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trois noms féminins mentionnés par l'inscription et qui a été acceptée par les éditeurs du LGPN III.B (p. 273, s.v.). En revanche, en faveur d'une inscription dédicatoire plaide la forme de la pierre, une sorte de cippe que l'on trouve souvent employé comme support pour des dédicaces à Zeus *Meilichios*. On voit ainsi toute la difficulté d'interprétation posée par cette inscription phocidienne, et que l'étude de G. ne laisse pas percevoir. Par ailleurs, on ne trouve jamais cité le *Bulletin épigraphique de la Revue des études grecques*, instrument de travail qui aurait pourtant permis à l'auteur d'enrichir son corpus d'attestations de Zeus *Meilichios* d'autres exemples, notamment à Iasos (BullÉp 1994, 530), à Larissa (BullÉp 1997, 321) ou à Rhodes (Bull. Ép. 2005, 106).

Enfin, deux *indices* (l'un géographique et l'autre des personnages mythologiques) et plusieurs figures et planches (de bonne qualité) facilitent la lecture du livre. Mais l'absence des *indices* des sources littéraires et des documents épigraphiques est gênante pour un ouvrage dont les inscriptions fournissent la documentation primordiale.

En dépit de ces faiblesses, la publication de G. éclaire mieux le culte de Zeus *Méilichios* à Sélinonte, offre une bonne présentation des trouvailles épigraphiques et archéologiques de l'aire de la Gággera, ainsi que de nombreuses opinions avancées depuis plus d'un siècle par les spécialistes pour expliquer la nature de cette divinité.

*Adrian Robu*

P. METCALF, *The Life of the Longhouse. An Archaeology of Ethnicity*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010, 345 p. (list of figures, 1 appendix, 2 indexes), 19 figs.

A first quick view of this recent title made me visualize some ideas present at the center of a long-debated subject of research regarding concepts such as identity and ethnicity, but it further proved to be a breathtaking ethnographical and ethnological reading.

The last decade has witnessed the advent of studies concerning the ethnical identities and the relevance of the remote past in creating the present identity structure. Studies dealing with the use of archaeology in shaping the political new identities in the Balkans were undertaken (i.e. K. S. Brown, "Seeing stars: character and identity in the landscapes of modern Macedonia", *Antiquity* 68, 1994, 261, p. 784-796 or J. Chapman, "Destruction of a common heritage: the archaeology of war in Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina", *Antiquity* 68, 1994, 258, p. 120-126. There are well-known debates over concepts of Celts', 'Celtic', Celtism' and their sixteenth-century invention (i.e. J. Collis, "The Celts: origins, Myths and Inventions", *Tempus Stroud*, 2003). Even more studies on understanding the way the past was adapted to serve the national interests during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were conducted (i.e. the stimulating historical view of E. J. Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and nationalism in Europe today" *Anthropology Today* 8, 1992, 1, p. 3-8; S. Jones, "The archaeology of ethnicity. Constructing identities in the past and present", *Routledge*, London, 1997; Ph Kohl, "Nationalism and Archaeology: on the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past" in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27, 1998, p. 223-246; for a bibliographical – frame study – L. Meskell, 2001, "Archaeologies of identity", in I. Hodder (ed.)

"Archaeology Theory Today", p. 187-213, *Polity Press*, Cambridge; or recently- S. Rieckhoff, U. Sommer (eds.), "Auf der suche nach Identitäten: Volk-Stamm-Kultur-Ethnos", 2007).

P. Metcalf's work in tracing the ethnicities of central Borneo moves beyond this analytical framework. The geographical area used for the study is the central Borneo island (termed as "Kalimantan" by Indonesian geographers), precisely the region known as Orang Ulu in the hinterland of Brunei and occupied by groups of so-called "Upriver people". According to both Indian and Chinese written sources, this territory was known for trading luxurious and exotic goods. The fact that in this area there are, at present, hundreds of ethnic labels that the travel writers named generally under the term „Dayaks" once again illustrates the relativity of the 'identity' concept. As P. Metcalf stated, "The tangles of ethnology in central Borneo, however would strain the patience of a saint" (p. 10). Thus, he dedicated an entire forth section to the study of Upriver People's ethnicities, stating from the beginning that ethnicity is "an object of research". Information from written sources (notes of explorers – a central text being that of Charles Hose – and administrators in late nineteenth century) regarding the peoples living in this specific area and lots of personal fieldwork accounts would give the idea that this is a rather issueless endeavor. Nevertheless, the diversity and complexity of these ethnicities make it a very challenging research project. P. Metcalf focused his study on the longhouse communities of the rainforests, trying to decipher the reason behind the deceiving mystery which features this

particular living-arrangement, both in premodern and postcolonial time. Metcalf's work distances itself from previous traditional approaches, which were concerned with finding essentialist, genetic and simple ethnic labels. The particular organization of a longhouse community, which is linguistically very different, had no interest in creating ethnic boundaries. The entire process of "ethnification" is neatly described in part six.

The volume approaches many aspects of the longhouse communities and it is divided in six large parts and a number of fourteen chapters, introduction (*The Problem: Ethnicity and Community*) and conclusion (*Conclusion: The General in the Particular*). The introduction is concerned with defining the issues (the geographical area, the sources and the inherent difficulties encountered) and concepts, such as ethnology, community, society or kinship. The search for ethnicity is not a primary approached issue, but it is the entire goal of the research, due to the multitude of ethnic labels (clearly illustrated through the Index of Ethnonyms, which includes over fifty terms).

