

what the book seems to propose is a reduction of 'doing anthropology' to a simple set of skills.

We need the techniques, says the introduction, to enable us to prove that our material is 'worthy of being passed along' (p. 3) and to establish that our portraits are 'reasonably objective overall' (p. 3). Perhaps, however, a clearer differentiation is needed to distinguish between quality review processes and an unquestioned belief in objectivity that I thought the social sciences had transcended. One witnesses an attempt to introduce a personal perspective in the opening paragraphs of each chapter, but the book never conveys the importance of personal commitment to one's specialism that drives so many researchers. Even if Angrosino and his colleagues disagree with the significance of this, it would have been as well to acknowledge it. Typically, each chapter begins with an introduction to a skill of which the author has personal experience. For example, this section in Angrosino's chapter attempts to demonstrate his personal involvement and to provide understanding of what the researcher has experienced when applying the technique. At the same time, however, he also feels impelled to prove that his endeavour is scientific. By doing so, Angrosino inadvertently separates his personal involvement from the drive for scientific knowledge, leaving the section strangely disconnected and disengaged.

The brief 'tool' and 'history' sections featured in most chapters too often suggest that certain topics are necessarily best studied with specific techniques, rather than suggesting that certain techniques will help with specific topics. Again, these more theoretical sections fail to capture the creative balance that lies between personal enthusiasm for a particular topic and the benefit that derives from well-utilized research techniques.

The sections on process are by and large idiosyncratic, but valuable 'how-to' sections explain how the research techniques are set up and carried out. These include discussions of dos and don'ts, sometimes in checklist form, at other times in the form of detailed descriptions. Finally, readers are presented with possible mini-projects to test these techniques. These are well selected, brief, and sufficiently contained to allow a degree of insight into each of the various techniques. The chapters end with a highly selective list for further reading on the topic. I found that list often too selective and would have wished for more extensive bibliographies.

Despite these reservations, I think that the book is concise and to the point in its descriptions. Most of the projects described take place in North America. This means that they mainly investigate special groups or minorities rather than societies as wholes. They will therefore appeal to undergraduates,

who have greater experience of such groups. The emphasis on ethics is also useful. However, the book may be most helpful for advanced students who need to brush up their skills quickly before embarking on a research project, or who want to make sure that they have considered the right assortment of research techniques for their research.

MARTIN ORTLIEB

*University of Manchester*

STOCZKOWSKI, WIKTOR (trans. Mary Turton). *Explaining human origins: myth, imagination and conjecture*. ix, 234 pp., tables, bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2002. £45.00 (cloth), £15.95 (paper)

Marshall Sahlins famously described Darwinism as 'the origins myth of western capitalism'. From Stoczkowski's book, we learn little about human origins, quite a lot about the myth. 'Man's ascent from savagery' has gripped the popular imagination for well over a hundred years. The tale begins with scrawny, vulnerable cavemen cringing in cold and fear while sharp-fanged lions, bears, and hyenas stalk the landscape. At the mercy of the elements, our unfortunate forefathers are perpetually on the brink of starvation. Then comes their momentous discovery of magic ingredient X – 'fire', 'tool-making', 'language', or 'abstract thought' – and man's conquest of the elements is assured. 'Reduction of canine teeth' gets a mention in most versions, as does 'bipedal locomotion' and the 'freeing of the hands'. In the story, as Stoczkowski (p. 49) explains, all these features are causally interlinked:

If our ancestors adopted an upright posture, their hands were freed from locomotion; the free hand made it possible to produce and use tools; the tools replaced the canines in a great many functions and consequently the canines were reduced in size; learning to make tools required a complex means of communication, so language was created, and so on.

Stoczkowski does a persuasive job in demonstrating the extraordinary tenacity of all this, the basic story appearing to perpetuate itself independently of actual discoveries of fossil hominids, archaeological remains, or new dating techniques. The causality is always a bowdlerized version of 'materialism' or 'technological determinism', with 'magic' and 'religion' sidelined as erroneous science. Each postulated cause is supposed to precede the effect:

But, curiously, time is not much in evidence in the hominisation scenarios and

the events that follow on from each other remain suspended in an astonishingly vague chronological space, all consigned to a more or less ill-defined period, in line with the knowledge or uncertainties of the hour, as 'the end of the Tertiary', the 'pivotal point between the Pliocene and the Pleistocene', the 'Plio-Pleistocene', the 'lower Palaeolithic', etc. (p. 51).

