleaning more insight into his fellow believer. What would an entomologist give to be able to 'empathize' with his insect!

Thus far I follow Van der Geest (1987) in his critique on the standard anthropological strategy of description and explanation. However, a problem arises when we look at the more specific results of this sympathetic program, in the second line, the quest for form. Granted its own *genus*, religion appears to the eye of the observer in a bewildering variety of forms, a wealth of religious expressions that challenges the student. The reaction of the phenomenology of religions is to label and to classify the phenomena: the religious experience and expression of one's fellow man are continually being processed: labeled with pre-existing descriptive concepts, classified in predetermined categories. Using concepts and distinctions from their own religion (the sacred), from classical religions (numen) or philosophical presuppositions (transcendence),

only in a small minority of cases scholars do apply the notions of the people studied (taboo, mana, dema); in that later case, anthropologists serve as their major source. In and through the process of labeling and categorization, the religious phenomena are changed. Even if not reduced to sociology or psychology, they are measured on another Procrustean bed, that of comparative analysis. Thus, the religious experience and expression is reduced to what phenomenology considers to be a phenomenon (Van Baal & Van Beek 1985: 206). In its own ranks, this tendency of phenomenology has evoked the criticism of making only a religious *Inventor eines antiquierter Museums*³.

So praxis differs from theory. Despite a heartfelt wish to take religious information seriously, in practice the hand of the analyst is felt, and heavily. Why this apparent inability to arrive at a systematic empathy of informant's expressions? I feel the crux is the term 'systematic'. Phenomenology's goal (and Van der Geest's) is nothing else but the quest for a truly 'emic' approach: a description and sympathetic analysis in terms of that particular system and relevant for the participants in that culture or religion, in short 'to get inside the informant's head' (Goodenough 1965: 64)⁴. This call for 'true emics' is quite old and will be repeated again in the future. It has its roots in linguistics, in fact in a strictly descriptive Bloomfieldian approach. The claim to take religion serious has these two sides: the *sui generis* definition of religion on the one hand and the descriptive rigour of an emic approach on the other hand. So let us take a quick glance at descriptive emics.

In anthropology this insistence on *emics* has nowhere been stronger than in ethnoscience. This approach has all the characteristics of a short-lived paradigm: a sudden emergence around a few studies, a network of adepts and disciples as well as a quick demise of the paradigm through a fast erosion of its major claims (Murray 1982: 168). It is not the place here to delve deeply into the reasons for this 'meteoric disappearance', though some factors have to become clear. Firstly, the enormous wealth of detailed information gathered in this emic fashion could in no way be integrated into a comprehensive description that offered more "than could be said on the basis of old-fashioned participant observation" (Kay, cited in Murray 1982: 169). The second problem was comparison. In some lexical fields this seems to have succeeded (Berlin & Kay 1969), but even this much-debated example is an exception. Harris' criticism as to the impossibility of comparison (Harris 1988: 315 ff.) has never been answered adequately. After all,

these types of emic analysis and description may, have been 'Hocus-Pocus', but surely not 'God's Truth' (Burling 1964: 20). Even worse, the strict separation of emics from *etics* rendered ethnographic research 'anemic and emetic' (Berreman 1966: 346), which through the demise of Bloomfieldian linguistics accounted for 'paradigms lost' (Keesing 1972). Anyway, anthropology's bid for a systematic *emic* approach has withered away: "by the late 1960s (...) classical ethnoscience was no more" (Murray 1982: 172). A truly emic approach showed itself to be impossible and unproductive.

The failure of ethnoscience and the impotence of phenomenology point at a serious flaw with 'true emics'. What makes these approaches so sterile? First, the problems of epistemology seem to be quite unsurmountable, as the inductive heuristics of the approaches stem from a naive empiricism no longer adhered to. More important is the aspect of comparison, explicitly aimed at in both approaches as their ultimate goal. The necessity for comparison does not relate well to an insistence on emics. Even in descriptions the use of indigenous terms has to be restricted in order to maintain the readability of the description. Comparison, leads to a higher level of abstraction and a greater distance from the phenomena: through the analysis of differences and similarities and the necessity for a meta-language to express conclusions. Inevitably, this process implies selection, rooted either in a more or less explicit theory or in personal interests and preferences. So in addition to the informant three other parties are involved: the researcher, the scientific community and other religions and cultures with which a comparison is made. Both the theoretical impossibility of 'true emics' and the comparative nature of anthropology (or the study of religion) render explanation or metaphorization of religious statement inevitable. These two reasons would suffice, if not a third, existential reason presented itself: the inherent problem of 'believing anything'.

The ends of empathy

As social scientists we share every human trait of the fellow men we study, also the capacity of belief. Though for most anthropologists their upbringing and training has eroded this faculty, it still is an aspect of our existence. Van der Geest (1987) is right in stating that this is a research tool as well: an atheistic anthropologist has a handicap in religious research.

However, this is one side of the coin. True, a researcher who does not take religion seriously, bars him- or herself from aspects of understanding the believing other. Yet, taking religion seriously is not at all the same as taking each and every religious statement seriously. One can try to feel empathy with a Kwakiutl who says he is a salmon, trying to probe what this means to him or her, without ever truly believing the informant is identical to a salmon. After all, Sandor did not throw his informant back into the sea either!

Apparently, our empathy ends somewhere; there is a limit to what one can imagine to believe or 'co-believe'. As an example, a famous citation from Foucault (1965) may serve. It is a classification of the animal kingdom in the old imperial China:

The animals are subdivided into
 belonging to the emperor
 balmed
 tame
 piglets
 sirens
 animals from fables
 running dogs
 mentioned in this classification
 behaving like mad
 innumerable
 drawn with a fine camel's hair
 etcetera
 who come to break the jar
 who from afar look like flies

Such a classification haunts us, Foucault comments, not because it is different and definitely non-occidental, but because we cannot imagine ourselves to devise such a 'system'. This *impossibilité de penser cela* is just what I am aiming at. There seems to be a limit to our production of empathy and belief, at least in this kind of cognitive issues. In my own fieldwork, like many colleagues, I have repeatedly encountered such situations. Some elements of Kapsiki belief were easy for me to 'share' with my informants; the cosmology, for instance, (Van Beek 1978: 367ff.), I could imagine to believe or to be able to believe. In other situations this was quite the reverse, like the following, classical therapeutic situation.

A blacksmith's woman, specialist in child medicine, treated a boy that probably suffered from a parasitic disease: swollen abdomen, thin legs and arms. Her diagnosis was kwankwèrèkwè, a small frog that is presumed to enter the body through the foot soles, and to proliferate in the belly. For treatment the boy knelt before the smith's woman. With a handful of leaves she took some muddy water from a jar at her feet and rubbed the boy's belly. After some rubbing suddenly she put out her hand and showed a small frog, presumably coming from the child's belly. She threw it in the jar, stroked at it with a stone and resumed the treatment. That session she retrieved twenty kwankwèrèkwè from the boy.

In this particular case I had spoken with the woman beforehand about the treatment. During that first encounter she assumed that I did not believe her, or maybe she got some inkling of my unbelief, however good I tried to disguise it. After the session with the boy, she was sure that I - at last - believed what she had told me would happen. Evidently, I did not correct her, but just as evidently I did not believe her. For me it was and is impossible to believe that those frogs spring from that belly, a predicament shared, of course, by many anthropologists, one that has evoked a number of commentaries (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 161). Relevant for me in this are two considerations. I can not follow the 'official' Kapsiki diagnosis and doctrine of treatment, and even more, nor do I see how another anthropologist may adhere to the native interpretation. If so, I do not see any advantage in doing so for the understanding of that particular culture. As a disbeliever in this particular issue, I had to account for a difference in knowledge and attitude between patient and spectators on the one hand and the smith's woman on the other. This classic shamanistic problem has been amply discussed in anthropology, but my point here is that the necessity to think the matter through beyond the overt informants' statements, adds to the understanding of values and processes within that culture. In my case, the smith's position gained another dimension, which appeared to be relevant in other aspects of Kapsiki culture too.

So there is no escape from interpretation and explanation, no way of avoiding the *Metaphor*. Sandor too used an interpretation, one that - though uncommon - might be closer to Kwakiutl perception (but maybe not for all Kwakiutl). The opposite question then is: What are the limits of empathy for an anthropologist? Each of us

may have his own limits, and for an anthropologist for whom religion is not superstition of others those borders may be drawn differently than for his atheistic colleagues. Yet, if taken a religious position, the anthropologist may provide a better empathy with the informants as a co-believer, it also may be a liability in restricting empathy towards specific religious statements. A paradox looms here: the anthropologist who takes religions seriously may have a differential empathy: some elements of the informant's religion are cognitively and emotionally more accessible for him, than in the case of an atheistic researcher, as is the general issue of religion, but others are not. A missionary is faced with a similar problem. As a believing Christian he has a focussed but more restricted empathy with specific aspects of the religion in question. He takes religion seriously but cannot agree with its specific content. The believing fellow-man is his partner, but his beliefs are not.

So given this inevitability of the *metaphor* and the difference between religion and religious content, the question rises whether the difference between missionary and anthropologist is in fact as large as Van der Geest (1987) asserts. Both distance themselves from the factual content of the informants' beliefs, both translate them into a language they consider to be a meta-language, an encompassing view that can contain the informant's vision but definitely is not his. For both some modesty is called for. For a missionary it may spring from the realization that the certainties of Christianity are subject to erosion (a consideration not relevant for fundamentalist missions). The anthropologist is aware of the limitations of his discipline, too. For instance, the level of explanation of cultural phenomena is not so high to warrant an overly self-confident stance. In our discipline explanations seldom surpass the level of plausibility, showing how the observed phenomena fit into the processes and structures of culture, time and place. Especially in religious phenomena this holds true. No anthropologist can seriously maintain that religious movements have been adequately explained in all their variety by the standard anthropological theories.

