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ANTHROPOLOGY 124

Comparative Religion

Professor Lessa

Final Examination

January 17, 1963

DIRECTIONS: Use blue books. Answer all questions, each of which has equal weight and requires a full answer. This examination looks different but it calls for basic answers to basic matters considered in this course. You are given the opportunity to use your imagination, and also to express some of your personal views. WRITE LEGIBLY so that you will not be denied full credit because the reader must grapple with your handwriting. Please write your answers in order, allowing yourself space if you want temporarily to skip about.

I.

O tempore! O mores! That is, times have changed. You are the father (mother) of one of those crazy, mixed up kids that you read about in paperbacks and see in the movies, but never thought it could happen to you. Nevertheless, your 'teenage boy is continually on the edge of serious trouble. You and your wife (husband) are good citizens who long ago became disenchanted with religion with its hell fire and brimstone, dietary rules, prayers, miracles, and all that. But you did go to church (synagogue, temple, etc.) when you were young and feel convinced that it was there that you learned most about the good and worthy life--the golden rule. You feel that neither you nor the public schools are able sufficiently to inculcate in your boy's mind the meaning of loyalty, responsibility, industry, charity, and all the virtues that you think are needed for a decent world. So you and your wife (husband) talk it over and decide that you want him to have the same religious training you had. You feel that by regular exposure to church (synagogue, etc.) the boy will be straightened out. What if he is given fantasy along with a code of ethics? More could be gained than lost.

QUESTION: You explain your proposal to your minister (priest, rabbi, etc.). What answer does he give you?

II.

So you are a man from Mars. You can see Earth People but they cannot see you. This is what you see:

Many people are standing around in a meadow. The older people are all wearing different masks that make them look like beavers, wolves, hawks, doves, catfish, and speckled trout. None of the children have masks. A huge bonfire is lit. Eighteen naked boys are suddenly led out of a nearby clump of trees by six

masked men, each of whom has three boys behind him in single file. The lads go near the fire and then begin to reel about. They fall limp to the ground, where they lie completely motionless. Some men pass among them, throwing red powder on each. The boys are then carried to a large rock where each is in turn made to lie on his back and submit to an operation on his sexual organ. Then some women, wearing six different masks, line up side by side with their legs straddled, and one at a time three boys crawl forward between each woman's legs. As they emerge each of the boys has a mask thrown over his head, corresponding to the mask worn by the woman between whose legs he passed. People rush up to greet them and there is wild shouting. Then each boy is given some leached acorns to eat, being joined by all the people in the meadow, who eat quietly and facing a small but deep hole. As they eat, a figure dressed as an acorn emerges from the hole and all the people, including the boys, set up a rhythmic chant. As the figure walks among them the people sing and are happy. Then slowly the figure makes his way into the hole again and the people disperse in all directions.

You find an Earth anthropologist who understands Martians and the Earthling explains what has happened. He also tells you a story about what the people in the meadow were doing, and how important this story is in the lives of the people.

QUESTION: What did the anthropologist say to you?

III.

This time you are sitting in a courtroom in *Sacré Blau*, Duchy of Quesnoy-le-Comte. You are a young woman from the little hamlet of Plougastel-Daoulas. The year is 1321. You are on trial for your life.

The Inquisition accuses you of falling into violent paroxysms, vomiting strange substances, and speaking in divers tongues normally unknown to you. It accuses you of dedicating yourself body and soul, your will, every wish and movement to the powers of hell. You are said to have confected charms to cause sickness and delirium by making amulets of evil power composed of the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood, commingled into a paste with a powder made from human and animal bones, the skulls of infants, hair, nails, flesh, the liver, brain, and spleen of an executed murderer. You are accused of slaying a number of young children, many of whom you are said to have cut open alive to offer their agonized and writhing limbs as a sacrifice to the Devil. Several were crucified in mockery of the Cross of Calvary. You are interrogated by the ecclesiastical court concerning your visits to a den of Satanists where you engaged in debaucheries, depravities, and blasphemies, and where you became pregnant. The

chief witnesses against you are Madeleine de la Palud, a girl your own age but frightfully ugly, and Anne Boulay, a toothless hag who has the power of throwing herself at will into a mediumistic trance. Your defender is Marguerite Murray. The Inquisitor demands that you confess to Satansim and recant but that if you persist in the face of all evidence to deny your guilt and refuse to be reconciled, then you must be condemned to the flames and executed the same day.