The author might have added that such vagueness exactly describes the scenarios of modern evolutionary psychologists such as Steven Pinker, Leda Cosmides, John Tooby, and Geoffrey Miller – for whom it suffices to consign all key developments to what they term 'the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness'.

The trenchancy of these criticisms is marred, however, by the fact that Stoczkowski misunderstands 'selfish gene' Darwinism so badly that he confuses it with 'group selection'. 'The biggest innovation', as he puts it (p. 155), 'is apparent in the works that appeal to sociobiology, where the field of usefulness is extended from the individual to the group'. This is embarrassingly bad – on a par with mixing up Copernicus with flat-earthism, Darwin with creation science, or Chomsky with behaviourism. Anyone even vaguely familiar with such topics should know that sociobiology is 'selfish gene' Darwinism and that, from the outset, this school of thought has defined itself precisely *in opposition* to the idea of 'fitness' as a measure of usefulness to 'the group'. Errors of this kind undermine confidence in the author's scholarly credentials.

A linked feature of this book is that its sources are seriously outdated. The bibliography lists ten up-to-date works by the author himself, but otherwise his references seem to peter out at around 1980. 1950s musings are discussed as if they were still topical. Contemporary giants such as Milford Wolpoff and Chris Stringer are nowhere mentioned. Indeed, we find not a word on the 'multi-regionalism' versus 'rapid displacement' controversy which has rocked human origins research over the past two decades. Stoczkowski mentions language evolution, but omits Chomsky, Pinker, Dunbar, and every other figure central to recent debates on this topic. In the past decade, archaeologists (e.g. I. Watts, 1999, 'The origins of society', in R. Dunbar, C. Knight & C. Power [eds], *The evolution of culture*) have discovered dramatic evidence for early symbolism in the form of decorated red ochre crayons and other artefacts dated in southern Africa to c.76,000 years. Again, these findings have passed our author by. All this is a pity because, taken together, they point to a scenario of cultural emergence (e.g. C. Power & L. Aiello, 1997,

'Female protosymbolic strategies', in L. Hager [ed.], *Women in human evolution*) about as far removed from 'the origins myth of western capitalism' as it is possible to get.

CHRIS KNIGHT

*University of East London*

## Religion

PALMIÉ, STEPHAN. *Wizards and scientists: explorations in Afro-Cuban modernity and tradition*. xi, 399 pp., bibliogr. London, Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2002. £16.95 (paper)

Palmié has written an intriguing discussion of Afro-Cuban religion that contains stimulating reflections on the relationship of modernity and tradition, and on the relationship of the past and the present. The book will interest not just readers concerned with Cuba and the Caribbean, but also those concerned with the ways that people in the present construct the past and their relationship with it, a relationship often coded as the modern and the traditional.

Between an extended analytical introduction and an epilogue are three chapters, each discussing an episode in Cuban history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first episode concerns José Anontio Aponte, a free Afro-Cuban artisan arrested for sedition and interrogated in Havana in 1812. The focus of his interrogation was a book of illustrations that he had made for himself and that Palmié analyses as containing an understanding of Western iconographic and cultural history that includes what his interrogators and their Spanish masters wanted to exclude, the mass slavery on which the Cuban order increasingly was based and the Africa from which those slaves were taken. In other words, Aponte's book shows the intimacy of the relationship between what we might call the modern and the traditional in the thinking of this Havana artisan, not simply in the form of Aponte's own selection and description of the images in his book, recorded in his interrogation, but also in the form of the images themselves, evidence of the transatlantic transactions that linked him to those who produced and distributed the works from which he took his images.

The second episode concerns two Afro-Cuban religious complexes, *regla ocha* (Santería) and *reglas de congo*. These tend to be seen as springing from distinct regions in Africa and moving to Cuba in a complex but generally unproblematic way: the former from a wave of Yoruba slave migration, the latter