**Clifford Geertz – Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight**

Cockfights illegal in Bali under the republic.

The elite worries about the poor, ignorant peasant gambling all his money away, about what foreigners will think, about the waste of time better devoted to building up the country. It sees cockfighting as ‘primitive’, ‘backward’, ‘unprogressive’, and generally unbecoming an ambitious nation.

The next morning the village was a completely different world for us. Not only were we no longer invisible, we were suddenly the centre of all attention, the object of a great outpouring of warmth, interest, and, most especially, amusement.

For it is only apparently cocks that are fighting there. Actually it is men.

The deep psychological identification of Balinese men with their cocks is unmistakable.

Cocks are viewed as detachable, self-operating penises, ambulant genitals with a life of their own.

Sabung, word for cock, is used metaphorically to mean ‘hero’, ‘warrior’, ‘champion’, ‘man of parts’, ‘political candidate’, ‘bachelor’, ‘dandy’, ‘lady killer’, or ‘tough guy’.

Pompous man whose behavior presumes above his station is compared to a tailless cock who struts around as if he had a large spectacular one.

Everything relates to cocks in some way.

It is true that cocks are symbolic expressions or magnifications of their owners self.

Also expressions of animality.

In the cockfight, man and beast, good and evil, ego and id, the creative power of aroused masculinity and the destructive power of loosened animality fuse in a bloody drama of hatred, cruelty, violence, and death.

The owner of the winning cock takes the carcass of the loser – often torn limb from limb by its enraged owner – home to eat, he does so with a mixture of social embarrassment, moral satisfaction, aesthetic disgust, and cannibal joy.

Focused gatherings are common.

Bringing a cock to an important fight was, for an adult male, a compulsory duty of citizenship.

Complicated betting.

To engage in such betting is to lay one’s public self, allusively and metaphorically, through the medium of one’s cock, on the line.

There are those, the really substantial members of the community, the solid citizenry around whom local life revolves, who fight in the larger fights and bet on them around the side. The focusing element in these focused gatherings, these men generally dominate and define the sport as they dominate and define the society.

The migration of the Balinese status hierarchy into the body of the cockfight. Psychologically an Aesopian representation of the ideal/demonic, rather narcissistic, male self, sociologically it is an equally Aesopian representation of the complex fields of tension set up by the controlled, muted, ceremonial, but for all that deeply felt, interaction of those selves in the context of every day life.

The cocks may be surrogates for their owners’ personalities.

Cockfight is a simulation of the social matrix.

The deep cockfight is fundamentally a dramatization of status concerns.

Almost all matches are sociologically relevant.

Money is of secondary concern.

The more a match is between near status equals (and/or personal enemies), and 2. Between high status individuals – the deeper the match

The deeper the match, the closer the identification of cock and man (or: more properly, the deeper the match the more the man will advance his best, most closely-identified-with-cock)

One of the great culture heroes of Bali is a prince, called after his passion for the sport, ‘the cockfighter’.

Along with everything else that the Balinese see in fighting cocks-themselves, their social order, abstract hatred, masculinity, demonic power-they also see the archetype of status virtue, the arrogant, resolute, honor-mad player with real fire, the ksatria prince.

**Thick Description**

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. Culture is those webs.

One could not tell which was twitch and which was wink.

Right down at the factual base, the hard rock, insofar as there is any, of the whole enterprise, we are already explicating: and worse, explicating explications. Winks upon winks upon winks.

Doing ethnography is like trying to read manuscript.

To quote Ward Goodenough, ‘culture is located in the minds and hearts of men’.

Ward Goodenough, ‘A societies culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members’.

Culture is public because meaning is. You can’t wink (or burlesque one) without knowing what counts as winking or how physically to contract your eyelids.

Culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly – described.

Anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot. They are such fictions; ‘something made’, ‘something fashioned’.

Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior – or, more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation.