QUESTION: How does Mlle. Murray defend you? How did you make out?

IV.

You are a black man and a Muslim, attending a convention in an enormous convention hall. Time has no meaning, so you find that sitting beside you are some redskins with odd-looking white shirts, and behind you some other redskins chewing a strange cactus. There are other black men besides yourself, but not all of them are dressed like you nor are they Muslims. Some wear leopard skins and are obviously from Africa, while others are just about naked except for some feathers and a penis sheath, holding tight to their bosoms a variety of things such as axes, calico, and costume jewelry from the dime store. A few whites are present, all wearing crucifixes and carrying scythes, pitchforks, and hoes on their shoulders. You also recognize that the hall is filled with Indonesians, Maoris, and other peoples, none of them looking very prosperous but all of them with eyes that gleam with fervor and hope. Speeches are made: "We were suppose to be a part of the 'Christian Church', yet we lived in a world of dejection....In large numbers we became victims of drunkenness, drug addiction, reefer smoking...in a false and futile attempt to 'escape' the reality and horror of the shameful condition that the Slavemaster's Christian religion had placed us in....Allah desires to make the Black Nation the equal or superior of the white race." An Indian spoke up, "The greatest of the Kiowa gods is the sun...while the peyote button is its vegetal representative. It is a panacea in medicine, a source of inspiration, and the key which opens all the glories of another world." Another Indian said, "When the sun died, I went up to heaven and saw the Great Spirit and all the people who had died a long time ago. The Great Spirit told me to come back and tell my people they must be good and love one another, and not fight, or steal, or lie. He gave me a dance to give to my people." And a Papuan said, "Mansren, creator of the islands and their people, will return and bring with him the ancestral dead, and the existing order will be entirely overturned. White men will turn black like Papuans, and Papuans will become Whites; root crops will grow in trees, and coconuts and fruits will grow like tubers. We

must continue to wear military uniforms and drill, and build air strips and run up the flag. The cargo will eventually be made available to us."

QUESTION: What brings these diverse people together? What do they have in common?

V.

Now you're a little old lady in tennis shoes. You are snooping around on the UCLA campus, looking for the worst. And you find it. In Physics Building 169 a lot of students are laughing at the comments being made by the instructor, who looks like an irresponsible type, and anyway he wears a moustache. You consult the Schedule of Classes and discover to your horror that this is a class in religion. But the lecturer obviously never attended a theological school, and people seem to be gayer than the proprieties demand. You take a seat in the back row and to your consternation here talk about the chemical composition of the blood, counter-sorcery, sex, and dog cemeteries. Trembling, you stomp out but return again the next lecture to see if this is not all a ghastly mistake. This time they are showing movies of horrid old men, stark naked and chanting in a staccato rhythm. You rush out bathed in a cold perspiration, and as soon as you get to Pasadena in your Stanley Steamer you sit down and type a letter that begins as follows:

"Chancellor Murphy!:

"I am a taxpayer and demand that you dismiss Professor Lessa from your faculty. If a course in comparative religion must be taught at UCLA, let an ordained minister do so, I am broad minded enough to accept a priest or a rabbi; but not that man. He made the students laugh when they should have been silent and reverent; he showed pictures of naked men to young girls who had just reached the flowering of their maidenhood; and he talked about the religion of dirty ignorant savages as if it had some justification. What are we coming to?..."

Etc., etc.

QUESTION: What did the letter from Chancellor Murphy say?