Consequently, a more moderate and modest methodological stance would suit anthropology better. Instead of methodological atheism, I have proposed methodological agnosticism (Van Beek 1982: 8) as a more honest point of departure. After all, in empirical research no anthropologist can make any statement about 'the other side of the world'. From an empirical point of view no statement at all can be made, positive nor negative. Of course, even when starting from agnosticism, one should look for non-religious

factors and processes interacting with the religious phenomena, and - inevitably - the *Metaphor* remains paramount. Still, in such a strategy one at least silently acknowledges that not all religious phenomena can be totally explained or translated. A starting point of 'not-knowing' may render us less pretentious.

The limits of empathy for both anthropologist and missionary and the modesty that would befit both, leads us to the question of commonalities between both. For this we have to return to the quest for emics. Starting with a critique of 'systematic empathy' focusing on the cases of phenomenology of religion and ethnoscience, I have sketched the ends of empathy. In this, the anthropologist and the missionary, though operating from different angles, were shown to share some basic similarities, among which the search for understanding the other is paramount. If this is so, one major difference Van der Geest (1987) perceives between anthropologist and missionary evaporates, which renders their similarity even stronger. So now we have to explore the extent as well as the content of these similarities.

In the following section, I try to outline a common existential basis for the similarities between the anthropologist and the missionary. Both try to understand the other culture or believer, both are limited in this quest for several reasons, and both have to rely on interpretation, translation and explanation, on the *Metaphor*. In my view, these commonalities spring from a dominant way of life which they both share, the field situation. I think that this shared field situation accounts for most of the similarities Van der Geest (1987) pointed at. In their quest for emic understanding both the anthropologist and the missionary have to select items from the culture, assign priorities, translate cultural form and content into new forms meaningful for a larger audience. They are able to do so as they both are in-between two cultures, the one studied and the one of their origin. Being in-between, and being in the field, they both create an intermediate culture, a culture of 'understanding', of 'emics', of 'translation'. It is in this shared in-between culture where most similarities between missionary and anthropologist are rooted.

The anthropologist and the missionary as partners in one *intermediate culture*

Anthropologists and missionaries⁵ share an existential situation which I shall call the *field situation*, which enables them both to serve as an independent translator of cultures.

At the mission post⁶ as well as in anthropological fieldwork one is no longer fully part of one's culture of origin. However, one is neither a fully-fledged member of the host culture. This syndrome of the 'professional stranger' is well known in anthropology, especially in the field. The anthropologist in the field is a stranger to both cultures, host and origin. For the missionary the same holds; he remains a stranger and grows ever more estranged from his root culture through his long field period, even more than the anthropologist. One major aspect of this 'professional stranger' - situation is the creation of a *pied à terre*, one's own domain: the 'post'.

The missionary is part of a mission culture, either as a family at a Protestant mission, or in the Catholic case with colleagues. He lives there with a limited and self-selected number of people from Western culture, sharing a common program, living in a surrounding which is neither western nor part of local culture, African, Melanesian or whatever. The language usually is a European one, clothing is Western or professional (= Western), living quarters share the best of local culture with Western commodities.

The anthropologist usually creates for himself a comparable environment. He or she lives as 'authentically' as is feasible, sometimes sharing the compound of a family, but often in one's own hut or house. Despite the ideology of participation ('living just like...') the anthropologist's situation does differ significantly from that of his informants. Finances, health, food and transport are guaranteed (including the return ticket). He has the material means to render his fieldstay productive, which means reasonably comfortable. Both in those instances where the researcher has his own household and where he lives in with another family the anthropologist creates his own domain, private and - if possible - inviolate, his own cultural territory. (This may, incidentally, be easier for a male anthropologist than for a female colleague). This

holds ever stronger in cases of team-research, where non-anthropologists participate.

The 'post' is, however, not a Western island in a sea of local culture, as the very goal of the post is to be continually open to its host culture. But there is an interface between the post and the culture. The people on the post interact intensively with a few selected members of the local culture (personnel) and less intensively with the other people, often on a more focussed basis, consonant with the purpose of the work. When venturing out into the host community, the selected 'autochtones' serve as guides and go-betweens. Their networks often serve as channels into this other culture. Knowledge of the local language is essential for the functioning of the intermediary culture. An interpreter is allowed only in the first phase of the fieldstay. Still, even with a reasonable mastery of the language, selected locals remain important as a link with the outside.

Mission-posts start working with a self-selected minority which remains important in their later phases. These early converts, personnel and other followers, can become key figures in full grown missions. Striking examples can be found in African novels, e.g. Mongo Béti's *Petit Christ*. Anthropologists collaborate intensively with a few assistants, however many informants they may list in their monograph. As any anthropologist is his own principal instrument of research, the number of significant relations with the people studied has to remain restricted. Research assistants or interpreters belong to the most important category of collaborators, often unjustly kept in the shadow of the researcher's report, mentioned only in the preface of the dissertation. They may harbour their own views on the fieldwork done; Salinas' *On the clan of anthropologists* (Russell 1975: 71-7) is a nice example. My own research among the Kapsiki could not have succeeded without my assistant, Luc Sunu. He was and still is convinced that it was more his research than mine. Maybe he is right.

Compared to the home culture, life at the post is sober, both in general comfort, food and clothing. Distraction maybe found in the local community, but this is never wholly separated from work.

Neither are people from back home helpful in this. They have to be entertained and shown around or are a bother in another way. Real leisure time is spent with people sharing the same intermediate culture, with the partners working in the same field.

Mission networks are remarkably closed and homogeneous, often even restricted to one denomination. Representatives from different missions in the same area meet seldom, I was astonished to see in Cameroon and Mali. In various cases I served as a link between the mission. This was especially the case in Cameroon, where I had to play the mediator's role between Protestant and Catholic missionaries in establishing a standard orthography for the Kapsiki language. In any mission the difference between a visitor from inside the mission network and from one outside is striking. The mission post in Kapsiki country had a rest house where missionaries on leave or officials stayed. Interaction of local missionaries with their colleagues was much easier, more informal and more directed at life at the mission than with other visitors. The experience was repeated in Mali, for both Protestant and Catholic mission posts.

Also anthropologists take time off, both the possibility to do so and its necessity are part of the intermediate culture. Contact with colleagues may be difficult to establish, though in North Cameroon I had contact with many anthropologists. Routinely, however, an anthropologist searches for the nearest mission station; or, the quarters of a development worker (who also belongs to the in-between culture) may serve.

A proclaimed flexibility in food habits and interaction patterns is part and parcel of the intermediate culture. Eating and - especially - drinking in the larger community is part of the normal routine, important for work. The continuous accessibility for members of the host culture is essential for the intermediate one, in fact is viewed as an important value. Ideologically, this openness towards the host culture forms the distinguishing characteristic between culture of origin and the culture in-between. Members of the latter are different from the former, just because they continually relate to and are accessible for participants and ideas from the host culture.

Some anthropologists may raise doubts whether this holds true for the mission. Though for some fundamentalist missions it may not hold, in my experience the missionary without an open appreciation for his hosts, is an anthropological stereotype. Both in Mali and in Cameroon missionizing met with such limited success to necessitate an abiding interest in local culture. In mainstream missions the old hierarchy between incoming high status Europeans and low status locals has long since eroded.

For the anthropologist this view of himself is customary: he is different from other Europeans or Americans by having renounced the syndrome of ethnocentricity. This very openness towards the other culture, however, is possible only through the proper intercultural background the anthropologist creates for himself. Anyway, his accessibility for and access to the host culture form his principal research method. What is viewed as a value, in fact is a field tool.

People change by being part of the intermediary culture. One distinguishing trait of both the anthropologist and the missionary is the problem of readaptation: when coming back from the field stay, either at the end of the research period or on furlough, resettling in the culture of origin proves difficult. Anthropologists are usually proud of this 'secondary culture shock' (Barley 1983), which shows them to be true initiates. These readaptation problems spring from the gap between host and Western culture. The partners in the intermediate culture have a vested interest in stressing the differences between these two cultures. After all, they are the translators, who render the values of the one culture accessible to the other. The values themselves, too, of each particular culture, should not be played down either, as the very value of both human culture and differences between cultures form the *raison d'être* for the existence of the intermediate culture. The value of culture is not subject to discussion.

For the missionary this holds too. Though this translation proceeds in an opposite direction from the anthropologist's one, it still is a translation. In no way can a translated message be parachuted into a local community. The hard labours of bible translators, discussions about

use of 'local ritual' and musical instruments, as well as the implementation of local leadership serve as indications.

The anthropologist considers translation to be at the heart of his profession. Evans Pritchard explicitly states so in the introduction to his *Nuer Religion*⁷. Often, the anthropologist labours under the illusion that the language he translates into, is a meta-language. That, of course, is only so for a small part; for most purposes it is SAE (Standard Average European).

Commitment to both cultures, host and origin, is essential for the intermediate one, being in fact a bridge between the two. The culture in-between is not an overlap between host and own, but a gate. The partners in the intermediate culture select which elements from one culture will be translated into the other. Value judgements of both other cultures as well as assessments of relative weight are done by the gatekeepers, the in-between partners. This selection of cultural elements is a fundamental difference between the partners in the intermediary one and participants in any one culture: the former are the only ones able to form a balanced opinion about the intrinsic values of both cultures.

