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The Potlatch as an Exemplar of an Historical Theory of Science

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Joan Mark (Research Associate, Peabody Museum, Harvard University) is at work on a biography of Alice C. Fletcher, nineteenth century American ethnographer of the Omaha Indians.

Donald J. C. Phillipson (Hall's Rd., Carlsbad Springs, Ontario) is doing research on the history of the scientific community in Canada, 1882-1962, with attention to the development of new disciplines, including linguistics and the role of Edward Sapir.

Jay Ruby (Professor of Anthropology, Temple University, Philadelphia) is doing research on the history of visual anthropology, focusing on the work of Franz Boas. Ruby is also interested in the use of dioramas in museums at the turn of the century, and in the use of live performers at various international expositions.

Britta Rupp-Eisenreich (Maître-assistant à l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris) is doing research on the specific features and conditions of the emergence of ethnology in German-speaking countries from the eighteenth century to 1885.

William Schneider (Department of History, University of North Carolina, Wilmington) is continuing his research on the Anthropological Society of Paris and anthropology in international exhibitions in the late nineteenth century.

Alexander Spoehr (Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh) is doing research on the men in the Pacific Islands area who provided Lewis Henry Morgan with information for his Systems of Consanguinity.

BIBLIOGRAPHICA ARCANA

I. THE POTALATCH AS EXEMPLAR OF AN HISTORICAL THEORY OF SCIENCE

Signe Seiler (University of Mainz) has just published a book entitled Wissenschaftstheorie in der Ethnologie: zur Kritik und weiterführung der Theorie von Thomas S. Kuhn an hand ethnographischen Materials (Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 1980). Mainzer Ethnologica Band I. Using the earlier work of the Frankfort School (Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas) to develop the paradigmatic theory of Thomas Kuhn into an "historical theory of science," Seiler chooses as an example the history of North American cultural anthropology. The substantial core of the book centers on an analysis of the literature pertaining to the potlatch festival of the Indians of the Northwest Coast of Canada. The potlatch has previously been interpreted as a product of historical events, as the expression of an independent psychic configuration, and as part of a culturally-oriented ecological system of adaptation. Seiler's analysis aims to determine how, in addition to the "objective" description of reality, metaphysical and social assumptions predetermined the structure of investigation. The conventional theory structure has been questioned from both a scientifically theoretical viewpoint and from that of ethnology (e.g., Hymes, Scholte, Berreman, Gough, Diamond, Wolf, Despres,
Seiler's goal is reflected in her closing demand for new research techniques and new theoretical approaches which will lead to new insights.

II. POLISH WRITINGS ON AND BY BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI

Peter Skalnik, of the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, University of Leiden, is editing an English translation of some of Malinowski's anthropological writings in the Polish language, along with writings on Malinowski, some of which have previously appeared in Polish publications. Among the latter are:


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