

## **Other People's Anthropologies**



# OTHER PEOPLE'S ANTHROPOLOGIES



*Ethnographic Practice on the Margins*

edited by  
Aleksandar Bošković



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*to our students*



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## *Introduction*

# Other People's Anthropologies

Aleksandar Bošković and Thomas Hylland Eriksen



### ABOUT THIS BOOK

There were several formative moments in the creation of this book. First of all, the idea of organizing the workshop on “Other Anthropologies” at the 2004 EASA conference in Vienna was suggested by Thomas Hylland Eriksen, as we were walking through the High Street of Grahamstown (South Africa) on a windy Sunday morning in May 2003. The two day (10–11 September) and three session workshop in Vienna went extremely well, both in terms of attendance and the discussions. Many papers from this workshop (by Kuznetsov, Elchinova, Sugishita, and Guber) eventually made it into this book.

This book cannot be viewed in isolation from the earlier discussions of “indigenous” or “non-Western” (Fahim 1982; Asad 1982), “native” or “nativist” (Narayan 1993; Mingming 2002), “central/peripheral” (Hannerz and Gerholm 1982; Cardoso de Oliveira 2000), “anthropologies of the South” (Krotz 1997; Quinlan 2000), or “world anthropologies” (Restrepo and Escobar 2005; Ribeiro and Escobar 2006). Apart from the collection of articles in *Ethnos* (Hannerz and Gerholm 1982) and Fahim’s book, we must also mention the edited volume dealing with the European anthropology and ethnology, by Vermeulen and Roldán (1995). The fact that all of these books have been out of print for a long time stands at odds with the growing interest in these issues. Last but not least, the leading Russian anthropological journal, *Etnografičeskoe obozrenie*, recently also devoted a special issue (2/2005) to “world” anthropologies, edited by Alexei Elfimov.

## ONE OR MANY?

It would probably be safe to say that the issues of alterity and difference were crucial for the human questioning of different (and potentially threatening) others, at least from José de Acosta's<sup>1</sup> *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* in 1590.<sup>2</sup> It would also be safe to say that the quest for understanding others was at the same time defining for the (rarely explicit task of) understanding ourselves, and anthropology has contributed to this since its very beginnings. Naturally, there were different traditions and different theories; there were gruelling intellectual debates between advocates of the "monogenetic" and "phylogenetic" theories in the early nineteenth century, then there was the issue of the "psychic unity of mankind," so forcefully championed by Bastian and his followers (and Franz Boas was one of them); finally, the issue of the "cultural circles" and the spread of culture and civilization (with Rivers' 1911 address to the Section H of the British Association for the Advancement of Science as the defining moment),<sup>3</sup> and many more during the twentieth century. It has been argued that even some "great" or "central" traditions arose as a direct consequence of the encounter with the other (Brumana 2002, Latour 2004).

But just as anthropology never had a single point of origin, it also never had a single stream of development—and this becomes, perhaps, more pronounced than ever in our "post-colonial" or "post-industrial" times. Some projects focusing on particular (imagined) points of view therefore become a bit problematic—for example, the distinction between "Western" and "non-Western" anthropologies has been so described (Madan 1982, Asad 1982). On the other hand, anthropology as a discipline is usually defined in terms of the "centers" or "central" traditions (de Oliveira 2000 mentions the American, British and French traditions [Cardoso de Oliveira 2000]; one might add the German one as well)—the processes of marginalization go so far that, for example, it is practically impossible for non-members of the biggest anthropological association in the world (the AAA) to even submit papers to some AAA journals.<sup>4</sup>

The processes of decolonization, along with critical interrogation of the dominant narratives, led to much greater visibility of the non-central anthropological traditions. Of course, some of them (like India, for example) have been quite visible for many decades. Others, like the Russian one, have been around for a very long time, and along with the Japanese and the Brazilian traditions, are quite impressive when it comes to the numbers of professional anthropologists or ethnologists. However, there are some differences in the focus of research (Asad 1982: 285; Madan in Fahim, Helmer et al. 1980: 655, Fahim 1982: 265ff.), as "Western" anthropologists tended to

study societies “abroad,” while their “non-Western” (or “peripheral”) counterparts much more often opted (or had to, due to financial and/or political constraints) to study “at home.”