Against the people back-home this shows as a relativism, and against the local culture as a severe criticism of the home culture. Though tensions between homefront and mission are not evident, they do exist nevertheless. Especially for fundamentalist missions (well represented in Africa) the image of the mission field is strikingly different from that held by the missionaries. In the case of the mainstream missions a longer missionary tradition and a less direct link with the background church have led to more an autonomous mission field. Still, values and norms developed in the field diverge from the church back home. As an example the relative tolerance of polygyny in the catholic mission in Mali may serve; there the missionaries follow a strategy of not wanting to know, in order not to have to condemn.

For an anthropologist *back-home* is more diverse. The academic community serving as a background does not normally belong to the intermediate culture. Touring the field, colleagues (and supervisors of theses) can be a pain in the neck. Family and friends rarely visit the more

remote field areas and are of little influence. Other visitors may be chance ones, like tourists; in both of my research areas they represented the home culture most emphatically, sometimes amusing, sometimes exasperating, usually bothering and always time consuming. This diversity of background makes critique of the home culture easy for the anthropologist, while at the same time rendering it relatively harmless and ineffective.

The position as gatekeepers, which the partners in the intermediate culture share, is bolstered by the respect they enjoy from both cultures in question. For the local hosts they represent the dominant Western culture, even deemed superior by many. In short, the partners are viewed as people who were kind enough to step down. The people 'back-home' view the soberness and accessibility of the in-betweens as a (relative) sacrifice the partners bring in order to stay in the host culture, and as such as a proof of commitment to a noble cause or of a laudable academic dedication. The existential privileges of living in that intermediate culture are evident only to its participants (and let us leave it that way).

A mild culture relativism is, as we said, essential for the intermediate culture, as the partners live under a constant pression for self-justification. Their presence in the field may be appreciated by both cultures, but is self-evident to none. Besides, the grounds for appreciation by the other cultures, differ sharply from the reasons why anthropologists and missionary stay in the field.

The basis for justification of the mission is changing, at least in Africa. The people back home still adhere to the stereotyped vision that the diffusion and permanence of Christianity is at stake in the presence of the missionary. Developments in African Christianity have long since caught up with this view. In West-African missions, for instance, the tasks and roles of the expatriates are being redefined, a process much longer under way in other parts of Africa. Indigenization of African churches implies a marginalization of missionary. On the one hand they are being retrained - or redefined - as development workers, a role they fulfill with varying success and fluctuating motivation. On the other hand they are *dirigés à l'ethnographie*, as a missionary recently told me in North Cameroon. Especially for the more fundamentalist mis-

sions this change is hard to stomach. According to one missionary of the Lutheran Brethren Mission in Cameroon, his new role as a development worker implied that he had to make people rich, thereby turning them away from the church. One missionary's son had, as a consequence, left the missionary service and started an automobile workshop in Cameroon in order to be more influential in the local church.

An anthropologist's self-justification is usually less complex, as his stay is both marginal and short. For the local people, the anthropologist's fieldstay is usually less problematic than for the researcher himself; they almost routinely use the anthropologist as a pawn in local power arenas. My own justification in Cameroon was to write a local history, an explanation needed as the *chef de canton* had some suspicions how the other Kapsiki would use my presence. In Dogon country, by contrast, I felt no need to explain my stay in the field. Whereas other villages had long since been 'honoured' with anthropologists, time was more than ripe that this particular village had its share. Most of the need for justification springs from the anthropologist himself. Various reasons, like the imbalance between giving to and receiving from the host culture and the fundamental debt the anthropologist feels towards his host culture, account for that; for the host culture it easily results in becoming a partisan for, of course still from the relative comforts of the intermediate culture. A positive evaluation of concepts like 'cultural diversity', 'tradition', 'equality' and 'group identity' form a part of this attitude.

These latter values, belonging to a small-scale society giving well-being to a marginal group, are highly relevant in the ideology of the intermediate culture. As a systematic ideology cultural relativism is in itself void, and should be filled in with inherent values of specific interpersonal relations. The missionary usually shares these values and aims at preserving them in the implementation of the mission program. In both instances, for the anthropologist as well as the missionary, these values fit in a social environment small enough to control through a personal network: they define a manageable group and a flock that can be herded. Of

course, these values restrict cultural relativism. The missionary has to translate an external message into the local culture and yet preserve the values he cherishes in it, and, integrate those elements he deems of worth. The anthropologist on the one hand has to deny the perceived superiority of his home culture, while on the other hand affirming or even restoring the value of the local culture. The same cultural relativism that makes him criticize his culture of origin - at least its pretensions and the way the local culture perceives it - challenges him into an over-valuation of the other culture.

A missionary in such a case may turn partisan, though in my experience it happens less often than van der Geest (1987) seems to suggest. Most missionaries I have encountered have a great respect for individual members of the host culture, but have little inclination to play the partisan. Not all political situations give rise to that necessity. Yet, missionaries usually define relationships more on a one to one basis.

The anthropologist probably tends more to extend and abstract his appreciation of persons towards a society and a culture. After all, very few field anthropologists actually dislike 'their' people; most of us combine a close, intimate relation with individual people with a positive valuation of their culture. I remember my own irritations over the self-denigrating way the Kapsiki of Cameroon spoke about their own culture⁸. If my presence and research would heighten their self-esteem and ethnic well-being, I would feel rewarded. When presently this indeed happens (van Beek 1988), I experience it as some justification of my work, anyway as a positive change. The only deception, evidently, is the minute part I really played in it.

Yet, cultural relativism remains an empty message, with an inherent contradiction: any systematic relativism destroys both one's own theoretical position and the appreciation of the culture studied. The only way out is a restricted relativism, through the process of selection of cultural elements that is central to the intermediate culture. It is the relative autonomy of that culture in-between that enables anthropologist and missionary to play the gate-keeper's role, albeit to a limited extent. Relativism is always

basically a moral judgement. The contradictions between cultural selection and denial of judgement can only be met in appropriating the rules of evaluation. This precisely is the luxury of the field culture, and sets off anthropologist and missionary alike as partners in one, intermediate, culture.

Notes

1. That a strict reliance on written sources, bears another, inevitable bias is a typical anthropological critique, which is not relevant for our discussion here.
2. The need for 'explanation' is of course a hidden way to face the question of truth: the Kwakiutl stating himself to be a salmon, cannot be believed at face value. According to Fabian, this problem of dealing with veracity shows the remnants of "a positivist philosophy of science which has run its course" (Fabian 1979, 1981). Still, it is difficult to see how, under whatever epistemology, this kind of question can wholly be abolished.
3. Van der Leeuw too, recognizes this problem: "I realized that this phenomenology of religion could not only consist of an inventory and classification of phenomena..." (cited in Sharpe 1975: 231). His solution is one of self-analysis and introspection by the researcher, a venue that most anthropologists would not opt for.
4. Another view on *emic* is more formal, defining it through diacritical rules that are relevant only within the system. Beyond linguistics, though, the difference is less marked.
5. For convenience I use both terms masculine; evidently, both the female and the male representatives of the species are meant, especially for the 'anthropologist'. Throughout, I refer to Western anthropologists and missionaries. Their non-western colleagues, despite their different culture of origin, have to be counted too as partners in the intermediate culture, through their education, position and international contact. Still, most of them tend to lessen the gap between the host and own culture, by working in their own culture of origin.
6. With 'missionary' both the Catholic and Protestant variety is meant, as with the term 'mission'.
7. The call for 'truly emic' description originated in the realization that *traduttore* equals *tradittore*. Hence emic approaches avoid translation labeling as long as possible, which often renders publications of ethnoscience very hard to read.
8. Research on the Kapsiki of Cameroon has been done in 1971, 1972-3, 1979, 1988 and made possible by grants of WOTRO (Foundation for the advancement of tropical research) and the University of Utrecht. Research in Mali on the Dogon has been going on since 1978, financed by the same sources.

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Anthropologists, Missionaries and Rationality

Jan Abbink

The problem: is revaluation of the anthropo-missionary debate necessary?

Anthropologists have, since Malinowski's radical elevation of fieldwork as the hallmark of a professional, scientific anthropology, claimed privileged access to the understanding of non-Western ('preliterate', 'traditional') cultures. They came to see themselves as rather different from, for instance, the missionaries, imprisoned as the latter were thought to be in the absolutism of their, ultimately ethnocentric, religious attitude. This image is familiar (see Van der Geest 1987: 1-2) but it carries more than a grain of truth¹.

In view of some splutterings in circles of missionaries and some anthropologists, a minor debate has flared up again concerning the relationship between the anthropological discipline and the missions. At issue is the status of such claims of privileged access, the question of what might be the most adequate approach in the study of the 'cultural others', and the question of value commitment. Thus, the traditional, slightly smug and self-flattering anthropological self-image, contrasted with the missionary image, is seen as challenged; and with it, anthropology's objectivity, its methods of data-gathering, its interpretations and explanations. *Eo ipso*, the authority of its texts and its social effects (in policy, in education) are questioned. One may wonder why this debate is renewed, in view of the fact that the discussion usually boils down to a rehearsing of familiar arguments by representatives of both camps?

The underlying reason is probably the insecurity among anthropologists about their field being a science, and about what kind of science it should be. Closely related to this is the often fuzzy thinking about value commitment, relativism and absolutism, which

leads anthropologists to being trapped in the *tu quoque* argument² of 'missionary advocates' (as I will call, for brevity's sake, missionaries, missiologists and (missionary) anthropologists supportive of them). I will come back to this argument in the course of this paper, but shall start with related problems.

