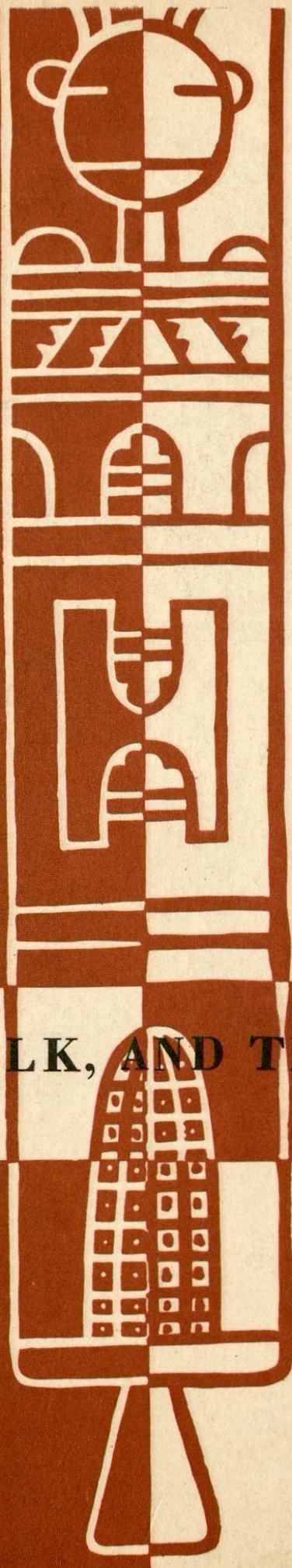
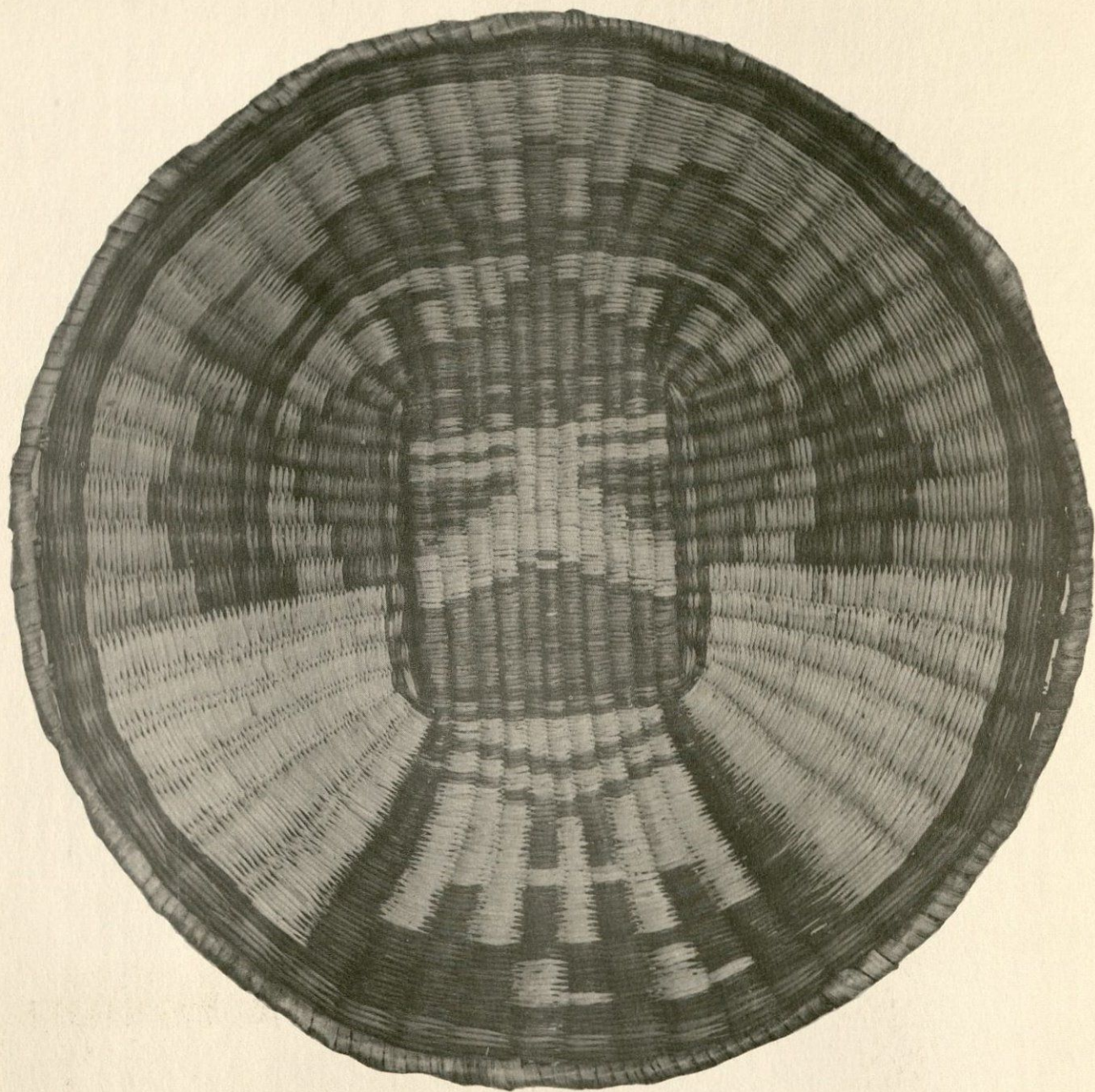


the
7th
*annual
fine arts
festival*

PRIMITIVISM, FOLK, AND THE PRIMITIVE

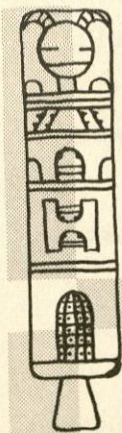
Harpur college,
state university
of new york





Frontispiece: Hopi, Oraibi, Arizona
Woven wicker placque with design
of Shalako Mana. 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter.
Museum of the American Indian.
Heye Foundation.

*the
7th
annual
fine arts
festival*



PRIMITIVISM, FOLK, AND THE PRIMITIVE

*essays
and
exhibition
catalogue*

**Harpur college,
state university
of new york
march 29 to april 18, 1962**

PROGRAM

7th Fine Arts Festival, 1962

Thursday, March 29

Opening of an exhibition of Primitive and Folk Art in the Art Gallery, Library Building, 8 p.m. Exhibition to be open during Library hours until April 19.

Friday, March 30, 8:15 p. m.

Poetry reading in the Harpur College Theater, directed by Mrs. Janet Eysselinck and Mr. Robert Wren.

Saturday, March 31

Jazz concert, 8:15 p.m. (Theater)

A recital by Billie and Dede Pierce, frequently featured at Preservation Hall in New Orleans.

Sunday, April 1, 3:00 p. m. (Theater)

Concert by the Harpur College chorus and band, under the Direction of Mr. Frederick B. Crane and Mr. J. Alex Gilfillan.

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Exhibition Catalogue

selected and prepared by M. M. Horowitz and K. C. Lindsay



Fig. 1

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Fine Arts Festival Committee

Mr. Frederick Crane, Chairman; Mr. Melvin Seiden, Mr. Kenneth C. Lindsay, Mr. Walter Eysselinck, Miss Joanna Damon, Miss Rose Baral, Mr. Arthur Cooper, Mr. Neil Friedberg, and Mr. Lawrence Klein

wish to thank those who have helped to make this Festival possible.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Frederick J. Dockstader, Director of the Museum of the American Indian, and to his staff for a generous loan from their museum; to Mr. and Mrs. Keith Martin of the Roberson Memorial for making available objects from the Jack Kulp Collection; and to various members of the Faculty who have permitted us to exhibit items from their personal collections.

Without support from the Harpur College Foundation this booklet would have never gone to press. Mr. Melvin Seiden and Mr. Charles Hess gave willingly of their time, in editing and design respectively, and we have profited greatly from their help and guidance.

We also wish to acknowledge the assistance given by the Gallery Committee in installing the exhibition. The Public Relations Department very kindly attended to the problems of publication, and Mr. Aysel Searles, Chairman of the Convocation Committee, was always resourceful.

FOREWORD

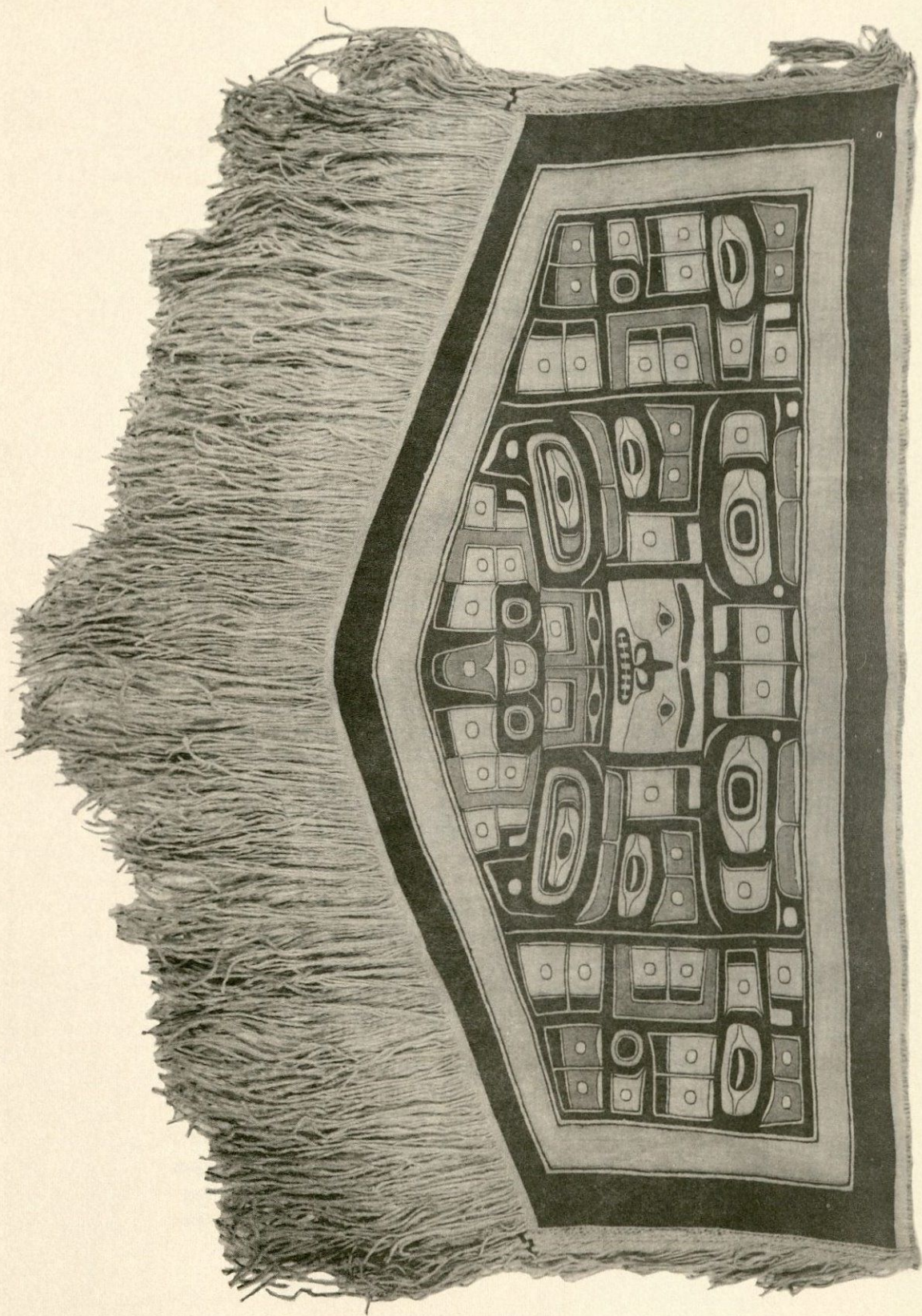
Our first Fine Arts Festival was held in 1956 when the college was situated in Endicott. Because we were a new college in temporary quarters, the Festival was thought of simply as a three day celebration of the arts. The departments of music, art, and theater presented a concert, an exhibition, and a play for the enjoyment of the college and local communities. Later poetry readings and lectures were added to the programing.

Now, for the first time, we have planned as many of the events as was possible around a central theme—"Primitivism, Folk, and the Primitive." A theme such as this has implications extending beyond the Fine Arts into the Social Sciences; indeed, it can only be fully appreciated and examined when studied from the vantage point of disciplines such as anthropology.

In order to guide our guests through the Festival and at the same time let them know how certain members of the faculty view the subject, we have solicited and published eleven papers (one is a contribution of a student). The eleven authors wrote these papers independently—that is, without knowing what the others had to say and without first working out definitions and agreements. This *modus operandi* has brought forth essays that are disparate and individualistic in point of view.

The objects in the exhibition were selected either because they were fascinating in themselves or because they demonstrated what happens to the art of a certain tribe or group after extended contact with the European. Some of the objects are displayed in a way which will dramatize the differences between pre- and post-contact art.

—K. C. L.



THE LEGACY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PRIMITIVISM

Questions posed today about primitivism in the arts were first asked in somewhat similar form in the eighteenth century. That century, so like our own in many of its conscious aims and in its doubts about their intrinsic worth, produced a great deal of writing about the "natural" man: instinctive, uninhibited, happy man, man as he once was or ought to be—in short, the human being as God or Nature intended him, rather than the human being in sophisticated English or European society. This writing was of course a form of self-criticism, and in this sense it belonged to a strain of thought ages old, deeply rooted in the myths, beliefs, and religions of societies East and West. That the backward glance toward a better state is a form of criticism of the present any parent can recognize. Whenever he tells his children about his own model behavior at their age, he is using a not quite real past to effect a desirable action in an all too real present, and at least for that moment he really believes that they don't make them like they used to.

But the eighteenth century was not merely elegiac about a golden day in a garden from which man had somehow been exiled nor paradoxically primitivistic as was the Renaissance in trying to move forward by doing again what the ancients had done. In its best efforts it was deeply imaginative and enlarged man's picture of himself. It is true that it is still a matter of study to sort out the good from the bad, the real from the spurious, and to assess the results of all. What can one finally say about Rousseau's primitivism, which helped to give our Founding Fathers as a basis for revolution a theory of human nature of doubtful validity? Or about a truly creative theory of poetry which Wordsworth (whose critical thinking was formed before the century was over) defended by an appeal to examples of imitation folk poetry which he took for genuine? Or of one of the greatest literary frauds in history, a blend of the real and the spurious, the poems of the ancient Celtic bard Ossian, wept over by the young Goethe, carried by Napoleon on his campaigns, and chanted to the ocean waves at Rockaway by Walt Whitman? As to the theory of the Founders, one historian has answered that, like many other ideas in history, it was a mistaken idea that had happy consequences. While one would hesitate to dismiss the other questions so gracefully, it may be necessary to resort to something like that historian's answer, for contending that primitivism had any happy consequences at all takes a bit of doing in the face of formidable arguments that it was only a mistaken idea.

The case against primitivism has been presented many times, nowhere more earnestly or damningly than by Irving Babbitt in

Rousseau and Romanticism, which more than forty years ago blazed a trail for many anti-romantic studies that read like entries in a series entitled "Civilization and Disease." But like the American Revolution, something that clearly happened and can not be written off, primitivism engaged some of the most active minds of the eighteenth century, whose speculations permanently affected public taste. If we can understand what these men were about, we may learn something about our own aesthetic judgments.