The ethnographer ‘inscribes’ social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted.

So there are three characteristics of ethnographic description: it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting consists in trying to rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms.

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is.

**David Coplan – The meaning of Tradition**

Harold Scheub, proposes that tradition is “the timeless in time”, composed of “cultural precipitates” that obviate history while depending on history for their images.

Oral traditions, including song, are essential to the symbolic construction of history and social experience.

The reification of cultural patterns as invariant group identifiers for political purposes.

Many ‘tribal’ identities as well as ethnic traditions were in reality invented by colonial officials, who sought to codify African oral law and fix ethnic boundaries and territories in order to facilitate their administration.

Ranger’s brief attempt to identify something called ‘authentic culture’.

‘exploited’ groups also invent traditions. In south Africa, where African cultural traditions have been debased by the dismantling of African institutions, which were then reinvented by Europeans as part of the theoretical justification for apartheid. For Africans, the use of their cultural heritage as an instrument of their oppression has led to the emergence of forms of accommodation and resistance that throw the outlines of the problem of tradition into extreme relief.

By representing African polities as rigidly bounded, stationary sociocultural units, British social anthropology created an artificial universe of ‘tribes’ that would serve as an ethnographic basis for apartheid.

Early generation of African graduates of mission schools often rejected their heritage as a detour into heathen darkness.

In seeking to distance themselves from African tradition, African Christians expected to escape the severe disabilities suffered by their rural nonliterate brethren in colonial society.

Cultural activists recognized the importance of a sense of tradition to a positive and autonomous definition of African identity and social being. They came to understand the dynamism of tradition as both a social and a historical process, requiring active appropriation, perpetuation, and transformation by members of the community among whom it is shared.

Ethnography can make no claim as a comprehensive account. It is at best a dialogue and a discovery process among particular subjects and particular observers, and any statement can only apply to social actors with specific perspectives in given interactional contexts.

“rather the social context becomes an integral part of interpretive analysis itself”

In performance, tradition provides authority to representations of the present by a “seamless connection with the remote past”

In reproducing tradition in performance, oral genres represent both a “mnemonic code,” elaborating the complex symbolism of a historical culture, and a critical reapplication of autonomous social values.

Music itself, therefore, is crucial to the reapplication of memory and the creation and re-creation of the emotional qualities of experience in the maintenance of a living tradition.

It was Franz Boas who first observed that oral genres are a people’s autobiographical ethnography. The concept of tradition, at that time simply identified with culture, has since been reified, manipulated, and stretched entirely out of analytical shape.

Ultimately the concept of tradition may be indispensable as a focus for exchange among anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and historians of third world societies.

**Bob White – Congolese Rumba**

Afro-Cuban music became popular in the Congo not only because it retained formal elements of “traditional” African musical performance, but also because it stood for a form of urban cosmopolitanism that was more accessible – and ultimately more pleasurable – than the various models of European cosmopolitanism which circulated in the Belgian colonies in Africa.

The modernity of Congolese popular dance music was marked not only by its accoutrements (electric instruments, expensive European cars, cellular phones and international high fashion), but also by the degree of its commercialization and by the way that it represents (or according to some compromises) Congolese national identity.

As Manda Tchebwa has observed, Kinshasa’s urban identity is tied up in the music and in many ways the two come of age together.

For people from Kinshasa, this city is the cradle of modern Congolese rumba.

Three primary sources of musical inspiration: Western music (this includes church music as well as European romantic ballads and ballroom traditions)j, “traditional” music (different types of African folklore and ritual-inspired performance), and Afro-Cuban music.

Rumba, even in a Cuban context, means many things to many people.

More than any other national or regional style of African popular music, Congolese music has remained close to its early Afro-Cuban influences. Three formal aspects: prominence of the guitar; clave rhythm ( now a snare drum); two part structure.

Fernando Ortiz wrote that the presence of Afro-Cuban music abroad stood for the “cosmopolitan triumph of the Cuban drum”.

