

# BOOK REVIEWS

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

**Andrew Bank. *Pioneers of the Field: South Africa's Women Anthropologists.*** Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xiii + 319 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$99.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-107-15049-2.

Andrew Bank begins this history of notable women anthropologists in South Africa with a discussion of how relatively recent it has been that the discipline of anthropology has queried the maleness and whiteness of its founders. In that vein, it does not seem impolite to note that Bank is a (white) male celebrating the lives and works of six women anthropologists who were eminent scholars of African culture. Bank himself would surely agree that issues of race and class have not lost their salience, and he shows great sensitivity toward his subjects, as well as self-awareness about the ways in which race, gender, political power (or its absence), and personal biography intersected and informed not only their individual scholarship, but also his own understandings of their works.

The heart of the book is six elegantly written mini-biographies of prominent ethnologists of the twentieth century: Winifred Tucker Hoernlé, Monica Hunter Wilson, Ellen Hellmann, Audrey Richards, Hilda Beemer Kuper, and Eileen Jensen Krige. Bank sees himself as “rethinking the canon” by emphasizing and elaborating upon the contributions of these women to the development of the school of social anthropology. Although he is concerned with their intellectual contributions, he also provides the context of their lives—the ways in which society, family, and mentors affected their research, their writing, and their legacies.

The biographical chapters proceed chronologically, with the first one being about Winifred Tucker Hoernlé (1885–1960). Bank notes that her scholarly work was foundational to the development of an anthropology that moved away from “the anthropological method and the racial ideology of this all-male Afrikaner nationalist school of *volkekunde*” that dominated the field until the 1930s (17). He strongly criticizes male colleagues for effectively erasing her from the canon, despite her many contributions to the development of research methods and her numerous students who went on to conduct groundbreaking research and to teach. Bank notes that her creation and mentoring of a network of students was as significant an

achievement in establishing the field as her individually authored works. The collaborative nature of knowledge production brought new research methods into the field, and new generations of scholars—including many women—into the academy.

In these mini-biographies, Bank documents similar patterns of innovative women scholars whose works have been underappreciated largely because of social prejudices against women professionals and scholars that extended into many universities. While the chapter on Hoernlé demonstrates a desire to reassert and burnish her reputation as a scholar, the chapter on Monica Hunter Wilson (1908–1982) radiates warmth and deep empathy for her as a person as well as a scholar. Coming from a strongly Christian background, Wilson saw her research as an outgrowth of her religious belief and as compatible with her antisegregationist political views. She not only wrote foundational ethnographies, but also expanded the field of social anthropology and trained multiple students across several decades.

All six scholars were part of a broader web of shared experiences, family lives, mentors, and career aspirations. Each chapter emphasizes their individual achievements as scholars as well as their capacity for developing networks and providing intellectual, social, and emotional support for one another and for others in the field. The collaborative nature of their careers, Bank suggests, is another part of the explanation for why they did not receive the same kind of accolades as their contemporaneous male colleagues.

In the book's conclusion, Bank extends his analysis of the relative disregard of their work into the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. In that later context, the fact that these women tended to be liberal rather than radical, and reformist rather than revolutionary, made their work dismissible. That they were also "middle class" and "white" contributed to their being characterized as part of the ruling class in South Africa, although Bank interrogates the categories of class and race as they applied to their backgrounds. The radical politics of the era looked to the urban proletariat to change the system of racial domination, and in many cases looked to violence as the means for bringing about revolutionary change. These attitudes rendered anthropological insights into African culture, particularly in the rural areas, seemingly as quaint pictures of a bygone age.

And yet the African culture that these women had studied was not bygone at all. Bank affirms that, because they were women, they brought different skills to their research than men did and also had different advantages. They typically faced less suspicion, and were able to conduct research on subjects such as family life and women's roles that either were off-limits to male scholars or were undervalued by them. They maintained collaborative relationships with their African research assistants, interpreters, and informants, and several also were mentors to African students at a time when Africans could find few footholds in higher education. It is the

broad-based and inclusive nature of their scholarship that Bank documents and celebrates.

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**Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff. *The Truth About Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order*.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. xix + 223 pp. Acknowledgments. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Paper. ISBN: 978-0-226-42491-0.

*The Truth about Crime* meets the expectations one may have of Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff: a book that is captivating, theoretically insightful and comprehensive, and appealing to scholars across disciplines interested in power, crime, and social (dis)order. Drawing from and expanding upon some of their previous work, this book is a valuable addition to a large body of scholarly work aimed at unraveling the intricate dynamics of crime, citizenship, and authority in contemporary South Africa and beyond.

The strength and core of this book is its theoretical sophistication. As the authors themselves state, the book is a “criminal anthropology” that aims to make sense of the ways in which citizens give meaning to and understand their social realities, particularly in relation to crime, power, and policing. By drawing from anthropological, criminological, and sociological classics and expertise (such as the works of Agamben, Beck, Caldeira, Douglas, Durkheim, Fassin, Foucault, and Wacquant, to name but a few), this book proposes several perspectives for understanding the making and re-making of the thin lines between legal/illegal, order/disorder, and informal/formal that define many facets of South African society.

The book is divided into two distinct parts. Part 1 addresses the “big picture” and presents the main (conceptual) argument—namely that we are experiencing a “tectonic shift” in the relationships among capital, governance, and the state. This shift refers to a transformation from “vertical, relatively integrated structures of sovereign authority toward lateral patchworks of partial sovereignties” (182) and entails changes that allow contemporary policing to be focused more on maintaining public and social order than on fighting crime. This claim consolidates and reifies the main insight that has emerged from numerous anthropological studies on sovereignty and policing—namely that societies across the globe are marked by differentiated forms of multiple sovereignties, described as either fragmented, contested, twilight, or variegated. The explicit comparison made to the United States in part 1 further demonstrates that this tectonic shift is a global one.

The second part of the book comprises five “pieces” that outline various dimensions of crime and policing. The first four focus on (1) representations