

INTRODUCTION

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'From initiation rituals in Papua New Guinea to the Twin Towers': this is how Maurice Godelier (2008b) summarizes the anthropological project and its remit, the scope of anthropology. Hegel's declaration that 'nothing that is human is foreign to me' is both apt and applied in practice, simultaneously tracing the purpose of a scientific programme and the curves of a personal trajectory. More than a simple assertion that the human being is a social animal, Maurice Godelier's work is guided by the precept that the human being has to actively produce society in order to live. It is a condition of existence. The intellectual path of a man who has taught several generations of anthropologists evinces both the broad ambitions of anthropology as a science of universal significance and a view of social reality as a tangible and, in principle, an intelligible set of facts. The practice of the social sciences reveals a constant dialectic between ethnography and theory, the particular and the general, the local and the global, the diversity of facts and their unification in anthropological analysis. The relentless intellectual movement between the acknowledgement of the particularistic nature of the local and the general scientific project it advances is a constant feature of Maurice Godelier's corpus. Such a project is feasible only if knowledge is progressively accumulated, if the theoretical apparatus is part of a developing paradigmatic choice, if schools of thought and their epistemological frameworks are non-dogmatic. Students of Maurice Godelier have heard him say, on many occasions, that one needs to be capable of using the ideas and concepts that generate understanding, irrespective of any loyalty towards a particular intellectual guide. The above is and has been Maurice Godelier's approach ever since he began to practice anthropology: Godelier in a nutshell, so to speak. As he is one of the most prominent and influential French anthropologists, both in and outside France, the present volume was written with two objectives

in mind: to pay tribute to a scholar for whom the social sciences in general and anthropology in particular have a purpose and follow a rationale, and to demonstrate, according to Godelier's own premises, that through the diversity of approaches, fields and domains, the scope of anthropology is concerned with the intelligibility of social forms and transformations.

Godelier was born on 28 February 1934 in Cambrai, northern France; his modest family background hardly provided the conditions necessary for him to become, as a young man, the assistant of the historian Fernand Braudel at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, and later the assistant of Claude Lévi-Strauss at the Collège de France. A few contingencies, as he himself calls them, contributed to his intellectual emancipation. Having been spotted as a brilliant pupil, he gained entrance to the local catholic school which his parents could not have afforded without the priests' help.

Two events that occurred during his school years seem to have marked his later life and work. First, his encounter with a Polish priest which opened his mind to contemporary art – in particular surrealism and cubism – and to the way it reconfigures or restructures recognizable elements into a different phenomenology; and, secondly, that with a young communist who gave him the confidential address of a bookshop in Paris that sold Marxist books. These events were crucial since, as we will see in the following chapters, while Maurice Godelier applied materialist theory to his anthropological work, he also promulgated a form of Marxism that was not mainstream, one in which the structural transformations of systems became central, and in which structuralism and Marxism coexist as combined methods of investigation.

Indeed, he became friends with Michel Foucault, whose lectures on psychiatry he was following, but turned his back on the kind of materialism that Foucault and others, such as Louis Althusser, were developing at the time and which proclaimed the death of the subject. Similar reasons distanced him from Louis Dumont in later years, at least the Louis Dumont of *Homo hierarchicus* (1967). Dumont sometimes opposed too sharply individualistic societies to holistic societies, while for Godelier the individualistic attitude in Western society is precisely what constitutes its holistic character.

Rather, he turned his interest towards scholars who were analysing concrete historical and social facts in a structural way, but integrating the materialist approach when addressing the social transformations of these structural systems. They included, among others, Jean-Pierre Vernant (e.g. 1962), a historian and anthropologist specializing in ancient Greece and developing a structuralist approach to Greek mythology and society; Jacques Gernet (e.g. 1972), whose work

on Chinese civilization had been groundbreaking; or Paul Garelli (e.g. 1969), a scholar of Assyrian history. As Descola, Hamel and Lemonnier explain (1999 8), through the analysis of the principles of causality, Godelier endeavoured to graft a physiological structure onto Lévi-Straussian structural morphology. The analytical separation between infrastructure and superstructure is not systematically reflected in a distinction of social institutions but, in many societies, coexists in one and the same social institution, such as kinship, in which functions or causalities are embedded and overlap. Godelier particularly crystallized this approach in his two volumes of *Horizon, trajets marxistes en anthropologie*, originally published in 1973, and his *L'idéal et le matériel*, published in 1984.

The theoretical and methodological framework that he had developed was applied to the study of the Baruya people of Papua New Guinea where he did several years of fieldwork. Although he was later celebrated for his work among the Baruya, thus creating favourable conditions for opening up French anthropology to Anglophone colleagues, as at the time Papua New Guinea was a field dominated by British and American anthropologists, the choice of Papua New Guinea was not made without some hesitation.

Indeed, while he was Lévi-Strauss's assistant, he first spent a year in Mali where, under the auspices of UNESCO, his project was to analyse the impact of a controlled state economy on village economy. Godelier soon realized that there was a ministry for economic planning in Mali, but that there was no economic plan. His project became, as he terms it, a project without a subject, and he used the time in Mali to read and work on the literature of economic anthropology, which resulted in 1965 in the publication in the journal *L'Homme* of his first major article, nearly sixty pages long: *Objet et méthodes de l'anthropologie économique*. Before 1965, he had written a few papers on economic anthropology (see the bibliography at the end of the volume), a field largely neglected in French universities and research centres, where studies on kinship and religion had dominated the scene since Lévi-Strauss's *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1947). This paper, however, would mark him as an anthropologist with a particular approach, and strengthen a new field in French anthropology: the study of non-Western economic systems. As the title of his article indicates, there is only one object of study in economic anthropology, but there are multiple and complementary methods. The very first paragraph provides insights into what has become the objective of several years, if not decades, of Godelier's work:

L'anthropologie économique a pour objet l'analyse théorique comparée des différents systèmes économiques réels et possibles. Pour élaborer

cette théorie, elle tire sa matière des informations concrètes fournies par l'historien et l'ethnologue sur le fonctionnement et l'évolution des sociétés qu'ils étudient. A côté de l' 'économie politique' vouée, semble-t-il, à l'étude des sociétés industrielles modernes, marchandes ou planifiées, l'anthropologie économique se veut en quelque sorte comme l' 'extension' de l'économie politique aux sociétés abandonnées de l'économiste. ... Ainsi par son projet, l'anthropologie économique prend à sa charge l'élaboration d'une théorie générale des diverses formes sociales de l'activité économique de l'homme car l'analyse comparée devrait nécessairement déboucher un jour sur des connaissances anthropologiques générales (1965: 32).¹

Going against the materialist mainstream and political economy of the time, Godelier concludes in this paper that there is no absolute economic rationality. Rationality itself is a social and historical concept. Similarly, there is no rationality that can be phrased in economic terms alone. In fact, the notion of rationality is very close to the analysis of the foundations of the structures of social life and the causalities of these structures' transformations. Hence, if there is rationality, it is not vested in the individual or the nature of the human being, but lies within the conscious and unconscious aspects of social relationships (also see Godelier 1966).

Therefore – and contrary to the dogmatic Marxist approaches that others had promulgated – the idea of a linear evolution in which societies and their economic systems evolve in mechanical ways from one step to the next had to be abandoned, even from a Marxist perspective: evolution is, if anything, multi-linear. The economic anthropology that Godelier proposed was thus quite distinct from what might have been expected from a Marxist point of view: economic systems are embedded in other social structures such as kinship, politics or religion; infrastructure and superstructure coexist in the same social institution; rationality is not an absolute concept, nor is it a human characteristic; it is the expression of social relationships. In other words, there is no purely economic domain in social life; there are only methods that crystallize the economic domain in an analytically comprehensive way.

It was only after the publication of this article that he prepared his fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, fieldwork that later became the grounds for intense exchanges between Francophone and Anglophone anthropologists. It was Lévi-Strauss who suggested that Maurice Godelier should work in Papua New Guinea rather than in Latin America which, following Alfred Metraux's advice, had been his original intention. Because of the research already undertaken in this region of the world by Anglophone anthropologists, Maurice Godelier soon encountered Edmund Leach, Jack Goody, Andrew and Marilyn Strathern and others, and engaged with a whole new network of

scholars. With the move away from Africanist or Latin American studies, where he could have easily evolved without becoming involved with British and American anthropology, he was soon part of exchanges of ideas and theories that went beyond the French context.

His work among the Baruya was groundbreaking, and his monograph *La production des Grands Hommes* (1982b) still remains one of his favourite works. In his previous publications, he suggested methodological and theoretical approaches to the analysis of the relationship between ideology and political economy in classless societies. 'With the publication of *La Production des Grands Hommes* this anthropology shows its full strength' in the study of an actual classless society, Alexander Alland writes in a review (1983).

In the light of Godelier's innovative multi-methodological and multilevel approach to socio-economic systems, in which infrastructure and superstructure are embedded in identical social institutions and structures within classless societies, Philippe Descola, Jacques Hamel and Pierre Lemonnier published a tribute in an important volume in 1999, unfortunately only available in French: *La production du social: Autour de Maurice Godelier*. This is a collection of papers originally presented at a conference held in Cerisy-la-Salle in 1996. The volume tackled important issues arising from Godelier's work: discussions of Marxist approaches to the social fact and to evolution (Godelier 1973); illustrations and analyses of the relationships between the *idéel* (sometimes translated as the 'mental') and the material (Godelier 1984); the consideration of Godelier's contributions to Papua New Guinea ethnography (Godelier 1982a); the analysis of his work on the uses and conceptions of the human body, sexuality or gender (Godelier and Panoff 1998); and his contributions in the domain of psychoanalysis and ethno-psychoanalysis (Godelier and Hassoun 1996).

The present volume attempts to go beyond *La production du social* in the form of a contribution to the question Maurice Godelier addresses in his latest book, *Au fondement des sociétés humaines: Ce que nous apprend l'anthropologie* (2007), and which inspired its title: what is the scope of anthropology? Literally translated, the title suggests a reinvigoration of the social sciences in a contemporary setting: 'the foundations of human societies: what we can learn from anthropology'. 'It is evidently not on nuclear physics nor molecular biology nor the neurosciences that one can rely to understand the opposition that has dominated Islam for centuries, that between Sunnites and Shiites', Godelier (2007: 222) writes in his conclusion. 'Only the social sciences can achieve this task' (idem). Anthropology has the scope to engage with the world, past and present, as it is, and with all its diverse social and cultural forms and their transformations. It can 'analyse

and understand the conditions of appearance and of disappearance of the various ways of organizing life in society, of the various ways of thinking and acting, which are the roots of the diversity of the known forms of individual and collective identities' (idem). Godelier thus goes back to his own origins, albeit more explicitly: societies are systems and have structures that undergo transformations that only the historical and anthropological sciences can explain. More than ever before, the answers produced by anthropology as a collective enterprise are relevant in understanding the contemporary world.