The history of U.S. intervention in Cuban affairs and the expanding U.S. culture industries led Cuban nationalists and radicals alike to see Afro-Cuban music as an antidote to American cultural imperialism (Moore)

People in the Congo were appropriating the very same musical symbols, but using them instead as evidence of their participation in a world of cosmopolitanism that was trying to break free of the confines of a racial identity.

Afro-Cuban music functioned as a torch of authenticity for some and as a marker of cosmopolitan modernity for others.

The G.V. series had a huge influence on urban popular music in the 1930s from various parts of the continent.

It was common for African sailors to bring back records from their travels abroad.

Fernand Janssen helped pave the way for a generation of local foreign-owned record companies that would be instrumental in the development of an urban popular music style that was Afro-Cuban inspired and yet uniquely Congolese.

The G.V. series was not the first Afro-Cuban music to be heard in the Congo but it seemed to have the most impact. It was the music of preference for the Congolese up until locally recorded commercial music became widely available.

Listening to Afro-Cuban music seems to constitute a moment of long-distance self-recognition.

Many Congolese comment on how this imported music was used as an expression of individual and social distinction.

The topic of Afro-Cuban music is particularly revealing because it represents a form of cultural practice that is expressly African and yet profoundly cosmopolitan. Afro-Cuban music was so attractive to Congolese musicians and audiences not only because of the way that it sounded, but also because of what it stood for. It provided urban Congolese with an alternative to a particular form of cosmopolitanism- Belgian colonialism – that was strict and stiff, if not cruel and in many ways anti-cosmopolitan.

Afro-Cuban music was cosmopolitan without being European – or more accurately without being Belgian.

**Displays of masculinity and rituals of display**

Xenophobia is widespread in South Africa.

When a group has no history of incorporating strangers it may find it difficult to be welcoming.

Many Congolese men living in South Africa have reacted to this rise of intolerance with a renewed sense of defiance and pride. These men responded with boasts that their culture is better than South African culture.

Music and fashion is at the root of this argument.

Soukous, the popular Congolese based music, is used in South Africa as a tool to validate social status abroad, with Congolese in South Africa hiring soukous musicians back home in Congo to sing about them and their perceived accomplishments.

SAPE, a movement of style and fashion developed in Congo, also plays an important role in Congolese affirming status in South Africa.

Soukous and SAPE reverse the hierarchies of inferiority imposed by xenophobia; they endow South Africa with a sense of rootedness and authenticity that empowers participating Congolese with opportunities for new imaginaries and practices of belonging.

Years of apartheid not only separated blacks from whites, it also divided South African Blacks into perceived ethnic groupings and separated them into distinct areas of residence.

Black workers from black neighbouring countries, including Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, were explicably contracted to work as cheap labour in the mines and farms during apartheid. They had few rights and limited legal protection. When their labour was no longer required they were dismissed.

While migrancy contributes to the rich tapestry of the cosmopolitan city, it also places a severe strain on employment levels, housing and public services.

Morris proposes from his research into Nigerian and Congolese migrants that “the negative treatment meted out to [them] had not impacted on their own self-image”. Rather, it has served to pull the migrants together into separate Congolese and Nigerian communities. “it was evident that the prejudice experienced, combined with the issue of language and a sense of familiarity with their own countrymen, greatly encouraged the groupings in question to cohere and assert their own national identity to counter the racism directed at them.

Through the shared experience of exclusion, then, the Congolese have re-established their own, distinct community, where, Pierre poignantly explains, “we can be ourselves”.

Although xenophobia is racialized in South Africa, it is also gendered: Black South African men comprise the majority of the attackers, and Black South African male foreigners represent the majority of those targeted in these attacks. This proposes a link in the country that connects xenophobia, migration and masculinity together.

Benita Moolman encourages us to view xenophobia in South Africa as being driven through masculinized struggles.