The term "primitive" is today generally a term of approbation. The late Grandma Moses was hailed as a primitive, Jayne Mansfield has been called (by herself) a primitive, and Louis Armstrong long ago learned how to behave like everybody's favorite primitive. To us, these three oddly assorted figures are just themselves; yet they were not so much born in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as invented in the eighteenth. Or at least the eighteenth century invented their ancestral equivalents, and ever since then it has been necessary to continue type casting in the same moulds. Grandma Moses's paintings of the rural scenes of her childhood betray a mood that we notice in late eighteenth-century England, a mood that produced in the early nineteenth a body of poetry celebrating landscapes "green to the very door," to be fixed in memory and cherished even as they were in actuality becoming dotted with the "dark Satanic mills" of smoky cities, early portents of our own industrial smog and urban sprawl. Jayne Mansfield's endowments are those which poets imagined might be found, and if old accounts may be believed voyagers sometimes did find, in authentic Edens in a pagan sea. Louis Armstrong is, of course, the Noble Savage *redivivus*. The common denominator here is surely man in a non-technological setting. Modern commercial exploitation of this image does not change its importance. The dealers who discovered that an old farm wife's paintings which brought five dollars in Hoosick Falls could be sold for five thousand in a New York gallery had a sense of the primitive, or of what the public wants it to be. So have movie actresses whose blatant self-advertising is related to the enormous stress in modern literature on the element of sex, modern urban man's one immediate access, as Alberto Moravia has pointed out, to a more "natural" world.

As pleasant pastures continue to give way to college campuses, light industrial plants, and county airports to serve them, we can view sympathetically the responses of eighteenth century men to the conflict between old ways of feeling and new, inevitable courses of life. The conflict hardly exists now for us, for we have learned to live with technology, watering the lawn and preserving a vestigial stand of trees here and there; and it is doubtful that any inglorious Broome County bard will ever sing of the lovely prospect afforded less than a decade ago by the tract which now sports a college, a photographic research center, a shopping plaza, and a large housing development.

But what could men in eighteenth-century England think, say, of the plight of the displaced agricultural worker forced into the mines or mills? Pushed off the land by enclosure acts, he worked a fourteen-hour day and sought solace in the newly introduced distilled liquors that completed his ruin. This appalling victim is hardly even dimly seen in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," in the troubled but still too elegantly expressed reflection

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

Most popular poets celebrated the virtues of the simple rural life or wrote in a very general way on "Trade" or "Commerce"; some did both, thus illustrating their own divided responses to the conflict between primitivism and progress.

That conflict produced in the latter half of the century what Professor Lovejoy has called "a climax and a crisis" in primitivism. The merely nostalgic or habitual primitivism that has always been present in human thought continued as only one ingredient in a much headier mixture of theories more or less clearly formulated and strongly urged in England, France, and Germany: thus the climax. At the same time the idea of progress, clearly demonstrable in a hundred ways, was achieving (in England, anyway) almost the status of a piety: hence the crisis. Of the idea of progress, which became dominant, it is pertinent here only to say that it has had its great day. Once defined as "the animating and controlling idea of modern Western civilization," it is, in the words of a recent speaker in a symposium on it, "almost everywhere dead. . . . Its inevitability is scarcely thinkable." This does not imply that primitivism finally won in some sort of death struggle of ideologies, for in our optimistic moments we are still committed to the possibility of progress. But it does suggest that eighteenth-century primitivistic thought may be worth a review for its permanent contributions to our cultural resources.

Among the more beguiling aspects of eighteenth-century thought are the assertions that human nature is good and that man is everywhere generally the same. Both could be used by primitivist and proponent of progress alike, and one could even be something of a primitivist and entertain hopes for progress, since much could be hoped for from a generally good human nature. The primitivist looked deep into the past and recognized there his own nature and that of his fellow men more plainly set out in a simple context. Most of the men who wrote about the earliest societies and general human nature knew that they could not really "prove" their cases. That Rousseau's assertions were imaginative efforts rather than statements of fact he knew and admitted more than once, as in this passage from the *Confessions*:



Fig. 3

"Wandering deep into the forest, I sought and I found the vision of those primitive times, the history of which I proudly traced. I demolished the petty lies of mankind; I dared to strip man's nature naked, to follow the progress of time, and trace the things which have distorted it; and by comparing man as he has made himself with man as he is by nature I showed him in his pretended perfection the true source of his misery."

Less arrogant men did not speak of "visions," but their speculations were often akin to Rousseau's as they tried not so much to change the whole social picture as to account for it. Some of these men made suggestions that still play a part in our thought today.

Very germane to any speculation about man in a state of nature and his subsequent development were theories of language. Here again, as in any account of primitivism as a whole, one may point to a stream of theory stemming from ancient sources, most of them emphasizing the primacy of the passions in communication before language became a tool for abstract thought. Homer and the Old Testament provided convenient testing grounds for eighteenth-century primitivists (to use very loosely and inclusively a term which would have surprised them). Thomas Blackwell in his *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) stressed the emotionally expressive elements, which he likened to those in the utterances of Arabs, Turks, and American Indians: they "give loose to a fiery Imagination, they are poetical, and full of Metaphor." A few years later Bishop Lowth delivered at Oxford a remarkable series of Latin lectures published in English in 1753 as *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, in which he advanced the idea that poetry "derives its very existence from the more vehement emotions of the mind." Though it was hardly a primary concern, he found himself speculating on the kind of poetic art that a primitive agricultural society might, and in this instance did, produce. Lowth's speculations led directly to those of Herder in Germany, published in 1782 as *Vom Geist der Ebraischen Poesie*, set in the form of a long dialogue in which can be seen the beginnings of an extensive theory of folk poetry as self-expression.

It will have been noticed that Blackwell drew parallels between Homer's speech and that of contemporary non-European groups (Arabs, Turks, American Indians). He was not alone in this kind of sweeping inclusion; many writers referred even more indiscriminately to other non-Western peoples, some even including the Chinese as child-like primitives. Confused as these appraisals were, they did at least reflect an awareness of other sensibilities. Another sensibility

to examine was closer at hand. If poetry inhered in the outlook and utterance of earlier, simpler societies; what might be found in the life of a present day community close to Nature? Considering Wordsworth as "not a chronological primitivist" but a "cultural" one, Meyer Abrams calls attention to the eighteenth-century assumption that

"the elemental and uniform—and, therefore, the normal—
aspects of human nature are to be found not only in
'chronological' but 'cultural' primitives, including people
dwelling in civilized nations but insulated by caste or rural
habitat from the artifice and complications of culture. In its
aesthetic application, this presumption was one reason for
the vogue in the eighteenth century of poets who were either
peasants or proletarians—Stephen Duck, the Thresher Poet;
Mary Collier, the Poetical Washerwoman; Henry Jones, the
Poetical Shoemaker—from whose ranks the one aspirant to
make good was the Poetical Plowboy, Robert Burns."

Wordsworth saw in his own youth a picture of man as he might be in a life close to Nature, and his effort in reconstructing his own emotional life is not unlike Rousseau's attempt to capture a vision of the youth of the race. Some of Wordsworth's greatest poems depend upon his emotional need to find in a close bond with the mountains and streams of his boyhood the support that had failed him in his life in London when he became depressed by the associationist psychology that he had adopted and by the disappointment of his hopes for the French Revolution. The life that had been his as a boy was still the life of the humble people of the communities in which he had been reared, and their life he tried sympathetically to enter and imaginatively record.

Wordsworth's turning from the intellectually articulate, cultivated urban world to the simply spoken rural one illustrates the primitivist strain of romanticism in which the feelings are exalted and conscious intellectual activity is suspect. In content there follows an emphasis upon the perceptions of children rather than the precepts of elders, and in form an emphasis on song and lyric. Children, peasants, and idiots are favored subjects in the poetry of Wordsworth, who could serve as the central figure in a discussion of much that we can properly label "primitive" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only in literature but in music and painting as well. Eighteenth-century primitivists were chiefly excited by linguistic expression and by music in close association with expressive poetry in their picture of early societies in which all of the arts were closely allied or as they could still perceive this connection in folk poetry and song; they had very little to say about painting. But surely the Wordsworthian interest in the child leads ultimately to the twentieth-century enthusiasm for children's paintings, paintings which present directly the vision of the child before it has been corrupted by the thought of his teachers ("Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing Boy," Wordsworth wrote), and to the interest in all that we call primitive art.

Inevitably, this emphasis upon the childlike or the seemingly instinctive raises some serious questions. Even granting that "the child is father of the man," to use Wordsworth once more, this time in a phrase that catches neatly the sense of the primitive as both our own childhood and the youth of the race, is the man to be as irresponsible as the child? The suspicion is that this indeed is what some artists want, and that if this is what is really meant by the glorification of the primitive we are in a bad way, or that at least the devotees of the primitive are. In *Rousseau and Romanticism*, Irving Babbitt quotes approvingly George Santayana's statement that "the common man does not share in the corrupt desire to be primitive." That desire is for artists and intellectuals turned anti-intellectuals, from Rousseau to the late unlamented Beats and their pathetic imitators.

But we can not afford to be cavalier about our primitivistic anti-intellectual intellectuals. They may be wholly mistaken in their assumptions and yet perform a very necessary work. Some of the absurdities of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* do not discredit Lawrence's passion for life itself, life in Lawrence's sense of living, which he sees all but extinguished in the monstrous, blackened England of the 'twenties. If he is wrong, then what is right about an intellectually contrived industrial world that denudes ancient forests and dehumanizes power-mad men? The primitive is a part of our humanism after all, and we must make the effort to understand what the painter, the writer, or the musician is trying to do with it. That means trying to understand the creative adaptation of African techniques by Western artists who did not understand the function of those techniques within classic, highly traditional, African arts. And since the artist in our time who plants himself on his instincts is vulnerable, we must play along with a Louis Armstrong in his game of surviving where Burns and Wordsworth failed. The rural primitives that Wordsworth wrote about and theoretically wrote for did not understand him ("A desolate-minded man," said one of them, "I think it was the poetry as done it."), and Burns, a true and even learned poet in an old folk vernacular tradition, made the tragic mistake of playing an uncongenial part prepared for him by the Edinburgh literati who wanted to exhibit a shiny new primitive who exemplified their theories. Louis Armstrong is too sly a clown to be victimized; beneath all which smacks of Madison Avenue on his embassies, whether in the name of the State Department or of soft drinks, there is something of the true primitive still, in his music if not in his manner. The case of Louis Armstrong and the desperate story of the American Negro (this is part of the "primitive," too) remind us that we can not merely patronize the primitive. The extreme subtlety and complexity of African rhythms is what the

crowds in Ghana responded to in his music, quite unaware that their musical sophistication and his might be somewhat condescendingly labeled "primitive" by a world that had never really understood it.

We know more now than the eighteenth-century primitivists did about the diversity of cultures and about the unsuspected depths in individual men; yet our need is even greater than theirs to work for what through a shared "general nature" men may accomplish. Whatever there is in the primitive, however defined, that is spontaneous and life-affirming in forms alien or adapted is important to all of us.

—*Vincent Freimarck*

THE MEANING OF "PRIMITIVE" IN MODERN ANTHROPOLOGY

Elman R. Service dedicates his recent collection of ethnographic essays to his fellow anthropologists, "otherwise intelligent and literate persons who do not accept the germ theory of disease." Service here acknowledges the typical conditions of research in anthropology which involve traveling to some far part of the world and living among a people whose remoteness from the Western European tradition is usually signalled by their poor sanitary facilities. While the other human sciences have conducted their studies in circumstances not often significantly different from those of the researcher himself, the anthropologist traditionally has found his laboratory among people who shared neither his language, nor his customs, nor his beliefs, attitudes or values. His unique contribution has been to extend the range of knowledge of human behavior beyond the limits imposed by his own culture. Popularly, the alien people among whom he lived and worked have been called primitive.

During the 19th century, when anthropology was first developing a theoretical position, the dominant motif was that of evolution. The assumption common to such diverse thinkers as Klemm, Bachofen, Bastian, Maine, McLennan, Morgan, and Tylor, to name a few, was that human societies develop in a fairly orderly manner, and that those contemporary societies which appeared much less developed than those of mid-century Europe represented a stage similar to that which the Europeans themselves once occupied. For the most part these scholars eschewed racial or psychological explanations of the delayed development of many groups. They felt rather that each group of people would respond the same way to the same stimuli; as Bastian put it, all men shared the *Elementargedanken*, fundamental ideas which allowed for the "psychic unity" of the species.

The interest in developmental stages led to the formulation of typologic schemes in which the societies of man, past and present, could be placed. The most ambitious, and in some ways most sophisticated (but for some glaring ethnographic errors), was Lewis Henry Morgan's 3-fold division into the stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilization. (Klemm had earlier used the similar classification *Wildheit*, *Zahmheit*, and *Freiheit*.) While such rubrics seem naive and blatantly ethnocentric today, Morgan avoided applying them in an evaluative sense. Savagery simply referred to those societies which depended for their subsistence on the hunting and foraging of wild foods, and were ignorant of the arts of pottery and metallurgy. Barbarism commenced with the discovery of acquisition of plant and animal domestication. Writing was the criterion of civilization. (The

modern usage of the terms "palaeolithic" and "neolithic" correspond to Morgan's "savagery" and "barbarism," although initially they referred to the technology of working flint tools.)

Tylor, who occupied the first chair in anthropology at Oxford, also used "savagery" in discussing societies of limited technological equipment, but called his great work which was largely a treatise on the origin of religion, *Primitive Culture*. (Morgan had entitled his book simply *Ancient Society*.) The term "primitive," referring operationally to the people studied by anthropologists, was continued through much of the 20th century, despite the rejection of the evolutionary hypothesis in the United States and Europe. In America, Boas, a marine biologist-turned anthropologist after an expedition among the Eskimo, insisted that each culture be understood in terms of its particular history, and that universal principles to explain the operation of cultures were not to be found. Nonetheless, Boas and his students did not avoid the term, as can be seen in such works as *Primitive Art*, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (in which Boas challenged the assertions of the French philosopher Levi-Bruhl that primitive man had a "pre-logical mentality," an inability to reason), Benedict's important article "Primitive Religion," etc. In England, the anti-evolutionary reaction developed somewhat differently, in a more social scientific, less humanistic direction. But the appellation was retained as evidenced by Radcliffe-Brown's study of "Primitive Law," and Evans-Pritchard's *The Institutions of Primitive Society*. Only V. G. Childe among recent British writers has clung to Morgan's terminology, and to his evolutionary position as well.

Melville J. Herskovits has been the most vocal advocate of banishing the work from the anthropological vocabulary entirely. A student of Boas, he has continued to oppose evolutionary theories at a time when they are once again, albeit much modified from their 19th century formulations, becoming scientifically respectable. Herskovits rejects the "our contemporary ancestors" assumption, and with it the term "primitive," since it implies an earlier or prior level. He also feels that aside from its developmental implications, the term should be avoided because it connotes a derogatory evaluation of whole societies. Herskovits is prominently associated with cultural relativism, and is dedicated to eliminating the judging of one culture in terms of the values of some other. He suggests that anthropologists adopt the more neutral "nonliterate," since it is quite value-free and does in fact point to a characteristic of most of the societies of traditional ethnologic concern. With the exception of the Maya, writing was absent in native New World societies, and literacy was not a feature of Australia, Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa (apart from areas of Arabic penetration), and much of Asia.

