

the West that Serge Gurzinski described in *Les quatre parties du monde* (also published in 2004).

Goody rejects a certain number of dichotomies that inspired writers in the social sciences who tried to account for the advantage of the West. The general thrust of his argument is against drawing too sharp a contrast between East and West in those features of social organization that could relate to the onset of capitalism, modernization, and industrialization (p. 102). Instead of accepting the great divide between modernity and tradition, Goody maintains, countering Giddens, that 'previous societies were not structured in a fashion that demanded unquestioning obedience to tradition', nor had there been 'a quantum jump to modernity, cutting off "traditional" habits' (p. 11). He sees human societies as consisting 'of chains of interlocking generations that both transmit and innovate' and human cultures as consisting 'of chains of interlocking communications' (p. 12). He rejects the dichotomy defining the West as a place where human agency is exercised on the individual level and the East as one where it is organized on the collective level. He claims that this vision continues to influence contemporary historians and demographers when they explain the roots of Western modernity. Goody maintains that individualism is not the reserve of the West and that collective elements are also part and parcel of Western culture. Individual choice exists in both Eastern and Western decision-making within 'opportunity structure defined to a large degree by collective institutions, interests and ideologies' (p. 96).

Technological progress that led to industrialization in the West beginning in the last quarter of the eighteenth century is due more to 'technological dialogue' or 'an inventive exchange' between East and West than to a supposed cultural advantage of the West. Goody demonstrates how foundry techniques, the use of paper and water mills were transferred slowly from East to West. European factory production of porcelain existed previously in China and may have influenced the way in which European factory systems were organized. Silk-throwing machines that came to Britain in the early eighteenth century and were patented there had come from Italy, by way of the Islamic world (p. 149). When centres of industrial production expanded in Europe, a process of de-development took place in the East where centres of production of fine cloth collapsed. This nineteenth-century European advantage was, however, only temporary partly due to the

military power exercised by the West that allowed it to establish for a time its own conditions of trade and restricted market conditions. It did not preclude shifts in leadership in industrial production and commerce as they currently take place with the massive transfer of industrial production to the East.

This little book of only 200 pages including notes and bibliography leaves the reader sometimes hungry for more detail. It has to be read in the context of Goody's life-long *oeuvre*, which provides ample illustration for the argument developed here.

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WILLIAMS, VERNON J. *The social sciences and theories of race*. 151 pp., bibliogr. Chicago: Univ. Illinois Press, 2006. £12.99 (paper)

Williams has written a well-executed and informative collection of essays that comprise this his third book. He utilizes a variety of sources and methods to bolster his critical analysis of a simple yet profound question: why did and do people in North America believe and value the bundle of essentialist theories embedded in the volatile idea of race? Williams is primarily concerned with the way theories of race and theories of culture have been routinely deployed to demonstrate the putatively inherent, inherited, or acquired inferiority of African Americans in the United States from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Focusing on the early twentieth century, Williams concludes that 'most people react in terms of what they perceive to be true, and often no amount of discreditation – however "artful" or "scientific" – of their myths can change' deep-seated ideas (p. 120). Williams punctuates this claim by citing George M. Fredrickson, who notes that 'the persistence of racial essentialist theory stems, in short, from people's delusions' (p. 120).

Although Williams's conclusion is accurate, it is not particularly satisfying. However, the way he approaches the question as a serious historian of science, ideas, and mythology is smart, informative, and very satisfying. The majority of chapters are biographical vignettes of influential anthropologists, sociologists, and 'race men' who played pivotal roles in the genealogy of scientific debates on race. Williams is not satisfied with just offering potted biographies and underscoring each man's major contribution. He painstakingly documents how

each of his subject's ideas about race evolved and changed over time, often in response to the changing conditions of race and racism. Williams never limits himself in his efforts to delineate, or in his words 'adumbrate', the influence of people, progress, and politics on the views of these scholars. He explains how he wanted to 'ignore the boundaries separating cultural history, biography, autobiography, social history, and intellectual history in order to provide the reader with evidence to support' his analysis of change over time (p. 4). As a result, Williams has produced a fast-paced and focused history of the way a handful of men contributed to major twists and turns of the seemingly intractable problem of race, which for far too long was viewed simply as 'the Negro problem'.

Although some of his subjects are the usual suspects – for example, Franz Boas and Booker T. Washington – most are not. He introduces Monroe Work and George Washington Ellis to historians of anthropology while he introduces Ulysses G. Weatherly to scholars of African American studies – it is a seamless interdisciplinary analysis of particular North American scholars' contribution, resistance, and maintenance of that persistent and intractable social category.

The book is much more than a collection of biographical sketches because Williams weighs into the historiography of anthropology – devoting an entire chapter to it and boldly taking on the likes of Nancy L. Stepan and Herbert Lewis by challenging their view that the impetus for change in the behavioural and social sciences was internal, as opposed to external, while questioning the way each eschews a serious consideration of the subaltern traditions within the history of ideas. Offering more than critique, Williams extends and develops his

compelling argument that 'cataclysmic social structural changes were necessary preconditions for the initial triumph of antiracist thinking in the newly emerging American behavioral sciences' (p. 10). He reviews the literature of the past thirty years on race in anthropology and carefully dissects and bisects it, outlining the stakes, politics, and approaches of the small group of scholars who consistently write about the history of anthropology and race. This chapter emphasizes his compelling discussions of Franz Boas, Monroe Work, George Washington Ellis, Ulysses G. Weatherly, and Booker T. Washington. For those, he offers new perspectives and fresh insights, and for the unusual suspects, he underscores how scholarly communities, and not just individuals, shape and shift paradigms.

The most important contribution Williams makes is the way he painstakingly mines, or, better yet, archaeologically excavates, the most salient contributions of some of the lesser known figures in the history of sociology and anthropology, and, like an archaeologist, he pays particular attention to social and material contexts and subtle changes over time.

Perhaps the most edifying aspect of this careful history is the way Williams demonstrates how regular folk, not just the historic luminaries, made a difference. As scholars who are simply committed to teaching students and writing prose that enables people better to understand the world in which we live, we can find solace in the fact that while not famous, we, too, might be making lasting and meaningful contributions to the discourse and the discipline that, like William's book, is situated at the confluence of anthropology, sociology, and African American studies.

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