In this sense, Maurice Godelier's programme is resoundingly positive and this volume will illustrate that we believe he has made the right choice. The social sciences are able to communicate about the world as it appears: nothing that is human is foreign. They are able to understand particular phenomena while providing explanations that transcend the local lens. 'My position is clear', he writes in the introduction, 'the crisis of anthropology and of the social sciences, far from announcing, by way of deconstructions, their disappearance, or more simply their dissolution into the soft forms of "cultural studies", is in fact a necessary passage to achieving a reconstruction at a level of rigour and critical vigilance that did not exist in the preceding steps of their development' (2007: 10). The present volume shows that the richness and diversity of anthropological fields of investigation are not synonyms for confusion or for a total incapacity to make any kind of generalization. It demonstrates that, despite the particularity of individual questions asked and specific phenomena studied, anthropology is an organized, collective and productive enterprise. Let us now turn to more detailed considerations.

The Enigma of the Gift (1999), first published in French in 1996, is an important step in Maurice Godelier's more recent trajectory. While he had already been combining materialist and structuralist approaches in his previous work, in this book he elaborates a significant theoretical shift which enables clarifications of local ethnographic structures and practices, while simultaneously crystallizing what appear to be general features of the social order and its reproduction. This shift, epitomized by the *Enigma of the Gift*, is a central focus for many chapters in the present volume. Maurice Godelier's work displays a continuity with respect to the centrality of the material aspects of social reproduction. *L'Idéal et le Matériel* (1984) had already foreshadowed what would become a major theoretical contribution to our understanding of the concept of society and its reproduction in time and space. But *The Enigma of the Gift* and the two volumes published thereafter – (*Metamorphoses de la parenté* in 2004 and *Au fondement des sociétés humaines* in 2007) – can and should be considered as marking a new era in his anthropological thinking. It marks a move from the analysis

of the means of production, be they material or immaterial, to that of the symbolic and imaginary orders that control and reproduce these means. The politico-religious domain constitutes the centrality of social structure since, as Maurice Godelier has advocated for years, it is not sufficient that institutions of control and domination exist. It is also necessary that people who are dominated and controlled accept these institutions.

The *Enigma of the Gift* reconsidered a problem that had occupied anthropology from its early days, most visibly in the work of Marcel Mauss: the structure and nature of exchange as constitutive of the social order, and the attributes of the things that are exchanged as constitutive of the social individual. The domain of exchange as a systemic practice offers two important epistemological points of entry into the social order. First, it is organized by accepted and shared systems of values and codes of practices and as such is one of the most visible aspects of social reproduction. However, it also ties persons organically to things (and things to persons) and to other persons, bridging in an overt manner the erroneous dichotomy between the collective and the individual and between persons and things. Marcel Mauss observed how people or parts thereof remain in the things that are exchanged (or given). Marilyn Strathern's theorization of the partible person or the dividual explicitly elaborates this insight (e.g. Strathern 1988, Mosko 1992).

The second epistemological opportunity afforded by a focus on exchange is the potential to combine structuralist and materialist approaches. While the objects exchanged are evidently the consequences of a particular type of organization of the means of production, and while the social and material values that underpin exchange provide for the organization of these means, exchange is also, from a structural point of view, the elementary condition for the substantiation of the social: in the exchange of people in marriage, of goods and of words. Whether one adopts a materialist or a structuralist approach, exchange reveals itself as more than a mere social practice. It is constitutive, a precondition, of the capacity of the social to reproduce itself in time and space. In the light of these epistemological opportunities it is no surprise that, through the *Enigma of the Gift*, Maurice Godelier reopens the question of exchange in general, and of a specific type of exchange, the gift, in particular. This is no surprise either when we consider how earlier in his career, he had already distinguished himself from other French Marxists, such as Althusser, through the combination and conjunction of Marxist and structuralist concepts and approaches, as Jonathan Friedman explains in his chapter of this volume.

After Marcel Mauss (1923–24), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1950), Annette Weiner (1992) and many others, Maurice Godelier thus re-examines the question of the gift and of exchange in general and observes two main characteristics. First, he notes the existence of non-competitive forms of gifts and counter-gifts that seem to challenge the central idea according to which material exchanges seem to be structured. The general expectation of the equivalence of values, between the things given and those returned, is confounded. His second major observation is that certain things, in particular those considered active in the religious domain, are not given. Maurice Godelier thus conceives a new typology of objects in particular and of exchange in general. First, there are objects that are alienable and alienated as merchandise; second objects that are given and thus alienated but which remain in part inalienable since some parts of the giver remain embedded in the thing given; and, finally, objects that may not be given nor sold, but that need to be kept. This is the case with sacred objects or, as in Western societies, to use Godelier's own example, the constitution of democratic regimes. Following Annette Weiner (1992), Godelier highlights how the tendency to give is inseparable from the tendency to keep. The drive to give structures the social field, while the drive to keep is a condition for the reproduction of the social order.

What is significant in the reproduction of this order is the centrality of the inalienable and its structuring capacity, as Polly Wiessner shows in her chapter in this volume. Two of Godelier's major propositions must be combined to understand the theoretical consequences of the centrality of the inalienable. First of all is the necessity for humans to fabricate structured societies in order to live. It is a condition for existence. Secondly, there is a need to elaborate fixed points, what Wiessner calls 'centres', around which the reproduction of structured societies takes place. The inalienable, what can neither be given nor exchanged but which needs to be kept and transmitted, constitute these fixed points, these 'centres' of the most sacred. The transmission of the inalienable is embedded in ritual practices and is the scope of religion as such. We are here, as already foreshadowed, witnessing a considerable transition in the thinking of Maurice Godelier: a transition from a stress on infrastructure in its material and immaterial aspects as the engine of social structure, towards an approach in which the political and the religious constitute the foundation of the fabric of social life and structure. This important shift was to be refined by Godelier in his *Metamorphoses de la parenté* and *Au fondement des sociétés humaines*, as we will see below.

In the first two chapters of this volume, Joel Robbins and John Barker both further this analysis of the inalienable, of what can

only be transmitted. The former highlights the notion of 'culturally enjoined secrecy' or 'secrecy as a value' while the latter focuses on the 'conjuncture of structures'. Robbins accentuates the equivalence that Godelier proposes between the inalienable, the sacred and the 'centre', by adding the 'secret', as an intimate part of the reproduction of the social order. Godelier had previously underlined the importance of the secret-sacred relationship, particularly when analysing masculine ritual initiations among the Baruya of Papua New Guinea (see also Herdt 1999). Robbins goes further, suggesting that the secret is necessary 'in order to keep the world going' in the eyes of Urapmin people.

In his chapter, Robbins demonstrates how Urapmin language ideology reinscribes the model of society as being constituted of three levels of structural exchange as Lévi-Strauss proposed; of goods, women and words. However, he then subverts this articulation of elementary structures by drawing on Godelier's work on the crucial role of the act of keeping in the construction and reproduction of society.

Joel Robbins thus broadens the domain of analysis of the *Enigma of the Gift* and includes the study of 'language as ideology', one of the topics which structuralism, even though it was on its programme, largely neglected. 'A language ideology is a society's set of ideas about what language is and how communication works', Robbins explains, and, putting it in Godelier's terms, suggests that through the study of language ideology it is possible to analyse the exchange of words as constituted in a given society's imaginary. Indeed, according to Godelier, the sacred conceals something from the collective and individual consciousness, it is opaque, secret and hence withheld from the general system of exchange and giving. Robbins draws a structural analogy to Godelier's relationship between things that are given and those that are kept within the domain of language ideology. He makes two general observations. First, Westerners are determined to give intentions away but keen to keep as many material goods as they can for themselves. Second, Urapmin people, on the other hand, are determined to keep their thoughts to themselves, but give away most of the goods that come to their hands. The importance of secrecy in the Melanesian world can hence be interpreted in terms of broader understandings of exchange. When it comes to the exchange of words, Urapmin people stress what is not given, what is not spoken or muted almost exclusively, thus highlighting the value of withholding words in verbal exchange.

While Joel Robbins, through his analysis of Urapmin language ideology, reinforces the proposition that the inalienable is central in social reproduction, Polly Wiessner and John Barker confirm

this rather through a negative proof: the social consequences encountered when the inalienable – centres and fixed points, the sacred and secret – is in danger of being significantly transformed or even destroyed. They depict two divergent consequences when the inalienable is endangered, in particular through Christianization and modernization. Polly Wiessner depicts semantic and symbolic transformations engendering displacements and even dilution of the centre among the Enga of the Papua New Guinea Highlands. John Barker, on the other hand, observes among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea a ‘conjuncture of structures’, a concept proposed by Sahlins (1985). Linking the centrality of exchange to another important aspect of Godelier’s work – the delineation of political systems centred on great men (Godelier 1986) – Barker traces the historical and cultural roots of contemporary ‘great men’ leaders amongst the Maisin through the analysis of the relationship between inalienable objects and the imaginary.

Indeed, when the Maisin speak of ‘tradition’, they are referring precisely to exchanges and the values that underlie them, drawing an implied contrast with European stinginess and individualism (similarly to what Joel Robbins in his chapter discerns as the difference between the intention of giving and actual giving). The Maisin’s perception of what they consider as the inalienable (and thus not give-able) part of their culture is rather explicit. Indeed, tradition marks items that lie outside the range of ordinary exchange and includes stories and non-discursive objects called *kikiki* that John Barker translates as ‘heritage’. This chapter investigates, precisely, how contact with the Western world caused potential transformations in the identification of these non-exchangeable and thus culturally central elements.

The pre-contact Maisin had a system close to that of great men systems, ‘based on distinct spheres of difference rather than based upon a common measure’. While we will reconsider the definition of the great men type of leadership, in particular through Margaret Jolly’s and Mark Mosko’s chapter, let us for the moment simply mention that John Barker reports the two most prominent leaders as being the peace chiefs and the war chiefs. The Maisin also had two types of ranked clans, the Kawo and the Sabu. Their relationship was asymmetrical. The Sabu were ‘lower’ and had to show respect to the ‘higher’ ranked Kawo who, on the other hand, had to look after and provide advice to the Sabu. The distinction between these two types of clans also determined the type of leader a man might become. The opportunity for a man to become a leader, however, also largely rested on his ability and on circumstances, a feature which is also central to the argument of Mark Mosko’s chapter on the Mekeo. Many leaders in fact came from the ‘lower’ Sabu clans. The apparent contradiction

between the hierarchy of clans and the capacity for members of the lower clans to become leaders is explained by John Barker by the strong preference for restricted and balanced exchanges, for example in the preference for sibling exchange in marriage, which thus reorganized individual and political agencies among the two clans.

An important question thus arises about the continuity of this structural organization based on asymmetrical and symmetrical exchange apropos inalienable verbal and non-verbal objects when the Maisin experienced Christianization and broader contact with the Western world. Polly Wiessner describes a story of destruction for the Enga. John Barker, however, observes among the Maisin the encounter of two systems which are mutually intelligible. He does not perceive Christianity as a continuation of the existing Maisin systems, nor does he describe a story of destruction or of systemic resistance. He rather speaks of a 'conjuncture of structures'.

The Maisin have experienced a gradual conversion by a rather tolerant mission. Missionaries brought the '*giu*', Christian knowledge as conveyed in worship services, sermons and the Bible. In return, converts listened respectfully to the missionaries and the teachers. In other words, there is a structural analogy in the relationship between Kawo and Sabu clans around *kikiki*, the inalienable objects, and between missionaries and converts around '*giu*', the inalienable centre of Christian religion. Drawing both from Godelier's insights on exchange systems and the inalienable, and from analyses of great men systems, John Barker confirms that the transition to competitive types of leaders, such as big men and nascent capitalists, is by no means automatic. The underlying principle seems to remain unaltered and intelligible: 'a hierarchical exchange partnership defined by inalienable objects that promised a transcendence of obligation and a "heaven" of equality', to quote Barker (this volume).

The situation of the Enga, though also in Papua New Guinea, is different in many respects. Like Joel Robbins and John Barker, Polly Wiessner situates the core cultural features in the inalienable. However, Wiessner tells us a story of destruction, asking what happens to marriage and alliance, descent, cooperation and exchange when the inalienable is dismantled. Following Annette Weiner, Godelier (2005) proposed that no society can survive over time if there are no fixed points, the inalienable. He underlined the importance of religion and politics rather than of alliance and descent in structuring society, a point to which he returned in his *Métamorphoses de la parenté*. There, one of his important conclusions was that nowhere are a woman and a man sufficient to create a new human being since everywhere religious, spiritual or imaginary forces are necessary for individual and social reproduction. Kinship is thus subject to religious and political

imaginaries that pervade the social body and enable the reproduction and transmission of the inalienable.

Considering such conclusions, Polly Wiessner asks what happens when the centre, the inalienable, the sacred (and the secret in Joel Robbins' view) does not hold. In Enga society, as elsewhere, the inalienable is definitely gendered. Men have inalienable rights through birth to clan membership, rights to land and affiliation with their maternal kin. Unlike the Baruya studied by Godelier, 'power was acquired by managing wealth and not by handling sacred objects or administering secret spells and rites' (this volume). On the other hand, women's inalienable inherited rights were few and were limited to support from maternal kin. However, women had considerable rights and powers in accepting or rejecting a potential bride, since they had to be asked for their consent. An important point in understanding how Christianization had such a destructive effect on the inalienable of Enga society is thus its relationship to gender. It was a relationship dominated by separation, in which, as Wiessner explains, the ideology highlighted public roles for men and private roles for women (but see Margaret Jolly's chapter in this volume, and Strathern 1988). The basis for this distinction and strong separation rested on the fear of contamination by menstrual blood and other feminine influences that would inhibit the physical and mental maturation of men.

The first pillar of Enga society, as Wiessner explains, was dismantled when a clan's sacred ancestral stones and objects were destroyed or relegated to cultural shows. The second pillar, gender segregation, was dissolved when missions downplayed the power of menstrual blood and boys and girls started interacting on a regular and daily basis (see Meggitt 1989). The third pillar was destroyed between 1960 and 2008, when activities that united male clan members diminished, thus eroding the clan structure. The destruction or displacement of inalienable objects, the end of gender segregation and the unity of male clan members were, according to Wiessner, the three principal steps in decentring the inalienable and prohibiting the reproduction of the group as an entity sharing inherited values.

The breaking down of these three pillars is particularly visible in Wiessner's analysis of marriage practices and patterns. There was a considerable decline in arranged marriages which were connected to the structuring of the clans and access to land and an increase in people's own choices of marriage partners. More than forty per cent of women explain that they had been courting, fell in love, and decided to marry with or without parental consent. In only ten per cent of the cases did parents and relatives arrange marriages and their daughters comply. Wiessner also observes a considerable increase in divorces. Both are associated with the weakening of the father-son

relationship, as sons are increasingly seeking land from their maternal uncles rather than from their paternal clans. Over the next decades, the author believes, these new associations to land – due to the weakening of father-son relationship, which is itself a consequence of new marriage choices and increased divorces – will induce a shift from a strong patrilineal and patrilocal society to a cognatic one. When fixed points are fragmented, uncertainty arises. For the present, it is only maternal kinship that remains stable and inalienable.

Several issues arise from these analyses. The first is the centrality of the inalienable in structuring the coherence of social formations and reproduction. These are objects or verbal forms that cannot be given, but can only be transmitted. They constitute the pillars of society and are in many, if not all, cases sacred, and often simultaneously secret. Christianization and Westernization have produced several types of reactions. In some, as in Barker's example of the Maisin, the local context allowed for a structural transposition of the foreign imaginary into local patterns of exchange and hierarchy. In other cases, as seen in Wiessner's discussion of the Enga, Westernization has, through transformations in the inalienable itself, created dramatic social change. Other concerns have been revealed as central to the reproduction and the transmission of the inalienable, concerns prevalent in both Godelier's Baruya ethnography and his broader Pacific anthropology: rank or hierarchy and gender and secrecy.

Godelier has repeatedly underlined how gender inequalities among the Baruya were linked to a system of social hierarchy (among men) and expressed through rituals of secrecy, of gendered separations and the transmission of the inalienable, reproducing a culture of men in sacred and secret activities and places. Among the Baruya, male domination is the most visible and fundamental basis for social organization and cultural reality (Godelier 1982b). Moreover, social reproduction is here intimately linked to sexual and homosexual activities and their control. As Gilbert Herdt explains in his chapter, Godelier identified the role of men's houses as pivotal in understanding the development of sex roles and the male psyche in particular. The male domination of the social and the human body, Herdt (1999) observed for the Sambia, was implied in the material aspects of production, but more importantly in ritual activities, and in particular those rituals that inscribe a gender onto the body. According to Sambia mythology, originary human bodies were hermaphroditic and it was only repeated rituals of insemination that endowed bodies with their masculine or feminine form. Social hierarchy or domination, the construction of gender and sex and the transmission of the inalienable are thus inseparably connected.

Herdt also notes, however, that the role of sex in the creative production of culture and social reality has been less understood, even though sexology studies have considerably improved in methodology and epistemology due to the influence of anthropology which is well suited to 'conceptualize these total systems of meanings, knowledge and practices' in which sexual practices are embedded (Herdt, this volume). What is still lacking is a constructive and interdisciplinary dialogue between the social sciences and the other ('natural') sciences with respect to a global understanding of the role of sex in social structure and practice.

Indeed, Herdt distinguishes two pivotal epochs in the history of sexology studies which he calls the 'before' and 'after' the Cascais conference of 1993. Here he tries to bridge the gap between the approaches of natural sciences interested in universal features of individual sexual behaviour and practice, and the social sciences which concentrated on the cultural aspects of such patterns. By default in the early days, sexologists treated sexuality as part of nature, but not as natural, since they were typically interested in the abnormal. They understood abnormal sexuality as a disease phenomenon located in individual, rather than social bodies. After the Cascais conference, however, there has been increasing research on sexual culture and life ways, addressing both the cultural and individual dimensions of the sexual.

In *Au Fondement des sociétés humaines*, Maurice Godelier advocates the renewal and reconstruction of anthropology as a science with even more rigour than before. Gilbert Herdt is among those contributors who identify explicitly the renewed scope of anthropology, in his case an increased understanding of sexuality as a multifaceted and multidimensional array of practices and structures. Concepts of 'sexual culture' with less discernible lines between the 'biological' and the 'cultural', sexual diversity, sexuality and human rights, the disruptive impact of migrations upon the sexual and social order, and an increased attention to transgender and complex subjectivities and emergent socialities, are all key to an understanding of the regulation of sexual behaviour which, as we have seen for the Baruya, is central in the reproduction and transmission of the inalienable. Complex subjectivities and emergent socialities are now, as Jonathan Friedman shows in his chapter, linked to the generalized cultural pluralism of different identities, albeit ethnic, religious or territorial. Culture undergoes a transformation from a structure of existence to a mere role set: the individual can practise culture, like sex, by choice (Friedman, this volume).

At least two aspects of social structure surround if not underpin the articulation of the inalienable with the sacred and the secret: gender

and political structure. In these processes, at least among the several Papua New Guinean societies discussed in this volume, sexuality plays a central role in the embodiment of gender and domination or hierarchy. Herdt's chapter offers an overview of the important facets that need to be addressed in the realm of sexology in order to further understand the importance of sexual behaviour and representation in the reproduction of the social order. Gender and rank are organically linked but in a historically complex and non-exclusive way, as Margaret Jolly demonstrates in her chapter on Vanuatu. Christianization and Westernization have also had important consequences on the shift or dismantling of the centre, of the inalienable, as we have seen with Wiessner and Barker. In Vanuatu, the situation is rather complex since, according to some researchers, missions have introduced a new model of gender and rank while for others Christianization has built upon pre-existing forms of domination. Margaret Jolly discusses these issues: 'the historical transformations of rank in northern Vanuatu, the changing gendered configurations of rank and power and the central importance of Christianities in such transformations'.

Developing her earlier arguments which saw 'graded societies' not as unchanging institutions or as eternal manifestations of male *kastom* (heritage, tradition) but as diverse and dynamic processes of rank and power, responsive to, and constitutive of, indigenous histories, she critically discusses three recent contributions, all relevant to the question of rank and gender in North Vanuatu: John Taylor (2008), Lissant Bolton (2003) and Annelin Eriksen (2008). In Jolly's opinion, Eriksen's analysis is very rich but slightly problematic. According to the latter, graded society and church appear as alternative social models: graded societies are supposedly male dominated, hierarchical, and produce big men, while the church produces a 'feminine' community. Margaret Jolly takes another point of view and suggests that there is no, or a different type of, conjuncture of structures in this case, and that women were and are far more implicated in processes of rank-taking and *kastom*. Far from producing only feminine forms of 'communities', the Church has embodied contexts in which individualist, hierarchical and masculine forms have prevailed as well.

Other ethnographies, including Jolly's own, differ from Eriksen's hypothesis with respect to the gender-rank relationship in Vanuatu. Taylor (2008), for example, shows that male and female rank-taking are distinct processes, but remain critically and inalienably linked. Bolton (2003) demonstrates that *kastom* does not embody a social semantic that is only linked to masculine culture. She suggests that where *kastom* is used in a national discourse, women tend to be excluded from it. In everyday practice, however, men and women's *kastom* are far more blurred and are in some cases undistinguishable. There were

segregations between men and women, and the Church did attempt to undo some of these separations, as was the case with the Enga as described by Wiessner (this volume). In fact, however, it introduced novel forms of segregations through a distinction of the female-domestic and male-public domains. Margaret Jolly starts her analysis with a report of a visit to the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, where a display on men's houses and figures of ancestral powers reveals the unproblematized and simultaneous relationship between masculinity, tradition and power: material elements substantiating masculinity and domination, two elements that, as we have seen earlier, seem to be at first sight those that underpin the reproduction and transmission of the inalienable. Let us remember Wiessner's chapter, where women had few inalienable rights, only support from the maternal kin and the possibility to reject a proposed marriage partner, and Godelier's work on Baruya initiations, where boys had to become men through the acquisition of the secret and sacred character of the inalienable. Margaret Jolly's chapter shows that, at least in Vanuatu, these are not such tightly enclosed worlds: while genders are distinguished, both women and men had different but related procedures for taking rank.

As Margaret Jolly recalls, Godelier (1978a, 1978b, 1984) refined some of the fundamental notions of Marxist theory, asking if the '*idéal*' was part of infrastructure, and thus prefiguring much later Melanesian ethnography where objects are understood as materializations of relations. What appear to be masculine objects do not represent men as such, but are the material aspects of relationships, including those between genders, that crystallize in modes of exchange or non-exchange (see Strathern 1988). Goods and services materialize in exchange systems, while inalienable objects and words appear in non-exchange systems. In *The Making of Great Men* (1986), Maurice Godelier had already prefigured this essential distinction, but he then concentrated on what is exchanged (rather than kept) and focused his research on the relationship between indigenous forms of leaderships and varying modes of exchanges.