The malaise which many scholars felt about "primitive" is evident in the eager acceptance of "nonliterate." At least two recent texts,

Beals and Hoijer's *An Introduction to Anthropology* (2nd ed., 1959) and Keesing's *Cultural Anthropology* (1958) specifically use the term, and Titiev, in his *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (1959), while discussing "primitive" culture, carefully equates it with "nonliterate." Dozier, analyzing "The Concepts of 'Primitive' and 'Native' in Anthropology," (1955), clearly prefers "nonliterate."

Nonetheless, "primitive" still retains much currency in anthropology. In the past few years the term has appeared in the title of a general introduction to anthropology by Hoebel, *Man in the Primitive World* (2nd ed., 1958), in Norbeck's *Religion in Primitive Society* (1961), and in Service's *A Profile of Primitive Culture* (1958). The latter, a collection of ethnographic essays, includes, in addition to such societies as the Eskimo and the Australian aboriginee, modern villages in Mexico, Morocco, India, and China! Leslie White's recent (1959) *The Evolution of Culture* has two sections: "Primitive Culture," and "The Agricultural Revolution and its Consequences"; and Piddington's *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* (2nd ed., 1952), speaks of anthropology as "the science of primitive culture."

There is obviously so much idiosyncratic implication in the use of the term "primitive" that it would be folly to attempt to distill the commonalities in meaning from scholar to scholar. Rather, I shall outline what "primitive" means to me, and defend my usage simply by noting that it does not seem greatly at odds with that of many of my colleagues. It is to be understood that this definition is, in a sense, ideal, and that few if any societies will be exactly described in all their nuances.

The characteristics of a primitive society:

1. A technology which is incapable of continuous production of high food surpluses. In consequence, most adults are directly involved in basic subsistence activities, and there is little full-time specialization in other fields.
2. A social organization in which most interpersonal relationships are mediated through ties of kinship and residence, and which is small enough to allow for frequent face-to-face communication among most members.
3. A system of social control which is primarily informal, not vested in some central agency or government which has a monopoly of legitimate coercive sanctions within the society.
4. Economic and cultural self-sufficiency.
5. Nonliterate.

Anthropologists no longer limit themselves to the field study of

societies which fit the above description. Increasingly, in recent years, they have turned their attention to peoples who form the rural population of the great civilizations, European, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Southeast Asian, and Islamic. These peasant villagers are in no sense primitive and cannot be understood in these terms. Similarly, the movement of anthropologist into the study of urban societies, as Powdermaker's examination of Hollywood or Warner's Yankee City series, underscores the necessity for terminological precision. The operational definition—a primitive society is one studied by anthropologists—is clearly no longer adequate.

—*Michael M. Horowitz*

THE "PRIMITIVE" IN POLITICAL SOCIETY

The concept of the 'primitive' has, peculiarly enough, not been of any significance in the field of political science, and the reasons for this neglect are related to the conceptions that political scientists hold as to what is the proper scope of their study.

From the time of Aristotle the study of political organization has focussed on those activities, involving conflicting interests, which we associate with the existence of the 'state.' By the state we generally mean a political community within a specific and limited territory organized under a consciously articulated governmental system. A state has clearly defined administrative machinery, judicial institutions, and a centralized authority. However, the boundaries of the state by no means limit the whole story of politics. The study of politics is essentially a study of how authoritative decisions are made and executed in a society and, in this sense, practically all societies have a political system.



Fig. 4

In what are generally called 'primitive' societies the political system is, usually, not sharply differentiated from the other elements of the social system—the economic, religious and kinship structures. And it is because of the integration of these elements that traditional political science has not paid much attention to the political systems of 'primitive' societies. This area of inquiry has therefore been pre-empted by the anthropologists and even these braves have not made it their prime concern.

It has been noted that regulation is a universal aspect of all societies because conflict, the stuff of politics, is a natural phenomenon in the relations of mankind. When this regulation becomes established in the hands of a formal agency, rather than resulting from informal familial or folk controls, we have the beginnings of government. Politicization increases with the division of labor and differentiation of structure into specialized regulative service institutions such as a legal system, a military arm, a bureaucracy, legislature and so on.

Political systems, therefore, graduate in sophistication from small societies in which there is little specialization and in which the political culture cannot easily be separated from the general culture to those which mark modern states and which are characterized by a specialized apparatus possessing a legitimate monopoly of force.

It must be stressed that fundamentally the political problem of all societies is fundamentally the same—how to settle conflicting interests. All societies have to deal with the question of allocating and differentiating political rights, e.g., who has the vote and on what subjects can the vote be exercised. In a 'primitive' society like that of the Zulus the vote may be exercised by certain 'age groups.' In some the vote may be exercised on questions of warfare but not on questions of land allocation.

Membership in all societies tends to be determined by birth, marriage, absorption through conquest and the voluntary assimilation of aliens. All societies have problems of immigration and refugees, and in most cases the latter usually have to go through a qualifying period before they achieve full rights.

The evolution of complex governmental structures can be related to the resources of a society, its environment, its size and the distribution of its population. A face-to-face group like a Bushman must deal with less complex problems of organization than that of a large Bantu tribe. A Bantu tribe can consist of several lesser tribes and thus will have more conflicting interests to be regulated: it is such a development of conflicting interest groups that leads to the necessity for an 'objective' formal government as opposed to a personalized system. War also helps in the growth of government as the demands for discipline put a premium on leadership. In some primitive societies, therefore, this role is specialized and there are different chiefs for peace and war as amongst the Shawnee Indians. This differentiation of leadership is analogous to Britain's turning to Churchill in 1939 and promptly dropping him in 1945, or to America's love affair with generals as presidential possibilities in the early fifties.

The fact is that in 'primitive' societies we can find political systems of varying complexities according to culture and circumstance. Quite common is the type that most people have in mind when they use this term: a small society, where the operational unit consists of a group all the members of whom are related, thus achieving a linking of kinship organization and political relationships. These are often undifferentiated communities where functions need no officials or agencies, where there is a religion without priests, customary law without court or judges, communal government without rulers. There may be a headman or chief but he is merely *primus inter pares* and is not a ruler. It is important to note that even in these simpler societies, the territorial tie is clear-cut; the band may be nomadic, and occupy, over

time, varying localities but the general geographical boundaries of the unit are commonly recognized.

At a more advanced stage one can find societies with a few specialized roles, and most common here would be a religious or mystic functionary: the medicine man or witch doctor. The chief may have some real powers—he may be the ritual head, he may be concerned with defense, quite often he has no control over economic questions, matters of law and ownership. His power is limited and the chieftainship is not a full-time role; thus in his non-official activities, his life is exactly like that of other members of the group. There may be a semi-judicial system where *ad hoc* assemblies make judgments only, while sanctions may be rendered by elders, by ritual means or by the people in general.

In really complex societies like that of the Zulus of South Africa, one would find state systems which are quite formalized and have all the appearances of government in a society which has clear class and privilege lines and in which there is a standing army, where social services are rendered by the government and where collective public enterprises are coordinated by the center. Even in such systems, however government is very personalized, rulers are not strangers in public office, they control the whole apparatus of government and there is no theory of separation of powers.

It is clear, therefore, that while one can see a progression in governmental structure from foundational communion through formal organization to institutions with independent juridical personalities, the task of government in all societies is basically the same. And the responses of the governed to the use of authority are essentially similar, as are their mythologies. Kinship groups, which are the *raison d'être* of the smallest societies can become transformed in modern, 'advanced' societies into the terrifying call of the blood which is the justification for the racial societies of Hitler's Nazis, Verwoerd's South Africa and the Southern United States. And, in the realm of symbols, it would be unthinkable for a chief of the Hopi tribe to wear the headress of the Sioux as it would have been injudicious for JFK to continue to order his suits from London *after* he became President.

The concept of 'primitive' is thus not very useful in analyzing a political system. It tends to be more descriptive of the complexity (or lack of it) of structure than it is illuminating of the content and process of politics. And it is the latter concern that interests political scientists.

In studying government, political scientists are concerned with how power is exercised; and whether, for instance, the system is despotic, totalitarian or democratic. These are some of the important questions

of political organization. Despotism exists in all stages of society from the 'primitive' to the 'advanced'. So also does democracy—the Bantus have a saying, "The elephant is the trunk," which illustrates the fact that a chief without his people's support is as useless as an elephant without its trunk.

Politicization, i.e., the extent to which individuals have specifically political role in society, is another enlightening focus for study. As societies become more complex politicization increases, as does individual cognition of the 'political' sphere. With modern nationalism, politicization is proceeding fast apace in much of the underdeveloped world and the impact of this process on the peoples of primitive societies is great. The rapid transition from an apolitical milieu to a political one has contributed greatly to the unrest in many of the emergent countries.

The current boom in nationalism has led to the formation of states which include, in one polity, many 'primitive' societies. The result of this cultural melange is political confusion. These states lack integration, and rational formulation of interests is frustrated since these interests still tend to be articulated largely in terms of tribal, kinship, religious or communal groupings. The immediate problems of primitive societies in the process of modernization are thus quite staggering. Within them, values are caught in the whirlgig of progress and stability often is bought only at the price of coercion. The wonderfully integrated social mechanism of the old societies has gone under before the rude assault of the West and the modernizers have yet to find a viable substitute.

Whereas in the past political scientists might have been content to leave the study of the political systems of primitive societies to the anthropologists, the recent phenomenon of the self-determination explosion among formerly colonial countries makes the understanding of their systems of vital importance to the practitioner and student of politics. Few problems in politics are as troubling today as that of devising workable governmental systems for the emergent countries. The new constitutions of many of these states are inadequate to their purposes—they are as awkward and uncomfortable in them as a geisha in galoshes.

The answer for these states may well lie in a marriage of the traditional and the modern; and so we need to know more about the former. Such a blend will not be easily achieved. One of the saddest aspects of the rush of these countries into what has been called the revolution of rising expectations is that, in the eagerness to modernize, the ancient is not only overthrown but becomes despised. This, of course, is in large part a result of the inferiority complexes which the West, in the arrogance of its technological superiority, has en-

gendered in these societies. It is also not unrelated to the deprecatory connotations that have usually been associated with terms like 'primitive', 'tribal', etc.

Actually there is much in these systems worth preserving and the stability and integrity which marked many of them is noticeably lacking in their modern successor states. Quite apart from such considerations, it would be a sombre and unexciting world in which all governments were organized on the prosaic and purely functional style of Washington or Moscow. Indeed, were this to happen, the state might well yet 'wither away'—from boredom.

The well-nigh universal admiration which the British system receives is clearly related to its success in merging the old and the new. The excitement which traditional leaders—kings, sheiks, chiefs—still evoke, especially in republican masses, is instructive as to the basic human weakness for ritual, pomp and circumstance. It would therefore seem ill-advised to treat the old merely as useless museum-pieces or charming idiosyncrasies. The traditional authorities can play a crucial and continuing role in the transition of these societies to modernity.

There is thus a vital rehabilitation job to be done in the appreciation of these cultures. The anthropologists, of course, have been doing this for some time but their attention has not been focussed on the type of analysis that is politically important. It is time others, particularly political scientists, take up the task also, especially as they have been neglectful of an area of study that ought to be their cup of tea. Besides, the anthropologists, like the archaeologists, have enough to do. They, poor devils, are working in an arena which itself may be fast vanishing as the ambitious demands for modernization grow more urgent among all peoples. Like Pharoah's tombs which will soon be swallowed by the Aswan dam, the 'primitive' societies are being digested by the nationalistic state—and the bereft anthropologists therefore may yet have to become real political scientists. Which I can't help thinking would be both a happier and a more useful fate.

—Neville Linton

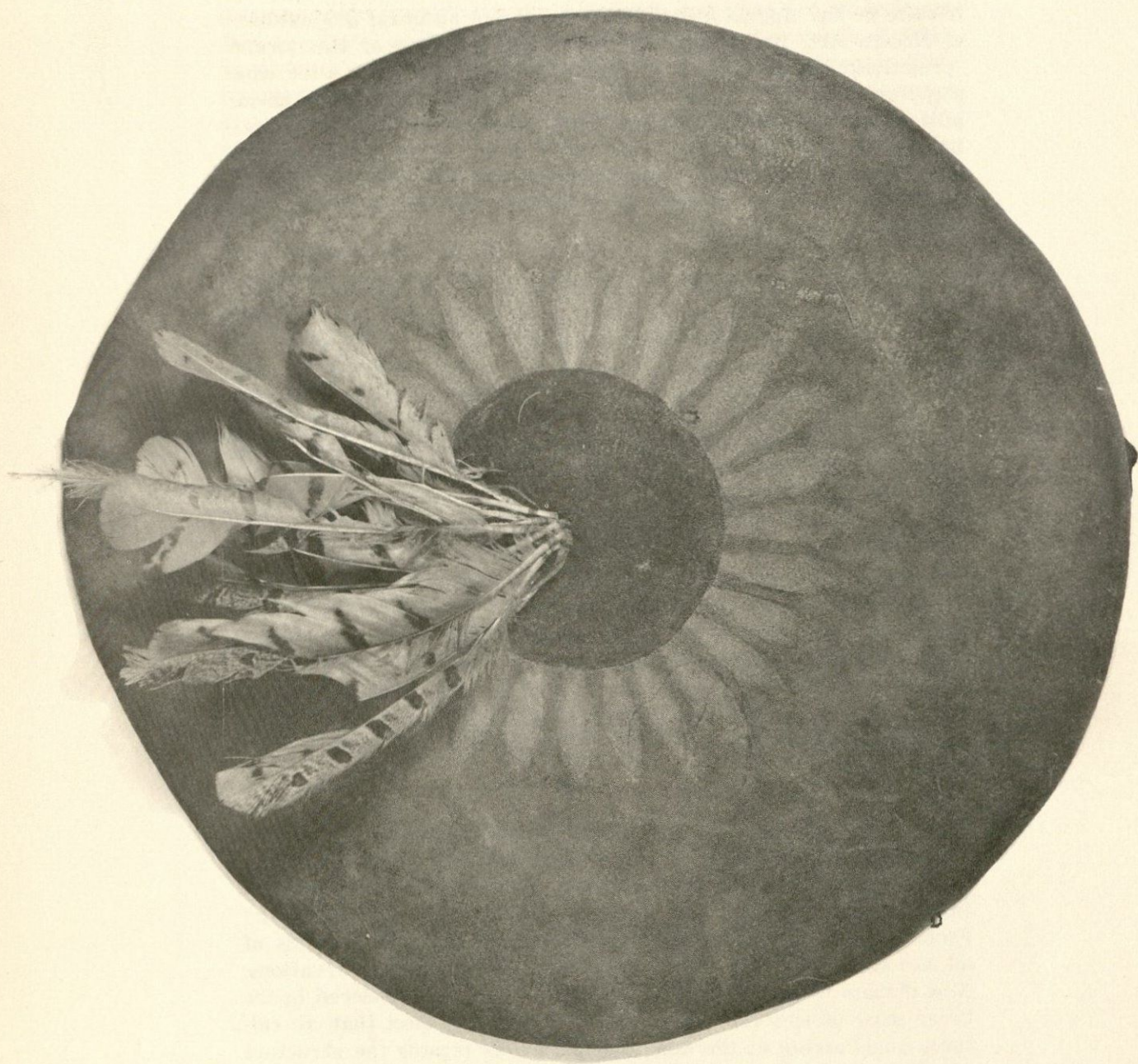


Fig. 5

PRIMITIVISM, DISTORTION. AND MODERN ART

If there be any dogma incipient in critical and historical evaluations of Modern Art, it lies in the inevitable introduction of the terms "primitivism" and "distortion." Detractors and apologists alike employ these two terms as interrelated concepts; the former uses them in a pejorative sense; the latter uses them as laudatory epithets. In either case, however, the employment of the terms "primitivism" and "distortion" is derived from fundamentally the same biases even though the critic and the defender of Modern Art have different ends in mind.