I first outline the various strands of argument in the discussion and pose the question of whether recent criticisms of ethnography and the ethnographical researcher, as advanced in the 'experimental approach' within anthropology (Clifford 1983, Clifford & Marcus 1986), render support to the claims of the missionary advocates. Is there need for a new evaluation of the anthropologist in the light of missionary criticism? A corollary question is: can the anthropologist 'learn' from the missionary in the study of other cultures? And finally, underlying all the criticism on the, in the eyes of missionary, presumptuous posture of the anthropologist, does all this explode the idea of some basic difference between the two in their approach to the subject matter?

An affirmative answer would nicely fit the missionary's vocation. But my thesis here is that anthropologists should - and can - answer with a radical denial on most of these points. Apart from incomprehensions, epistemological differences divide anthropologist and missionary. They come out clearly in a discussion of the above-mentioned questions.

What makes a discussion on the changing image of the anthropologist, as possible mirror image of the missionary, somewhat of a rear-guard skirmish, is the fact that the classic missionary seems to be disappearing (although they may be taking on another appearance only). Thus in the debate, we see people, on the one hand, deny that the stereotypical missionary still exists; but on the other hand the idea of missionary work and its legitimacy can be affirmed³. Moreover, there are few real studies of missionaries in the field which permit a balanced discussion. Following calls of Beidelman and Salamone (1977), we can only repeat that missionaries, in their interaction with 'non-Western' groups, should now first of all be studied. Unless the missionary advocates break new ground, the relevance of a discussion with them may appear slight. But there are two reasons to continue it:

1. reconsideration of the status of the anthropological observer in the light of the discussion recently generated within anthropology on the subjective aspects of its knowledge formation and writing, mentioned above, is useful;

2. a restatement of the uses of rationality in anthropology and the missionary approach should be made and thought out further, hopefully leading to some more epistemological clarity. My intention is thus to place the entire discussion in a *meta-context*.

Approaches to the problem of the relationship anthropologists - missionaries

The debate on the role and function of missionaries and anthropologists has usually been conducted on the basis of classical - and partly outdated - images: the soul hunter, trying to bring a message to non-believers in order to convert, versus the superior truth-seeking rational scientist, 'objectifying' his/her informants and their culture, fitting them in a Western 'ethno-logic' discourse. One may argue that these images should no longer serve as the basis for discussion, as the variety both among missionaries and anthropologists has always been astounding (Miller 1981: 127). But one constantly falls back upon them. Hiebert, for instance (1978: 175-6, 178) admits that in the modern, post-colonial era the missions have to adapt their approach of the non-Christian world, fully recognizing cultural variety and the problems it poses, but in the end the Christian message and the hopes of conversion (now aptly restyled 'Christian witness to non-Christians') are upheld by him. More significantly, in his article he takes the values of Christianity as the yardstick to evaluate the problems of the anthropological approach, thus arguing from the familiar assumptions of a sort of religious absolutism.

This is the crucial problem in the debate on the relationship between anthropology and missions on a theoretical level. On a practical level there is indeed much less reason to contest the activities and achievements of most present-day missionaries. Virtually all of them appear to have thrown out any clear conversion activity and are engaged in development projects, education, medical care, refugee assistance. With their commitment and their results they often score as good, or better, than the (applied) anthropologists and other development workers. Whether this is first and foremost the result of changed circumstances (political and socio-economic), forcing missionaries to develop other attitudes, while the underlying idea of transmitting Christianity to non-Christians is maintained⁴, I do not intend to discuss here⁵.

These remarks leads us to the various lines of argument which can be discerned in the discussion of the problem of the relationship and possible complementarity between anthropology and missions:

1. historical; 2. pragmatic; 3. methodological; 4. theological, and 5. epistemological. All these approaches can be found in the work of recent contributors to the debate (Stipe, Hiebert, Beidelman, Miller, Hvalkof & Aaby, Van der Geest) in various mixtures and degrees of success.

After briefly considering each of them, it will be clear why the fifth approach, is the most useful. It cannot be ignored in a fundamental discussion to clear up the ever-present tension between anthropology and missions.

A historical argument to the problem usually takes the following form: The missionary as an 'ethnocentric destroyer of indigenous culture' and a 'short-sighted bigot imposing a culture-bound religious system on people who have not asked for it', is a thing of the past. In the colonial era nobody escaped such an attitude. What has been perpetrated against indigenous peoples was, in many cases, unforgivable: meaningful religious systems, cohesive community structures, indigenous traditions of art were destroyed. The missionaries were often uncritical accomplices of colonialism. But, the argument goes, at the same time there were missionaries who tried to protect the native communities, were sometimes anti-colonialist, assisted the dominated populations in a material sense (money, medical services, education), and were, in several cases, even helping them to survive. Furthermore, the missions are so heterogeneous, that one cannot draw one single picture of *the* missionary as a converter of heathens, disrespectful of native culture. At the same time, missionary advocates point to the colonialist bias of early anthropology, inescapably operating in the same *Zeitgeist* as the missionaries and often equally infected with ethnocentric, racist presuppositions⁶.

With such an approach, which can be illustrated at will with all kinds of special case studies, any argument of anthropological opponents sceptical of the role of the missionary is refuted. While it seems to me that the historical evidence points incontrovertibly to the conclusion that missionaries did more harm than good in their contacts with native groups⁷, such an historical discussion remains arbitrary and sterile because the idea that the positive and the negative effects of mission work do balance each other obfuscates the search for and evaluation of the really existing differences. A historical-descriptive approach can thus be used to point to all kinds

of 'hidden similarities' between the anthropologist and the missionary to assert that there is not much that really divides them, that their historical role is similar. But even when conceding the fact that the rivalry was sharpened in the context of academic competition and increasing professional specialization (cf. Pels in this volume), the question of the status of anthropological and missionary statements and explanations about their subject matter has thereby not been solved.

The historical argument ignores the fact that anthropology, after having emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, has undergone a significant development both philosophically and methodologically, entirely changing the self-image of the anthropologist and of anthropology as a relatively autonomous scientific tradition with some critical canons. It glosses over the fact that the missionary approach has basically remained the same, as the absolutist basis of belief guiding action has not been given up. In this respect, the missions are much more homogeneous than anthropology. The foregoing is not meant to deny the fact that both the missionary and the ethnological enterprise are historically a by-product of the age of European expansion, both materially and ideologically (Keesing 1981: 403-5), despite there remain questions about the degree of involvement with - or contamination by - this historical process. For one thing, the missionaries as such were present in the regions brought under colonial domination from the early start of mercantile capitalism. Ethnology/anthropology came later (excluding Montaigne's lucid observations): in the wake of missionary, traders' and travellers' reports, which challenged the self-conception of the newly emerging bourgeois classes of eighteenth and nineteenth century European society, and set them to reflect upon the expansion process and upon the people brought into the Western orbit.

Moreover, a real historical approach would try to investigate the socio-cultural conditions of emergence of missions as well as of anthropology themselves. Anthropology itself has by now well advanced in this process of historical epistemological self-analysis.

The missionary approach can, in the last instance, not dissociate itself from the contents of its constitutive beliefs which give direction and meaning to it. This is the question of whether *understanding* religions is compatible with (still) *believing* in them (MacIntyre 1970). The corollary question whether anthropology is a culture-specific discourse limited to one type of society and not valid without/outside it, misses the point, because while the religious

discourse is a discourse about reality and the supernatural held transculturally valid for all of humankind, anthropology is mainly a comparative discourse about such discourses and their social basis.

A pragmatic approach to the relationship missions - anthropology is directly based on the field experience. It emphasizes the need for dialogue and reciprocity between these two groups of (Western) practitioners in other cultures, sharing many assumptions, interests and aims. Their efforts are naturally complementary and not competitive. In the field they can support each other and have a kind of division of labour relegating each group to its own sphere of interest. Both have their own rationale, work with equal right in these parts of the world and face similar problems of rapport with the people they study or work with. Therefore both camps should de-emphasize their differences in outlook and value assumptions (which are said to have the same status anyway), and come to closer cooperation. The anthropologist shows some missionary traits, the missionary some anthropological inclinations. This argument, of course very popular in circles of the missionary advocates (cf. Hiebert 1978) will not do. It too easily by-passes the differences of approach. It is a nice formula for ordering relations in the field (provided there is a tacit understanding between missionary and anthropologist *not* to talk about certain things too deeply), but it is not satisfactory from a theoretical point of view (see sections 6 and 7).

A methodological argument - generally advanced in conjunction with the preceding pragmatic approach - can be discerned in the thoughts advanced by (some) anthropologists and (most) missionary advocates that any cross-cultural contact situation has its own logic. The method and manner of approaching the culturally 'Other' is equally problematic for both missionary and anthropologist: they both face the problem of interpretation, of 'translation', and in actual practice they do not substantially differ in their dealings with cultural others, it is said. This is often followed by the claim that the missionary is in a much more advantageous position because s/he can spend a longer period in the field, can get a better grasp of the language, and can offer more services to the people s/he is working with. This methodological view tends to give the missionary a better mark in communication with people in other cultures, and in interpreting and understanding them, than the anthropologist.

However, such an effort at methodological defusing of the differences of the anthropological and missionary approaches is misleading, as it refrains from comparing the explanatory evaluation of their respective discourses.

