

EDITORIAL NOTE

We commence this first issue of 2009 with a paper given by Professor Maurice Godelier, *Directeur d'études* at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, on his visit to Helsinki in November 2008. The Finnish Anthropological Society would like to express its gratitude to Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Helsinki for the material assistance they offered on this occasion at which Professor Godelier addressed one of the grand questions in the human sciences: what makes a society? Or, as he frames it himself: *What are the social relations, of whatever kind they may be—political, religious, economic, kinship, etc.—that have the capacity to bring together and to weld into an all-encompassing whole and to endow with an additional, global and shared identity a number of human groups and individuals who thereby form a 'society' with borders that are known if not recognized by their neighbor societies?* After examining the answers that have been offered by different thinkers at different times, and the various solutions explored by anthropologists during the life of the discipline, Professor Godelier assays the evidence and asserts, controversially, that only “what we in the West call political-religious relations have the capacity to make societies”. It was a lecture that generated animated debate which is ongoing amongst those who attended, and which may now be opened to those reading this issue. We are fortunate to be able to further amplify some of the points raised by publishing an interview with our visitor conducted by Tuulikki Pietilä and Janne Ahonen, in which he traces his thought over the past decades and also discusses his vision of the future of anthropology and its unfading relevance in the contemporary world.

The first article in this issue—“*My House is Protected by a Dragon*”: *White South Africans, magic and sacred spaces in post-apartheid Cape Town*—is based on a paper presented by Annika Teppo (University of Helsinki) at an African Studies Seminar organized at the University of Helsinki during the spring of 2008. In it the author discusses transformations in the religious practices of White South Africans since the negotiated revolution of 1994 produced a liberal constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion to all. Teppo's informants are White South Africans from Cape Town—neopagans who practice Wiccan witchcraft and *sangomas* who practice traditional African religion—whose experiences cast light on the novel conjuncture of local and global which is resculpting ‘sacred urban spaces’ in response to anxieties about spiritual insecurity and racial boundaries.

This is followed by an article by Johanna Whiteley (London School of Economics)—*Food and Bodily Fabrication: An alimentary approach to personhood in Papua New Guinea*—in which she postulates and elucidates an ontologically significant relationship between the ingestion of food, bodily transformation, and the production of different ‘types’ or ‘kinds’ of person in Papua New Guinea. Basing her argument on a reanalysis of existing ethnographies from the region, the author joins scholars who feel that food should be a critical focus in anthropological studies of social processes in Papua New Guinea, specifically those concerned with the activation of personhood.

The issue also includes a research report by Päivi Hasu (University of Helsinki)—*The Witch, the Zombie and the Power of Jesus: A trinity of spiritual warfare in Tanzanian Pentecostalism*—which is based on her research into a unique Pentecostal-Charismatic church in Dar es Salaam which acknowledges and attempts to defeat zombie-witchcraft. In a paper that was first presented at a public seminar in Helsinki in February 2009 entitled “Spirits and African Christianity”, Hasu sites the conjuncture of neo-Pentecostal gospel, demonology and deliverance in the context of social transformations and economic reforms in Tanzania.

The topic of discussion in the Forum of this issue, “Deconstructing Dumont’s India”, comprises an examination of promising theoretical orientations for anthropological research in India, and consists of three brief opinion-essays by Siru Aura (who contributes the formal lecture she offered in defence of her Ph.D. dissertation in Helsinki in June 2008), Sirpa Tenhunen (University of Helsinki) and Minna Säävälä (University of Helsinki). In these three short reflections, tribute is paid to the work of Dumont in India at the same time as his premises are probed and his findings deconstructed. All three writers, who have amassed considerable time in the field between them, query the immutability of principles of hierarchy in Indian social organisation for rather different reasons. Further discussion on the subject is very welcome.

MARIE-LOUISE KARTTUNEN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF