characterizing human society. Contrary to the indetermination of human society, the natural science of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed a completely mathematical determinism of nature which was successfully computable in analytical mechanics. The infinitesimal calculus delivered the mathematical fundament of the new mathematical disciplines. Philosophically, the concept of nature and society in the eighteenth century was discussed later on by Immanuel Kant. In what way is acting and deciding on the basis of free will in a completely determined nature possible? The strict distinction between a completely determined nature and a human world of random, expectation and probability has been overcome in the twentieth century when quantum mechanics with its probabilistic quantum effects became the new fundamental of physics.

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1. Early Work and Developing Analyses

Big man is the Anglicization of a descriptive phrase bikpela man—meaning ‘prominent man’—common in some variants of Tok Pisin (an important Melanesian lingua franca). The term was adopted widely in post-World War II Melanesian ethnography (e.g., Oliver 1955, Read 1959, Strathern 1971) to refer to male leaders whose political influence is achieved by means of public oratory, informal persuasion, and the skilful conduct of both private and public wealth exchange. The anthropology of big men comprises both regional ethnography (the sociocultural interpretation of case materials derived from extended field research) and—as this ethnography is puzzling from a comparative perspective— theoretical debate.

1.1 Ethnography

While a variety of political systems have been observed in Melanesia from the early colonial period to the present day, the big man is a notable feature of political life in highland regions of Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. These regions are distinctive for high population densities and settled, loosely kin-centered communities (e.g., ‘clans’ associated with named ‘places’). Their horticultural economies characterized are based on intensive tuber (sweet potato, taro) cultivation and pig raising.

Big man leadership has intrigued anthropologists as a vantage for understanding how economic intensification might be possible in the absence of institutionalized political structures. As it has been observed ethnographically, highland Melanesian sociopolitical life is decentralized, informal, and participatory in spirit. That is, access to garden land is universal (a flexible concomitant of kin relationships), and systematic differences in access to subsistence means, spouses (and other household labor resources), and valuables are muted or absent. While direct participation in clan events is a more or less exclusively male prerogative and affects male social standing, it is not obligatory. Even for men, clan interests do not take precedence necessarily over personal relationships with kin and other exchange partners, in which women are also involved. Finally, in many communities, leadership is a personal achievement associated with organizing events held in the names of clans and tribal alliances. Leaders neither inherit their status by virtue of seniority, lineage membership, or ritual sanction, nor are they formally elected or instated. Communities do not typically institutionalize decision-making councils or offices that must be filled.
Despite the lack of institutionalized political structures, during precolonial and early colonial times communities did affiliate themselves regionally for warfare and ritual performances (e.g., initiations and fertility cults). People also came together frequently to sponsor competitive exchanges of indigenous valuables (e.g., pigs and pearlshells), events in which thousands participated as recipients and donors. Periodic exchange festivals of different scales and degrees of social and political complexity have driven intensive garden production for generations in the highlands. During the colonial period and nowadays, exchanges also involve money and introduced valuables (e.g., cows, trucks), and may partially motivate participation in wage-work and commercial endeavors. Held to mark important events like deaths, and to constitute or reorder regional alliances between groups, these festivals require skillful organizing and long-term planning, as well as an intensive production base.

Early in Highlands research Read (1959) noted a tension between culturally sanctioned assertions of personal autonomy and of collective purpose. Western constructs resolve an apparently analogous relation by subsuming naturalized 'individual' interests within institutionalized social structures (like the state). In contrast, Melanesian cultures implicate both differentiating and collectivizing interests as social possibilities in a distinctive concept of personhood. Autonomy is enacted in the elaboration of personal networks of kin and exchange partners (affines, friends). More or less idiosyncratic, each person’s social network embodies interests that converge partially—but may regularly conflict—with the collective projects of clans.

Big men make their names by successfully orienting their clansmen to collective ends. While the means they use varies in different parts of highland Melanesia, their power is personal and ephemeral relative to leadership power in societies with inherited rank or with formal councils. This absence of structurally reproduced power gives Melanesian communities a reputation for ‘egalitarianism’ (among men, if not between men and women). Men with leadership ambitions work to develop personal access to resources within and outside their communities. They achieve fame and influence by using local and regional social networks as bases for organizing collective wealth prestations: events that make and remake clans and tribal alliances. By means both of public oratory and private persuasion, big men work to add a collective significance to their own and other’s actions, which would otherwise be construed only as diversely personal.

1.2 Political Typologies and Developmental Puzzles

In post-World War II ethnography, ethnographic accounts from Melanesia and Polynesia were influential in the modeling of sociopolitical ideal types (respectively exemplifying ‘tribes’ and ‘chieftainships’). Such typologies were central to theories of cultural evolution (development), of special interest to archeologists but also prominent over the past century both within and outside of sociocultural anthropologies. Developmental theories assumed that less economically productive, less socially differentiated and politically centralized social types give way, over time, to more productive, more centralized ones. They posited a series of functional interdependencies among variables like population density, technology, the organization of production, ‘surplus’ production, and sociopolitical stratification.

Sahlins’s (1963) typological comparison of the Polynesian chief and Melanesian big man—perhaps the single most influential argument concerning Pacific polities—established the figure of the leader as key to arguments concerning their historical fortunes. With Polynesian chiefs as a standard, Sahlins emphasized the limited coercive power of the big man in mobilizing wealth for public prestations, and identified these limits in the refusal of his clansmen (understood as his political supporters in regional inter-clan prestations) to put up with his increasingly unreciprocal behavior.

Viewed from this perspective, evidence of regular, large-scale prestations of pigs, pearl shells, and other wealth in highland Melanesia was puzzling. Ethnographic arguments by Mervyn Meggitt, Andrew Strathern, and others subsequently demonstrated that—while relations between men (dominant in wealth exchange) and women (mainstays of food and pig production) were conflictual—relations between leaders and their fellow clansmen were not predominantly extractive, but were mitigated by big men’s ability to tap labor and other resources in groups other than their own by means of exchange networks.

Meanwhile, a convergent line of research—bent more on understanding economic change than sociopolitical systems—developed a comparison between Melanesian exchanges and capitalist markets. Dubbing Melanesians ‘primitive capitalists,’ this work emphasized apparent similarities between local orientations and Euro-American cultural values like individual achievement, competition, material wealth, and investment. For example, Finney (1973) argued that the similarities culturally and psychologically ‘preadapted’ the big man, in particular, for capitalist development. Indeed, during the colonial period, highland Papua New Guineans were notably entrepreneurial (rather than simply spending cash incomes on consumer goods).

1.3 Big Man on the Margins

These lines of research came to an ambivalent resolution in the late 1980s (e.g., Godelier and Strathern 1991). Most prominently, Maurice Godelier centered...
attention on the structure of marriage exchanges in an argument meant to suggest that the big man type—with its emphasis on the manipulation of wealth—is not as typical of highland Melanesia as earlier ethnography implied it was. In communities where marriage conventions de-emphasize bridewealth (transfers of wealth for persons or their capacities) in favor of ‘sister exchange’ (transfers of persons for persons), Godelier proposed that one observes ‘Great Men’ not big men: varieties of male prominence (notably initiation cult leadership) founded on ritual expertise.

Godelier’s position followed the classic pattern of using ethnographic cases to construct political economic types as elements in a hypothetical developmental sequence. It made diverse cases comparable (capable of being organized as a progression) by assuming their common commitment to the maintenance of male collective (clan) interests. Also like earlier work, it placed the big man type structurally on the frontier of market capitalism. However, these approaches were already under siege, ethnographically and theoretically, as they were articulated in the mid/late 1980s.

2. Recent Trends

The progressive decline in research on big man since the mid-1980s echoes a now long-standing disciplinary trend away from typological, developmental/functional comparison and toward nuanced cultural interpretation in the context of historical and ethnographic analyses of intra- and intercultural engagements. On the whole, Melanesian anthropology has not only reflected but also spearheaded these transformations in the ‘culture’ concept and its uses. In this reworked arena, the rich lines of research that the puzzles of big manship stimulated have been absorbed into other projects.

These projects include, for example, increasingly serious attention to gender relations and meanings and to political economic transformations. Melanesian gender studies direct attention to divergent perspectives and relations within and between communities. They render the male-centered (not to say leader-centered) typification of cultures analytically unusable and big manship a decidedly qualified value (e.g., Lederman 1986, 1990, Godelier and Strathern 1991).

Complementary work seeks insight into the contradictory engagements of men and women, differently positioned in emerging class relations, as Melanesians situate themselves in a roiling global economy (e.g., Gewertz and Errington 1999).

Attention to the adoption of unfamiliar class and national identities has in turn sharpened understanding of the reinvention of culturally familiar relations, values, and meanings. Thus, studies of the articulation of market and gift exchange relations, and their associated political cultures, have clarified their differences even as their mutual entanglements have elaborated over the past generation. For example, one highlands Papua New Guinea people personify the state as a big man to insist on a relationship of equivalence, not hierarchy, between the ‘local’ and ‘national’ (Clark 1992). Ethnographic observations like this show what is at stake for Melanesians as the intramale egalitarianism associated with big manship confronts—ambivalently, unevenly, and contingently—structural inequalities associated with state and global involvement, as well as new versions of familiar alternatives and conflicts (notably those between men and women: Sexton 1993).

