

The World of Maluku should be read by all who wish to understand the nature of either the earliest European interactions with eastern Asia, or premodern statecraft in the region.

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Showing Signs of Violence. The Cultural Politics of a Twentieth-Century Headhunting Ritual. By KENNETH M. GEORGE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. xvi, 339 pp. \$48.00 (cloth); \$18.00 (paper).

Headhunting has been an enduring concern of anthropologists and others concerned with the highland peoples of insular Southeast Asia. This practice was central in the elaboration of theories of "soul-stuff" among colonial observers (e.g., A. C. Kruyt) and has continued to pose an enigma for more recent analysts, who have drawn on numerous approaches to make sense of the practice, from Freudianism (e.g., Derek Freeman) to Simmelian sociology (e.g., Robert McKinley). Substantialist theories of soul-stuff have been effectively deconstructed, most notably by Needham, but the fascination with the practice continues.

Kenneth George's book *Showing Signs of Violence* focuses upon a headhunting ritual complex called *pangngae* celebrated in the communities still observing the *mappurondo* traditions of the Mambi hinterland in the highlands above the Mandar coast of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Although clearly inspired by the writings of Renato and Michelle Rosaldo on Ilongot headhunting in the Philippines, George adopts a very different mode of analysis, for he must deal with the question of why the ritual complex of *pangngae* continues to be so central in the absence of any actual headhunting. His answer, nicely summarized in the last two pages of chapter 3 (pp. 99–100), revolves around the politics of identity maintenance and the assertion of local autonomy, responding to both the former context of unequal exchange relations with coastal peoples, especially the Mandar, and, as he more fully articulates in the last chapter, to the present context of competition with world religions and state penetration under the aegis of development.

Chapter 1 sets the basic parameters of George's analysis, announcing the basic focus on the pragmatics and hermeneutics of the discourse of violence in *pangngae*, and situating his own interpretive quest in the light of previous work on headhunting in the region. Chapter 2 sets the scene of the *mappurondo* communities of the "rural precinct" (i.e., *desa*) Bambang, emphasizing the inhabitants' status as a religious minority. The reader is introduced to "a few basic 'facts'" (p. 42) about local political structure and social organization, including the basic principles of seniority, sibblingship, and gender complementarity, as well as the cyclical ritual calendar of the region. Chapter 3 recapitulates and deepens the theoretical arguments of the first chapter, cogently displaying the shortcomings of earlier theories of headhunting ritual and confronting the problematics of the textuality of history in reconstructing scenarios of past (actual) headhunts. In this chapter George also establishes one of the basic cultural functions of *pangngae*, its symbolic inversion of the inequalities of upstream and downstream groups in the former regional exchange system.

The theoretical and regional context having been established, the next two chapters proceed according to an artfully constructed double basis. On the one hand, each chapter points out a different cultural focus of the ritual, a symbolic function of

sorts; on the other hand, the two chapters also replicate the phases of *pangngae* aided by a series of superb black-and-white photographs. Responding to Renato Rosaldo's "Grief and the Head-Hunter's Rage," chapter 4 shifts the issue of motives for participation in headhunting rites from "powerful emotions" to "obligations and acts made in discourse" (p. 17). This chapter delineates how *pangngae* functions as a ritual containment of communal mourning (e.g., for those who have died in the previous year), while describing the symbolic actions of the ritual headhunters in their journey away from the village. Chapter 5 deals with the ceremonial reception of the returning headhunters, focusing on the local construction of manhood through adornment and the "ceremonial politics of envy and emulation" (p. 132), as well as the counter-emulative discourse of women in trance possession.

