

## EDITORIAL

Papers in this volume refer to governments, indigenous knowledge and development. This combination raises thoughts about the future of some, indeed, many, of the societies that we, as anthropologists, study.

In Western societies we hear a lot about ‘the dependency culture’, which might be characterised by the familiar phrases of ‘the government should provide this’, ‘they should control that’. Less familiar, because more recent, have been concerns about our dependency on big corporations. In Europe this involves U.S. meat with hormones and, in particular, GMOs. Once GMOs are available we will all be in hock to global corporations. That is not particularly our concern here, rather that we, through our governments and development departments, are creating dependency cultures in those countries that can least afford it. At its very simplest, by encouraging Western farming methods with all the inputs of fertiliser, machinery, irrigation pumps, etc., we are making them dependent on Western manufactures, if not for the machinery itself, for the machinery which makes the harvesters, deep ploughs, sprayers and all the other paraphernalia. More serious is the fact that this dependency is gradually suppressing the indigenous knowledge needed to farm the country traditionally.

It might be thought that this does not matter – Western methods are the methods of the future. True enough in some ways but, there is one aspect which tends to be overlooked. Governments and civilisations are, in Braudel’s *longue durée*, temporal; they disappear, implode, explode or mutate at irregular intervals. This is, and always will be, a fact of life: there is no evidence that the West, will be immune. What happens to Western farming methods then?

One would like to think that traditional knowledge has not been forgotten; it clearly has not in places like Siberia and Mongolia. And foreign ‘experts’ are used rather than emulated in the Arab world. But does this happen everywhere? Can common sense triumph over handouts? Indigenous methods may still flourish in those corners of a country which are neglected by officials. It would be interesting to know.

Fine words from anthropologists are not going to stop ‘development’, even if they should. We should, perhaps, just note, privately, the invisible culture of noncompliance, cast doubt on the salesman’s hyperbole and make the indigenous farmer or herder more aware of his own skills and worth. To promote our own values to the exclusion of others is hubris. And traditionally, the punishment for hubris is to be utterly cast down.

We would, however, like to end on a more cheerful note, and are happy to inform you that the Commission on Nomadic Peoples (CNP) has intimated to us the selection, by a jury of nine Commission members, of William Irons as the recipient in 2000 of its Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding contributions to the study of nomadic peoples. The CNP plans to present this award annually,

and you may recall that the first award was presented in 1998 to Fredrik Barth. A fuller announcement, describing Professor Irons' work and accomplishments will be published in a later issue.

Another novelty is that our journal has decided to publish a series of interviews with senior scholars of nomadism and nomadic peoples. We start off this series – The Long Walk – with an interview here with Anatoly Khazanov. Some of our next issues will carry interviews with, among others, Donald Cole, Emanuel Marx, Fredrik Barth, Robert Paine, and James Woodburn.

*The Editors*