The notion of the "primitive" and primitivism" originally assumed the cultural achievements of Europe as a humanistic norm. Thus, any non-European culture became classified as primitive to the degree of deviation from the norms of the Age of Enlightenment. This is a lingering and implicit prejudice, though we now substitute industrial performance for humanistic fulfillment. The notion of "distortion" (which is irrevocably connected to the concept of "primitivism") in addition considers the pragmatic bias of "naive realism" as the definitive characteristic of "reality." By "naive realism" we mean the assumption that the area of immediate sense impressions constitute the "world as it really is." It is interesting to note the contradiction that the very people who evaluate a work of art from the standpoint of naive realism are also likely to adhere to a religious belief that denies the ultimate "reality" of the world of sense impressions. Further, these same people would not think of accusing the contemporary physicist of "distorting" reality when he tells us that nature is not as we sense it but that nature is, in reality, an indiscriminate, unpredictable, and purposeless interaction of extremely minute energy packets.

Since the notions of "distortion" and "primitivism" are related to biases that are limited in extent, these terms are without meaning in any descriptive or definitive sense. Consider the term "distortion" for instance. By what norm can we properly use the term? From a purely physiological viewpoint, the neurological systems of all men are fundamentally the same whatever the ethnic derivations. Now if there were a "normal structure" to nature (considered in the broad sense of the universe *in toto*), we should expect that all cultures would arrive at the same conclusions as regards the structure of nature since the raw sensory data of humans must be similar. But there are numerous constructions hypothesizing an ultimate structure of nature. We have, therefore, no purely neuro-physiological norm that we can appeal to, hence no "distortion."

From an epistemological or ontological viewpoint, the various cultural "world-hypothesis" must be related to cultural values. That is, out of the vast array of sense data possible, we can select that range of data we choose as most valuable and reject any other range of data. Since we tend to select certain sense data and to reject other sense data we choose as most valuable and reject any other range of data. as we use the selected sense data to construct an idea of nature that represents what is valuable to us on an operational level, our "images of things will (or should) conform to that idea of nature. If our image, then, conforms to our idea of nature, it cannot be in any sense a distortion. Since different cultures and cultural epochs choose to select differing ranges of sense data as valuable and thus construct different images conforming to their respective ideas of nature, we have neither epistemological nor ontological norms for which the usage of the term "distortion" can be shown to be meaningful. This means, then, that no artfully wrought image, in so far as it makes visible a constructed idea of nature, can be called a "distortion."

The notion of "distortion" is generally equated with the notion of "primitivism"; but if we have no proper norm by which to define "distortion" we have no proper norm by which to define "primitivism." We must conclude, then, that the two terms, "primitivism" and "distortion" are meaningless, since they rest by definition on fundamental biases and not on substantial and verifiable grounds. If the notions of "primitivism" and "distortion" are meaningless, then they cannot form characteristic means for either the description or definition of Twentieth Century Art or indeed of any art form.

—Charles Hess

ETHNIC TRADING POST

Only a few people have had the experience of making an art without a previous art to guide them. The first Eskimo to carve, an isolated and unlettered farmer fighting the boredom of a long winter evening by scratching on bark, the very first paleolithic man to notice the curiously suggestive forms on the walls of caves—these men, and a few others like them here and there in history knew the magic of discovery. They alone, I believe, can strictly be called primitive artists.

We scarcely know their art. Nonetheless, we are haunted by the ideal they represent—by the thrall of primacy—and so we construct intellectual nets in which to catch at least partial exemplifications of the primitive. People from the majority of other cultures have never made such nets. Others have made them, with wider mesh, and have used them in shallower waters than we have. During this Fine Arts Festival we are asking ourselves why we fish this way today, what kind of net we use, where we fish, and finally, what kind of a catch we pull in.

It is important to remember that almost all of the art we know was made in the shadow or in the light of other art. Art students know the ways of their masters. The Venetians of the Renaissance knew what was happening in Florence. The early Greeks admired Egypt and knew the ruins of the Aegean civilization. And most colonial limners had a vague notion about the art of baroque Europe.

Knowledge of this sort inevitably leads—either consciously or unconsciously—to adaptation or derivation. What ever it be called, the borrowed element is known as influence. Influences are considered as shadows if people put stock in originality, and as light if they value tradition. In actual practice artists have always been highly derivative: or, to put it another way, unprimitive. Even those who espouse originality purloin far more than they would care to admit.

One of the fascinating aspects of art history is the analyzing of influence. Where a culture goes for sources, how it uses these sources, and how intensely it conducts this enterprise, often reveals more about the culture's secrets than would a simple viewing of various monuments made by that culture.

For instance, why have we in the twentieth century embraced the mystique of the primitive so passionately? Other kinds of art, it is true, have been courted in our contemporary orgy with the past, but none has given us as lasting and pervasive headiness as the primi-

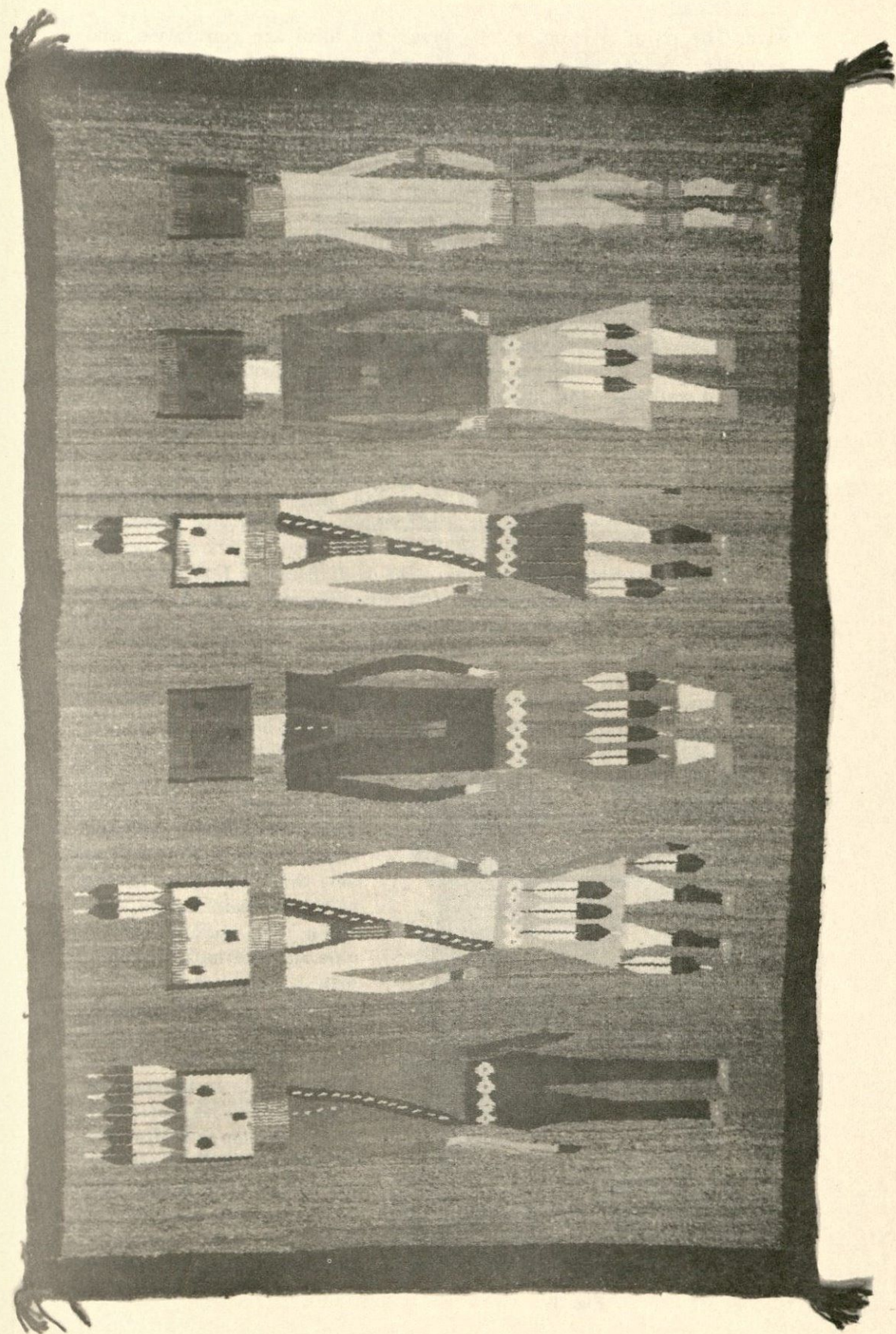


Fig. 6

tive. The chief virtues of the primitive ideal are conviction and strength. We search for these virtues strenuously, if not indiscriminately, both in art and in life. We are particularly pleased if we find it in ourselves. The thought seems to prevail that lying beneath the fatty layers of civilization there remains in each of us some splendid primitive sinew which, if it were to be discreetly used, would exorcise the worst of the fat and make us more authentic beings.

Except for a privileged few the attempts to do this are awkward. For example, in certain social gatherings where we would celebrate the temporary demise of our isolation, we may, bleary-eyed, attempt to recapture the age-old ritualistic ethos of group by means of song. But with people who no longer know what or how to sing, each would-be primitive bellows into the face of his neighbor something about a railroad (on which he never really worked), and then wonders about his persistent loneliness.

The weakest boy often becomes the greatest sports fan. He admires and yearns for that which he does not possess. So our modern civilization, privileged beyond comparison with certain comforts, reveals through its excessive adulation and need of what it is not, a fundamental discontent and sourness of disposition. But until that time comes when we again learn the meaning of a three-day empty belly and the rites of song, we are, like Krapp, condemned to spiritual wretchedness and to the enormous nostalgia of our "last tapes."



Fig. 7

Among the small farmers of, say, Nigeria, there are no would-be primitives. Indeed, many of them seek to be "civilized." As the white man collects their idols and fetish forms in his strange net, they take pay in the palms of their hands. The transaction seems profitable and the native craftsmen produce more. Now moved by an alien motivation, the old craft regulations begin to wither. Those works influenced by contact with the net-man's world—which the Nigerian supposed would please the most—are eliminated disdainfully from the net for they are now corrupted forms and would never do

in the Museum of Primitive Art. The native is bewildered. The white man too is bewildered: he did not learn from the butterfly collector that to make a collection one must kill.

Who is better off, the disappointed native or the disappointed white man? Certainly the Nigerian . . . at least for the time being. He ad-

mires our technology and senses that its gifts can be possessed either by purchase or education. He stands to lose at first only those things which he has not yet learned to aesthetically cherish, such as his art. But the civilized man has no convincing and admired goal toward which he can reasonably aspire. Though our penicillin will cure the sick native, his idol can only decorate our mantle pieces.



Fig. 8

—Kenneth C. Lindsay

SOME FACTORS IN PRIMITIVE ESTHETICS

Primitive art is interesting on a number of levels: as a reflection of the significance of rapport between the artist and his society, as a clue to the importance of basic concepts in the development of art styles, and as a source of ideas about design and composition.

Severe traditionalism, for example, is so important a part of primitive styles, that it is possible to assign isolated works to specific geographical areas on the basis of little more than stylistic characteristics. The traditions, which are rigidly proscribed by tribal religions, are passed on in the training of artists, who in some cases are specially talented, and in others, inherit the role of tribal artist.

African tribal artists who were queried recently about their reasons for not making innovations in style and subject matter, answered as follows: "It would have no meaning," or "No one would like it," or "it would have no market."

For a change to take place and influence later tribal artists, then, it would require the acquiescence of the tribe.

The relationship between the artist and his public in a primitive society is very close. The artist's function is specific, and serves specific socio-religious needs. This contrasts enormously with the role of the contemporary artist in our own society who serves his own personal bent (let us not be cynical and speak of "the market") and relies upon time and exposure to attract his public.

The primitive's concept of nature, particularly as it affects his sense of relationships and compositional arrangement, is of great importance. A significant factor in his formal design is his understanding of spatial relationships in the world around him. Max Jammer, in his book, *Concepts of Space*, although he is concerned primarily with the history of physics and optics, describes a "primitive concept of space," which seems to explain a number of factors in primitive art styles.

Essentially the primitive concept of space is characterized by a lack of systematization. It comes about through an accretion of isolated experiences which are rarely coordinated to explain the general nature of space.

Maps, for example, are not completely understood by the primitive. He might describe a trip on the basis of time expressed in "moons,"

and directional orientations based upon topological features in the landscape that would be passed through. It is the idea of treating his experience as part of an existing system of relationships that is foreign.



Fig. 9

Similarly, in his artistic representations, he would arrange the forms of the body as an assemblage of distinct features, each of which receive equal emphasis, none of which is subjugated to the total concept of the figure or its action.

He is unable to conceive of the figure as a form moving through space. His sculpture is imprisoned in the tree stump or block of stone. Its projecting forms are treated as reliefs on the four salient surfaces, clinging to the surface and not emerging in fore-shortened projections.

This lack of spatial representation conspires with the symbolic requirements of his art in placing a symptomatic stamp on his style. The important and inescapable requirements of symbolism are met with conventional forms that define the purpose of the figure. These symbols are expressive of such things as religious attributes, sexual characteristics, and even emotion-provoking expressions. Handled as conventional simplifications, they agree esthetically with the other forms of the figure, which, because they do not handle spatial relationships, are also conventional simplifications.

These conventionalized forms are expressed in cubic terms, so that the final work is seen as a compilation or assemblage of forms.

The peculiar appeal that these primitive works held for the modern artist is explained in part by the fact that so little of the meaning of those works was known. This meant that they could be considered primarily as works of art.



Fig. 10

As works of art, their power lies in the simplification of forms which are presented together in startling relationships. They seem to reveal the artist's willfulness in experimenting with natural forms, although, as we

have seen, the "experimentation" was in fact, traditionalism based upon primitive concepts. Nevertheless, in contrast to European traditions, primitive simplifications are abstractions. Without the power to communicate subject matter as they did in the tribal situation, these works took on a mysterious quality for the Europeans, seeming able to express the artist's intentions satisfactorily through their aesthetic organization, uncumbered by meaning.

Because of their boldness, seeming arbitrariness, abstract formal qualities and interrelationships, and the directness of their expression without subject matter, these primitive works appealed to modern artists at a time when it seemed important to evoke mystery, emotion, and sensation in a way that would not grow stale with the passage of time. For this reason, primitive art had an important liberating effect on modern developments.

