

Culture



Deirdre MEINTEL, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde*, Syracuse, N.Y. : Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1984. 201 pages

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Arabs and Berbers, Muslims and Jews. Using Schutz' categories, Moroccans who make all relevant persons into consociates are contrasted with Balinese, who in Geertz' studies 'perceive all others as more or less anonymous and stereotyped contemporaries'. Rosen goes on to describe the development of personal encounters between Arabs and Berbers (from their initial formality to subsequent informality) as switching from Bernstein's restricted to his elaborated code, without adding much enlightenment to his own analysis.

The last chapter considers the narrative aspect of relationship bargaining in literacy sources, and so the concept of time itself, which seems to support the emphasis on social reality as essentially personal and contextual, for past events are only significant as relevant to present relationships, so time is not lineal, or continuous duration, but a constellation, a 'milky way' of instants. 'History is biography.' Time units are significant as sets of relational dynamics, packets of consociational bonds. Those who come before and after, once out of the realm of direct negotiation, become non-consociates and nonpersons. Thus Rosen supplements *homo loguens, fabricans, sapiens, ludens*, with *homo contextus*.

Deirdre MEINTEL, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde*, Syracuse, N. Y.: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1984. 201 pages.

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Derived in large part from Meintel's doctoral dissertation, this account of race, culture and Portuguese colonialism in that archipelago, located some 300 miles off the coast of Africa and labeled the Cape Verde islands, is a study of a vanished system. The fieldwork began in late 1971 and extended through most of 1972. However, in April 1974 Portugal underwent the bloodless revolution that marked the genuine end of the Salazar regime and, following a popular local referendum, the islands became the Republic of Cabo Verde in July of 1975. Thus, the study was done just as the African wars of independence were forcing the Lisbon regime to make marked changes in their treatment of the Cape Verdeans—partly as a showcase for the 'beneficial results' of Portuguese colonialism—but also just before the final collapse of the colonial empire and the fascist regime on the mainland that had lasted since 1932. Since then, of

course, there have been significant changes in the Islands, not the least of them the result of large amounts of foreign aid for development. The general unsuitability of much of the archipelago for agriculture, fishing, industry or any other form of development, and its vulnerability to drought as well as concomitant famine, has meant that attempts to 'modernize' the region in the last decade have not met with much success. The 300,000+ inhabitants of this 1500+ square mile region are still among the poorest in Africa.

When first discovered in the 15th century the islands were uninhabited, and the lack of water deterred settlers. The earliest history of the islands is as a slaving station and entrepôt, as well as a haven for political exiles, banished criminals, smugglers, and adventurers. Meintel illustrates how and why these islands—despite being ignored and left as a backwater much of their colonial history—became the source (or at least the most popular representative) of a myth centered around the unique format and results of Portuguese colonial rule. The latter, it was claimed, led to a 'raceless' society; some observers of the colonial process scorned this as the result of the Portuguese 'inability to respect their own racial purity' (and not a few references appear concerning the Portuguese penchant for miscengenation). Others praised the disregard of race that so seriously flawed the colonial rule of other nations such as Great Britain. In any case, as the myth went, in Cape Verde society color was irrelevant (as were other phenotypic markers such as hair, nose, lip shape, etc.) and one was judged solely on the basis of personal achievement and culture—with money having the ability to 'whiten' all and any. The examination of this myth and the extent to which race and culture were inextricably intertwined in Portuguese colonial rule are the main foci of this monograph.

Meintel develops the history and ecological/demographic features of the Cape Verde Islands from their initial settlement in 1462 through to the late 1970s. After an introductory chapter on field work (pp. 1-13), she discusses the physical setting of 'African islands in the Atlantic' (pp. 15-29), an historical outline of 'A society built on the slave trade' (pp. 31-53), the history of the crises brought about by repetitive and extended droughts (pp. 55-82), the sociocultural context of race relations during the slavery period (pp. 73-92) and during the post-slavery period (pp. 93-126). The latter chapter, together with the one that follows ('Colonizers and colonized: Cape Verdeans in the Empire,' pp. 127-58) form the heart of the monograph and lay the groundwork for the final chapter, 'Race and culture

in colonial Cape Verde: A comparative view' (pp. 159-69).