Masculinity, like other kinds of social identity, is an ongoing construction in a dialogue between one’s self-image and others’ perceptions of one”(Khosravi). From that perspective, one can conclude that the masculine identity presented by the Congolese men living in Johannesburg are informed by their experiences had both in Congo as well as in South Africa.

In Congo, wealth is considered the most important prerequisite of a ‘real man’. Yet, as Katrein Pype argues, it is the appearance of wealth that is crucial.

SAPE, through its cultivation of clothes, enables members to stand out and to “become someone”.

The Congolese men in Johannesburg are committed to extending that ideal back in Congo through soukous appreciation songs. These appreciation songs also stand as further symbols of the men’s financial success in South Africa.

In the quest for self-preservation, it has been in their interest to develop a ‘display of masculinity’ that would allow them to straddle the borders of both South Africa and Congo; to maintain connections to both ‘here’ and ‘there’.

It is a strategic identity in that it assures constructive and mutually beneficial relations with both South Africa and Congo, thereby allowing the Congolese men to avoid having to choose between nations.

Kankonde Bukasa says “soukous is a remittance practice that allows Congolese migrants from Johannesburg to London to attain ‘social adulthood’.

Soukous served as a vehicle for Congolese to take hold to a modern world and to lift social standing.

The adoption of la SAPE presents itself as a symbolic gesture aimed at reclaiming power.

La SAPE constitutes the creation of a ‘particular form of resistance’ that disrupts societal hierarchies, inaugurating a space for “an oppositional, counter-hegemonic culture. Within this culture, they assert their identity and compete for status according to their own system of values. In this process, they exclude those who are part of the system that has excluded them.”

La SAPE and Soukous converge in Johannesburg at the Santayi lounge and Club. Sankayi serves as a link to home.

Xenophobia classifies and categories people. “How we name things affects how we behave toward them. The name, or label, carries with it expectations.” (John Clarke and Alan Cochrane)

Through the power of devising their own success stories and style images, accomplished through appreciation songs and la SAPE, the Congolese resist the ways the are represented in South Africa.

Displays of masculinity and rituals of display enable the participating Congolese to “experience new ways of doing and being” in the world, and to “escape [its] disciplining eyes”. (Ghannam) They provide a specific opportunity for the Congolese to re-insert themselves into the city of Johannesburg, reshaping an otherwise foreign space into a local place of meaning; releasing participants from real life circumstances.

**Patria Roman-Velazquez - Salsa**

Salsa was the name given to describe a specific musical practice that was initially associated with the Spanish Caribbean populations of Puerto Ricans and Cubans in New York City.

Salsa soon became associated with a pan-latin identity.

Rhythm is a way of transmitting a description of experience.

Sound waves are assembled in such a way as to resemble physical gestures.

Music has the ‘ability to make us experience our bodies in accordance with its gestures and rhythms.

In salsa, the bass swings across the bars.

Salsa is based on the rhythmic patterns 3/2 or 2/3 called ‘la clave’.

Salsa derives equally from African rhythms and European melodies.

Salsa is portrayed as a ‘flexible’ musical style that can be accommodated to a range of other musical practices and forms.

Musical perception, rather than ethnic background, is the key point for understanding and playing a musical practice like salsa.

Place becomes an Important site for understanding, approaching and learning musical practices.

Associations between instruments, rhythms and ethnicity persist.

Places are important sites for the meeting and exchange of different cultural practices and possible cultural transformations.

There is a tendency to ‘ethnicise’ certain rhythms and instruments around certain myths about musical and cultural characteristics that conform to fixed ideas about Latins having the rhythm and Europeans having the melody.

Certain musicians rejcted the notion of a relationship between ethnicity and instruments.

As in language, there is no fixed relationship between ethnicity and playing music.

Economic constraints due to large number of band members.

Economic constraints have led to the creation of different musical styles and performances.

