



Childhood and Folklore: A Psychoanalytic Study of Apache Personality

Review Author[s]:
Philip J. Greenfeld

American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter, 1984), 64-67.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0095-182X%28198424%298%3A1%3C64%3ACAFAPS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E>

American Indian Quarterly is currently published by University of Nebraska Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/unp.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

when the subject is as diverse, colorful, and meaningful to the human experience as the people called Apache.

Sul Ross State University

Earl H. Elam

Boyer, L. Bryce, M.D. *Childhood and Folklore: A Psychoanalytic Study of Apache Personality*. N.Y.: The Library of Psychological Anthropology, 1979. xii + 205 pp. Photos, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95 (cloth); \$6.95 (paper).

This study is based on the model held by the old Freudian school of culture and personality which contends that child rearing practices are causally related not only to individual personality factors, but to the basic personality type in any specific society. Basic personality in turn is expressed in a variety of projective cultural systems: e.g., folklore, religion, and art. The case in point is the folklore of the Mescalero and Chiricahua Apaches of the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico.

There are nine chapters. The first three include an introduction reviewing the basic Freudian position on the relation between folklore and conflicts resultant from the child's sexual fears and frustrations with respect to its immediate family, a review of various explanations about the significance of folklore, one about the general historical and ethnographic background of the Mescalero and Chiricahuas, and one about Apache child rearing. Chapters IV through IX cover the central concern of the book, the analysis of folktales as projective symbols of early child rearing practices at both a group and individual level, and the possibility of there being a universal framework of cognitive and emotional symbolism which can make the psychoanalytic approach applicable in a cross-cultural setting.

I frankly thought this model was moribund in current anthropology. This book certainly demonstrates why it should be. This model has been repeatedly criticized on a number of grounds, (summarized in Bock (1980:131-136)) all of which are applicable to this study. My specific objections involve the following:

1. Ethnocentrism and ethnocentric language. The author is apparently well aware of the possibility that various of his psychoanalytic labels will be construed as ethnocentric. He notes that his terms may sound pejorative to the layman, but are not intended to be. Be that as it may, a point needs to be made among social scientists that labels which sound pejorative, even if current technical terminology, have no place in cross-cultural scientific work. Apaches are literate, intelligent, bilingual people who have access to the academic literature. Terminology which labels them as a group as having an "hysterical personality with impulsive and paranoid traits," a "borderline personality disorder" and makes the flat out assertion that "strong latent homosexuality . . . characterizes typical Apache men (p. 105)," cannot be tolerated by ethical members of the discipline. Such labels are insulting, and dangerously stereotypic. Work produced in such a framework not only de-

nigrates its subjects, but it also impinges upon the research of other anthropologists by effecting their access to people so insulted.

Not only is the language ethnocentric, but many of the reactions taken by the author to Apache cultural practices seem based in middle class Anglo assumptions about "normal" family relations, feelings, and emotions. He is obviously unaware of a number of Apachean customs which are wide spread in the Southwest, and which to one degree or another also characterize other cultures throughout the world. He particularly focuses upon adoption, apparently being horrified that Apaches give away one or more of their children "without conscious guilt (p. 59)." He views this custom as "startling" and a sign of unconscious hostility of Apache parents toward their young. This practice occurs among all Apacheans in one form or another; typically involving culturally defined relatives (including outsiders such as visiting anthropologists who have come to play a role in family life), and in my experience involves an expression of affection both to the child who is adopted out, and to the relative so honored as to be requested to take the child. To accept an adopted child is considered part of the normal range of kinship obligation.

2. Linguistic ignorance. Nowhere in this work is it made explicit as to what language psychoanalytic interviews were held in, nor if the patients were bilingual, native speakers of English, or if interpreters were ever used. The reason this is relevant is that throughout the analysis key points hinge on either the meaning of Apache terms or words used by Apaches (apparently in their English). In a number of instances it is clear that the author has minimal insight into Apache, nor has he used to the best advantage the massive amount of descriptive material available on Apachean languages. His transcriptions follow none of the standard orthographies, he does not correctly identify morphemes and word boundaries, and relies on English glosses for semantic insight. One example of this is his analysis of the word for *coyote*, a central character in many tales. He associates this term (transcribed by Hoijer and Opler (1938) as /mai/ or /ma²ye/, phonetically this begins with [m^b]) with the word for one of the masked dancers /libáyey/ 'gray one'. He notes, "The Apache name of Coyote is alternately *bayeh* or *thlibayeh*. *Bayeh* also means wolf or monster. The prefix *thli* can be interpreted as tan or gray (p. 176)." The transcription *thl* for the voiceless lateral /l/ (in another word he uses *th*) immediately demonstrates his inadequate knowledge which is further indicated by his faulty morphemic analysis. Nowhere in Hoijer and Opler's (1938) work or in related languages is there any indication that "bayeh" means monster. As a generic term it may be glossed 'animal' (Hoijer and Opler 1938:211), and it enters into many compounds including the words for wolf and various kinds of lizards. Its range of meaning in Mescalero and Chiricahua is somewhat different than the cognate term in Western Apache where it is used in a variety of compounds for small mammals including monkeys, badgers, foxes, wolves, as well as coyote. Except perhaps in a remote historical sense this word has no connection with the stem in the word "thlibayeh" (/libáyé/). The prefix /li-/ does not mean 'gray' or 'tan' but is a thematic prefix associated with color terms and a few other modifying verbs in this language including: /liži/ 'black', /liga/ 'white', /litó/ or /liči/ 'red', /litso/ 'yellow', /lik²aa/ 'fat', /kikij/ 'spotted', and /litsaa/ 'broad'.