Mark Mosko's chapter reconsiders this important question. If the inalienable, the sacred and secret constitutes the purpose of social reproduction and is tied to politico-religious leaderships (or rank as in Jolly's chapter), then it is necessary to analyse how these leaderships are influenced by relationships produced by the exchanges of alienable objects. In other words, leadership is to some extent the link between the inalienable and the alienable. It concerns the question of the 'personifications of power', to reuse the subtitle of the volume published by Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern in 1991. Margaret Jolly (this volume) recalls the distinction between systems of 'great men' and 'big men' as being based on two distinct systems

of exchange and of power and control. In 'great men' systems, where leaders are warriors, shamans, initiation leaders etc., these did not rely on the strategic accumulation of wealth, but on inherited ancestral powers within a ritual economy focused on male initiations. In 'big men' systems, on the other hand, leaders relied on the strategic accumulation of wealth and competition in ceremonial exchanges. In 'great men' systems, people can be exchanged only for people, such as in marriage; however, in 'big men' systems, things can stand for people, such as in transactions of bridewealth. In 'great men' systems, men depended on the appropriation of women's procreative power, whereas in 'big men' systems, they depended on the appropriation of women's labour force.

There is thus an apparent important distinction between great men and chiefly systems on the one hand, and big men systems on the other hand, which resides in the hereditary nature of access to power in the former, and control of labour and exchange in the latter. Mark Mosko critically examines this distinction and rearticulates the pattern of chiefly leadership in terms of categories of reciprocal exchanges. Hereditary succession in great men and in chiefly systems is not 'some kind of automatic one-way "inheritance" or transfer of status', he suggests, 'but rather a complex process wherein presumed successors strategically detach elements of their persons deemed to be effective in eliciting desired ritual elements of their predecessors'. Drawing on Marilyn Strathern's work on the dividual and the partible person, he highlights how relationships are transportable. What Mark Mosko endeavours to demonstrate is that great men and big men systems are in fact 'variant expressions of one singular mode of sociality, that is gift exchange among partible persons'. Indeed, an analysis of ethnographic accounts of successions seems to show that the so-called inheritance based systems exhibit numerous exceptions, including strategies for disqualifying a person from becoming a chief. Mosko suggests that 'empirical instances of chiefly succession are the consequence of sustained series of complex interpersonal transactions mainly between chiefs and persons intent on becoming their heirs but also between the rivals for succession and other relevant persons'. Significantly, in their exchange systems North Mekeo leaders detach ritual knowledge and reattach it to the men they select to pass it on to. Succession, or in fact the transfer of succession, seems to operate in a blurred zone between the domain of exchange of goods and that of the exchange of the sacred and inalienable. Following Joel Robbins, what is transmitted here is again in the realm of ideology of language, of the secret.

We have seen how the chapters of this volume articulate a shift from a materialist to a more symbolic approach to social reproduction,

in which the politico-religious is an integral part of infrastructure. We have seen that social reproduction is intimately tied to the inalienable, to objects and to knowledge that cannot be given but can only be transmitted. In the analysis of the inalienable important questions recur, dealing with sacredness and secrecy, gender and the dynamics of rank-taking and systems of power. This shift is also one that Maurice Godelier has been undertaking in his own career. Very early on, in a methodologically significant chapter of his *Horizon, trajets marxistes en anthropologie* (1973), he already advanced the idea that kinship relationships and social organization may function as elements of infrastructure and of social reproduction. Analysing Yengoyan's (e.g. 1968) material on Australia's Pitjantjatjara's section systems, he suggested that classifications of kin operate in the distribution of access and control to means of subsistence (production). However, the more he analysed how aspects of the 'idéel' structure and restructure a mode of production, the more he moved towards the distillation of the politico-religious domain as central. It is not sufficient that institutions of domination and control exist, it is also necessary for people to be able to accept these institutions; and to do so, they need to believe in a politico-religious complex that reproduces a holistic vision of society.

Centring his analysis on the inalienable as the nucleus of this holistic vision was an important step in Godelier's work. However, one further step had still to be taken in light of this shift: a discussion of why some societies seem to be organized around relationships of kinship rather than the politico-religious complex. In *Metamorphoses de la parenté* (2004) he addressed one of the strongest fortresses of our discipline: the idea of kin-based societies. The principal objectives of this work can be summarized in a few sentences. First, and most importantly, Godelier endeavours to demonstrate that kinship and the family are not the foundation of society and that there has never been such a thing as a kin-based society. He had previously (1973, vol.1: 38) expressed the idea that the family is not the basic unity of society, because a family cannot exist and reproduce itself through generations independently of other families. Formerly, however, Godelier thought this was due to the universality of the incest prohibition and the necessity of economic cooperation. In his later work Godelier rather observes that ties based on kinship are insufficient to create 'corporatedness'. It is, rather, adherence to a common and shared cultural web – which he calls the 'imaginary' content and which belongs to the politico-religious domain – that creates the social being as a member of a group. 'Imaginary' is understood as the world of conscious views, rules and norms imposed by a group with respect to its socio-political and religious order. In order to exercise

some autonomy and durability, this imaginary anchors kin groups – however their members are recruited – in a territory. In other words, it is not kinship ties that produce a society, but rather politico-religious relationships that have this capacity when they produce and legitimate the sovereignty of a group of human beings over a territory and its material and socially constructed resources.