These three approaches of the relation missions - anthropology dominate many discussions. But in fact, as arguments, they are non-starters, secondary to the main issues. Due to their partial and arbitrary character they do not contribute to a clarification of the real bone of contention, which is the disagreement on some persistent, basic differences between the anthropological and the missionary aims. This is not meant to say that there is no shady area of agreement and a common ground in much of what missionaries and anthropologists are doing. But the point of principle should be stated once again in order to avoid unwarranted encroachment of the scientific field of anthropology by missionary advocates. To illuminate this, one has, in some measure, to abstract from the historical and pragmatic-methodological considerations which provide *ad hoc* evasions of any criticism and sort out the philosophical basis of the traditional opposition between the missionary and the anthropological point of view (cf. Abbink 1985, Feldman 1981). I repeat: even though the classical opposition between the two seems to be lost nowadays - at least many discussants try to minimize its relevance or even its existence - a hard core of difference remains. A sociology-of-knowledge critique of the distinction - bent on reducing it to common socio-historical circumstances - is incomplete.

The background of the difference is of course the problem of value orientation in science and in personal life: an epistemological⁸ as well as an existential matter. The existential moment - the problem of how to reconcile the idea of the 'rational unity of mankind' with the deep religious, social, and other differences between people of various cultures is of course met by anthropologists as well as missionaries, but for the missionary it receives a theological answer: faith provides the key to the problem of overcoming cultural and religious differences and the apparent chaos and arbitrariness of values in the world. The absolutist yardstick is used not only in personal life but also in communication and working with people in other cultures. This is done without, in such a situation, drawing the methodological consequences from the fact

that this still is a historically specific belief system which cannot have immediate application in other cultural settings.

The theological argument is evident in almost every study of the relationship anthropology - missions (cf. Stipe 1980, Hiebert 1978). About anthropologists, Hiebert writes: "With no place in their models for the divine nature of people, they are left with little sense of the dignity and destiny of human beings. Nor do they have a foundation for determining values and ethics, without which people are reduced to beasts." (sic 1978: 172). This then leads him into a muddled discussion of the supposed characteristics of epistemological matters, in conclusion of which the author claims: "Anthropologists still perceive scientific knowledge to be absolute statements of truth. They thereby deify rationality of the mind." (ibid.:178)⁹. I refrain from comment on this patently misconceived argument, showing a mistaken interpretation of, or lack of familiarity with, epistemological reflections in 'critical' and mainstream anthropology, already well-developed at the end of the seventies. But many recent contributions are no better. Van der Geest (1987) writes that anthropologists understand and describe religion not from the inside, like the 'natives' themselves do experience this, but on the basis of theoretical assumptions of the anthropologist, which he takes to mean that religion is robbed from its real meaning and redefined as something relevant and interesting within anthropological discourse (1987: 4). Missionaries are then said to have an 'epistemological advantage' in the study of religion, because the religious element of religion is taken seriously by them (ibid.: 10). In other words, to be religious is said to be an asset for a good anthropologist. But this argument - reflected in Stipe's assertion (1980: 167) that anthropologists see religious beliefs as 'essentially meaningless' - ignores the fact that a whole school of anthropologists of religion does not follow the adagium 'study the ritual, not the belief'. Instead, they take religious beliefs and statements at face value and evaluate what is being said and expressed (Horton, Spiro, Firth, Guthrie, Jarvie and Agassi). The critique on far-fetched metaphoric, symbolic interpretations of statements like 'the Kwakiutl is a salmon' (Van der Geest's example, 1987: 5) has come from many rationalist anthropologists (cf. Jarvie 1979, on the 'virgin birth'-debate). This approach is of course known as the 'intellectualist' or 'cognitivist'. On the other hand, Mary Douglas, ironically a believing anthropologist, is one of the main proponents of such symbolic interpretations. A more important matter here is the fact that anthropologists tending to interpret seemingly

'irrational' beliefs such as in the above two statements in terms of metaphor, does not entail that such interpretations are logically on the same level as the belief on the basis of which a missionary would interpret religious or cosmological utterances of other cultures. The anthropological interpretations have the status of a tentative hypothesis. This is not the status of the belief of missionaries when they apply to it as a possible basis for 'better understanding'.

An epistemological approach in this discussion tries to focus on a logical reconstruction of the material and the cognitive aspects of the process of knowledge formation, attempting to clarify the basis of claims to knowledge advanced by anthropologists and missionary advocates. In the case of anthropology this means the explanation and understanding (the basis of) of cultural difference in its widest sense. Any claims to knowledge or explanation, coming from any discipline, including missions, of course stand open to the same scrutiny. This can be construed to mean using a critical rational method of assessment and an exclusion of faith or authority from something outside the critical method itself: any statement's or theory's explanatory claim must be held criticizable, including the method used to reach the results. This proceeds only on the assumption that we want to know more, in an intersubjective, discursive manner, about our world and its problems, our behaviour and the behaviour of others in comparison.

Critical epistemological reflection allows one to see that absolutist or justificationist claims to (evaluate) knowledge - on the basis of a non-criticizable standard used in its turn to assess reality and the statements about it - are unacceptable. An absolutist approach implies a body of entrenched metaphysical clauses which cannot be refuted. The issue of understanding religious beliefs is a case in point. To say that anthropologists cannot really take seriously the 'religious aspect of religion' (Van der Geest 1987: 10) is a fallacy: it presupposes something the existence of which can neither corroborate nor falsified and asks us to accept it *a priori*.

That absolutist approaches contain entrenched clauses is in itself not reprehensible. Such a system of clauses or beliefs (e.g. religion) can certainly not be said to be meaningless or nonsense. But equally, it cannot be used to construct or defend a critical scientific method, and neither form the basis of a realist semantics (often seen as a precondition for cross-cultural comparisons of behaviour. Against this, see Luntley 1978: 202-3).

Additional reasoning, on the basis of a comparison of anthropology and missions, leads to the rejection of the 'irrational' basis of missionary (and what I have called theological) views on the process of explanation of other cultures, as well as of the rejection of the *tu quoque* argument¹⁰ that 'rational' anthropologists also fall back on an irrational choice, viz. adopting 'reason' as their philosophical basis and world view. Such a view can be refuted on the basis of, e.g., the 'panrationalist' philosophical theory of Bartley (1962, 1964). This aims at the self-foundation of rationality as a guiding principle in efforts to understand or explain the world (see below, p. 135). He has shown rather convincingly that the *tu quoque* argument against a pancritical epistemology fails: at no point is it logically necessary to resort to an 'irrationalist value commitment' in order to ground the rational scientific method. The *tu quoque* argument was also often used in implicit form in anthropology: anthropologists have tried to evade the *tu quoque* by relapsing into cultural relativism, thus paying the price of being unable to criticize others; or have sought some 'absolutist point' in order to avoid relativism¹¹ (See section 6).

The missionary critique of anthropology

The above remarks illustrate the two basic positions which one faces in any discussion on missions and anthropology.

In this section we briefly summarize the specific criticisms of the missionary advocates on anthropology, in order to be able to compare them with self-criticism in the 'experimental' approach in anthropology (See especially Hiebert 1978, Salamone 1977, Stipe 1980 and Van der Geest 1987). We have seen that anthropology is the target of missionary criticism along two lines: a. methodology and b. the place of extra-scientific values in research.

As far as methodology is concerned, it is asserted that anthropologists:

1. have not enough commitment to the people they study and tend to 'objectify' their informants and their culture. They may be rational and trying not to impose their beliefs on others, they also do come uninvited and tend to communicate their acquired data and knowledge to others, not to the people studied.
2. often do not master enough of the local language because they stay for a short time.

3. work with an outdated view of other cultures as being sort of organic and well-integrated (Stipe 1980).
4. are 'just as colonialist' as the missionaries are charged to be. This is to say that they also are ethnocentric.

On the second point (b) one often finds the criticism that anthropologists:

5. do not address the question of ultimate truth.
6. tend to fall back on an impossible relativist or nihilist world-view.
7. work with an explanatory (scientific) model missing the real dimension of other socio-cultural behaviour patterns, and of reality as defined by the informants (e.g. the meaning of religious beliefs).
8. do not sufficiently realize their own impact on the culture of the informants: they introduce new values and aspirations and thus unwittingly act as culture brokers, also in an immaterial sense.

The methodological objections are derived from the belief that anthropology does not accord sufficient weight to the limits of its own methodology and ignores its own value-basis ('there is no value-free science'). The objections are reducible to the fideist idea that as, ultimately, values in life and in science are arbitrary, one has to assume some minimal beliefs which justify the approach followed: every one, it is claimed, faces an irrational - not fully rationally justifiable - decision at some point.

The 'experimental' critiques of ethnography

Anthropology has always known a self-critical moment, but in recent years, roughly since the late seventies, a new dimension of critical comment can be discerned. Anthropology questions its Western character, its methods and its range of explanation and/or understanding.

The basis of the self-critique is that it should be recognized, in a more radical sense, that the ethnographical observer is an active party in the research context, setting the terms of the encounter with the 'Other', determining what is interesting and relevant, and afterwards asserting his/her authority as an ethnographer presenting a depiction of a culture or a cultural event in a certain

conventional rhetorical style of writing, persuasively going beyond the data.