I. L. Zupnick

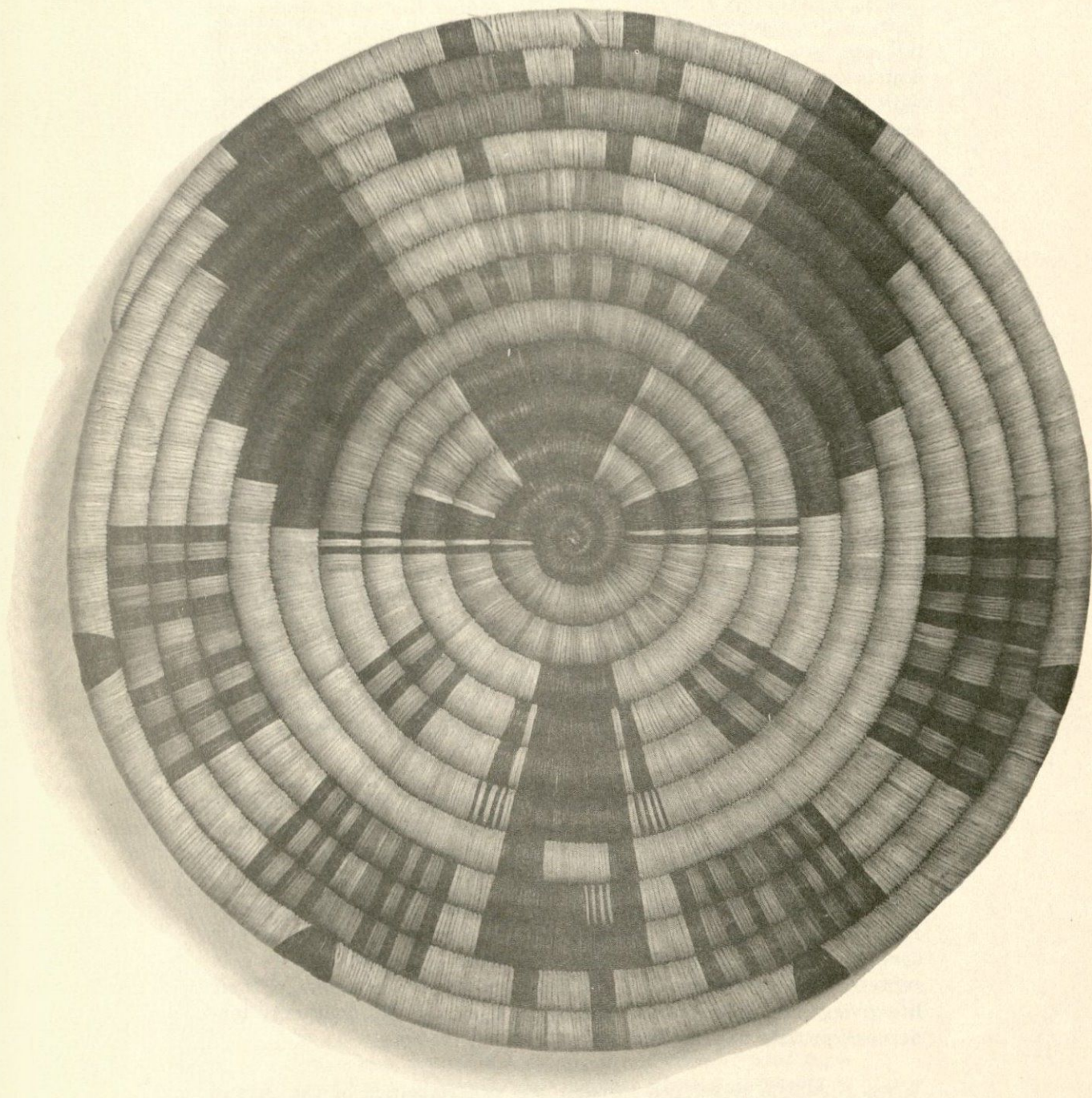


Fig. 11

KALI, THE TERRIBLE MOTHER

In the entire pantheon of Hindu deities none has excited more adoration and love, more terror and awe than Kali, the Black Goddess of destruction and death. Kali is personified as a black naked female with three glaring eyes, a bright gold tongue reaching to her waist, her body decorated with earrings and a necklace of human skulls, and a girdle of human hands. She has four arms: one holds a curved sword, another the head of a victim, a third is raised in blessing, and a fourth extended to welcome her devotees. She dances a cosmic war dance in the prostrate body of her husband, the Lord Shiva, a dance representing the frenzied rhythm by which the world is destroyed in preparation for its re-creation.

Though her temples and shrines are found throughout India, Kali worship is most prevalent in Bengal. Her festival is held on the darkest night in the month of Kartik (October-November) when clay images of her are made, worshipped, and thrown into a river, preferably the Ganges. Traditionally, her worship requires acts ordinarily forbidden to good Hindus—animal sacrifice and intoxication. In the past human sacrifices were offered to Kali. At her principal shrine, the Kali Ghat temple in Calcutta, goats are slaughtered in the temple courtyard and their heads and blood presented to the goddess. To the superficial observer and to the westernized Indian Kali worship is “primitive” and loathsome, the goddess herself is repulsive, and the temple courtyard with its bleating goats, swarming flies, sticky blood and vile stench is sickening. Nevertheless, Kali is venerated among all classes of Hindus; she has inspired powerful devotional poetry; she has been the patron goddess of one of the most profound Indian philosophers. What is the secret of her magnetism? What does Kali represent?

Kali is one of the multitude of mother goddesses whose cults were widespread in India until the Aryan invaders, who entered the sub-continent after 1500 B.C., introduced their male-dominated pantheon. From 1500 B.C. until the fourth century A.D. mother-goddess worship was confined to the common people. As one of these mother goddesses, Kali was worshipped by a frightened peasantry who implored her to save them from plagues and natural disasters. Her black aspect may represent the capricious dark clouds which can either withhold their life-giving rain, destroy the crops by flooding, or, with motherly tenderness, provide a beneficent rainfall.

When Hinduism developed through the syncretization of the Aryan religion with elements of Buddhism, Jainism and the pre-Aryan cults, the female goddesses, including Kali, were incorporated as consorts

of the important male gods. Kali entered the Hindu pantheon as one of the consorts of Shiva, the god of destruction, death and reproduction. The consorts of Shiva are called shaktas (from the Sanskrit *sak*, meaning to be strong or able). The shakti is the creative aspect of Shiva who himself embodies the principle of passive, unmanifested Unity. It is Shakti who produces, maintains and withdraws the universe. In fourteenth-century Bengal Shakti was worshipped in an esoteric cult in which selected men as embodiments of Shiva had sexual union with selected women as embodiments of Shakti. Their purpose was to attain spiritual freedom, the elimination of ego and emancipation from the illusion of the separateness of individual manifestations of the all pervading world Soul. In time this cult degenerated into licentiousness, and in reaction the people turned to cults infused with Bhakti or intense individual devotion to god.

In the eighteenth century Kali worship reached the height of its popularity in Bengal. Central political control had broken down, the people were oppressed by military adventurers and victimized by extortionists. Heavily taxed, they had no reserves for times of drought. Many turned to their Mother in despair. Their misery was best expressed by a poet of Bengal, Ram Prasad Sen (1718-1775), who introduced Bhakti into the Shakti cult. His mother goddess reflects the rivers of Bengal, in some years life-giving and caressing, in others capricious and cruel. He sings of his unhappiness as a neglected child of the arbitrary Mother. How could a poet sing devotional hymns to the black goddess of destruction? The answer lies in his own words:

Though the mother beats him, the child cries "Mother! Oh Mother!" and clings still tighter to her garment. True I cannot see thee, yet am I not a lost child? I still cry "Mother! Mother!" . . .

* * * *

Is motherhood then a mere word of the lips? Bringing forth does not make a mother, unless she can understand the griefs of her child. Ten months and ten days a mother endures sorrow. But now, though I am hungry, my Mother does not ask where her child is. Earthly parents correct their sons, when they have offended. Though you see Death, that dreadful ogre, coming to slay me, you are untroubled.

* * * *

No longer shall I call you Mother: countless ills have you sent me, Mother, countless ills are sending. I had home and dear ones, but you have made me a mendicant. What worse can you do, O Long-Tressed Goddess? I must go from door to door, begging my food. Even though the mother dies, does not the child live still? "Mother," I cry, and yet again, "Mother," but you are deaf and blind. While the mother lives, if the child suffers so, what is the use of his mother to him?

Ever art thou dancing in battle, Mother. Never was beauty like this, as, with thy hair, flowing about thee, thou dost ever dance, a naked warrior on the breast of Shiva.

Heads of thy sons, daily freshly killed, hang as a garland around thy neck. How is thy waist adorned with human hands! little children are thy ear-rings. Faultless are thy lovely lips; thy teeth are fair as the *kunda* in full bloom. Thy face is bright as the lotus-flower, and terrible is its constant smiling. Beautiful as the rain-clouds is thy form; all bloodstained are thy Feet. . . .

My mind is as one that dances. No longer can my eyes behold such beauty.

In the nineteenth century order was restored to Bengal under British rule. The cult of Kali declined in popularity, especially among the educated classes. Her major followers were the outlaws of society—dacoits, thieves, and the thugs. The thugs, until they were suppressed by the British in the 1830's, were gangs of professional robbers who strangled travelers in the lawless area of central India. They dedicated their victims to Kali, as human sacrifices to their patron goddess.

In the latter nineteenth century the first stirring of nationalism in Bengal was accompanied by a revival of the mother goddess cult, now as the motherland personified. One of the earliest nationalist writers was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) whose patriotic poem, *Bande Mataram*, became the anthem of the nationalist movement.

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
 mother free . . .
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
Thou who savest, arise and save!

When an extremist wing developed in the nationalist movement, it was only natural that its members should choose Kali as their patron goddess. From 1905 to 1916, when the extremists resorted to bombing and assassination to terrorize the government, they invoked Kali to give religious sanction to their violence and bloodshed. The movement died out only after Gandhi's non-violent methods proved more effective.

While the Kali of the thugs was revived in the terrorist movement, the Kali of Ram Prasad Sen was revived in the teachings of a Hindu saint, Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886). Ramakrishna was a priest in a temple near Calcutta dedicated to Kali. There he was visited by many of the westernized intellectual leaders of Bengal. The illiterate Brahmin priest so impressed them by his simple faith

and deep wisdom that he inspired a revival of monistic Hinduism among the English educated Bengalis. His chief disciple was Swami Vivekananda who traveled in the United States and founded the Ramakrishna Mission with branches in many American cities.

Ramakrishna as a monist believed that all gods are manifestations of the Infinite; but he selected Kali for his particular devotion. Kali represents the reality and divinity of the physical world. One weakness of the ancient nondualistic philosophy of the Vedanta is that all acts of creation, all manifestations of Brahman—the impersonal Supreme Being or World Soul—are considered illusions or Maya. Brahman is the only reality and all of creation is unreal. In the Shakti cult, however, the Divine Power which emanates from Brahman (or Shiva) is itself worshipped as Reality, and therefore, to the Shakti worshipper the sensual world is as real as the World Soul. But Shakti as the consort of Shiva appears in many forms; most of these goddesses are beautiful, kindly and protective. Kali alone represents the awesome aspects of life, the power of destruction, death, famine, earthquake, epidemic, flood and drought. Kali, as the protectress has power to protect or not as she sees fit; because she has power over the forces of destruction, she embodies the powers of divine grace and divine punishment. Of all the forms of Shakti, Kali is the one which is closest to Truth—life is suffering and death.

One visitor asked Ramakrishna why, if Kali can give man freedom, she keeps him bound to the world with its misery. He answered:

That is Her will. She wants to continue playing with Her created beings. In a game of hide-and-seek the running about soon stops if in the beginning all the players touch "granny." If all touch her, then how can the game go on? That displeases Her. Her pleasure is in continuing the game. It is as if the Divine mother said to the human mind in confidence, with a sign from Her eye, "Go and enjoy the world."

Thus Kali, born in the primordial mother goddess cult of prehistoric India, lives today. Perhaps her simple worshippers do not understand the depth of her message—that experience, however sorrowful, is life itself. In the words of Ram Prasad Sen, "All the miseries that I have suffered and am suffering, I know, Oh Mother, to be your mercy alone . . ."

Blair B. Kling

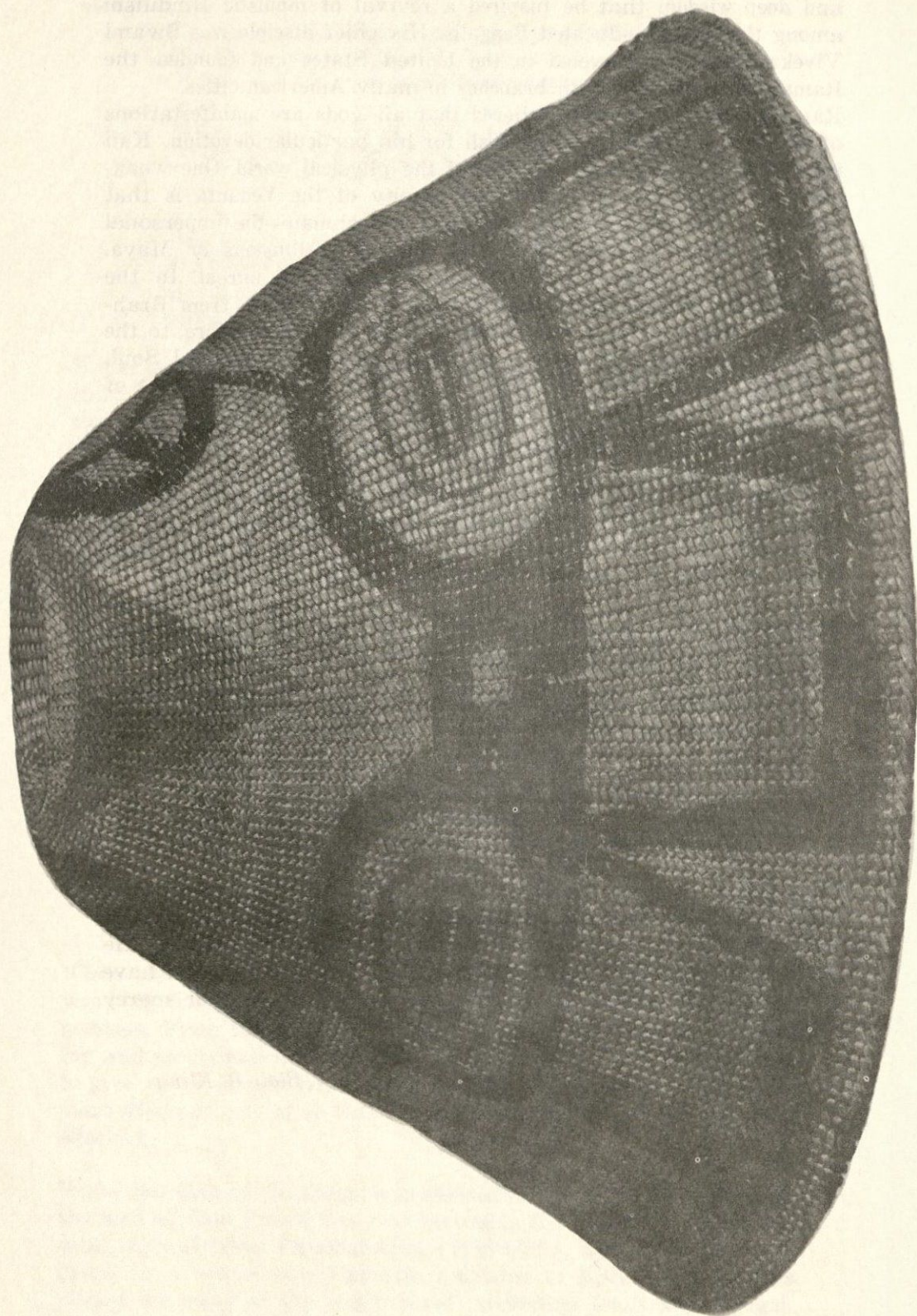


Fig. 12

"PRIMITIVE" MEDICAL TREATMENT

The Chinese people of Taiwan, almost to a man, consider the aboriginal population of the island "primitive." The urban people legitimately base their opinion on such things as the aborigines' lack of any form of literacy, their simple technology, and their form of social organization. Here, "primitive" is equated with antediluvian. The rural people base their opinion on the aborigines' seeming lack of restraint: "they show a want of tact and are excitable"—in short, they are "uncultured." "Primitive" means different things to different people and many things to the same people. To the sophisticated urban Chinese, for example, "primitive" also means "superstitious" or even "just backward" when they consider the religious and more especially magical beliefs of the rural population. The urbanite, educated to the advantages of modern (western-style) medicine, finds it difficult to understand why the Chinese villager of Taiwan resorts to (what are actually age-old and highly refined) religious, magical and shamanistic rituals to deal with misfortunes such as illness. To the urbanite, the "scientific" is the supreme. Although the urbanites share much of their cultural heritage with the rural population, this ritualistic aspect of the rural culture is so different, alien, and out-of-date to them that they can only label it "primitive."