Chapter 6 returns the reader to the larger context of the social functions of *pangngae* performance, arguing that commemoration through song "legitimizes and brings into being the continuity of the community" (p. 199). The emphasis in this chapter on communal integration is balanced in the final two chapters with a treatment of how the differences among *pangngae* performances respond to the contemporary cleavages of *mappurondo* settlements. Chapter 7 discusses the contrasts of performances between the ToIssilita (people of the ground) and ToSalu (people of the river), highlighting the transformations effected by the conversion in one community's enactment from the spontaneous performance of oral ritual into the liturgical reading of a written narrative. Chapter 8 traces the images of *pangngae* held by present-day Muslims and Christians within the context of government efforts to convert "nonreligious" ritual performances into "cultural arts" (*seni budaya*). The book then ends with an epilogue that testifies to the resilience of *mappurondo* tradition in the midst of state penetration in the 1990s, and a series of appendices treating linguistic conventions of transcription, basic demographic data, and musicological analysis of *sumengo* songs.

Throughout the text George ranges widely in his use of sources concerned both with the region and relevant theory. His use of the Rosaldos's work on Ilongot headhunting is perspicacious, both generous in his acknowledgment of their insights and critical of their undervaluation of such aspects of practice as the actual celebratory songs (e.g., *buayat*). Similarly, he nicely situates his own interpretations with respect to McKinley's general theory of headhunting, both acknowledging what he has taken from McKinley and noting where he thinks McKinley has missed the point. George sees the symbolic function of rituals like *pangngae* as the production of difference, and indeed enmity and superiority in relation to the other symbolized by the foreign head, instead of the obliteration of difference and incorporation of the head into the host community, as McKinley argues. George also nicely situates his own work with respect to other ethnographers of eastern Indonesia when treating various aspects of his analysis (e.g., citing the work of Janet Hoskins on the functions of commemoration in controlling the past on p. 192). Yet, his somewhat tortured analysis in terms of hierarchy and egalitarianism in discussing such basic principles of *mappurondo* social structure as seniority, sibblingship, and gender complementarity (e.g., pp. 49–54) could have been much more elegantly accomplished by invoking the theory of precedence in Austronesian societies that has been developed by James J. Fox and his colleagues. Use of a precedence model might also have illuminated the *mappurondo* communities' conceptualization of the basic contrast in terms of the notion of "source" between upriver and downriver societies, as well as many of the parallels of *mappurondo* ritual language classification and usage to the basic conceptual distinctions and

sociolinguistic practices already analyzed for groups on Flores, Sumba, Timor, and elsewhere.

George situates his own theoretical approach as inspired in large part by practice theory, with nods to Ortner and others, emphasizing the social and political dimensions of the practice of *pangngae* rather than the logic of beliefs that underlies the local discourses of headhunting. In this endeavor he rejects the modernist search for a fundamental answer to the question “Why a head?” in favor of adopting a postmodern partialism: “[a] series of vantage points, from which the shifting ambiguities and ironies of the stolen head can be glimpsed” (p. 62). Yet, the inspiration of his interpretations may be more traditional than he lets on. His discussion of *sumanga*, rejecting the “mysterious factor X” of soul-stuff (pp. 63–64), is reminiscent of Durkheim’s construction of “collective effervescence” in Australian aboriginal corroborees in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (orig. 1915). Indeed, George’s continual emphasis upon the discursive manipulation of social “sentiments” rather than individual affect through images of violence, not to mention his invocation of the “continuity of the community,” also contributes to the impression that, at some level, he is elaborating a variation upon a basically Durkheimian project, though one that is quite innovative in the way it is informed by other theorists as well. Indeed, his insightful discussion of Renato Rosaldo’s work also traces some of Rosaldo’s insights on the “piacular” to the latter’s reading of Durkheim (p. 300, n. 11). Perhaps it is, above all, the spirit (*sumanga*) of Durkheim that is conjured in George’s own text.

Yet, more overtly, George is struggling with the spirit of Geertz. His basic treatment of *pangngae* as a theater of headhunting (e.g., pp. xi, 3, 108, etc.) evokes Geertz’s interpretation of the theater-state for Bali. His very use of the term “signs of violence” also reminds the reader that George’s own interpretations stem from the semiotic conception of anthropology that Geertz did so much to further. Yet, his own emphasis upon practice theory also indicates how he wishes to move away from a sole reliance on the hermeneutic interpretation of the cultural system of symbols to the political analysis of the use of signs, indices as well as symbols, from the semantic to the pragmatic, from the semiotic to the performative, as illustrated by his invocation of Austin, Searle, Tambiah, and others (p. 302, n. 29).