Meintel herself stresses in the Preface that the study will focus on the colonial experience of the Cape Verdeans, with special emphasis on the system of racial relations that colonial experience fostered. She maintains that, 'The race relations and ideology of colonial Cape Verde are in certain respects unique, and thus of interest for the general understanding of racial systems' (p. viii). Rather than a simple dichotomy between 'black' and 'white' as is said by most to mark the racial categorization system in the United States, 'the Cape Verdean racial system resembles the Brazilian in its lack of a history of legalized discrimination, along with informal patterns of racism...' (p. viii).

Following a well-known discussion concerning the distinction between the Iberian and Anglo variants of slavery in the Western Hemisphere, Meintel first explores the resemblances of Cape Verdean slavery to the Iberian model and then (Chapter VI) pursues the comparison on the level of contemporary race relations. Contrary to arguments by scholars such as Michael Banton and Marvin Harris, Meintel maintains that her data and analysis give evidence that, 'racist ideology and racial discrimination are quite compatible with a multicategory racial system of the Iberian sort' even though legalized discrimination is absent (p. 12).

Chapter VII looks at the unique role played by the Cape Verdean colony in the Portuguese empire and looks, particularly, at the wider political context of Cape Verdean race relations. Meintel stresses the importance, for Cape Verdeans, of the notion of "culture" (i.e. the adoption by the blacks of Portuguese norms, mores, concepts of "proper behavior"). She sees the concept as "a key element in Portuguese racial policy and in the dominant folk ideology of race" (p. 12). She concludes by suggesting that, despite the distinction between the so-called "Iberian" and "Anglo" models of race relations, there are greater parallels between the two systems than has been generally understood to date.

The fundamental question addressed here is: Were indigenous peoples—whether African or Amerindian—forever doomed to be inferior under colonial rule, or did certain forms of colonialism allow the acquisition of traits and norms to constitute an 'evolutionary' movement into the category of 'civilized-and-one-of-us'? In a system where race was of minimal concern could one change one's class 'simply' by behaving in accord with the stylistics of the dominant class? Contrariwise, in a racially biased context could one ever

become totally 'declass'—if white—regardless of one's behavior? And if not white, could one ever become totally accepted (to the point where 'a person of color' could set the rules that others followed rather than always living in fear of making a wrong step that might allow elites to sneer that 'blood will tell' or 'one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear')?

To begin, one had to be able to examine racial discrimination. Using a test devised by Marvin Harris and used in Brazil, Meintel arrived at dissimilar conclusions for Cape Verde society. Her thesis is that those like Harris who deny the reality of racial discrimination in Brazil or Cape Verde or wherever have failed to grasp the discriminatory subtleties of the system that *is* at work. Meintel claims that *both* race and class are important supports for a system of social hierarchy and, indeed, 'In Brazil as in colonial Cabo Verde... a key element of the dominant ideology of race is the notion racism does not exist' (p. 162). In Cabo Verde her research indicated that 'discrimination presented as a distinction of 'level' or background is experienced as racism by those who are its object. Social exclusion of those considered to be of a lower level has the function, intended or not, of effecting informal but real racial barriers' (p. 162).

Though modest and unpretentious, this monograph makes an important contribution to the literature on race and race relations and supports Meintel's claim that 'it is misleading to oppose race and class as two entirely separate "determinants of stratification" of the social placement of individuals. Rather, the racial hierarchy and the ideology that supports it must be seen as bulwarks of a given class order. In colonial Cape Verde... it was not only a local class order that was at stake, but the Portuguese colonial system as well (p. 163).

W. R. SWAGERTY, *Scholars and the Indian Experience: Critical Reviews of Recent Writing in the Social Sciences*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian (Newberry Library), 1984. 268 pages, US \$22.50 (cloth), US \$9.95 (paper).

By Richard K. Pope
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This provides an invaluable guide to recent literature in the area of Indian-White culture contact, which is primarily from the United States