The content of the six parts addresses topics as following:

**I. Longhouses:** the meanings of the longhouse, its location construction, communities and ethnicities. The idea of the longhouse surely is not an exception (there are also similar and obvious examples from northern Europe), but the impressive scale, mode of construction and distributed space is specific to Borneo. A longhouse has a strong and massive roof, it is composed of „rooms”, occupied by a variable number of families, but the term has no geographical connotations, it is rather connected with the people inhabiting it. The internal walls are usually present, but if not, the space is however socially divided among residents. Even in the presence of the walls, there are gaps constructed especially for creating visibility. The *veranda* represents the social space, but also a common space dedicated to production and elaboration of rituals. „The veranda became a boulevard, a place to see and be seen.” (p. 41). The fact that the longhouse and its environments include all sorts of activities a community may provide conducted the author to using the term „metropolis”. From the point of view of the residents of these communities, a longhouse would be the most human way of living, the immediate alternative being living in the forest.

**II. Longhouses and leaders:** the origins and leaders of the longhouse. This section describes the career and politics of Aban Jau (founder and ancestor) and his successors during nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The death of Aban Jau reveals a particular meaning of the longhouse within this case: he was never buried, but laid in his longhouse apartment, the place being abandoned afterwards; therefore, in this particular case, the entire longhouse became one human grave.

**III. Longhouse and trade:** it describes the trading systems both in premodern times and during the

colonial period. The trading system was very much related with the chieftain. There were, however, specific Borneo export items renowned for their luxurious qualities, as camphor and rhinoceros horns. A notable example is that of bird nests, very appreciated for their flavor within a special soup in China. This was more a creation of the colonial period, than an ancient commodity. One may find within these two chapters conspicuously valuable objects for people living in Borneo, the understanding of their meaning being relevant to a prehistory-archaeological examination such as: glass beads, iron or even ceramics. Attention should be also paid to the way elites reify their status through these specific commodities in order to widen our view with examples of human behavior.

**IV. Longhouse populations:** it includes issues about different Ethnonyms and groups. Central to the subject is the process according to which place names become Ethnonyms (the "ethnification"), and are therefore used for representing ethnic differentiation. As a starting point, most people would agree that generally the first and most visible ethnic differentiation is language. However, in central Borneo this is not the case. For the longhouse communities, the linguistic differentiation (the local languages belong to the Western branch of the Austronesian family) is not so easy to detect. Metcalf has shown the language diversity due to the continuous innovation of speech. Therefore, trying to create a taxonomy of linguistic data was an effort *in se*. Being connected also with historical and geographical data, the result was to be associated with ethnical labels.

**V. Longhouses and ritual:** this chapter approaches many surprising aspects of rituals operating in life and death of individuals of the community, ritual as an environment for negotiating leadership. The conversion to Christianity moment shows the indigenous solutions in withstanding this new religion. The author analyzes a world where the so-called "Old Way" seems to be fighting against these new emerging traditions, a changing world where ritual is a very central issue for the community. The description of funerals, secondary treatment and shamanic rituals is highlighted in a stimulating way.

In the last part,

**VI. Longhouses and the State,** which also includes the conclusion of the author, fundamental changes in politics and regimes are discussed. It begins with the time of the Raj and major economical developments and policies of that period are described. This section discusses also the effects of Second World War over this region, the British colonialism and the present longhouse organization. There are still longhouses, but after the seventies, the idea of longhouse community was lost and changes coming along with the eighties and nineties caused a huge transformation of what a longhouse once meant. Nowadays, a longhouse is more like a construction empty of its previous scope.

The appendix includes the list of longhouse-living communities in the Baram District.

The danger of essentializing concepts has been illustrated once again by this study in anthropological literature. The dynamics of human interaction is consequently much more complex than an essentialist assumption would allow it to be. For the longhouses in Borneo the kinship processes were not central to the community. The author turns therefore to trade and ritual elements in order to explain the functioning of such groups.

The results of Metcalf study criticize the traditional view of ethnography, which was seeking universal patterns of ritual and human behavior. He showed the multiple ways of how ethnicities were constructed using geographical terms, previous Ethnonyms or even geographical terms used in the past. As stated by him therefore, that was not a preliminary, but a goal of research. However, some of us trying to trace ethnicities are not so lucky. This kind of endeavor brings altogether an epistemological doubt when no ethnographical field

observations exist and when written sources (if they exist) are more entangling than helping. If there is so much complexity in understanding people one can still see and communicate with, I wonder what amount of consistency there might exist regarding people that nobody today has ever had the chance to have a real picture of. Nevertheless, in order to look for 'ethnicity' where there is no data regarding language or writing, we should agree first in regards of the permanence and again essentialism of the notion. Thus, as L. Fleck and later Th. Kuhn both have suggested, the coming of new times means a change of knowledge. I believe the lack of methodology in deciphering ethnicities exclusively through archaeological records could be facing a need for further debating of the background within this theoretical framework. I would also continue by asking, in a hypothetical extended debate, why are we really so concerned with this terribly powerful idea of understanding past ethnicities in the present stage of knowledge?

*Alexandra Ghenghea*