3. Ethnographic ignorance. I have already cited one instance of this in the discussion of adoption. Another, out of many, involves his analysis of a tale in which there is a magic rock which rises up and down at a command.

He claims this is a projection of Apache death and rebirth because, "These Apaches view the afterlife as being in the sky (p. 103)." Opler (1941:477-478) gives an extended discussion of the Apache afterlife as being focused on an underworld. Any view that it is in the sky would have to be an extremely recent Christian introduction.

4. Unprincipled and ad hoc explanations and analyses. One of the goals of good science is to present a consistent and objectively testable explanation for a particular set of facts. This analysis involves highly subjective random explanations for a variety of things especially in its treatment of symbolic elements. This is particularly true of what Boyer calls "overdetermined" symbols. In the case of the magic rock (p. 103-107) that rises up and down referred to earlier, he sees it first as representing the child's wonder at seeing his father's penis increase and decrease in size during erection, secondly as related to life and death, and finally as a projection from a parent's playing with a child by lifting it up and down as parents in our own society are known to do. How does one test such assertions?

One final example of his ad hoc approach again hinges upon linguistic facts. In one of the tales a boy goes hunting for a deer and is aided by a bald eagle (p. 112-113). Boyer assumes the fact that it is a bald eagle has significance. Noting that bald eagles are not any more numerous in Apache country than are brown ones he links the eagle to a phallic symbol. He points out that bald eagles are not really bald, but only look that way because they have white feathers on their heads. What makes this particularly ad hoc is that the Apache term for bald eagle makes no reference to baldness as a phallic view of the eagle implies. The word is /ʔl̥ɛʔáɬgaií/ which translated simply means 'the white protected one'.

Since baldness is only something which affects non-Indians it seems strange to assume that Apaches see this as a naked or bald phallic image. Brown eagles may be as plentiful as bald ones in Apache country, but buzzards are more common than both. If this were a phallic projection the buzzard seems to be a much more likely candidate for the role.

5. Inconsistent relation between the time frame of the myths, and current situation. All of the myths Boyer analyzes are rather old, dating back at least to the contact period when Mescalero culture was intact as a hunting, gathering, raiding, matrilineal, band type society. For this period Boyer describes the Apache personality as being, "typified by a high degree of aggressivity and stoicism, independence of action, suspiciousness, suggestibility and the capacity to withstand loss through death or desertion without appreciable psychological disturbances (p. 76)." Today's personality is similar, but that "independence has been replaced by dependency and impulsivity." I don't understand how these myths and tales could have been the product of the earlier personality type, yet continue to reflect or be projections of a more recent personality type.

Frankly, as an anthropologist this work disturbs me. It is the most inaccurate, biased, and ethnocentric study I have seen in recent anthropological writing. The one thing that I can be thankful for is that the author does not call himself an anthropologist, but a psychiatrist. I am frankly surprised that a prominent anthropologist Alan Dundes, has consented to write the foreword. I hope that this review, at least, reassures those Apaches who are aware of Boyer's work that not all anthropologists can accept such work, and that

those of us who think or would like to think that we know Apaches fairly well are embarrassed by something of this type.

San Diego State University

Philip J. Greenfeld

References Cited

- Bock, Philip K.
1980 *Continuities in Psychological Anthropology*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co.
- Hoijer, Harry and Morris Edward Opler
1938 *Chiricahua and Mescalero Apache Texts*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Opler, Morris Edward
1941 *An Apache Life-Way*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bee, Robert L. *Crosscurrents Along the Colorado: The Impact of Government Policy on the Quechan Indians*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981. xix + 184 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$18.50 (cloth); \$7.50 (paper)

The essence of the Indian experience in this country is ethnohistorical and Bee's objective in this case study of the Quechan of the lower Colorado River Valley is "to describe the impact on the Quechan of a century of United States government efforts to 'develop' their economic and social well-being." Ethnohistory is no longer a new approach, but it has rarely been the catalytical means to analyze and interpret how a tribe has coped with changing bureaucracy and policy in the course of reservation life. *Crosscurrents* examines the Quechan in five substantive chapters representative of periods of administration from contact, establishment of the reservation, paternalism and allotment, New Deal and postwar, and New Frontier to 1974. A closing chapter assesses the tribe's status today in light of internal colonialism. Bee spent more than a decade interviewing individuals, attending council meetings, and researching documentary sources (especially agency letters) in order to reconstruct a tightly conceived study of how a tribe endures and persists despite the overburden of a dogmatic government. Bee has also utilized the concept of 'adaptive strategy' as developed by John Bennett in *Northern Plainsmen* (1969).

The Quechan, or Yuma, represent a small tribe occupying a fragment of original territory near the Mexican border. In this desert environment, livelihood depends upon a sustainable and well managed water supply, but much of the conflict in the past century has been over the preemption of their best lands and much of their water rights. Today about half of the membership—850—live on the reservation (Fort Yuma). In his analysis of how the tribe figures in the development and management of their meager resources, Bee repeatedly stresses the contradictory policies, 'experiments' in indigenous