

BOOK REVIEWS

BUDIL, Ivo T.: *Mýtus, jazyk a kulturní antropologie* (Myth, Language and Cultural Anthropology). Prague, Triton 1995. 239 pp.

Shortly after the appearance of the book *Sociální a kulturní antropologie* (Social and Cultural Anthropology) a similar book has recently been published in the Czech Republic. The author divided the book into 4 chapters. He describes anthropology as the science of knowing “the others” and says that its development from the Renaissance to the present actually reflects the fates of our civilization.

In the introductory chapter I. Budil focuses on a concept of “anthropology” and the beginnings of its use, its origin as a specific scientific field in the 18th century and on its original classical division into pre-historic, ethnic, and physical anthropology. He alerts that at the very beginning of the development of this science there were two principal aspects of the contents of anthropology. While continental Europe preferred physical anthropology which was not directly associated with ethnology, archaeology, and linguistics, the Anglo-Saxon world, particularly Great Britain and USA, inclined to the much wider definition of anthropology where the privileged place was occupied by cultural anthropology. The author argues that this dichotomy still persists. Budil then focuses his attention on differentiating between the notions of cultural and social anthropology. He says that at first these concepts had more of a semantic than a content character. American anthropology mainly constructed by immigrants from the German linguistic area began to use the concept of “cultural anthropology” while the British school inspired by French sociologists gave preference to the term of “social anthropology”. The difference between the two sciences gradually deepened and gained new epistemological contents. The author maintains that one of the chief methodological differences in individual anthropological schools is the question of synchronic and diachronic approaches to cultural reality; their derivation from various philosophical currents which always had a principal influence on anthropology being of equal importance.

The most extensive part of the book is the chapter (Development of Anthropology) dealing with the development of anthropology till the first half of the 20th century. Budil introduces various schools and explorers to the reader but mainly sheds light on historical and cultural context in which new anthropological currents were born. He placed into the survey also such thinkers who cannot be ranked among anthropologists but through their work in other fields of knowledge, they made an important contribution to the formulation of this discipline. Central to this chapter is the conviction that the formation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultural anthropology cannot be understood without taking movements of European thought throughout the modern era into account. For these reasons, the reader can get acquainted for instance with the works of Niccolo Machiavelli, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, and Max Weber. The author also traces the evolution of individual currents within the framework of cultural anthropology, mainly evolutionism represented by Edward B. Taylor, Lewis H. Morgan, James G. Frazer, etc. The chapter also deals with the formation and development of French social anthropology and the work of Emile Durkheim who was the first to write about binary oppositions and whose idea of the dualism of divine – sacred and worldly – profane in the thought of archaic humans was adopted by a number of religionists, even by Mircea Eliade so often cited today. The chapter ends with a survey of the twentieth-century cultural-anthropological schools: functionalism and its representatives – Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred R. Redcliffe-Brown, configurationism and its prominent defenders – Albert L. Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Melville J. Herskovitz, psychological anthropology inspired by Sigmund Freud and Gustav Jung, cultural and biological determinism and the work of Margaret Mead, and many other data.

The third chapter entitled Man, Language and Society discusses in detail the schools of cultural anthropology which were inspired by a synchronous approach to linguistics founded by J. Baudoin de Courtenay, Ferdinand de Saussure and representatives of the Prague linguistic group. This current in the development of linguistics and a similar current in anthropology and other human sciences is known as structuralism. The author centres on the crucial figure in structuralist anthropology – French

ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Analysing his works and ideas, Budil concentrated mainly on the elucidation of what was the basis of this world-famous scientist for formulating ethnology as an exact science. He gives a detailed interpretation of Strauss' thesis on exchange as a social determinant of every human activity since human society is an open system of exchange operating at three communication levels: 1) exchange of information constituting language, 2) exchange of women creating a system of relatives, 3) exchange of goods, the essence of economic activities. The author also describes Strauss' structuralistic account of the myths of indigenous nations. The end of the chapter is devoted to a significant movement within American cultural anthropology which began in the sixties when the advent of a new paradigm of this science coined new ethnography, with its main branches of cognitive and symbolic anthropology, was observable. Voices criticizing the new wave of anthropology in the USA reproved their predecessors that traditional methods of exploration cannot catch all aspects of cultural reality. Therefore a turnover was launched from classical academic scientism to the "real life of culture" and a boom in research on ethnic and religious minorities, sexual minorities, feminists, etc. began; simply, cultural anthropology returned from its journeys through exotic countries back home and started to pay attention to its own society and its problems.

The title of the last chapter is Man, Myth and Religion. The author studies an anthropological constant, namely religious thought. The author says that from the perspective of anthropology and sociology, the term religion denotes a complex and extensive set of various modes of behaviour of both archaic and modern communities. The history and basic concepts of religionism are here presented through categories with which western scholars work within non-European cultures. After introducing the chief representatives of religionism, the author directs his attention towards the classification of religion and to notions of myth and ritual. These concepts are explained through the opinions of different personalities so as to picture the differences in their interpretation through various scientific channels. The parts of this chapter about space, time, personality and the soul as envisioned within archaic cultures illustrated by concrete examples from researches are very interesting. The end of the chapter presents basic categories of theistic and karma religions and different versions of contemporary religions making attempts at creating new syncretic ideologies.

The book Myth, Language and Cultural Anthropology will attract the attention of those who are interested in the background of the thought of individual cultural-anthropological currents and their personalities. From this perspective a number of new pieces of information and connections are found in the book which gradually complete our image of the sources and evolution of western science. The reader realizes how long was the journey of this scientific discipline from the past century, from the period of the culminating power of the West when anthropology was a theoretical science; with patience and with awareness of its immense technical predominance it studied customs and rituals of "primitives" and "wild" people and the present status of cultural and social anthropology which already reflects the reality of the advent of a new civilization characterized by the author himself by such attributes as postindustrial, postideological, postmodern, multicultural, and multiracial.

Rastislava Stoličná
Institute of Ethnology,
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Jakubovo nám. 12
813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia