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MILLENARIAN MOVEMENTS

SEE: *Religion; Religious Conversion*

MISSIONARIES

Missionaries can be broadly defined as propagandists of a religion. Within the more narrow perspective of anthropology, missionaries are nearly always preachers of the Christian faith outside the so-called Christian world. Catholic missionaries are usually unmarried priests, Brothers, or Sisters, whereas Protestant missionaries are often married men and women who live with their families in a foreign country. Missionary work consists of direct preaching or practical work, such as education, health care, and agricultural activities. Missionary zeal has always been a characteristic of the Christian faith. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul, the first great missionary, wrote: "Woe for me if I do not preach the

gospel." Missionaries see their work as bringing "good news." Originally, this was a message of salvation and a call for conversion, but today more and more missionaries stress the fact that they want to make people conscious of their situation in a rapidly changing world. Generalizing about missionaries, however, is not possible. They include verticalists, who limit themselves to preaching, and horizontalists, who are dedicated to practical work, and they vary from cultural relativists to fundamentalists.

Missionary activities took on a global dimension in the sixteenth century (the Age of Discovery) and again at the end of the nineteenth century with the upsurge of colonialism in Africa (Neill 1964). Missionaries were an inherent part of the colonial scene, together with administrators, merchants, settlers, and anthropologists. All of these people contributed to the destruction of local cultures, even by simply being there with their tools, crops, medicines, books, and money. Missionaries were particularly well represented in Africa, Oceania, and Latin America. Societies in the influence sphere of such great religions as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Shinto, and — one should add—communism, were much less frequently visited by missionaries, not in the least because they were often barred by political and legal means from entering.

Missionaries are in two ways relevant to anthropologists: they are, in a sense, their colleagues (and antipodes), and they are also "objects" of anthropological study.

COLLEAGUES AND ANTIPODES

Most anthropologists see themselves as the opposite of missionaries, but it cannot be denied that they have much in common. Both missionaries and anthropologists work in a foreign culture and take an interest in the people of that culture. Both also have facilitated colonialism by being brokers between colonial authorities and local populations, and both have carried out and published ethnographic work. In the field, missionaries were indeed the other foreigners who were most likely to be encountered by anthropologists. The latter usually spent one to two years doing research, whereas it was not uncommon for missionaries to stay for the duration of their lives. Meetings abroad between anthropologists and missionaries sometimes led to mutual companionship and exchange of ethnographic data, but they could also

MISSIONARIES

be the cause of irritation and animosity, when the differences in objective and perspective were too great (Beidelman 1982).

Missionaries as well as anthropologists contributed substantially to the colonial enterprise. Their relative closeness to the population made them prominent intermediaries who were able to translate the indigenous concepts and needs for administrators and vice versa. Even when they opposed colonial rule, they could do little more than soften its effects on the indigenous population. In many cases, however, missionaries benefited from the presence of the colonial power, just as anthropologists did, and supported it to further their main objective—the promulgation of the Christian faith and the founding of Christian communities.

The common interest in culture was—and still is—the most significant bond between missionaries and anthropologists. Before Bronislaw Malinowski “invented” fieldwork early in the twentieth century, missionaries were practically the only serious students of foreign cultures. They learned local languages; wrote dictionaries and grammars; collected proverbs, riddles, songs, legends, and folktales; and described cultural beliefs and practices. Some of the most prominent missionaries in the last five centuries were Bartolomé de las Casas, who wrote about the culture of the Indians in Central America and criticized the colonial practices of his fellow Spaniards; Bernadino de Sahagún, who published a book about the Mexican Indians; Gabriel Sagard, who wrote a lively account of his stay with the Huron Indians in Canada; Joseph-François Lafitau, who also worked in Canada and wrote a great many books on American Indians; William Ellis, who published about Polynesian cultures; Robert H. Codrington, who studied Melanesian cultures and languages; Henri A. Junod, who worked in Mozambique and Transvaal, South Africa, and wrote an extensive ethnography about the Tonga. From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, many missionaries started to correspond with “armchair anthropologists,” such as James G. Frazer and Wilhelm Schmidt, who incorporated that information in their publications.

Even when anthropologists began to carry out fieldwork for themselves, missionaries held some important advantages over anthropologists; their prolonged stay in a community and their fluency in

the language enabled them to write richly detailed and insightful anthropological accounts. Most missionaries also felt more affinity with the *anima religiosa* of the people they stayed with than atheist anthropologists. Some of the most empathic ethnographic studies were produced by missionaries such as Maurice Leenhardt, Eric de Rosny, Edwin W. Smith, and Bengt Sundkler. Missionaries played a crucial role in the foundation (in 1926) and early years of what is now the International African Institute, a platform for students of African culture.

The relationship between missionaries and anthropologists, however, became more and more strained. Most anthropologists disapproved of the missionary goal. They accused missionaries—often rightly—of destroying local cultures. Missionaries forbade heathen practices, such as rituals, certain sexual habits, polygynous marriage, and drinking. They forced people to get rid of their statues, temples, sacred objects, and other artifacts. Missionaries personified what anthropologists detested most: ethnocentrism. As Norman Etherinton (1983) notes: “The missionary deserved more opprobrium even than the white settler or the mining magnate. The latter merely wanted the Africans’ lands and labour. Missionaries wanted their souls.” Anthropologists developed a stereotypical image of missionaries as preachers and agents of change, which they contrasted to their image of themselves as listeners and custodians of culture (Stipe 1980). Interestingly, anthropologists rarely voiced opposition to proselytism by “missionaries” from other religions (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam). They judged the ethnographic achievements of missionaries—with some laudable exceptions—as poor, amateurish, and biased with Christian presuppositions. As a result, the animosity between the two groups grew, and anthropologists blotted out all traces of missionary assistance and companionship from their publications. Missionaries became an embarrassment in the academic world. Once colleagues, they had become antipodes, even enemies of anthropologists.

That hostility has, in the last decade, subsided to some degree. Present-day missionaries have stopped their iconoclastic practices. They tend to have a more open attitude toward local cultures and engage in various activities to enhance the well-being of the community, and anthropologists appreciate these efforts. Anthropology is now a regular required subject in most missionary-training programs, and some

missionaries have attempted to become more professional in their anthropological work (Luzbetak 1988). The attitudes of anthropologists toward missionaries also improved, through changes in their own outlook. Critical and reflexive anthropologists realized that they too have a "faith" and a message that they spread—consciously or otherwise. They discovered that they differ less than previously admitted from missionaries. Moreover, the idea of the anthropologist as a conservator of a static culture has become totally obsolete, if in fact it ever existed. Anthropologists acknowledge that people do not exist only as subjects of research, but that the people themselves may want to change. It would be an example of neoethnocentrism to try to stop them. Both the anthropologist and the missionary are involved in processes of cultural change.

OBJECTS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

Missionaries are part of the ethnographic reality that is studied by anthropologists. They figure prominently in four fields of anthropological interest—politics, religion, health care, and education. The importance of the political role of missionaries during the period of colonization can hardly be overestimated. They were the most persistent and closest representatives of the colonizing culture. In their preaching and daily work they demonstrated a new life-style, which prepared the ground for colonial integration. Missionaries brought along a capitalist ethos and taught new modes of thinking and production that anticipated the imposition of colonial rule and inclusion of the indigenous population in the market economy.

This is not to say that all missionaries supported the colonial presence. In many cases, missionaries were critical of and opposed to colonial politics. They could be troublesome witnesses of colonial cruelties, which they reported through their own channels. Such a reaction was most likely on the part of missionaries who originated from a country other than the colonizers. Belgian missionaries in Belgian Congo (now Zaire), for example, largely supported the Belgian colonial policy; missionaries from other countries tended to be far more critical (Markowitz 1973). Hostility between missionaries and colonial authorities was particularly strong when their respective home countries were at loggerheads with one another. Even where missionaries criticized colonial policy, however, their missionary work did favor it *de facto*. In their

schools, they helped to build up an indigenous intelligentsia who could assist and eventually continue the colonial transformation of the local society. Through their medical work, they contributed to a healthier and more numerous work force. By their religious and moral teachings, they molded a spirit that was more adaptive to the colonizers' civilization.

Outright and open opposition to colonial policy was, in fact, relatively rare. Most missionaries saw the colonial presence as a favorable factor for the propagation of their faith and the establishment of Christian communities. Political, even military, force was sometimes welcomed to achieve those objectives. Practical innovations, such as agricultural improvements, health care, schools, and trade, served that same missionary goal but were also pursued in their own right; most missionaries saw themselves as part of a general civilizing mission. Historical-anthropological research, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Oceania, needs to take the missionary factor into account.

The same principle applies to students of religion. Missionaries have deeply influenced religious belief and experience throughout the world. Missionary and independent Christian churches often dominate the religious landscape. Until today, however, "orthodox" Catholic and Protestant religion is largely overlooked in religious anthropology. Studies of religion in Africa, Oceania, and Latin America rarely discuss the impact of missionary Christianity. If anthropologists take an interest in Christianity, it usually is limited to the independent churches and prophetic movements (Fernandez 1978); it has to be different from the European or North American version of religion. Christianity, it seems, constitutes as much of an embarrassment to anthropologists as the missionaries themselves. It is the outcome of an ethnocentric endeavor that they prefer to ignore. By doing so, they ignore not only the work of missionaries but also an authentic part of local religious experience.

Missionaries also introduced school education and new forms of health care. They have affected local conceptions of health and medical practice and changed socialization and training. Here, too, anthropologists tend to overlook the missionary factor. Medical-anthropological studies rarely take into account the crucial role of missionary medicine, and a similar critique can be leveled against studies of socialization and education.

The fact that anthropologists have not included the role of missionaries in their ethnographic work is undoubtedly related to their ambivalent attitude toward missionaries. Another factor is the exoticist bias in most anthropological research. Anthropologists have preferred to study other cultures in their "otherness" and turned a blind eye to familiar Western features in those cultures. That trend was reinforced by the main theoretical models that steered anthropological research in the first hundred years of its existence. Evolutionists sought purely indigenous traits in their attempt to draw parallels with the prehistorical pasts of their own societies. The structural-functionalist approach predisposed anthropologists to view culture as an organically working system. Foreign elements, such as missionaries—but also colonial agents and traders—disturbed that functioning process and were left out of the picture. Cognitive and symbolic anthropology focused on modes of thought and reasoning that were distinctly different from Western discursive thinking and thus led researchers away from missionary traces.

Since the 1970s the situation has started to change. Anthropologists can no longer overlook the cosmopolitan features of the cultures they study. They are taking an interest in how people react to the ideas and commodities invading their community. Marxist anthropologists view societies in the context of global political and economic development. Cognitivists and symbolists are now interested in cultural reinterpretation and the marriage of old and new images in processes of symbolization. These new trends include the study of the work of missionaries and their successors. This shift in ethnographic and theoretical interest coincides with a less ambiguous relationship between missionaries and anthropologists. Present-day anthropologists are less bothered by the presence of Christianity than those of the previous generation, because Christianity no longer constitutes a part of their own repressed past. For most of them Christianity is just a religion, like any other. Missionaries and Christianity have now themselves assumed "exotic" features and have become attractive themes for anthropological study (Schneider and Lindenbaum 1987, Huber 1988, BurrIDGE 1991).

CONCLUSION

Missionaries have for a long time troubled anthropologists. As partners in the field, they were not taken seriously by anthropologists. As local inhabitants and

cultural brokers, they were almost systematically neglected in the ethnographic work of anthropologists, even in the fields where their influence has been most profound—politics, religion, health, and socialization.

Anthropologists who are reflexive of their own position and ethnographic praxis have begun to discover the hidden similarities between missionaries and themselves. The most telling similarity is that their scientific presuppositions do not differ essentially from the religious conceptions of missionaries. Both missionaries and anthropologists are unable to leave the safe grounds of their own beliefs when they meet people from other cultures.

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SEE ALSO: *Cognitive Anthropology; Colonialism; Critical Anthropology; Cultural Relativism; Educational Anthropology; Ethnocentrism; Marxism; Medical Anthropology; Reflexive Anthropology; Religion*

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MODAL PERSONALITY AND NATIONAL CHARACTER

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MODAL PERSONALITY AND NATIONAL CHARACTER

The concepts of "modal personality" and "national character" emerged in U.S. anthropology during the 1930s, together with the development of a new subfield of anthropology then known as "culture and personality studies." By the 1990s this subfield was called "psychological anthropology." The development of these fields was stimulated by the introduction and rise of psychoanalytic theory in the United States during the 1920s, as well as by the theoretical orientation of the American anthropologists who were trained in the Boasian tradition (Manson 1988). This tradition recognized the psychological nature of culture, especially as it was reflected in the history, language, religion, and folklore of a people. Thus, it is not surprising that the leading theoreticians behind the concepts of modal personality and national character, namely, Ruth Benedict, Cora Du Bois, Abraham Kardiner, Ralph Linton, and Margaret Mead, had received some if not all of their training under Franz Boas at Columbia University, in New York.

The concept of the modal personality arose from the collaboration of Kardiner, Linton, and Du Bois. Kardiner, who had a year's worth of graduate training under Boas, went on to become a physician specializing in psychiatry and psychoanalysis and participated in a training analysis that was conducted by Sigmund Freud himself. Kardiner was a founding member of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, the first U.S. institution to offer training for the practice of psychoanalysis, which was established in 1931 (Manson 1988). In 1933 Kardiner began to teach a seminar on psychoanalysis and the social sciences that continued over the next fifteen years and became known as the Kardiner-Linton Seminar. From modest be-

ginnings, the seminar became one of the most famous and influential ever held in U.S. anthropology, attracting analysts from the Institute and anthropologists and graduate students from Columbia University, including (in addition to Linton and Du Bois) David Aberle, Burt Aginsky, Victor Barnouw, Benedict, Ruth Bunzel, Joseph Casagrande, John Gillin, Adamson Hoebel, Clyde Kluckhohn, Edward Sapir, and James West, among others (Manson 1988).

Kardiner used the seminar to develop a modified Freudian theory of the relationship between culture and the individual, testing his formulations against the ethnographic data that was provided by the anthropologists (Kardiner et al. 1945). The concept of the basic or modal personality is at the center of Kardiner's theory. The modal personality is the personality configuration shared by most of the adult members of a group that results from the commonality of early childhood experiences. Whereas Kardiner used the term "basic personality," Du Bois (1944) stressed the concept as "the central tendency" of the range of individual variability in personality within a culture and used the term "modal" instead.

Kardiner also distinguished the "primary" institutions, which were crucial in the formation of the modal personality and to which the ego adapts, from the "secondary" institutions that were the result or "projections" of the modal personality. Primary institutions include such features of culture as family organization, care or neglect of children, approaches to discipline, feeding, weaning, toilet training, and sexual taboos and the society's mode of subsistence, whereas secondary institutions include religion as well as attitude toward deities, folklore, artistic expression, and attitudes toward illness. Kardiner viewed the concept of the modal personality as an operational tool that could be used for describing the interrelationships and the fit between various social practices and a constant set of human needs and drives (Kardiner et al. 1945).

Although the concept of modal personality was applied to the analysis of several groups, including the Marquesas, the Tanala of Madagascar, the Comanche, and Plainville (United States), the outstanding anthropological work to emerge from the seminar was Du Bois's *The People of Alor* (1944). Du Bois conducted eighteen months of fieldwork among the people of an Atimelang village on the island of Alor, in Indonesia, collecting both ethnographic and