Indeed, one wonders whether George’s reticence in dealing with participants’ individual feelings—their “lived experience” (p. 132) or the “perlocutionary effects in terms of participants’ emotional states” (p. 302, n. 29)—stems not just from a Durkheimian restriction to the social, but also a Geertzian emphasis upon the public code (not to mention a Foucauldian focus upon discourse). Others concerned with ritual expression in this region—most notably Hollan and Wellenkamp for nearby Tana Toraja, but also Rosaldo himself for the Ilongot—have more boldly attempted to address the personal aspects of participation in ritual expression. While I respect George’s decision to limit his interpretations to the dimensions he highlights, such delimitation still leaves open such questions as why some community members choose to participate in the *mappurondo* round of rituals in Bambang, while others, the majority of the local community, in fact (p. 57; table 2 in appendix 2, p. 282), have decided to opt for the prayer gatherings and other rituals of Christianity, not to mention the possibility of migrating to a Muslim identity in Mambi and beyond.

George’s book is an unmitigated delight to read. His discussions of other theorists’ perspectives on headhunting are lucid and perspicacious. His refocusing of the problem from a concern with belief to one with the social and political practice of headhunting ritual constitutes a refreshing and insightful perspective, a truly original

contribution to debates on headhunting. His prose is balanced, even melodious, as are his artful translations of *sumengo* songs, *mamose* speeches, and other *mappurondo* genres. The book's organization is a masterly synthesis of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic, in its parallel treatment of copresent cultural codes and sequential ritual enactment. The occasional puns (e.g. "Defaced Images" and "Theory Turned on Its Head" in chapter 3) enhance the deft writing of the text, as does George's reflexive situating of himself in the text. This book is ethnography of the very highest order.

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Interpreting Development: Capitalism, Democracy, and the Middle Class in Thailand.

By JOHN GIRLING. Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1996. 98 pp. \$32.95 (cloth); \$14.00 (paper).

This is an excellent, concise rumination on Thailand's contemporary political economy. Girling draws on a wide reading of Thai and English language sources to examine the rise of capitalist development; growing tensions between state officials and members of civil society who challenge the former's perquisites; shifts in dominant values among Thais and the composition of the country's elites; and an ongoing struggle among the ideologies of capitalism, pluralism, and nationalism. He concludes that Thailand no longer is a bureaucratic polity, but has not yet become a bourgeois one.

Girling analyzes the respective roles and ideologies of the Thai military, business circles, civil society groups, and the rurally based brokers who increasingly dominate Thai political parties. He sees four autonomous forces—business, civil society, political brokers, the military—contending with four central dynamics: the rise of business influence, resistance to state (particularly military) power, the growth of civil society, and the corrosion by money politics of democratic political practice.

The last 30 years have produced three revolutions in Thailand, Girling argues. Economic nationalism ended by the early 1960s, student protests dispatched the bureaucratic polity in the early 1970s, and civil society flourished over the 1980s. The military, money politics, and civil society each reached their respective peaks in the early 1990s only to fall back exhausted: the military with the failed February 1991 coup, civil society with the May 1992 demonstrations and the September 1992 election, and money politics with the earlier March 1992 election. (In fact, subsequent elections in 1995 and 1996 make it clear that money politics has yet to peak.) The weaknesses of all alternative political and social forces leave the way open for domination by business and the middle class, who champion a pragmatic, materialistic individualism. Traditional patron-client networks, Girling suggests, have helped to imbue many Thais with fatalism, factionalism, and defeatism that leach away at efforts to promote faith in the efficacy of organized cooperation.

Girling argues that Thailand's growing civil society builds on an eclectic group of Thai intellectuals such as Pridi Panomyong, Puey Ungpakorn, Jit Phumisak, and Kukrit Pramoj. With economic development as the new hegemonic ideology, embodied in a rapidly growing middle class, Girling believes justice and order will depend on further expansion in civil society and its ability to foster the spread of political participation, as well as reforms in parliament and the political parties.