The followers of "primitive" rituals also appreciate the value of modern medicine and make use of its skills; but when modern medicine fails to effect a cure, the villagers feel compelled to deal with illness in some other way. Since such an illness can not be treated or even explained on the "scientific" level, the villagers can only assume that the problem is influenced, if not caused, by some supernatural power—usually a devil or one of many spirits which are believed to inhabit the numerous natural objects in nature—and therefore must be dealt with on the supernatural level. Thus, after all other means of a medical cure have been attempted, there is little left to do but call upon a practitioner whose specialty it is to deal with just such supernatural forces.

Shamanistic rituals are performed in order to learn the cause of the problem; a shaman for a particular deity goes into an almost epileptic-like seizure and becomes possessed by the god. The god then speaks through the shaman and directs him how to placate or exorcise the devils believed to be at the heart of the problem.

Such rituals are often expensive for the particular family involved because of the shaman's charges and the costs of the many sacrifices to the supernatural forces. At the same time, not only are they time-consuming for the family concerned but often time-consuming for

the entire village should they be called upon to participate in the ritual. It is these magical acts, which sometimes go on for a whole night and may even be continued over a period of weeks, which are often considered indicative of the "primitiveness" of the village people by their more sophisticated countrymen.

But can these ritualistic forms of behavior so simply be discounted as "primitive," "superstitious" or even "just backward" without giving consideration to the possible functions which they might perform for a people desperately looking for some answer or solution to the insoluble? With this thought in mind, one should examine the possible psychological and therapeutic value which could be attributed to such ritual acts.

In cases of illness, the patient is not the only one of concern. The family of the patient must be considered. Should a village family fail to utilize every available means of producing a cure—a western-style doctor, followed by magical ritual and, if this fails, religious prayers to the gods—it would be criticized by the village for not doing all possible to aid the family member and it would undoubtedly suffer from extreme guilt feelings. When the family does everything possible to effect a cure it is relieved of feelings of guilt because it has exerted all its power to help the afflicted family member. Would any family do less?

Still more basic is the psychological value of such rituals to the patient. In our own society when the doctor is unable to cope with an illness, or more extreme, some form of mental disorder, there is little else which can be done. In rural Taiwan, however, hope need not be given up at this point; there is no need to feel totally helpless in the face of the unknown. It is always possible to place the blame on some supernatural cause and call in a shaman.

There is the possibility of real psychological value to the patient if he is made to believe that the supernatural is truly the cause of his illness and that it is being properly resolved. The patient might even be suffering from some psychosomatic illness and the feeling that everything possible is being done for his welfare could have definite value. Such a ritual focuses attention on the patient, with family, friends and villagers taking part in the rituals to bring about a successful cure. As a result of the attention directed toward the patient he may develop a real feeling of worth, which could contribute to his recovery. In extreme cases of mental disorder, where even in our modern and highly scientific society the cause of the disorder and the possibility of cure is most questionable, some of the techniques used by local shamans in order to exorcise the supposed devil are so frightening that the awe and fear inspired in the patient could in itself have therapeutic value. Isn't electric shock treatment administered to mental patients in our society?

Still another function of all ritual might very briefly be considered here—the entertainment value of ritual behavior in the rural area. This function is evidenced by the number of people who turn out to witness such rituals, even those extending long into the night. For the villagers, such rituals are almost always exciting to observe. Where formal entertainment is often lacking, may not the ritual act fill the vacuum?

It is evident then that in any society, the non-believer may well judge the rituals of others pejoratively, whether they are of the magical form or simple religious prayer, or stem from “primitive” beliefs. Forms of “superstitious” belief can be pointed out as existing in all societies, including our own. It is only a matter of one’s cultural point of view which determines how one categorizes the “primitive.”

Bernard Gallin

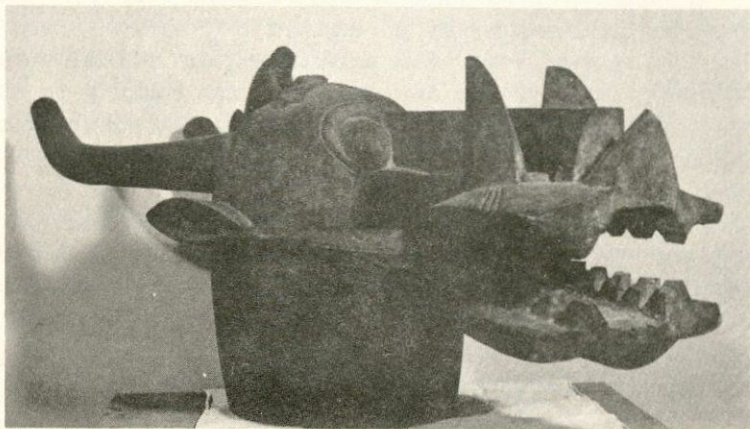


Fig. 13

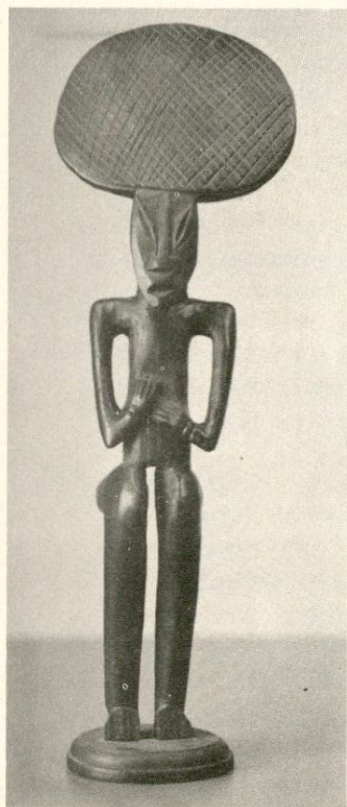


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

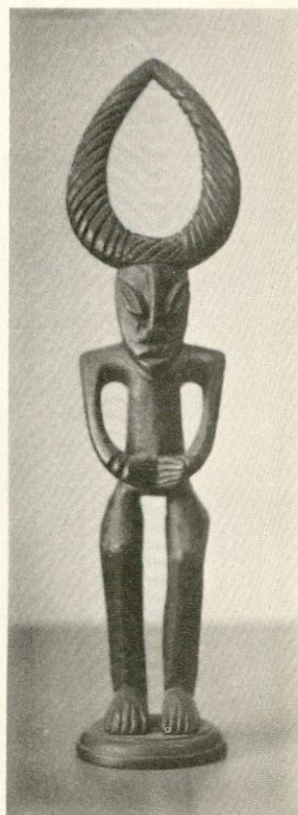


Fig. 16



Fig. 17

LETTER FROM A PEASANT'S SON

I first met you on the banks of River Cauvery. You had all kinds of ornaments on you. You had a silk towel tied around your hip, golden chains on your neck and the knitted wild jasmines hung on your curly tresses. You were in the knee-deep water performing the poojas (rites to the setting sun). I was washing my cow and gazing at you in a queer manner. Your turbaned servant was watching both of us. You were six and I was eight. We looked at each other and there was a mutual consent of admiration for what we were. I was beginning to murmur a folk song that expressed the sorrow of a darling little sparrow who missed his mate. Somebody had thrown a stone at me in the intentions of disturbing my pleasant mood. I was frightened and began to weep. You looked puzzled. Your guard yelled at me for no reason and ordered me to quit the place at once with my cow. I obeyed him.

That night I told my Amma (mother) about the incident on the river bank and she said that a son of a poor peasant should not glance at the daughter of a rich landlord. It is a crime of the land and Amma's explanation looked silly and I began to wonder in my innocence.

From then on, I knew of your existence. We both went to the same school and I was absolutely true to my Amma in keeping the promise—not to look at you, since we were opposites. You were rich and I was poor. Years rolled by.

It was a school festival. Now, I was fourteen and you were twelve. All the boys and girls were running and shouting and singing with joy. I was sitting in the corner for more than an hour, mourning because my only shirt was torn in the game. You entered the room and handed over a shirt of your brother who was of my own age. It was a benevolent present of you and I accepted it with my own doubts. It was dusk when we all assembled in the open air gallery and the petromax lights were blinking without life. I was awarded the first prize for the highest marks in the school—a cash award for my next three years' school fees. The time was memorable since I stared at you the second time in life. You responded to my looks without knowing what was going to happen.

Next morning, one of your palace guards was at my house. I followed your servant with your present of the shirt in my hand. Your father came out to greet me with a stout whip in his hand. I began to weep and wept for a long time. I was charged as a thief who had stolen a shirt in your back yard while it was drying. I shivered with shame

and my parents and brothers were severely warned on this charge. We did not try to defend.

That night, I sobbed at my mother's shoulders and Amma warned me to cut off the whole contact with you for the rest of the life.

Time went on. I was now the recipient of the honor's award in our district, a hero in the hearts of our community. The farewell party of the seniors was impressive and the third time I saw you. You were now a blossoming flower of the season and your dress was fantastically attractive. Being myself the chief guest of the occasion, I was surrounded by our teachers and student friends. We celebrated the event under the shades of the mango grove. The whole mood was festive and gay. Almost at the end of the party you pinched my back and called me to the solitary corner. You told me that you were going to study in the same college that I was to attend. I was happy and my heart began to pound in an unorderly rhythm for no reason.

The terrible blow was awaiting me at home. I returned home late with my English teacher who was bragging about his romantic experiences in the city. The tiny oil lamp was greeting me with all the sadness in the world. The summer dry wind was tearing the coconut thatches of my home. I saw my older brother gulping his gruel from the earthen pot and my mother was sitting beneath my father's cot. My mother was looking at me and weeping, but afraid to say anything. My father said that beginning tomorrow the village landlord would be closing the water channel for our lands because he was displeased and insulted by the peasant who broke the orders and rules of the village. The dignity of the landlord was deeply hurt by the fact that his daughter had to study with his servant's son.

I thought of the problem and met your father the next day to seek mercy; but his heart was harder than the barren rock. He treated me badly and I saw you crying behind the thin curtain at the far end of the hall beneath the big window. He scorned me as a fool since I craved to accomplish something which was impossible. I told your father that I would decline the scholarship and would also destroy the fond dreams of the future. I mentioned the name of the European Revenue Officer who used to admire my English recitation of Mark Anthony's funeral speech and who would certainly not welcome my decision. Your father became panicky and asked me to get out of the house.

My father was gloomy and could not give his consent for my trip until the affairs with him were alright. We all would be starved to death without water for the land. I arrived late in the city and I met you in all my classes. We began to know each other well without any feeling of love. At the end of the year, I passed all the examinations with distinctions and to my dismay you failed them all. We returned

home in summer and I worked with my parents in the fields. After a few weeks I heard you were engaged to the Pattagar of Singanallur, the largest owner of the elephant cattle in South India.

In the meantime, I had organized a voluntary youth group to aid the poor and aged in our area in the farmwork and education. Your father did not like my activities and blamed me for his loss in the municipal elections. As you know, I was slowly becoming independent and influential in the village. Everything was balanced and happy until that sad event.

It was one of those ordinary monsoon daybreaks. You were returning alone from the river with the wet saree wrapped around you. I saw you passing by and it was you who first called me by my favorite pet name, 'young poet,' which was very unusual of you. I smiled and returned the compliment by calling you 'Sakuntala' (one of Kalidasa's heroines). Nobody was round us and there was no sign of life anywhere. I assured you of my present for your marriage and you looked affectionately at me.

It was at this moment, I heard someone running fast and we saw your father dashing towards us. He was enraged and brutally beat me till I fainted. Vaguely, I saw you imploring and sobbing. An innocent heart never easily forgets an unjustified punishment.

After two days, I sent your father my present . . . the best I could ever get. I carefully packed it in the finest bamboo box. It took me more than a working day to procure the gift. It was a special breed of the Kollimalai region and it was the last companion of Cleopatra. The snake was a high class cobra seven feet long and after a few moments of its biting in any living creature the life will be finished. It would confidently assure your father of his dangerous play—especially with the emerging youth of the nation. The whole episode was highly personal and only between us and there was a dawn on your father and he began to restrain himself.

After a few months I was preparing to leave for the United States of America, the land of Lincoln. Your father requested me to attend the banquet he wanted to give in my honor. But I had to decline. I went to the extent of hurting my own parents to avoid your father's request. I hope you forgive me for my stubbornness.

Though I do not love you, I cherish you in the deepest corner of my heart.

Nalli Krishnan

JAZZ AND THE DICTIONARIES

A dictionary editor, wishing to contribute to the worthy, and often confused causes of business and education by expanding his dictionary beyond all discreet boundaries of probability and necessity, should have no difficulty doubling the weight and size of his product if he is willing to turn his attention to such confusing words as 'primitive,' 'primitivistic,' 'primitivism.' And confusion, as an initial phrase, is healthy. It implies the frail promise of a tatter of truth.

Likewise, we can at least be assured of confusion and controversy by centering our Festival around the concept of 'primitivism.' There is the artist, the man of the theatre, the musician, the dancer, the historian, the anthropologist, and all of them are bound to come to the Festival with a stimulating variety of ideas on the subject. It can only be hoped that this cacophony of concepts will encourage those attending the various programs to think for themselves and find their own definitions.

Reluctantly it would seem—for jazz has been twisted to fit too many programs and definitions, from communist to surrealist manifestos and back—jazz does have something to contribute to a few of the current meanings that are generally attributed to the term 'primitive.' This will be especially true if we limit ourselves for the time being to the earlier styles, to New Orleans jazz in particular.

The anthropologist will view 'primitive' as "pertaining to a race, group, having cultural or physical similarities with their early ancestors." Some of the most vital components of jazz could certainly serve as accurate demonstrations of this anthropological definition, and also satisfy the art historian.

The contributions of primitive West-African society—an innate sense of rhythm and a characteristic singing technique—become essential features in the earliest manifestations of jazz. Far beyond the fascinating, if crude functionalism of these first work-songs and field-hollers (the predecessors of the blues), the African elements reveal basic ingredients of the more complex musical form which is usually referred to as 'jazz.'¹ The transition, from tribal tomtoms ('talking drums') recorded in Ghana or the Congo to the consummate artistry of great jazz drummers like Louis Cottrell, Sr. or Warren 'Baby'

(1) Is it any reflection upon the concept and practice of justice in the South that the best examples of bleak work-songs and field-hollers seem to have survived in state prison-farms and camps, as evidenced by the material recorded by Alan Lomax, Harry Oster and others?