Change is also adopted to appeal to different audiences.

Salsa songs contain an improvisation section called the ‘soneo’.

Salsa sang in spanish.

Dancers are encouraged to improvise.

Dancers and musicians respond to each other.

Body movements signify latinness.

Salsa dominated by males.

Gender expectations.

**Big Drum Dance of Carriacou, Grenada**

The ancient Big Drum Dance of Carriacou, is crucial to the current generations memory of national origin and kinship. Created by enslaved people, the Nation Dance celebrates family reorganization and changes in social status. The Big Drum songs stretch and sustain the people’s cultural and personal knowledge of their ethnicity.

Derives from West African Groups: Cromanti, Igbo, Manding, Chamba, Congo, Temne, Moko, Arada, and Banda.

The Big Drum Dance most often accompanies the final funeral observance but may also be mounted at a wedding reception, the launching of a new boat, or the christening of a new house. Food almost always accompanies the Big Drum as a significant ritual element that is offered to the spirits as well as to the human participants.

3 subdivisions: nation dances; Creole dances; and frivolous dances.

In contemporary performance the musical ensemble includes three male drummers and several female singer-dancers led by a *chantwell,* the female leader of the ensemble. The chantwell introduces each song and controls the ensemble with the aid of a seed-filled *boli,* the *chic-chac.* The keg-constructed drum trio consists of a *cutter* and two *boulas,* all open-bottom drums with goatskin heads. The head of the *cutter* drum is wrapped with a snare that is actually a string knotted to hold several straight pins.

Call and response form.

Before the main part of the dance, the host family directs an introductory ritual to invite the spirit ancestors. Bell gong starts the song, family dances counter-clockwise within the ring, sprinkling rum libations that consecrate and transform the ritual space into the “free-ring”. With this, the ring is open and preserved for the pleasure-seeking spirits’ dance.

Each song type is tied to a specific, discrete rhythmic mode reiterated by the *boulas.*

People of the older generation feel that loss of knowledge about one’s origins may be recuperated through one’s affinity to or enticement by the *boula* pattern that identifies one’s nation.

The musical beat and dance appear to be connected in the definition, delineation, and individualization of the multinational population. We see a social class system arising from or at least reflected in the ethnic song classification of the Big Drum.

Mainly controlled by women.

Danced historically by older people.

The dance classifications express generation.

Ethnic demarcation was not only a dance convention but also a useful tool for estate proprietors in keeping census records and documenting runaways.

By virtue of their plurality and forceful presence, the Cromanti were likely to have dominated the 9 nation society not only in musico-ritual areas but also in political activities.

The Big Drum program order reflects the influence of three leading groups: the Cromanti, igbo, and Manding.

Cromanti songs are sung first, then Igbo, then Manding, before the other 6 nation repertoires are interspersed among the Creole and frivolous repertoires.

The geographical point of slave exit, the regional city annexed to the port, or the language or culture of the group could be chosen as the slave’s national title.

Nation songs project matters of collective concern. Always at the beginning of event.

First Cromanti song is called a ‘Beg Pardon’ used to invoke and invite the spirits to the dance event.

Elements of religious supplication and ancestor veneration do appear to dominate their focus.

The Big Drum Dance, initiated out of the necessity for societal modeling, group bonding, and material sharing, reconstructed human interaction. The effort of the musical drama centered on the unification of the nine-nation congress, in which classes were equalized and divisions lessened through the cyclical nature of *saraka* food giving, ritual activity, and the focus of the Big Drum, which worked toward social compromise. At the same time a desire for social stratification and differentiation was implicit in the code of ethnic categorization.

As new people such as the Scotch Igbo entered the society, a new racial classification as well as a new dance style was invented.

Also built into the system was a regenerative code that restored ethnic identity by means of the personal response to a nation rhythm. It appears that through a musical attraction to a nation rhythm alienated people’s recovered a chance to claim nationhood.