On the surface, this creates a very different situation: this anthropologist begins with considerable knowledge of cultural and social patterns, she often does not have to learn a new language, etc. Yet, it can be argued that this supposedly crucial difference between works of “Third World” or “non-Western” anthropologists does not really affect the quality of work or research, although the fact remains that the most influential anthropological works today are published in English (and occasionally French).<sup>5</sup> Some questions follow from this. Firstly, is this leading to a certain “auto-provincialization” of anthropology? Secondly, how does this contribute to a “critical Third World vision” (Cardoso de Oliveira 2000: 11)?

The work of anthropologists from non-metropolitan traditions displays enormous variation, much of it poorly known in dominant, largely Anglophone anthropology. Some of these anthropologists have had extensive training in the metropolitan schools, while others have been educated in a domestic or regional intellectual environment. Some have done their fieldwork at home, or among “others at home,” making for a closer relationship to the domestic public sphere and domestic politics; while others have worked overseas. Some publish chiefly in non-hegemonic languages (which increasingly means any language but English); some depend on extensive consultancy work to make ends meet, while others have a strong institutional base in their national university system. Some may function as free intellectuals and scholars, while others are expected to conform to strictly academic or ideological norms. In brief, the differences between “marginal anthropologies” are just as pronounced as the similarities, and make comparisons both demanding and necessary—even more so as the stories of these anthropologies may stimulate critical reflection on the basis for the assumed centrality of hegemonic anthropologies.

In the introduction to their pioneering collection of peripheral anthropologies, Gerholm and Hannerz (1982) compared the center-periphery relationship in anthropology with that of a mainland to the outlying archipelago. People living in the islands were variously connected to the mainland by ferry, bridges, etc., but their main point, which remains valid today, is that the island people needed the mainland to survive, while mainland dwellers did not even need to be aware of the existence of the islands. While this discrepancy in symbolic power is well known in the “islands,” it is rarely noticed on the mainland. Majorities do not need to learn the minority languages; minorities are forced to learn majority languages. Majorities define the terms of discourse, while minorities can either remain marginal or adapt.

Such basic insights into intergroup power relations, taught in Anthropology 101 courses everywhere (both on the mainland and in the archipelago, incidentally), are rarely brought to bear on anthropology itself. Do peripheral anthropologies create their own centers, or do they slavishly adapt to the latest fashions of the metropolises? Do they at all perceive themselves as peripheral? Do they represent alternative theoretical or methodological perspectives which should have been better known at the center, or is their work either second rate or similar to metropolitan anthropology?

In this Introduction, we ask these and related questions by drawing on eleven original, hitherto unpublished accounts from as many countries,<sup>6</sup> ranging from the huge to the tiny; from countries with an old, confident, and venerable tradition of anthropology, to countries where the subject was either developed during twentieth century colonialism or even more recently, that is, after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The stories cover Argentina and Brazil in the Americas, Cameroon and Kenya in Africa, Bulgaria, Russia, and former Yugoslavia in Eastern Europe, the Netherlands and Norway in Western Europe, as well as Japan and Turkey.

## DIVERSE ORIGINS

British and French anthropology had partly overlapping origins with colonialism, although it would be preposterous to claim, as many have done, that they were “an extended arm” of the colonial endeavor.<sup>7</sup> The relationship with colonial authorities was much more complicated than that. Regarding the anthropologies that emerged outside the centers, their relationship with global power structures varies greatly.

Han Vermeulen traces Dutch anthropology back to the 1770s, arguing that it was institutionalized from the 1830s onwards—a generation ahead of Morgan and Tylor. In the Netherlands, the early interest in systematic studies of faraway peoples was quite clearly a result of colonialism, and early (proto-) anthropologists stood in a complex relationship to the VOC (the Dutch East Indies Company). Through most of its history, Dutch anthropologists have concentrated on the country’s colonies, largely Indonesia. Independent theories of social and cultural dynamics have been developed by Dutch scholars in Dutch, and their awareness of metropolitan traditions naturally exceeded the metropolitans’ knowledge of their work. Even more interestingly, scholars working seriously with Indonesian ethnology need to acquire a reading knowledge of Dutch.

Although there is a strong publishing tradition in Dutch, anthropology in the Netherlands is increasingly bilingual; even the central journal,

*Bijdraagen*, publishes articles in both English and Dutch. In the last decades, Dutch anthropology has become more diverse in terms of regional orientation, and it must by now be said to be fully integrated into the mainstream, as witnessed in the fully English language journal *Focaal*, which takes on topics such as immigration and “the Other” in Europe.

While Dutch anthropology quite clearly has colonial origins, this cannot be said to be the case with the other West European country in our sample, Norway. Although there was considerable scholarly interest in the Sami in the nineteenth century already, and although the pioneering Norwegian sociologist Eilert Sundt (1817–1875) wrote sensitively about traveling communities and rural customs, the impetus to a modern Norwegian anthropology in the twentieth century came wholly from abroad; initially from German, French, and Anglophone sources, but after the Second World War increasingly from Britain and the USA. Following a period of eclecticism with a strong base in museum anthropology, Norwegian social anthropology was institutionalized and professionalized in the 1950s under the leadership of a few individuals, foremost among them in the formative period the young rebels, Fredrik Barth and Axel Sommerfelt, who were both reputed to have said, at various times, that one ought to sell off the Ethnographic Museum’s collections in order to fund fieldwork. Since this period, Norwegian anthropologists have prioritized publishing in English, but somehow opposite to the Dutch situation, Norwegian language anthropology has flourished since the early 1990s. The Norwegian story reminds us, relevantly in the present context, of the fact that a handful of individuals can make a great deal of difference.

Moving east, Russian anthropology shares its colonial origins with Dutch anthropology, but since its empire was contiguous with its center, the clear cut distinction between ethnology (local culture) and anthropology (faraway peoples) is more fuzzy in Russia than in the Netherlands. Kuznetsov shows that in their pioneering studies of the *ethnos*, Russian anthropologists included themselves, or Russians rather, as one of the ethnic groups. Informed by both German *Volkskunde* and, obviously especially after 1917, a particular brand of Marxism or “Diamat” (dialectical materialism), Russian anthropologists saw their research, according to Kuznetsov, as being superior to that carried out in the West. Before 1990, little anthropology was translated between Russian and the West European languages, in spite of efforts by people like Ernest Gellner (1980) to develop a dialogue. The post-1990 situation seems to be characterized by a dual desire to “catch up” (the self-proclaimed provincial’s attitude) and to show the West that a powerful Russian anthropological tradition does exist.

Lacking the means to carry out fieldwork overseas, Russian/Soviet anthropologists were always forced to problematize the distinction between

“self” and “other” in ways Western anthropologists began to do only in the 1970s, notwithstanding their dependence on a stifling evolutionist explanatory scheme. In Brazil, Peirano points out, the “self–other” distinction has also played itself out in a way shaped by local circumstances. While anthropological theory in Brazil has been heavily influenced by both French and North American impulses, its articulation with society is very different. Like in Russia, the peoples studied by Brazilian anthropologists live in areas contiguous with their own. They have often assumed the advocate’s stance, and, as Peirano puts it, “guilt has not prospered in a context which has always demanded social scientists’ commitment to the objects of their study.”

The Japanese situation, again, is qualitatively different. Sugishita points out that Japanese made the “shocking discovery” already in the 1870s that they were the object of Western observation! Their first anthropological association was founded as early as 1884. Not a conventional colonial power, Japan nevertheless was a regional power in East Asia, and yet twentieth century Japanese anthropology has been truly global in its reach. Sugishita, in a critical assessment of anthropology in Japan, argues that it remains a neocolonial enterprise based to a great extent on an unquestioned contrasting of “self” and “other,” lacking careful self-reflection on “the complicated relationship between Japan, the West and the rest of the world.” In this, Japanese anthropology seems to mirror, oddly, concerns which have been at the forefront of Western anthropology for a long time.

Spanish language Latin American anthropology has stood in a more direct, and arguably more dynamic, relationship to Western anthropology than either Russian or Japanese anthropology. Many Mexican and Argentinian anthropologists received their training overseas, and their work has developed in close dialogue both with metropolitan anthropology and with foreign anthropologists working in their own regions. Argentina parallels Norway in that anthropology was for a long time oriented towards cultural history. Guber notes: “Until the late 1950s, Argentinian anthropology only dealt with the past and with what anthropologists and most state agents conceived of as survivals of pre-Hispanic and pre-modern times—archaeology, ethnology and folklore.”

The Soviet/Russian case is unique. There exists a rich and theoretically significant research literature in Russian that goes back to the eighteenth century. Research was later curbed and shaped by Soviet authorities with an active ideological interest in ethnology, subsuming it under Marxist universal history, a fact which did not prevent Soviet scholars from developing sophisticated theories and amassing enormous comparative ethnographic knowledge. The USSR was at the same time a hub attracting students, many of them interested in the ethnology of their own country, from socialist countries worldwide.

Some “peripheral” anthropologies may in fact claim to represent “great traditions” in their own right, and this is clearly the case for the former Soviet Union and possibly for Japan and Brazil as well. The Russian anthropologist V.I. Kozlov wrote in 1992 that, “I often had to socialise with American scientists from the prestige universities, as well as from the average ones, and I must say that their ‘doctors’ and ‘professors’ are scientifically inferior to ours” (quoted by Kuznetsov).

Brazilian anthropologists would probably not go this far, but it is clear from Periano’s account that Brazilian anthropology, chiefly Lusophone, never saw itself as marginal or peripheral. Ethnological research has been carried out in Brazil for many generations, and today it plays a social and political role rarely paralleled in the North. Although the indebtedness to European and North American anthropological theory is evident in Brazil, there appears to be no sense among Brazilian anthropologists of living in a backwater or running a remote branch office.

Geographically closer to the centers, Serbian, Turkish, and Bulgarian anthropologies have histories which perhaps justify the term “periphery” more easily than some of our other examples. The most extreme example is Bulgaria, where anthropology appeared, according to Elchinova, only after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and where it is still very much in the making. Anthropology lacks a domestic tradition and even singular prominent scholars like Holy, Stuchlik, Gellner, and Skalník (from the former Czechoslovakia), Gusti (Romania), and Malinowski (Poland). However, like in most Central and Eastern European countries, an ethnological research tradition existed long before this; yet, according to Elchinova, the academic interest in far-away places was almost nonexistent. (Interestingly enough, Bulgarian exiles like Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov, who have written superbly about cultural differences, are non-anthropologists.)

Tandogan dates the origins of Turkish anthropology to 1925, just after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Significantly, it was founded not by foreigners, but by domestic scholars. In Turkey, rural sociology overlapped with anthropology and possibly still does. In Serbia, anthropology has been practiced (as part of the so-called “human geography”) at least since 1884. Its history is fraught with political concerns, political factionalism, and a difficult relationship to the nationalist discipline of ethnology, but there has also for decades been a very active dialogue with foreign (largely Anglophone, but recently also German language) anthropologists who carried out research in Yugoslavia and in the neighboring countries.

In the two African countries included in our sample, anthropology was quite clearly established by foreigners or expatriates like the Leakeys (Kenya). In Cameroon, there are few domestic scholars; Kenya has more,

but in both countries, most of the well-known ethnographies have been published by foreigners. In Brazil, by contrast, the vast majority of anthropologists working in the country are locals.

In spite of Jomo Kenyatta's early monograph, *Facing Mount Kenya*, foreigners have dominated Kenyan anthropology. The famous paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey's mounting presence for decades in Kenyan academic life may have influenced sociocultural anthropology in the country; it is nonetheless a fact that it appears to be much more interdisciplinary than in most other countries. Anthropology is taught at several Kenyan universities, and also has an institutional base at the country level that has produced some remarkable polyhistorians, easily transcending the boundaries of social or cultural anthropology.

Anglophone Cameroonian anthropology has been shaped by a handful of engaged foreign anthropologists, from Phyllis Kaberry to Edwin and Shirley Ardener, who helped to institutionalize research in the country and to develop local research expertise. However, in spite of this, it is probably fair to say that no truly independent research paradigms with an overseas influence have seen the light of day in postcolonial African societies (with the possible exception of South Africa). The funding remains erratic and the institutional infrastructure remains poor.

These are our eleven cases. With the exception of the Netherlands, Norway, and Japan, research in these countries is largely carried out at home or in the library. One characteristic of "peripheral anthropology" may thus appear to be that one tends to do fieldwork "at home." However, this will clearly not work as a general description. Certainly in Russia and Brazil, but also in the other countries under consideration, the tendency has been to study "the others at home"—Amerindians in Brazil, ethnic minorities in Russia, and rural farmers in Kenya and Cameroon.

Nevertheless, the empirical focus and breadth of research in a country is obviously interesting. Conversely, it is just as relevant to look at the domestic impact of anthropology in a country, which may be inversely related to the extent of overseas fieldwork—a topic to which we will return.

The extent of foreign ethnographic interest is also relevant, not least for its contribution to the internal dynamics of the subject in the country. Foreign anthropologists have consistently studied, published about, and engaged in dialogue with local scholars in Africa and Latin America, to some extent in Japan and former Yugoslavia, but to a much lesser extent in Russia, the Netherlands, Norway, and Bulgaria. According to Elchinova, only two anthropological monographs have been written about Bulgaria, and to date, their influence on Bulgarian scholars has been modest.

The varying relationship to colonialism is also interesting. Some anthropologies developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were connected, however tenuously and uncomfortably, to colonial expansion; others were subjected to colonial interests, while yet others developed independently of colonialism, sometimes in direct competition with the anthropologies of the centers. This kind of difference is an important dimension of comparison. The Japanese case is such an example. Japanese anthropologists followed the colonial expansion of the Japanese state in the early twentieth century by concentrating their research on Eastern Siberia, Southern China, and other regions of imperial interest. After the demise of Japanese imperialism in 1945, Japanese anthropology became more global, sometimes seeing itself as a competitor to Western anthropologies. With Cameroon, the situation is very different in almost every respect. Cameroonian anthropologists depend on external funding for their research, lack a firm institutional and publishing base at home, publish in the colonial languages, and rarely do fieldwork abroad. The contrast reminds us that there is no such thing as “peripheral anthropology,” but many, arising from highly distinct historical circumstances, and functioning under extremely different institutional, financial, and intellectual conditions.

## LANGUAGE ISSUES

Issues of language enter into the discussion in a variety of ways. Does it make an anthropological tradition peripheral if its main body of published work is in a non-metropolitan language? If this is the case, then Russian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish must be considered peripheral languages. Arguably, Anglophone anthropologists are more parochial than their Brazilian counterparts. Brazilians read English language works, either in the original or in translation; the opposite takes place much more rarely.

In Cameroon and Kenya, anthropological works are published almost exclusively in the colonial languages—English and French. The Dutch, Turkish, Serbian, Slovenian, and Norwegian anthropologies tend to be bilingual, while Russian, Japanese, Brazilian, and Argentinian anthropology is chiefly published in a non-English language. Who is peripheral, he who emulates the language of the hegemon or he who opts for his own? There is obviously no answer to this question, and it hardly makes sense to raise it. When Erikson began to write up his Mauritian fieldwork in the late 1980s, it was easy for him to decide to publish in English rather than Norwegian. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to take part in any well-informed

professional dialogue about Mauritian culture and society. The point here is about scale, not about language as such, but it is worth noting that important anthropologies remain unknown to Western Europeans because of a lack of translations.

As a rule, anthropology is translated *into* these languages, mostly from English and French, and rarely *out of them*. Worldwide, the number of translations into English is much lower than the number of translations out of English. In fact, according to UNESCO statistics,<sup>8</sup> more books are translated in Finland (with five million inhabitants) than in the USA (with 300 million). Thus, it is not just in anthropology that the English-speaking world tends to isolate itself.

Naturally, the paucity of translations into English indicates the symbolic power and discursive hegemony of the Anglophone world. The majority rarely needs to learn the language of the minority. However, it could be the case that the majority sometimes has important lessons to learn from the minority!

As a result of globalization, there is currently a great pressure to publish in English among academics in a very many countries. In small country new-speak, the term “international publication” means “any grotty little piece that has been accepted by an English-language journal or edited volume.” In this book, Japan appears to be the only country where it gives a scholar higher prestige to publish in the national language than in English.

Using the vernacular has its costs, but also its benefits, as it enables the writer to engage with the public sphere in his or her country. As Eriksen argues, the widespread use of the Norwegian language among the anthropologists of the country has given them considerable influence in the public sphere. The situation is somewhat similar in Brazil. When Tandogan describes anthropology in Turkey as “a silent discipline” in the greater public sphere, one cannot but ask if this has anything to do with the eagerness on the part of Turkish anthropologists to write in English. Bilingual publishing is probably the best solution, intellectually speaking, at least in smallish countries with a limited domestic public sphere. Significantly, there appears to be no anthropological publishing activity to speak of in African languages.

## CONSTRAINTS

One of us remembers a job interview some years back, where the interviewee was a West African scholar who had applied for a research position in Western Europe. When asked why he wanted to move to the cold north, he simply answered that it was necessary for his academic work. At home, he had access to few journals, a slow and dated computer with an erratic Internet

connection, a salary which made it impossible to support oneself, let alone a family, and no money to go to conferences.

The contrast between a West African country and a West European one is perhaps extreme, but anthropologists in many countries face serious constraints of an institutional, infrastructural or simply financial nature. In the UK, funding for anthropology was extremely limited in the 1980s, but the discipline survived due to its strong institutions and solid professional infrastructure. In less fortunate countries, sudden financial cuts may lead to the departure of the brightest stars and the end of anthropology at home. Both Elchinova and Bošković make this point in their essays. In Central and Eastern Europe after the transition, anthropologists have increasingly come to depend on international foundations since state funding has become less reliable. In general, anthropology is often precarious at the institutional level, with few tenured posts and small departments. Some eke out a marginal existence and have to supplement their income outside the academy. In the context of Kenyan anthropology, Ntarangwi talks about “the anthropology of short-time consultancies,” where intellectual energy is deflected from research to better paid work. This is also rapidly becoming a major issue in South Africa, which has a much broader and larger anthropological tradition than Kenya.

In the Netherlands and Norway, where public funding for research is still available, the situation is fiercely competitive, but at the same time there are many potential sources of funding. Both national research councils and ethnographic museums may fund research, along with university departments in social and cultural anthropology, non-western sociology, and development studies. As a result, a large number of research projects are funded every year. This is also the case in Russia, Japan, and Brazil. Others depend on international foundations.

Varying degrees of academic freedom also create distinct opportunity spaces. In the so-called post-Communist world, academic agendas had for decades been shaped by ideological concerns and relatively fixed theoretical blueprints. Soviet ethnology was grafted onto universalist Marxist theory after the Revolution, but this was a controversial move among ethnologists and anthropologists who rejected unilinear evolutionism. According to Kuznetsov, ethnology, which was very nearly abolished in the 1920s because of its inherent un-Marxist tendencies, was rescued by the adoption, among Soviet ethnologists, of the principles of “stadialism.” Since the early 1990s, Russian anthropology has partly been concerned with “catching up” and partly concerned with asserting its own identity.

The Turkish case is also a reminder of the ideological and political constraints on research. It was the formation of a state committed to modernization that led to the establishment of anthropology in the first place; later, the

military coups of 1971 and 1980 led to a temporary curtailing of all social science research, including anthropology. Faced with such oppression, one may be forgiven for thinking that Thatcherism was a trifling annoyance.

Anthropology often struggles for its legitimacy, but it may also suddenly become fashionable. In Kenya, where social anthropology had been associated with a romantic view of the “tribals”—a difficult role to undertake in a country where modernization was the main political goal—Ntarangwi tells of a sudden change in the early 1980s. This was when the Moi regime decided that traditional cultural forms “ought to be preserved and documented.” All of a sudden, anthropology became perfectly legitimate.

The role of individuals is always emphasized in standard histories of anthropology. Quite clearly, in countries with a fledgling academic structure, unpredictable funding for anthropological research, and uneven access to metropolitan publications, outstanding individuals may play an enormously important part. In remote Norway, Fredrik Barth was extremely important in establishing social anthropology as a high prestige academic discipline. But often, the heroes and heroines are less well known. In Argentina, Esther Hermitte, who studied in the 1950s at a Chicago department still heavily influenced by Radcliffe-Brown’s research ideals, was decisive in shaping the subject at home. Guber also mentions eclectics like Eduardo Menéndez, whose politically engaged and anti-colonial views would shape students’ perspectives through textbooks and lecturing. In fact, as mentioned above, Elchinova partly explains the poverty of anthropology in Bulgaria by mentioning the lack of one or two outstanding local scholars.

In the larger countries, individuals have played a less pronounced role as the subject slowly grew and became more solidly institutionalized. It may also have become more streamlined and standardized. Perhaps, by this token, it is from the anthropologies which can still properly be described as peripheral that real originality may be expected in the future.

That said, it may be a sign of true peripherality that one oscillates between trying to emulate the metropolises and to assert one’s independence. In a critical characterization of Japanese anthropology, Sugishita speaks about a Japanese “we/here” that continues to reproduce similar us/them distinctions as those produced by Western anthropologists. In her view, Japanese anthropology “is inseparable from Japan’s desire to join the West as the dominant socio-cultural entity” in the world. Lacking reflexivity, she adds, a major epistemological shortcoming of Japanese anthropology consists in its lack of reflection “on the complicated relationship between Japan, the West and the rest of the world.” If truly original anthropologies are to emerge from one or several of the sprawling non-metropolitan traditions, she seems to imply, a mental decolonization must first take place. Perhaps the answer