Dodds is indeed a smooth one. The evolution from the voices of early blues-singers to the full sound of New Orleans horns presents a straight line; the jazz of the Crescent City gives us essentially an instrumental synthesis of these singing voices. In the first attempts at collective improvisations of trumpet, clarinet and trombone lingered the echo of polyphonic, collective singing of the slaves working in the fields. As voices untrained by Western conservatory standards had sung together, instruments that came closest to their natural pitch and were most readily available, tried to play collectively in the New Orleans of the eighties or nineties. The evolution of the blues offers the clearest example perhaps of this fusion of voices into instruments.

It should be noted, of course, that when talking about the vocal heritage both a secular and a religious tradition have to be included. Using the same technique, the same phrasing, often the same vocabulary, the untrained negro voice sang to God in exactly the same manner as it had poured loneliness and hunger, fervor and joy, longing and frustration (love, love, love!) into the blues. Bessie Smith, the 'Empress of the Blues,' and Mahalia Jackson, the great gospel singer, show similarities in style and concept that are neither accidental nor superficial.

Right from the start, the blues reveal a tendency on the part of the singer to substitute dialogue for the spoken voice. The blues singer may have stretched some strings over a wooden box, he may have picked up a guitar somewhere to accompany himself—the important thing is that he doesn't rely primarily on his instrument for rhythmic support, but uses it instead as a second voice, talking with him. The structure of the blues, with its pause at the end of each bar, allows for this dialogue between human voice and instrument. The work of the oldest blues-singers preserved on records—e.g. Blind Lemon Jefferson—illustrates this trend admirably; even the more sophisticated of present-day blues-singers carry on that same tradition. "Talk to me, guitar, talk to me!", Brownie McGhee exclaims, as he lets his fingers and the strings of his guitar take over briefly at the end of a line he has just sung. Whether the accompaniment is provided by a guitar, piano, or cornet—the basic idea remains the same.

The concert Billie Pierce and her husband Dede will give at Harpur, should make this abundantly clear. Not only is Dede's lyrical cornet the extension of a human voice, but bursting in at the end of each of Billie's phrases or whispering gently while she is singing, agreeing, quarrelling with her, pointing some of her words, echoing them, the instrument participates in a dialogue. Between a woman's husky voice and a trumpet, a conversation is being woven, a conversation which, in its range and poignant simplicity, in its timing and its dramatic climaxes, is hard to resist.



Fig. 19: Sunday parade in New Orleans.

of the snare-drum, the leader of the band digs into a small bag he carries over his shoulder and passes around the music for an intricate and solemn dirge—the kind of thing one usually hears in Europe when a general has died. But they'll have fifty pieces there, and these notes don't seem to possess that insistent edge of sweet sadness, that undefinable touch of melancholy, that hue, now and then, of the blues. And on the way back from the cemetery, the trumpets, the E flat clarinet, the alto, baritone- and bass horn, the trombones, the bass- and snare-drum lash into their ferociously joyful adaptation of the latest pop-tune. It may be "Panama Rag," "Down in Honky Tonk Town," "High Society," or so many other rags, stomps, marches, fast blues, and tin-pan alley hits—they all have the crowds swirling about the band, shrieking with delight, swinging umbrellas, dancing.

It would be a hopeless task to attempt a complete survey of the many components of New Orleans jazz here. But the many sounds of many musicians—black, brown, and white—make one thing clear: out goes our anthropological definition of 'primitive.'

Then what is left?

Some of our fashionable critics and columnists, tastemakers, and institutions (like *Playboy*) dedicated to the service of (physical culture and frustrated 'intellectuals,' have hastened to paste another 'primitive' label on this New Orleans music. It never seems to dawn on them that their endless, condescending comparisons between the older and newer forms of jazz are not only insipid, but also futile and totally irrelevant. In their critical endeavors, 'primitive' now implies 'old fashioned,' 'unaffected or little affected by civilizing influences.' And, of course, it all didn't start in New Orleans anyhow, but rather in Hoboken, N. J. or on Long Island.²

No New Orleans aficionado would contend that the early jazzmen and their followers were always flawless technicians, that their taste was invariably immaculate, their originality endless. We have every reason to suspect that some of the first bands in jazz history may have sounded stiff and ponderous. It is one of the indelible paradoxes of New Orleans jazz that the music combines from the very beginning elements of raw and rough directness with an amazing degree of sophistication and technical skill. Jazzmen trained by the best musicians of the famous French Opera in New Orleans sometimes played in small bands with others who couldn't read a note.³ The repertoire of many of the bands in the early days allowed for popular tunes, blues that would be largely improvised, but it also included semi-classic or operatic selections and rags. The authentic orchestral rag-time music, a direct descendant from an earlier piano style, does away with the contention that New Orleans jazz is crude and inflexible. The parts for each instrument require great technical skill, and the over-all effect of the rags can only be achieved if the correct tempos are rigorously observed, if a very subtle balance and shading of instrumental volume are maintained.

The lead in these classic rags, it will be remembered, was played by the violin, with the trumpet whispering, singing the complex pattern of a second lead behind it. Although great trumpet players like Bunk Johnson or Charles Love were in their middle sixties by the time someone finally thought of recording them, their records exemplify the full range and rare versatility of the old style. Like many of the early jazzmen, they are capable of infusing the melodic lines of a waltz, a rag, any old song with tender gracefulness, triple-tonguing through the trickiest bridges, adorning their lead with exquisite 'grace notes.' High note virtuosity has never been a criterion of excellence among New Orleans musicians, but a Bunk or a Charles Love can

(2) Leonard Feather is a distinguished exponent of this new school of thought. In discussing New Orleans jazz in his *Jazz Encyclopedia*, Mr. Feather sets new standards of erudition. Usually quite effective at being unwittingly funny, he breaks all previous records in this.

(3) Musical illiteracy, of course, sometimes becomes a pose. It is probable that some of the early musicians, like Buddy Bolden, claimed they couldn't spell, let alone read music because they were afraid it might affect their popularity.

pluck their high notes with the greatest of ease. They don't confuse fast tempos with exhibitionism, exuberance with frenzy. And come midnight, when the crowds in the dance-halls start clamoring for the low, mean, meanest blues, they'll switch to that climate, and holler and growl into their instruments with throbbing intensity.

Countless examples of the mature sophistication, the refinement and imaginative creativeness of New Orleans jazz come to mind. They are an intrinsic part of it, along with elements of boisterous, at times harsh, even crude directness. Need we refer to the ravishing clarinet obbligato Alphonse Picou or Achille Baquet brought to "High Society"? Need we refer to the brilliant ensembles of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band or Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers? Need we, indeed, stretch the point any further?

That New Orleans jazz contains significant primitive elements is obvious. To what extent, How many? Where? When?

Perhaps we should ask Billie and Dede Pierce when they arrive here. Perhaps they will tell us in their music.

—Walter Esselinck



Fig. 20: Eddie Morris, one of the veteran New Orleans trombone players.

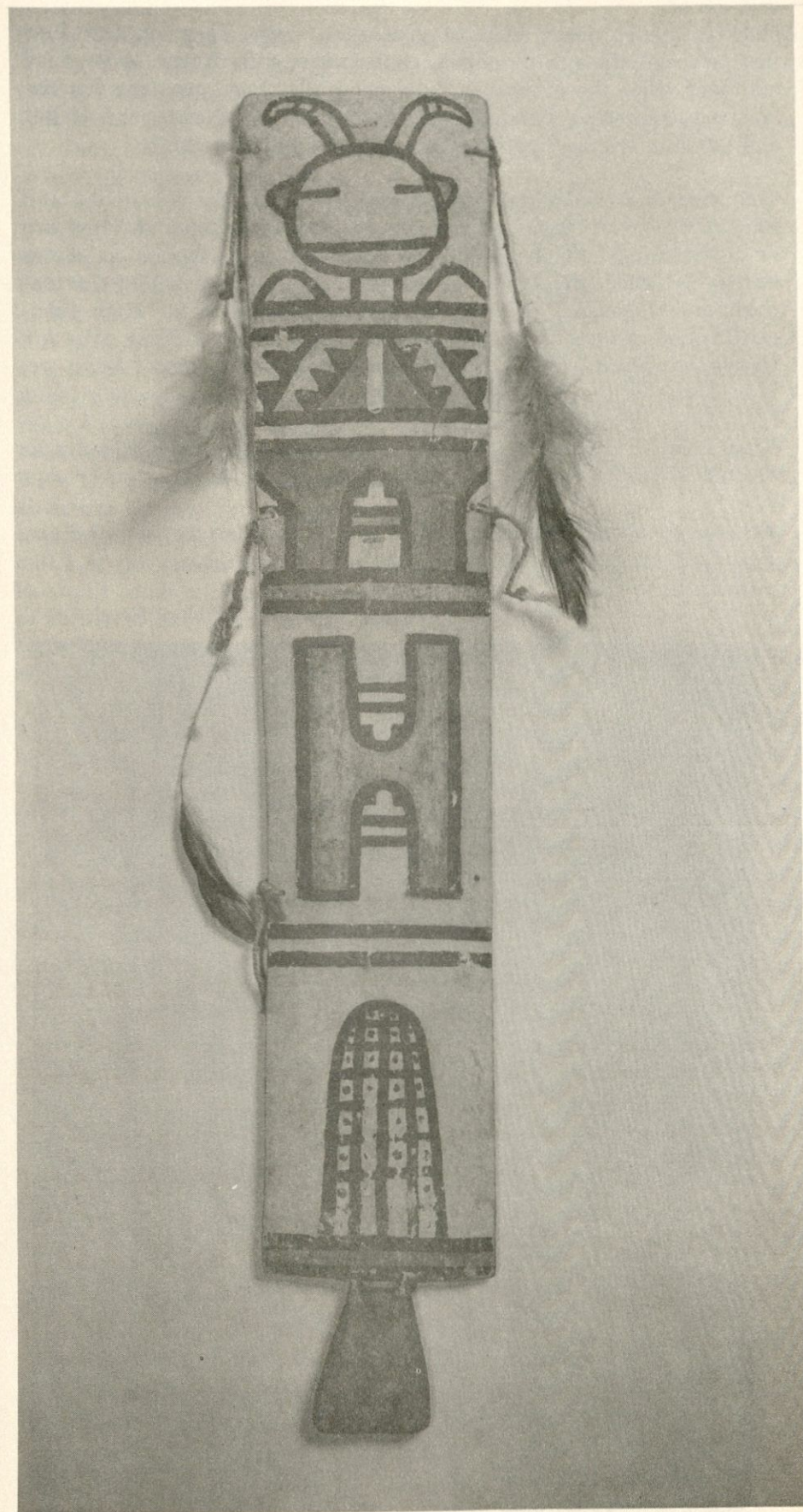


Fig. 22

POETRY AND THE PRIMITIVE

The desire to dehumanize is distinctly and exclusively human; the apes are not concerned with abstracts. It is the tendency of human groups to seek to communicate the intangible through the manipulation of the tangible, and insofar as it is communication, all art is in this sense symbolic.

Anthropologists differentiate primitive cultures from advanced by marking the point at which the symbols of communication have become so denaturalized that a series of them may be combined to record the language:

Writing is communication by means of visual symbols substituted for spoken words. All writing is, therefore, symbolic and its origins lie in symbolic art . . . (It is) the one feature of culture that all anthropologists agree distinguishes civilized culture from primitive.*

It is not the anthropologists' point, nor my own, that literature is the most civilized form of art, but that a written language involves a double use of symbol. Character-symbols are used to designate, not the thing itself, but the sound-symbol which designates the thing itself. The distinguishing mark of civilization is such by virtue of the fact that it is at two removes from nature. What is by definition 'primitive' in human communication would then seem to be that which involves only a single use of symbol, a single process of abstraction from nature.

It had best be said, to be done with it, that there is nothing primitive in modern art, any more than there was anything classical in Augustan poetry. Nevertheless, the word has been coming up, and there are evidently attempts to produce it and to find it in poetry, painting, music and the dance. The impulse, I believe, is more than, though it probably derives from, an increasing awareness of primitive people. If modern artists were content with a civilized (slightly astonished) look at life in the jungle, then Vachel Lindsay's "Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM" would be as primitive as anything the Beats and the New Brutalists have to offer. It is not.

I should like to offer a tentative definition of the primitive in modern art, as that which seeks to abstract directly from nature, without the intermediate aid (or interference) of conventions common to ar-

* E. Adamson Hoebel, *Man in the Primitive World* (McGraw-Hill), 1949, pp. 183-5.

tist and audience. This is not to say that all artistic rebellions are toward the primitive; on the contrary, most revolutions in art involve a further refinement or intellectualization of conventions which have become too simple: the Romantics liked their nature wild, but their rhythms, like their sentiments, were more complex than those of their Augustan predecessors. Neo-primitivism goes 'back to nature' in a special sense. Its practitioners usually do not, and never merely say that trees are better company than people. They say instead that the accepted means by which a tree is evoked are symbol-symbols having nothing to do with the conditioning of civilization, and having nothing to do with the nature of a tree. They wish not to build new things with old tools, nor to improve the tools, but to throw the tools away and work with their hands.

If this is definition of modern primitivism as abstraction directly from nature is substantially correct, it might clarify the relation of the artistic attempt to some common misconceptions—of the primitive as something simple, brutal, sexual and slightly sinister. It might help to solve the contradiction of the Grandma Moses and Rousseau brands of primitivism, for an artist can fail to make use of the traditional means of his medium for conveying the natural world, either because he does not know them, or because he refuses them.

And if it is correct, then of all the arts it is most difficult to make poetry primitive, and to isolate the primitive in poetry. Insofar as poetry is 'writing,' it cannot be primitive, and all modern poetry proceeds from the pen. W. H. Auden defines poetry as "memorable speech" and make the some-times angry claim that his poetry is written to be heard. But no serious modern poet believes that his poetry will become known (or in most cases, understood) by being heard, and I have not heard of one who is not willing to commit it to the more accurate memory of print. The forms of verse which do rely most heavily on the preliterate techniques of making memorable (alliteration, repetition, unvaried rhythmic pattern) and which genuinely are intended for hearing rather than seeing—jingles, twist lyrics, doggerel, popular love songs—are not awarded the name of poetry, nor do they seek it. Poetry, trying to be primitive, is bound then to the distinguishing mark of non-primitive man.

Further, a poetic rhythm or form cannot of itself be primitive. By the time that a culture acquires a written language, the basic rhythm of its poetry has been established, but this rhythm is not therefore a representation of nature, or even of the nature of the people who produce it. Speech patterns are undoubtedly conditioned by music (as musical rhythms are conditioned by speech), but it would be hard to prove a progression from bloodbeat to tom-tom to iamb. Rather metre is, like literacy, in itself a product of language, at two removes from nature; a reflection not of natural sounds but of the construc-

tion of the language. This can easily be illustrated by the fact that Greek poetry cannot be scanned in feet; that an Alexandrine is graceful in French, boring in English; that a genuine Haiku cannot be written in a Romance or Teutonic language, let alone translated into it; and that the Iliad wrenched into heroic couplets is a joke beside the *Essay on Man*, which belongs in them.

So that the basic rhythm of a language is not something that can be returned to for primitive effect; it is inherent in the language and remains with it through its developments. Likewise, the earliest stanza forms become a part of poetic tradition, and the use of them signifies no wrench with that tradition: the ballads of Houseman may have been old-fashioned as soon as they were penned, but they were never primitive; Rolfe Humphries' use of the Welsh bardic metres is delicate, intellectual, and 'civilized' in the extreme.