These studies no longer identify themselves as contributions to the anthropology of the big man or functional/developmental typology building. Instead, they aim to contribute to a more thoroughly historical perspective on the politics of shifting contexts for meaningful action. The rise and ultimate dispersion of big man studies was characteristic of Melanesian anthropology over the past century. A similar interplay of local interpretive ethnography and comparative cultural analysis will continue around political values well into the twenty-first century.

See also: Economic Anthropology; Exchange in Anthropology; Exchange: Social; Kula Ring. Anthropology of; Melanesia: Sociocultural Aspects; Trade and Exchange. Archaeology of

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Bilingual Education: International Perspectives

The majority of the world’s population speaks more than one language. Given the human cognitive capacity of managing multiple linguistic systems, curricula employing two or more languages of instruction and drawing on the linguistic and cultural resources of bilingual or multilingual individuals should find wide acceptance. In reality, the situation is more complicated. After a definition of bilingual education, an overview of the objectives and major types of programs is offered, and parameters determining success are identified. Throughout, L1 refers to the child’s first language(s) and L2 to any languages acquired after age 3 years.

1. Definition

For educational programs to qualify as ‘bilingual,’ two conditions should be met: (a) more than one language serves as medium of instruction and (b) bilingualism and biliteracy are explicit goals. In practice, however, discussions of bilingual education often relax these conditions and include policies considering bilingualism a transitional state.

2. Settings and Objectives

Since the 1960s, bilingual curricula have been developed all over the world (see the comprehensive overview in Baker and Jones (1998) and García (1997)). Sometimes, as in Asia and Africa, more than two languages are involved. Besides globalization and the need for intercultural communicative competence, the following factors can be singled out as most conducive to this development: (a) co-existence of two or more official languages, as in Belgium, Canada, Luxembourg, and Switzerland; (b) co-existence of different local languages with a non-indigenous (colonial) language functioning as a neutral official language, such as English in Ghana or French in the Ivory Coast; (c) in-migration and high drop-out rates of minority children; and (d) revival of interest in ethnic cultures and languages.

Against this background, at least three educational objectives can be identified:

(a) assimilation of the child of in-migrant or indigenous minority groups into mainstream society;
(b) maintenance and development of the first language of minority children; and
(c) enrichment and empowerment of minority and majority children.

3. Types of Bilingual Education

Baker (1996) (see also Baker and Jones 1998) distinguishes ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ educational policies, with only the former satisfying both conditions mentioned in the definition.

3.1 Strong Forms of Bilingual Education

An intensively researched program is the immersion of groups of majority children in a second language, such as English speakers in French programs in Canada, which may begin in kindergarten or at later grade levels, and be partial in the beginning (with only some subjects taught in L2) or total, with a shift of some contents to L1 in later years.

In maintenance or heritage programs, minority children are taught in their L1 at least 50 percent of the time. Successful programs have led to the strengthening of Navajo in the USA, of Catalan, Gaelic, Finnish, and Welsh in Europe, of Maori in New Zealand, and of aboriginal languages in Australia.

In two-way or dual-language programs, which teach through both minority and majority languages (or rely on more than one majority language), balanced numbers of native speakers share a classroom. Languages alternate, either by subject, day, or some other consistent principle.

Second-language medium instruction is also an important feature of International and European schools, which, like the Swiss ‘finishing schools,’ are typically attended by children of socioeconomic and intellectual elites.

3.2 Weak Forms of Bilingual Education

The ‘sink or swim’ policy of submersion is the most widespread way of dealing with minority children, both in-migrant and indigenous. The child is placed in mainstream classrooms, sometimes assisted by additional instruction in the majority language (in withdrawal or pull-out classes). ‘Structured immersion’ L2 classes, not to be confused with the immersion program for majority children (e.g., in Canada), contain only minority children. Transitional bilingual education starts by teaching in the minority child’s L1 and as soon as possible moves over to instruction via L2. It is possible to distinguish ‘early exit’ (after 2–3 years) and ‘late-exit’ options.

In many countries, in-migrant children may well experience a mix of different methods. Parental initiatives, religious organizations, and consulates often provide additional L1 classes focusing on language development, ethnic history, and culture.