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Choice and Morality in Anthropological Perspective



Derek Freeman. Photograph taken by Monica Freeman
in the mountain ranges south of Canberra.

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Essays in Honor of Derek Freeman

Edited by G. N. Appell and T. N. Madan

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PREFACE

This collection of essays on choice behavior and the moral order is by colleagues and former students of Professor Derek Freeman. It examines a critical dimension of human action from a variety of analytical perspectives. Professor Freeman has had a long and consuming interest in this field of inquiry, and he has made major contributions to the theory of choice making and the development of the interactionist paradigm.

This book is thus to honor Professor Freeman on his seventieth birthday. He is now Professor Emeritus of the Department of Anthropology, School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University as well as Foundation Professor of Anthropology and Consultant on Samoan Studies at the University of Samoa. Professor Freeman, a stimulating teacher, an exceptionally gifted fieldworker, and an uncommonly innovative and seminal thinker, is as active as ever in extending the frontiers of anthropological thought with great strength of spirit and mind. We thus selected a theme for this volume that is representative of one of Freeman's major research interests—choice and the moral order—and it is hoped that these essays will help forward anthropological inquiry in a field of fundamental interest to him.

To those of us who have worked with him, Derek Freeman's contributions to anthropological thought are unparalleled. Freeman first became known for his pioneering researches on the Iban (1949/1951, 1957/1958, and 1976), from which he produced one of the finest ethnographic accounts of a people in Southeast Asia. But in addition, he has made important contributions to the study of human ethology, particularly in his analysis of choice behavior as critical to the development of the human ethogram, and to psychoanalytic anthropology. Freeman's field researches on Samoan culture and behavior, which began in 1940 and were interrupted by World War II and his Iban researches, have resulted in his refutation of Margaret Mead's account of Samoa, the first formal refutation in the history of anthropological inquiry.

Freeman's insistence on the importance of choice in the growth of cultures and in the development of the ethogram of *homo sapiens*, his position that an interactionist paradigm is needed for anthropological inquiry, and his rejection of cultural relativism for a science that will evaluate cultural behavior in terms of its cognitive accuracy in mapping reality and its adaptive value, all testify to Derek Freeman as one of those outstanding scholars that cause a major shift in the direction of inquiry in their discipline.

During the last three decades, a large number of anthropologists have come into close contact with Professor Freeman as students or as professional colleagues. To many of us the most salient trait of Professor Freeman's character is his absolute insistence on intellectual integrity. Not only does he demand that we endeavor to make ethnography as accurate and comprehensive as possible, he also insists on an unswerving dedication to the scientific truth in the analysis and presentation of data. His moral outrage at shoddy or self-serving scientific work is well known, and he has told innumerable scholars about to set out on ethnographic fieldwork to make sure to "get it right." He, himself, is an outstanding ethnographer and takes infinite care with the collection, recording, and classification of field data.

These traits are all expressions of his vision of scientific inquiry as first and foremost moral action that demands unquestionable standards of conduct from all of us. The individual researcher is responsible for ensuring the trustworthiness and high quality of his work. Given such a stance, it is not surprising that his students have had to meet exacting standards in their fieldwork and in the writing of their dissertations. He has required comprehensiveness and depth in field data and lucidity in the presentation of the results. While some have found the pressure too heavy to bear, the great majority of us gratefully acknowledge the virtue and benefit of the intellectual discipline that Professor Freeman has taught us. Dr. Michael Jackson, a contributor to this volume, has written (personal communication): "I admired the methodical way he pursued his research interests, the scholarly thoroughness with which he wrote, and above all the passionate manner in which he studied his chosen subject. What many have found dogmatic and self-assertive in his manner, I have construed as dedication, enthusiasm, and an unrelenting pursuit of the truth that underlies the conventional defenses we construct against it. He is one of the most uncomplacent men I have known."

While Professor Freeman has demanded the utmost in scholarly endeavor

from his colleagues and students, he has on his side offered unstinting intellectual and moral support. He has been known to be as

unsparing of himself as of his students in the care he takes to respond to an urgent query from a student in the field that requires library research and thought or in the effort he takes to read and respond to a field report or a draft of a dissertation.

Added to such intellectual support has been a keen sense of personal concern and caring. He has always been forthcoming with help in tackling personal problems, large or small, and offering carefully considered advice on them. He has followed with interest the professional careers of those who have worked with him and has kept in contact with them, discussing their work, as well as his own, in carefully written letters (often in longhand), and has exchanged offprints with them. He has also shared in their family joys and sorrows.