The sophisticated approach informed by these concerns has become known as 'experimental' or 'postmodern' (cf. an early 'diagnosis' in Marcus & Cushman 1982). Essentially, the role of the anthropological observer - as outsider-researcher and as representative of a politico-economically or culturally dominant society - is radically contextualized. Also, the conception of what ethnographic 'knowledge' is and how it is produced, is at issue. This can be inferred from many recent contributions (see e.g. Clifford 1986, Marcus & Fischer 1986, Geertz 1988):

* ethnographic writing is not an unmediated, realist depiction of things as they 'really are'. The author of a text, even if not visibly present in the text, is always there as the authoritative, creative voice (cf. Geertz 1988). Anthropology has a 'fiction' component. This bias should be recognized and its impact on the reality depicted be analyzed. What Geertz calls the 'professional mystique' of writing (1988: 138) should be uncovered¹². The upshot of this point is that the commensurability of the various interpretations and theories of anthropologists is not always immediately clear.

* in the field, the ethnographic observer is caught in politico-economic and social contexts which influence his/her activity in the culture of the informants: anthropology "...enacts power relations." (Clifford 1986: 9, Marcus and Fischer 1986: 95f.). Good ethnography should include a reflection on its conditions of existence (material and cultural), and on the impact of these on the research praxis itself. This reflection implies a basic critical attitude towards the 'home culture' and its underlying values in the light of which ethnographers have sought out the 'Others' (see Marcus & Fischer (1986: 111).

* ethnographer and informants construct a context, a reality, an 'Other', in and through which information is supplied. Important aspects of culture are performed. Most ethnographic facts are not out there to grab. Anthropological results are thus repeatable or controllable in a limited sense only.

* ethnographic truths are inherently partial, committed and incomplete (Clifford 1986: 7, what Clifford means by 'committed' here is unclear). There can no longer be any ambition in ethno-

graphy that 'totalizing' theories or explanations are possible - the 'truth' can only be uncovered partially. While this is not a path-breaking new insight, it emphasizes the importance of the subjective element (i.e. the subject being the ethnographer).

* as much of ethnographic writing has tended to let the voice of the informants be drowned in the discourse of the anthropologist, there should be an effort to allow them to speak more clearly for themselves (this is tried in M. Shostak's book *Nisa* (1981) and of course in Crapanzano 1980 or Dwyer 1982).

* closely related to this, anthropologists should recognize the 'dialogic' character of their relationship with their informants. Such a dialogue is not easily translated into a 'written up' account, a discourse removed from the voice of the informants, without adding a fictional or personal component going beyond the socio-cultural reality in which the observations and conversations were carried out.

We may hail such criticisms as achieving the completion of the critique of traditional anthropology (e.g. of the functionalist or structuralist schools), sensitizing us to the need for 'specification of discourse' (Clifford 1986: 13) and attention to the social conditioning of anthropology as scientific praxis. An 'experimental' approach along such lines can provide powerful insights in the intangible aspects of the subjectivity and the lived experience of culture as well as an effective and sensitive rhetoric to lay bare the implicational meaning of cultural phenomena (such as e.g., ethnicity: cf. Fischer's essay, 1986).

At the same time, one should be careful not to contextualize the anthropological research effort too much, in that a relapse into relativism occurs. A related danger is that one may be satisfied too easily with appealing 'interpretations' without pursuing their cross-cultural parallels or more encompassing explanatory theories.

Some of the dangers are cited by Clifford (*ibid.*: 24), who feels bound to affirm that no 'attack on science' or 'incitement to relativism' is intended. One page later he asks how 'truths of cultural accounts' are to be evaluated. A solution is not given and is not sought at this early stage of experimenting; but this is indeed the basic question of the entire approach.

Furthermore, we should neither get the impression that the anthropological effort is only a 'genre', a rhetorical strategy, not having the characteristics or potentialities of a science. Geertz has rightfully hinted at the possible dangers "...in regarding the anthropological vocation as in important aspects as a literary one" (1988: 142): it must remain committed to the task of furthering cross-cultural understanding (p. 147). Thus, there remains a need for 'standards' to compare ethnographic accounts as to their validity. Such standards must go beyond those of their stylistic or other persuasiveness.

The trap into which such an approach may lead us - as foreshadowed in, e.g., the discussion on ethnographic dialogue between Tedlock and Tyler (1987) - is set when one abandons of the normative idea of anthropology as a science where competing explanatory theories can be assessed. The idea that any 'representation' of social reality must be abandoned (Tyler 1987: 342), while challenging, appears to be a recipe for regression into a style of monographic ethnography, whereby every ethnographer writes a unique report of a culture evoked by dialogue, without bothering too much about comparison or deeper structures below the surface¹³.

Another confusion is the old-fashioned idea that anthropologists face a problem in that observer bias is a specific problem for them, compared with natural scientists. But anthropology does not lose its scientific character if it is recognized that many of the advanced theories or solutions or interpretations are highly hypothetical and speculative; bias can never be hidden. The answer has always been to criticize and amend such theories within the institutional structure of anthropological debate: we have reasons to say that some explanations are better than others¹⁴.

Obviously, the critical points raised above are reminiscent of the critique of missionary advocates, who have said all along that anthropologists must come to terms with their culture-boundedness, the impact of their subjectivity, and their 'choice of values' in their dealings with others. Missionaries can also claim to have instituted the idea of 'dialogue' with their subjects earlier than anthropologists - but on the basis of the search for a common ground, inspired by the idea of the 'divine nature of man'. They also claim to have shown more commitment to the well-being of the non-Western people they work with. Missionaries urge that

anthropologists recognize the impact they have on the people they work with.

While the missionary criticisms raised above are, to a certain extent valid, they are valid for the wrong reasons. The missionary approach is no alternative: it criticizes from a still absolutist, entrenched position. The experimental criticisms go much further and apply, *mutatis mutandis*, also to missionaries engaging other cultures. Most importantly, in the experimental or post-modern trend, the idea of an encompassing metanarrative (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 8, citing Lyotard), a kind of grand explanatory theory pertaining to reality and giving direction to the effort of explaining it, is abandoned, or at least met with profound scepticism. It is exactly at this juncture that anthropology by-passes the missionary viewpoint, which still clings to such a (religious) metanarrative as the underlying standard with which the 'Others' must be met and evaluated, and on the basis of which one maintains the dialogue with them.

Compared with developments in the missionary field, the implications of this self-reflecting style of experimental ethnography are very critical of the society and of the values from which it emerged. The missionary endeavour, on the other hand, knows as yet no comparable radical questioning: self-criticism here is limited to reflections about how to improve the dialogue with the populations amongst whom one works, or to theological evaluations about the process itself in the light of the religious message (As throughout in this paper, I restrict myself to references to the Christian missions).

Hence, the missionary self-critique is not primarily concerned with the adequacy of the representation of the others, but with the effectiveness of the communication with them, and with the transmission of the religious message, or with processes of culture change in the light of this message. What has spurred discussion of these topics are the changed conditions of missionizing in independent and increasingly self-conscious countries in the 'Third World' (See Whiteman 1983, last chapter; various contributions in Van der Linde et al. 1978, and recent contributions in any missionary journal: *International Review of Mission, Missiology, Zeitschrift für Mission*).

The experimental approach in anthropology deserves elaboration because it refines methodological awareness, and criticizes certain

rhetorical conceptualizations of the data that anthropologists gather and put into written, communicable form.

The criticism of the permeation of traditional anthropological accounts by such rhetorical strategies, stating that they often are not based on sufficient factual evidence, and characterized by stylized, persuasive arguments, is justified, provided it does not relegate anthropological reporting to a relativist endeavour, abdicating from the task of offering serious explanations of socio-cultural behaviour.

On so-called similarities

Of course, there are open and hidden similarities between anthropologists and missionaries, as we have seen above. But stressing such similarities, instead of the differences, is a reductionist view, and a too easy way out. Furthermore, on closer analysis, the significance of the similarities tends to melt away. They can be explained as the product of a fuzzy conceptualization of anthropology as a science, and of an incomplete epistemological argument.

All of the similarities mentioned are highly questionable. We concentrate here on some of the 'hidden similarities' (Van der Geest 1987, Miller 1981, Salamone 1977, Stipe 1980), related to the points mentioned in section 3 above.

Consider the criticism that both camps are 'ethnocentric' in their faith (in religious or in scientific values). The religious faith of missionary advocates is said to have the same status as the faith in reason of the anthropologist. This most confusing parallel is always drawn, based on the tacit relativist ontology of many anthropologists. This reasoning assumes that although religious belief is not refutable, it still can be allowed to enter in the evaluation of the empirical world. Anthropologists, however, need not accept this point. They can be (and always are) talked out of their ethnocentrism: by critics like the 'experimentalists' and by 'indigenous' anthropologists (see Fahim 1982). The missionary advocates in practice can, but in theory cannot, only in an innocuous methodological sense ('improving the dialogue').

A second similarity of limited significance is that of the fieldwork role: the missionaries as 'better' anthropologists. They may indeed be longer on the spot and know the language very well, but I cannot see why this should imply an "epistemological advantage" (Van der

Geest 1987: 10). Religious commitment may be an obstacle as well as an advantage for understanding, because religious observers are not allowed a degree of freedom of interpretation by the natives. Missionaries' observations are made from a particularist vantage point, and are not (meant to be) systematic and complete, as any anthropologist having dealt with a missionary in the field will testify. Also, the written discourse of the anthropologist and of the missionary differs substantially. This is what makes most anthropological works more interesting and relevant.

A third point is that both are unwitting agents of secularization and of culture change. But here one should distinguish the missionary, as an active seeker of change, from the anthropologist, much more reserved toward it. More important is the effect of the presence of either one of them upon the cognitive structure and self-image of the informants. Empirical evidence seems to suggest that the missionaries have a more far-reaching impact on native cosmologies and coping strategies in situations of change, offering also a specific religious answer to the induced change itself. But it is hard to make any categorical statements on this issue.