Several ways are left open to the modern primitivist in poetry. He may, though his poems do not come directly from mind to mouth (and indeed, are probably composed on the typewriter), make a deliberate and organized effort to get them heard, in which case poetry once more takes on the group atmosphere of primitive ritual. He may, though he is bound to use the signs and syntax of written language, deny their relevance by flinging them arbitrarily about the paging or grouping them in impossible combinations. He may strive, by rejecting the formalities of language where they do not fit, to reproduce the rhythm of the life which is his subject, to "make the sound an echo to the sense" in a way which Pope would not have called poetry. Or he may ignore the rhythmic traditions by accepting them and, using the simpler and/or freer verse traditions, not concentrating on the pattern he produces, never sacrificing the order of his meaning to the order of his rhyme, express his alienation from the civilization of which those traditions are part and parcel. In any of these techniques, he will concern himself with the world as physical, and his symbols will express the relation of himself as physical and instinctive to the physical world. He may regard the whole artifice of civilized society in much the same way that primitive cultures regard the supernatural in religion and magic: either as an uncontrollable terror to which he can only submit, or as an obscure but potentially comprehensible trick which he could change or control if he had sufficient power.

I should like briefly to mention three poets or groups of poets which seem to me, in one or more of the above ways, to display primitive elements in modern poetry.

The various attempts to prove e.e. cummings the poetic counterpart of the Dehumanists in painting and sculpture, have failed for the simple reason that cummings does not dehumanize. His poetry is

deliberately and consistently sensual. His voluminous *Poems 1923-1954* begins with the earth honored for the sake of "quivering continual thighs," and ends with the moon as "twilight's mystery made flesh." In between he is mystical but not contemplative, hymns a love which cannot be separated from the physical, treats progress as a mad god, and praises courage which is not mixed up with ideas. (His martyr Olaf martyrs himself for himself, not for an ideal, nor for the love of anyone else.)

It is true that cummings is a technical innovator, and his innovations, coming at the same time as the innovations of the Dehumanists in painting, has tended to link him with them. But when cummings plays with syntax, grammar and punctuation, he is not trying to create meaningful patterns of those elements, but to reject them. His grammatical distortions are sometimes supremely effective ("A world of made is not a world of born") and sometimes nonsense ("than he to foolish and to wise/offered immeasurable is/proudly"); but in his haphazard parentheses, unlikely inversions, interchanged parts of speech, extravagant spacing and disconcerting punctuation there is rarely any super-cerebral significance. The notion that he has any special concern for pattern, either as symbolic or in itself, may be dispelled by a comparison of "Spring is like a perhaps hand" as it is printed, and as cummings reads it. It is possible to invent convincing reasons for all the unlikely line-breaks and punctuation marks in this poem, but as the author reads it it is punctuated, like most poetry, exactly as it would be if it were prose. The only meaningful thing about his language symbols is that they do not mean anything. I see these 'innovations' not as concern for the written language as an art-form in itself, but as a rejection of a tradition, reflecting the rejections in his subject matter:

(While you and i have lips and voices which are for kissing
and to sing with who cares if some oneeyed son of a bitch
invents an instrument to measure Spring with?)

By far the purest (and only in that sense, best) examples of primitivism in modern poetry come from the American Beats, and their smaller following in England. The Beats do not go to the woods for nature; nature is life as they find it, and it includes cities, speed, heroin, and other people. A small part of this nature can be physically experienced and is therefore kind—power, sex, music, movement, food, drunkenness (all of which become unkind when distorted by social conventions)—the rest of it, like the elements to primitive tribes, is incomprehensible, alien and fearful. The Beats rarely write in rhyme or stanzas, and though their basic metre is still the iamb, their variations from it are attempts to reproduce the rhythms of the physical things about which they write: unretarded automotive speed; sexual tension, climax, relaxation; a dancing body.

Not only do the Beats attempt in these ways to eliminate poetic traditions of form and contemplation which lie between experience and expression, but they also make a deliberate effort to get their poetry into the ear, unlike most poets, who read when and where they are asked. The coffee houses of San Francisco and Greenwich Village, in which the Beats read their poems (to the primitive enough accompaniment of guitar strumming) are spreading over the country, and have appeared in Los Angeles, Dallas, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. The English Beatophiles, some of whom have published no more than a pamphlet, make organized reading tours, singly or in groups, from the counties to the universities and back again. At least one of these, Royston Ellis, though he publishes in pamphlets which he sells at his readings, has refused magazine publication, and has instead found himself a spot on a Midlands television station, where he reads the output of the preceding few days.

However the thought would disgust them, the Beats are the most academic illustration of what primitivism in modern poetry is, and how an artist may try to produce a symbol of life which is not a symbol-of-a-symbol of life. The New Brutalist Movement in England is a more positive, less violent, and by and large more successful expression of the primitive.

The New Brutalists, led by Ted Hughes (who spends his efforts on poetry, not leading, and is a leader only in the sense that he is being followed), rarely write about civilization and its conventions, either with interest or rage. They use conventional, if rather loose, forms. They sometimes demonstrate great skill in tight stanza forms and intricate rhyme schemes, but for the most part their poems are in off-rhymed or unrhymed lines of approximately equal length.

The distinguishing characteristic of the New Brutalists (which is a critic's misnomer, though it has stuck) is a strong sense of identification with animals, not merely with 'the animal' as 'the physical,' but with the instinctive actions and reactions upon which all thought and convention are based. The animals in their poems think. They reason and are logical. But all their reasoning is based on an elemental sense or assumption of their own natures, and whether this assumption is right or wrong, it is inseparable from them as creatures. So the "Cat" of William Dunlop learns to play the part of a sycophant, behaving as his owners expect him to:

... to mince
With delicate correctness, bland as cream,
Among the best tea service; lapped in silk,
Conceals a yawn (eyes wincing cosily)
To watch a stooge pull strings, feed him a line,
Or mime his mousing with a ball of wool
Juggled

—until he strikes,
Spins it off axis, sinks five searing claws
Deep into Europe, and begins
Unravelling the globe.

Ted Hughes's "Hawk Roosting"
reasons about the universe thus:

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes
closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked
feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and
eat . . .

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

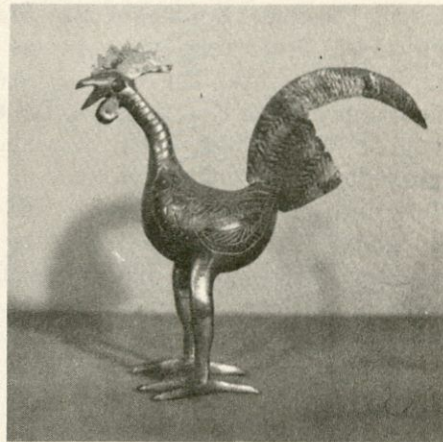


Fig. 21

I think it is not too much to
suggest that the New Brutalist's
animals have the same characteristics as the totem animals of many
primitive tribes. That is, the poet regards the animal both as a power-
ful extension of himself and as a god. The hawk is a recurring image
in Hughes' poetry, and sometimes, as above, the hawk and the poet
are one; at other times the poet is an earth-bound human cowering
before the power of his totem:

I drown in the drumming ploughland, I drag up
Heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth's mouth

From the clay that clutches my each step to the ankle
With the habit of the dogged grave, but the hawk

Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye.
His wings hold all creation in a weightless quiet.

The use of animals is more than metaphor. It is not comparison. It is
identification, physical, mystical, and essential. Again, I think it is
not too much to suggest that, whereas other poets have said "My love
is like a red red rose," and "I *should have been a crab*," there is special
significance in Hughes's insistent:

There is no better way to know us,
Than as two wolves, come separately to a wood.

The poet means literally that there is no better way to know us, and
that to explain our relationship through the symbols of reason is
double-talk, in more than one sense of the word.

Whether the new primitivism has anything of lasting value to offer
to poetry remains to be seen. These remarks are meant only to sug-

gest that it is something possible and definite, that it is more than an
impulse to be impudently crude, cruel and sexual, and that its at-
tempt is to break back through the middle symbols which separate
experience from expression. I shall be satisfied if I prove interestingly
wrong.

Janet Eysselinck

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Lent by the Museum of the American Indian, Dr. Frederick J. Dockstader, Director. (Paranthesical numbers refer to the Museum's own catalogue.)

1. Man's beaded vest, Winnebago (1/720)
2. Embroidered dance kilt, Hopi (1/1223)
3. Cornhusk mask of a woman, Seneca (6/1111)
4. Embroidered dance sash, Hopi (8/5408)
5. False Face mask, Seneca (8/7807)
6. Woman's dance wand, Hopi (9/585)
7. Wicker basketry plaque, Hopi (10/5281)
8. Buffalo hide shield—The Sun, Crow (10/8308)
9. Kachina doll—Qocha Kachina, Hopi (11/3634)
10. Woven blanket—Yei figures, Navaho (11/6450)
11. Painted hide—"box design," Teton Sioux (12/2246)
12. Ivory carving, Eskimo (14/3362)
13. Polychrome water jar, Acoma (15/6918)
14. Woven ceremonial blanket—Chilkat, Tlingit (16/1693)
15. Carvel shaman's wand, Tlingit (16/6791)
16. Kachina mask—Tasap Kachina, Hopi (18/5940)
17. Model totem pole, Haida (19/3527)
18. Painted cedar bark hat, Haida (20/9281)
19. Modern Kachina doll—Choqapolo Kachina, Hopi (22/9213)
20. Painted hide—Sioux Winter Count, Brule Sioux (23/246)
21. Beaded cap—Glengarry type, Mohawk (23/722)
22. Coiled basketry plaque, Hopi (23/1209)
23. Carved steatite walrus, Eskimo (E9.1585)

From the Jack Kulp collection of African art, Lent by Roberson Memorial, Mr. Keith Martin, Director. (Paranthesical numbers refer to the Kulp collection catalogue.)

24. Helmet, buffalo horn, calabash, cowrie shell, Dagomba, Ghana (AK-1)
25. Helmet mask, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-3)
26. Head of woman, wood, Benin, Nigeria (AK-6)
27. Pipe, bronze, Bamoum, Cameroan (AK-10-1)
28. Table in figure of man, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-11-1/2)
29. Table in figure of woman, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-11-3/4)
30. Mask, bronze, Dahomey (AK-17)
31. Bird, wood, Ivory Coast (AK-18)
32. Whirling toy in figure of woman and boy, brass, Dahomey (AK-20-1/2)
33. Helmet mask, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-39)
34. Rattle, iron, Ghana (AK-43)
35. Figure of man, wood, Sierra Leone (AK-45-1)
36. Dance mask, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-46-2)
37. Two vases, calabash (AK-50-1/2)
38. Jar, calabash and paint (AK-7)
39. Spear, wood, leather, iron, Nigeria (AK-40-2/4)
40. Head of man, wood, Benin, Nigeria (AK-51)

41. Figure of woman, wood, Ivory Coast (AK-52-2)
42. Seated figure of woman, wood, Ivory Coast (AK-55)
43. Bowl, calabash, Ghana (AK-56)
44. Variable-pitch drum, wood and leather (AK-58-1/2)
45. Mask, iron, Ghana (AK-79)
46. Five figurines—orchestra and dancer, iron and paint, Nigeria (AK-80-1/2/3/4/5)
47. Cock, brass, Dahomey (AK-82-1)
48. Two figures of men and hyenas, brass, Dahomey (AK-82-2/3)
49. Two figures of women with trays, brass, Dahomey (AK-82-5/6)
50. Head of woman, ivory (AK-84)
51. Leg drum, wood (AK-41)
52. Gold weights, bronze, Ashanti, Ghana (AK-86-1/2/3/4/5)
53. Figure of man, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-92)
54. Figure of woman, wood, Senufo, Ivory Coast (AK-52-1)

Lent by Mr. Lou Young, Den of Antiquity, New York City.

55. Harpooned whale, whale's tooth and ivory, Scrimshaw
56. Mounted bull-fighter, whale's tooth, Scrimshaw
57. Engraving of queen, walrus tusk, Scrimshaw
58. Carved letter opener, mastodon ivory, Scrimshaw
59. Pierced and engraved box, elephant ivory, Scrimshaw
60. Sewing box with pin cushion, rosewood and whale ivory, Scrimshaw
61. Two tops, whale bone, Scrimshaw
62. Carved bear handle, walrus ivory with gold ferule, Eskimo
63. Mallet with seal carving, ivory, Eskimo
64. Carved seal, ivory, Eskimo
65. Carved walrus head, ivory, Eskimo

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. David Bloom, Binghamton, New York

66. Seated figure, wood, Benin, Nigeria

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Bernard Gallin, Binghamton, New York

67. Oil pot, ceramic, China, Yuan dynasty
68. Statue of Goddess Matsu, wood, Taiwan
69. Buddhist temple rubbing, Bangkok, Thailand
70. Painting of dancer, Thailand
71. Painting of Goddess Kuan Yin, Japan
72. Painting of roses, Japan
73. Two prints, Japan, 18th century (?)

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Hans Hoffman, Binghamton, New York

74. Two polychrome masato ("beer") bowls, Shipibo, Peru
75. Three food bowls, Shipibo, Peru
76. Water jug, ceramic, Shipibo, Peru
77. Doll, wood, Chimu Period (?), Peru
78. Bear, steatite, Eskimo, Richmond Gulf

79. Otter and fish, steatite and ivory, Eskimo, Richmond Gulf
80. Kayak and Eskimo, wood and sealskin, Eskimo, Great Whale River
81. Knife handle, ivory, Eskimo, Belcher Island
82. Kayak and Eskimo, ivory and steatite, Eskimo, Richmond Gulf
83. Two figures of women, brass, Cameroun
84. Pipe in figure of man, ceramic, Bamoum, Cameroun
85. Two figures of men, wood, Cameroun
86. Bird, wood, Cameroun

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Michael M. Horowitz, Binghamton, New York

87. Kula necklace, spondylus shell, clam shell, coconut fibre, Trobriand Islands, Melanesia
88. Harpoon, wood and shark's teeth, Melanesia
89. Club, wood, Melanesia
90. Single-spout whistling vessel, ceramic, Gallinazo Period (?), Peru
91. Statue of first *avatara* of Vishnu, soapstone, India
92. Masked no actors, wood and textile, Japan, 19th century (?)
93. Feline deity, ceramic, pre-Columbian, Mexico
94. Pendant, iron and brass, Congo
95. Cane, bamboo and brass, Congo
96. Canoe, latex, West Indies
97. Water jug, ceramic and basketry, Martinique

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Blair Kling, Binghamton, New York

98. Standing Buddha, brass, Nepal
99. Six dolls—gods with instruments, wood and papier mache, Banares, India
100. "Devil dancer's" mask, papier mache, Nepal
101. Three pieces of folk sculpture, brass, Bengal, India
102. Fragment of story-teller's scroll—Krishna-Lila Pata, water color, Bengal, India, 19th century (?)
103. Three dolls and lingam—Jagannatha, Balarama, Sulhadra, wood, Puri, Orissa, India

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Robert Kroetsch, Binghamton, New York

104. Man and bear, soapstone, Eskimo, Bathurst Inlet
105. Bear, soapstone, Eskimo, King William Island

Lent by Mr. Neville Linton, Binghamton, New York

106. Figure of Indian and palm tree, balata latex, Arawak, British Guiana

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Irving L. Zupnick, Vestal, New York

107. Gold weight, bronze, Ashanti, Ghana

Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