Another noteworthy trait in Professor Freeman's character is his deep sense of moral responsibility to espouse the cause of those, whether individuals or groups, whom he has believed to be the victims of caprice, prejudice, or persecution. At the same time he has been known to be generous and forgiving towards those who have wronged him. This rare quality was in evidence in the dignified manner in which he responded to the attacks on his work and personal integrity following the publication of his refutation, *Margaret Mead and Samoa*. He answered each point of criticism in the serious manner befitting a scholar and never returned abuse for abuse. Though Freeman presents a stern exterior, at heart he is a person of broad sympathy and gentle disposition.

A voracious reader, Freeman commands a wide-ranging scholarship in the fields of anthropology, sociology, biology, ethology, psychology, comparative religion, philosophy, literature, and the classics. He is also a fine literary craftsman and his writing is characterized by both the passion of conviction and the felicity of phrase a rare combination.

In his thinking, Freeman has exhibited impressive intellectual daring. He has not hesitated to criticize his own earlier work when new intellectual perspectives have matured in his mind (for example, see the new Introduction to his *Report on the Iban* 1970a). This has kept him intellectually active all his life and bestowed on his published work a freshness and provocativeness that are very precious qualities. He has adhered firmly throughout his life to his view of anthropology as a comprehensive science of man and his works. His current efforts to construct an interactionist paradigm of human behavior

is an expression of this same view.

Apart from being a scholar-thinker and a crusader for causes that move him, Professor Freeman has a cultivated aesthetic sensibility. He is interested in fine arts and music. It is incredible how his response to Indian classical or Japanese music is as sensitive as to Western classical or Australian folk music. His interest in nature is also noteworthy. Besides

being a keen gardener, he has for years walked in the mountains and bush around Canberra, observed the behavior of wild animals and of those in sanctuaries and zoos, and explored the flora.

Derek Freeman's family, his wife, Monica, and their daughters, Jennifer and Hillary, are inseparable in the minds of all those who have had the privilege of being their friends. Monica Freeman has not only kept house for her husband but has also accompanied him on his many fieldwork trips to Sarawak and Samoa. She has helped in field observations and her artistic gifts she is a sculptor of considerable refinement have enriched his published work as the sketches in his *Iban Agriculture* illustrate so well. But the Freeman family is not confined to four persons it includes their many friends all over the world.

G. N. A. and T. N. M.

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George Devereux was, until his recent death, Professor Emeritus, Ecole des Hautes en Sciences Sociales; Consultant in Ethnopsychiatry, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris. His publications include *Reality and Dream: Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian* (International Universities Press, 1951); *Mohave Ethnopsychiatry and Suicide: The Psychiatric Knowledge and the Psychic Disturbances of an Indian Tribe* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin No. 175, 1961); *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences* (Mouton, 1967); and *Ethnopsychanalysis: Psychoanalysis and Anthropology as Complementary Frames of Reference* (University of California Press, 1978).

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PART 1
INTRODUCTION

Derek Freeman: Notes Toward an Intellectual Biography ¹

G. N. Appell and T.N. Madan

Derek Freeman was born in Wellington, New Zealand, on August 16, 1916. Growing up there he developed a passion for exploring the bush and the mountains, which has not abated (Freeman 1983b:64).² This is characteristic of Freeman's deep involvement with the world and the great physical and mental energy with which he has approached anthropological inquiry, always with the hope that the use of science will improve the human condition. To understand the extent of the intellectual journey in which Freeman is engaged and the contributions both substantive and theoretical that he has made to anthropological inquiry and the human sciences, it would be best to start from the perspective of his present intellectual position and in his own words.

The human species has reached a stage in its history where its survival is being threatened both by antiquated customary moralities and by the unwise use of knowledge. This situation presents an immense challenge which, if it is to be met, will require the extension of scientific understanding into human consciousness and action that reach beyond the determinisms of nature which have hitherto preoccupied scientists (Freeman 1983b:63).

Thus, his principal theoretical concern of recent years has been (Freeman 1983b:63):

in contributing to the construction of an anthropological paradigm that takes cognizance of biological, cultural and environmental variables, and their interaction, as also of the human capacity to solve problems by the making of wise choices. It is my hope that such a