His other conclusions flow from the central aspect of the analysis of kinship mentioned above. In particular, they concern the observation that nowhere are humans considered sufficient to reproduce a human being, and that everywhere there are spiritual or religious agents that participate in the procreation process. A man and a woman fabricate a foetus, not a child. Importantly, it follows from this that the incest prohibition is not the passage from nature to culture and is not universal, but is rather a politico-religious strategy, a means for social reproduction. Following his analysis of the place of human reproduction and kinship in society, Godelier, like Gilbert Herdt (this volume), notes the emergent, abundant literature on reproductive technologies and their impact on the social order, especially that part of it which might be called sexual culture and sociality. What is at stake in the production of sexual culture is the regulation of sexual behaviour, both within individuals and outside in the cultural environment.

Métamorphoses de la parenté has provoked many responses and much scientific discussion; among the most prominent specialists on these questions are Jack Goody (2005) and Robert Barnes (2006), who have provided long and detailed reviews. While Jack Goody addresses yet another question in this volume to which we will return soon, Robert Barnes tackles these questions again and elaborates on some important aspects which were neglected in his earlier review. What is at stake for him is the definition of descent and of classification in particular, and the definition of anthropological concepts and their applicability in general terms. Descent is a particularly central notion since, according to Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 48), some form of unilineal institution is almost, if not entirely, necessary in any ordered social system. We touch here on the problem of the existence of corporate groups as based on kinship (Radcliffe-Brown) or as based on a politico-religious system for social reproduction (Godelier). Godelier showed in *Métamorphoses de la parenté* that Radcliffe-Brown's model did not represent the ethnographic reality. The question of what descent systems are, however, remains intact: 'there is after all no "true" definition of descent', Barnes writes in this volume, since ethnography reports the most diverse forms of successions, invoking many possible definitions by numerous researchers, 'but most seem not to have accepted that

the variety is in fact the message'. Godelier's claim that religion or politico-religious systems are among the strongest forces even in the domain of change of kinship terminologies is backed up by Barnes' chapter, even though the 'history of evolutionary speculation in anthropology has never produced anything like certainty in our understanding of how and why such patterns change'.

Indeed, change, and the combination of structural and materialist approaches which are predominant throughout the chapters of this book and in Maurice Godelier's work, are the two major domains addressed in the last two chapters of our volume: Jonathan Friedman's work on cosmopolitanization and indigenization in the contemporary world system; and Jack Goody's short paper on the Asiatic mode of production. These chapters are to some extent distinct from the rest, since, as is the case with Gilbert Herdt's paper, the ambition is to look at the 'big picture'; and being able to detect the big picture while analysing local and particular phenomena has been the aim of Maurice Godelier's work as well. This is particularly explicit in *Au fondement des sociétés humaines: ce que nous apprend l'anthropologie*, which is being translated into English as we write. In this analysis, Godelier works against an anthropology that, in recent decades, has been thinking of itself as being emptied of its substance through the development of an overly relativistic attitude. He proclaims that anthropology is able to describe and understand aspects of social structure, be they local or general, and understand them in an expanding and recirculating way. Moving on from his former work on exchange systems and the metamorphosis of kinship, he points here to the universal weight of politico-religious symbolism as fundamental to social organization and order, whether in Tonga or the Western world.

The 'Asiatic mode of production' was, as Jack Goody recalls, a fundamental concept in the development of Marxist anthropology. It defied the uniform historical dialectics that were considered to lead the world to capitalism and thereafter to socialism. It had been declared unacceptable at the Leningrad conference in 1931 since it implied the impossibility of Eastern nations achieving socialism. Godelier reopened the question in 1970 by editing a volume that included Marx's study of pre-capitalist socio-economic formations, and by rehabilitating the notion of the 'Asiatic mode of production'. According to Marx, this mode of production succeeded the hunter-gatherer state of humanity by establishing sedentary and agricultural civilizations around waterways with centralized power structures. The major discussion that arose in Marxist anthropology concerned the question of whether this Asiatic mode was, or is, distinct from those social structures that in the West led to capitalist society. But

the differences or absence of differences between the Oriental, the Asiatic and even the Western economic and political structures are not self-evident. As Jonathan Friedman recalls in his chapter, even the notion of 'class' has been heavily criticized and deemed by some (e.g. Harris 1992) to have been a failure in understanding social structure.

Combining Marxist and structuralist approaches, Jonathan Friedman reassesses these criticisms in order to work towards an understanding of class formation in what has come to be known as the era of globalization. In an attempt to find an alternative to the fragmentation produced by postmodernist analyses, he argues that it is impossible to dissociate questions of the structure of state societies and their reproduction from those of class or cultural identity. The global, he explains, is an emergent property produced by the articulation of numerous local processes that are not limited to the current modern era, but are embedded in a cyclical development of hegemonic expansion and contraction: he adopts a global systemic perspective. Analysing the fabrication of the cosmopolitanism of elites in different epochs, he convincingly concludes that this process takes place in periods of strong globalization such as we have today. These elites encompass the diversity that lies below, among the masses, without being part of it. The heterogeneous has become a goal in itself: 'a generalized cultural pluralism of different identities, ethnic, religious, territorial, gender and of political projects' (this volume).

Our introduction began with a quotation from Maurice Godelier about the scope of anthropology: 'From initiation rituals in Papua New Guinea to the Twin Towers'. One common theme in all the chapters in the present volume is that this scope is about understanding transformations of systems and structures, a theme that has remained central throughout Maurice Godelier's work.

Note

1. 'Economic anthropology is the comparative theoretical analysis of different actual and potential economic systems. In order to elaborate this theory, it takes its substance from concrete information produced by historians and anthropologists on the functioning and evolution of the societies they study. Alongside the field of "political economy" that, it seems, is devoted to the study of modern industrial societies, be they market or controlled, economic anthropology claims in a way to be the "extension" of political economy to those societies that have been neglected by economists... Hence, through its project, economic anthropology takes on the elaboration of a general theory of human beings' diverse social forms of economic activity, for one day comparative analysis should necessarily produce general anthropological knowledge'. (Our translation).

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