The critique on the scientific approach 'missing the real dimension' of the experience of the informants is ambiguous, in that any effort to state something about such dimensions needs a minimal intermediate language for outsiders. Even a Christian needs such an intermediary to understand the cosmology of another group of believers. Such a criticism also reminds one too much of the Castaneda controversy.

Other criticisms (points 5, 6 and 7 on p. 131) refer to the basic issue of the value choice and value commitment made by both camps. Relativist anthropologists have no real defense here against the argument that, as 'a value-free social science' is impossible, they must relate themselves to an overarching evaluation of moral questions, consciously or not. Missionary advocates, professing inability to adhere to a rationalist-secular attitude, feel justified to shove axioms of belief into the field of scientific explanation, claiming that the situation is equivalent in anthropology. This is not warranted. On this point a restatement of anthropology as a science with objectivist traits, reformulated in a rationalist vein, is necessary, although I do not, herewith, claim to exhaustively solve the problem.

Anthropology and rationality: the meta-context

In the above section, we have seen that various points of anthropological self-criticism correspond to points made in missionary critiques of anthropology. Insofar as the criticisms are made in order to improve methods, or to elevate the discussion about the construction and formation of knowledge to a higher level, these points are well-taken. When, however, a relativist basis underlies this criticism, we are invited to fall back upon a dead epistemological position. Just such a, what we might call, neo-relativist stand is also often taken by anthropologists open to the missionary critique of anthropology. In the face of such a challenge, a reconstruction should be made of the epistemological difference between anthropology and missions. As with any epistemology, this reconstruction has a normative character, in the sense that it points to the procedures of rational assessment which *should be* followed by scientists in offering and judging explanatory statements, and which often *are* followed if these explanations appear to have been successful.

We start with the observation that, as it has emerged from the problem of to deal with the fact of cultural distance and difference in view of some existing human universals, all anthropology has an implicit comparative dimension and uses some minimal standards in the effort to describe and evaluate of the ethnographical reality which it defines (it provides a sense of the meaning of these differences, it describes them by translating them, it attempts to contextualize them in order to give their situational-historical logic). Hence, it nominally points to some universalist criterion of assessment. Its implications should be brought in the open and discussed in favour of the (fideist) absolutist standards applied explicitly and then held up against the (scepticist) relativist. In the discussion on experimental critiques it was noted that there was a problem of finding standards of assessment of different accounts of cultural phenomena. Several proponents admit that thinking about it, beyond the old 'realist' dogmas, has only just started (Clifford 1986: 25). But it seems obvious that the anthropology cannot do without a 'representational' discourse, saying something about reality and about others to others), based on a reasoned assessment of accounts of 'cultural realities' (in whatever sense these are defined). That such a standard of assessment must have some

universalist, non-relativist character, is already obvious from what was said above.

One answer is to take a religious belief as standard. This can serve as a framework for the interpretation of the differences within, and the destiny of, humankind. But it compromises reason in that it takes the 'irrational' leap into an uncriticizable domain of metaphysics. If one accepts the challenge posed by this problem but does not want to commit oneself to such a religious vantage point, recognizing that 'truth(s)' are culture-bound, relativism is the result.

If one is not prepared to make such a concession, then a self-grounding of reason as a specific human faculty, might be sought, based on a generalization of the cognitive disposition of people in engaging and confronting the world around them with more or less rational means. (Jarvie 1986: Rationality = "the application of reason to tasks").

Then we have arrived at the old philosophical problem of rationality. In discussions in the philosophy of science it was tried (by Bartley 1962, 1964 and later work, criticizing Popper's philosophy) to develop a critical, non-justificational theory of rationalism, grounding the rational, and ideally also the scientific, approach in its own preconditions, i.e., those of argument, criticism and rational assessment.

This is the elementary idea of Bartley's theory of rationality, a powerful retort designed to eliminate the age-old *tu quoque* argument of the irrationalists, stating: 'no one can escape making an 'irrational', non-rationally justifiable leap of faith: in God, in Science, in Nature, in reason. There is no *a priori* necessity to adopt any value or commitment whatsoever, so if any commitment is made, it has', so the argument continues, 'to be done on faith, on moral grounds, to overcome the arbitrariness and value chaos with which the world confronts us'. This is also said to hold for rationalist philosophers or scientists, but unsuccessfully. Unfortunately, Van der Geest's new article (1988) misses the entire point. The use of *ratio* (or a minimal logic) is grounded rationally, stemming the infinite regress of the *tu quoque*, and is not (as with Popper) a minimal irrational commitment, because, in this view, the methods of rationality and logic themselves are also held open to be refuted. There is no commitment to reason: this is held open. A refutation of the use of the rational method and its openness itself is effective only if it could be shown intersubjectively that there are

better ways to gain insights and explanations of the puzzles we are faced with.

The big advantage of a such a panrational theory of rationality as applied to anthropology is that a non-relativist vantage point can be held, on rational grounds (until a better one has been offered). It is consistently open to criticism on every account.

More specifically generalized to anthropology, concerned with the puzzles of culture, we see that the idea that there are always contesting views, on any subject, is the only elementary assumption we all share or experience. Some of these views may be better (i.e. more explanatory, more insightful, leading to better understanding) than others (if we are not yet all musicians or poets - and even then).

On the basis of this problem, Jarvie (1986), has spoken of (weak) absolutism, i.e., the recognition that there are some non-relative truths, on the basis on which the comparative endeavour of anthropology - admittedly the product of a specific society which has come to make room for a universalist discourse (cf. Todorov 1988: 5) - is possible. This weak absolutism implies a mainly methodological stance, based on the idea that one can be absolute in a limited, provisional sense only, not in a prescriptive sense. This approach does surmise that there is a common ground for assessment of differences between cultures, with the knowledge that humans are also one in many important respects: in biological and psychological disposition, in sharing elementary needs, in symbolic structuring of experience, in sensitivity to cultural molding (We may note that this implies, however, the bedrock of a realist ontology, which I will not further discuss here).

Even if this rationalist-grounded approach to socio-cultural reality cannot give us the iron guarantee that some accounts are 'closer to reality' or to the 'truth' (an old-fashioned theory of verisimilitude hardly acceptable in anthropology - see the experimentalist criticisms), it can at least be said that rationalist discourse improves the conceptualization of reality itself. In this sphere, the objectivity of anthropology (as intersubjectively guaranteed checks on bias of any sort) can also be located¹⁵.

In the last resort, one might say that there is no choice but to adopt the theory of rationality and the model of science as expounded above - if we assume that the aim of advancing (intercultural or whatever) understanding and explanation is desirable¹⁶.

Incidentally, the approach sketched above has nothing to do with not taking religion seriously. Neither is the missionary approach not to be rejected because it is infused by religion *per se*. A rationalist anthropology does not need to agitate against religion as such (we do not have to brand religion as superstition). It is only that religion cannot be used to prescribe morals or to tackle empirical questions which demand resolution through critical debate, especially when one cherishes the idea that religion expresses symbolic-emotive truths (cf. Southwold 1979) and not factual truths with cognitive status (on the idea of the complementarity of belief and science, see Agassi 1974).

In contrast with religion, reason knows no bounds: everything can be questioned and criticized, including this statement itself (although not everything can be explained).

Relativism and universalism

What we have to do, and what privately we do, is to treat the religious instinct with profound respect, but to insist that there is no shred or particle of truth in any of the metaphysics it has suggested; (...) and above all to insist upon the seriousness of the religious attitude and its habit of asking ultimate questions (Bertrand Russell, cited in Agassi 1974: 512).

A universal standard has somehow to be adopted in anthropology, this much is clear from the missionary challenge. In no way, however, can one adopt their solution to it. The existential problem of the arbitrariness or anarchy of values and the human need to make sense of it requires no fideist or scepticist answer. And if we agree that the scientific quest, also in anthropology, is an open-ended quest, neither do we need a fideist basis for the specific methodological criticisms from missionary advocates directed at anthropology. A methodical universalist stance can be rationally defended.

Thus, anthropologists in principle need not be vulnerable to the missionary critique that they either have to be relativists in defending the indigenous value system of the people they study, or also must make a value commitment when they halfheartedly deny it or appear to surreptitiously appeal to unspecified absolutist values.

I hope to have shown that this critique does not hold. A rational, self-reflexive attitude toward their own praxis and their own writings, conceived of as persuasive, but tentative and criticizable statements about culture and behaviour, is possible.

Missionary advocates can claim to have a universalist discourse, but it is just this which excludes them, as missionaries, from anthropological discourse, unless they leave their entrenched metaphysical position. The anthropological discourse is universal in the sense that it must show critical openness toward others and toward its own statements. This universal aspect of anthropology is also evident from the emergence of 'indigenous' anthropologists, who as far as I know try to share the same kind of discourse as 'Western' anthropology does (though shorn of the biases it still may have; cf. Fahim 1982) and already have made notable contributions to it. They also tend, like the people studied by anthropologists, to reject relativism.

We can conclude that the universalism of missionary advocates and of rationalist anthropologists is different both in substance and in method¹⁷. The first ultimately give an absolutist answer to the existential and cognitive problems that the world and its value anarchy pose. The second give either a relativist-scepticist answer (impressed by either the argument for enculturation, the actual contents of culture difference, or the inability to convey the inner experiences of others), or a normative rationalist answer with no other standard than the extension of the use of reason to apply to tasks, evident in human beings in their efforts to survive and to control their environments.

Finally, another problem with the universality of certain religious systems is that, strictly speaking, it does not exist except on an abstract, symbolic level¹⁸: in fact, it is tied to a form of life, a culture in which it emerged and in which it developed as a set of metaphysical-cognitive claims. That the cognitive part of these claims have all been refuted over time (for Christianity perhaps beginning with Galileo)¹⁹ does not (and cannot) withhold the religious camp from communicating the metaphysics to unconverted groups, despite that these have often already their own answers. More important, it is always assumed that the religious and the scientific-rationalist point of view can be nicely separated in practice (each having their own domain). This idea is increasingly problematic (see also MacIntyre 1970, Agassi 1974). The adoption of science definitively alters the cognitive map and the attitude of

people's relation to things as well as to the cosmos and to society (Gellner 1985: 116, 120). In a society dominantly oriented toward science - for better or for worse - there is no way back into naïveté. And this is the characteristic we are inclined to ascribe to the missionary advocate equating his/her own value position with that of the anthropologist holding a self-consciously rationalist position.

Dissolution of the problem: missionizing in its place

This epistemological discussion of the relation between anthropology and science on the basis of a rational theory of rationalism and scientific openness, while not complete, has hopefully clarified the enduring problem between the missionary and the anthropological approach. Such epistemology is not enough to end the confusion or to hope that missionary advocates change their points of view. But their *tu quoque* argument against the anthropologist fails.

Common sense and academic politeness of course urges us to work towards a rapprochement between both camps. But this will remain difficult, as long as fideist argumentations are still resorted to by one party in the debate. They should simply be rejected. In this respect, the missionary critique of the anthropologist cannot be upheld and only trivially resembles the critiques of anthropological conventions of research, writing and interpretation advanced by the experimentalists.

In conclusion, while it has been influenced by the historical presence and concerns of the missions, the anthropological self-image owes few new insights to missionary critiques, the gist of which has already been advanced within the critical tradition of anthropology itself. The additional advantage of anthropological self-reflection is also its edge of cultural self-critique, continuing a line which started with Montaigne (As such, anthropology, not without its own contradictions of course, emerged from philosophical concerns current at the time of the breakthrough of the bourgeois era).

In a more practical sense one might say that the Barbados Declaration (1973, calling for a halt to all missionary activity) was right: it is time to stop missionary work (in the classical sense) wherever possible²⁰. There is no justification neither for sustaining the structures of ideological and material dependence inherent in

the missionary encounter nor for keeping the non-believers locked in a dialogue from which there is, perhaps, no escape.

To paraphrase Evans-Pritchard's well-known citation (in a way he certainly would not have liked), missionary work must choose between becoming anthropology and becoming nothing. That is to say, its scientific, research-oriented branch should be 'anthropologized'; its pastoral, charitable branch should concentrate on development work, both without any purpose or hope of conversion. It can be readily admitted that in this field, missionaries show admirable perseverance and dedication, hardly to be matched by anthropologists - the latter not having the funds, the vocation and the job for it.

The idea of *a priori* superiority of an absolutist system of belief or morality has been shown to be untenable on rational grounds. This in itself will not (and need not) lead to abandonment of belief (because this is by definition beyond refutation). But it should eliminate the claim to superior cognitive or moral status of any historically and culturally specific belief system as such. Hence, the message and critiques of the missionary advocates cannot find acceptance among anthropologists.

The love/hate relationship between anthropology and missions (Hiebert 1978) should develop into one of casual cooperation and of sound indifference. The missionary advocates are on the other side of the 'cognitive (or better, intellectual) division of labour', but a dialogue is of course laudable, as long as each side knows what divides them.

Notes

1. The missionary in Somerset Maugham's famous short-story *Rain*, (written in 1920, set in the early decades of this century) is not only a caricature. The missionary in the story tells about his work in the Solomon Islands: "When we went there they had no sense of sin at all (...) They broke the commandments one after the other and never knew they were doing wrong. I think that was the most difficult part of my work, to instil the natives the sense of sin." (Somerset Maugham 1975: 18). This notion is reflected in many historical studies of the missions. Cf. Wellbourn (1971: 315 "Missionaries were also shocked to find that they [the majority of Africans, JA] had no sense of sin"). It is nowadays harder to find such classic missionaries in the field (see Exley 1973).

2. I tried to explain this in an earlier contribution (1985, directed mainly against Stipe's implicit *tu quoque* argument, stating that anthropologists try to deny the fact that they too make a 'leap of faith'). I repeat several points from that article. While my argument presented there is rather concise and schematic, it still stands. It has been misunderstood, and worse, erroneously cited, by Van der Geest (1987: 6). (But cf. Van der Geest 1988b. See below for further comments on this).
3. Cf. Hiebert's remark (1978: 171) on: "...a paradigm shift in epistemology that is challenging the conceptual frameworks of both." (i.e. of missions and anthropology, JA).
4. Cf. the activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and its various affiliated bodies and the continued presence of Catholic mission stations and projects in many parts of the Third World.
5. Such works as that of Whiteman (1983), and many articles in modern missiological journals would seem to suggest that missionary aims and hopes are ultimately maintained.
6. Of course also ethnology had positive exceptions, one of them the scholar of Indian cultures of North America, Henry Schoolcraft (1793-1864), a remarkable precursor of modern ethnological research.
7. I will try not to commit the same sin of selective illustration, but a few statements should be considered: one by Kenyatta (1938: 269f., a largely negative view of the missionaries); and the fairly balanced but critical historical conclusion by C.P. Groves (1969: 487-8). For one case study, see Moorehead's fascinating account of the transformation of Tahiti (1968: 98-125). A good general overview of the problem is provided by Keesing (1981: 402-6. One should read or cite more than the first few lines of that section).
8. As rightly emphasized by Hiebert (1978: 178) and also Van der Geest (1987).
9. Hiebert continues to say that "Others are more aware of the limitations of human knowledge and are more willing to live with open systems" and with "...a greater dependence on faith" (Hiebert 1978: *ibid.*). This is a first-class *non sequitur*. The awareness of the limitations of human knowledge does not force us to adopt a specific belief of a religious nature.
10. It was most clearly stated by the anthropologist-missionary chairman of SIL in the USA, dr W. Merrifield. In an interview in 1983, in response to the question: "Between the majority of social anthropologists and SIL members there must come a point in any discussion where it can go no further?", Merrifield answers: "Yes, that's right. We will continue to insist on certain theological points which, in our view, are the heart of the Christian message. We realize that some intellectuals may think we are naive for taking the Bible at face value, but we can live with that". Consider what this attitude (shared, *mutatis mutandis*, by any absolutist believer) implies when practised within the framework of anthropological fieldwork.
11. Many anthropologists are 'reluctant relativists' (Scholte 1984: 902) - a good term to indicate the dilemma.

12. Geertz (1988: 59), in his analysis of Evans-Pritchard's writing, emphasizes that the style of E.-P. has a "studied air of unstudiedness", conveying the impression that for him nothing whatever strange or singular, "resists reasoned description." (p. 61). The realism of his text is imposing, homogeneous, transparent. "The main source of his persuasive power is his enormous capacity to visualize representations of cultural phenomena." (p. 64). Still, he says, it is a convention; the events as witnessed by E.-P. could also have received quite another treatment.
13. Tyler (1987: 342): "Dialogue in the service of representation will always be a kind of trick, but that does not mean that we abandon dialogue; on the contrary, we abandon representation! (...) why not let dialogue be the allegory of our lost world of participatory wholeness? (...) let it be a wild seed in the field of knowledge." This is almost religious language, and music in the ear of many a missionary advocate.
14. A few examples: we may say that White, Murdock and Scaglione 1971 offer a better solution to the explanation of the Natchez paradox (on the complicated social structure of the Natchez Indians) than any preceding one; or that Kelly (1985) offers a better (though more challenging) explanatory framework for the interpretation of the formidable nineteenth century Nuer expansion than any author before him.
15. If objectivity is conceived of as human intersubjectivity constituted in the research situation itself and not outside it, there still remains the obligation to present it as a culturally typical, representative situation, in order not to lapse in a subjectivist account of one observer's view. This view, moreover, will only be applicable to certain aspects of culture only (the more performative; and not, e.g., the economic basis, the material culture, or the political structure of a local culture).
16. Experimental anthropology will also come to confront these ideas again, because the problem of how to exercise cultural critique cannot be solved only with recourse to the statement that our discipline is aiming at 'engaged relativism' (cf. Marcus & Fischer 1986: 167).
17. The retort that there are also successful anthropologists who are at the same time missionaries is irrelevant here, because they speak not as missionaries while engaging in anthropology.
18. Witness the great problems of the relationship between Christianity and local churches in Africa. Islam has the same problem - a good evocation of an African's cultural critique of Islam is provided in the remarkable film *Ceddo* (1976), of Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene.
19. Cf. MacIntyre's analysis in his *Is understanding religion compatible with believing?* (MacIntyre 1970). His answer is no.
20. I fully agree with Kloos, that sometimes circumstances prevent this (1986: 203, providing a sensitive example of where sending away the missions would result in disaster for the group concerned).

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The Ambiguity of Rapprochement

What, can one say, have anthropologists in common with missionaries? Research traditions in the Netherlands do reveal some of the connections between the two professions. In this book Dutch anthropologists are catching up with an international discussion on the sensitive relationship between anthropology and missiology. It certainly is not an unambiguous discussion, as it comes to a rapprochement between the two disciplines. Differences and resemblances between them are elaborated by the contributors. Although they write about past anthropological traditions, in the differences between the contributions the present paradigmatic developments on the subject also become visible. Therefore the book can be seen as a contribution to the Anthropology of Anthropology.