Media anthropology in a world of states

Dr John Postill

bremer institut für kulturforschung (bik)
University of Bremen
Postbox 33 04 40
D-28334 Bremen
Germany

jpostill@uni-bremen.de

Abstract

This paper suggests that media anthropology should pay closer attention to the manifold nation-building uses of media technologies, especially in postcolonial and post-Soviet countries. Adopting an ethnological approach, it questions the present celebration of the creative appropriation of media forms, and argues that it is time to reintroduce diffusionist approaches that can complement the prevailing appropriationism. In the same ethnological vein, it also suggests that modern states are not imagined communities but rather the prime culture areas (*Kulturkreise*) or our era, and that modern media are indispensable in the making of these culture areas.

1
Introduction: media anthropology in a world of states

> The present world is a world of states, neither a world of tribes nor a world of empires,
> though the remnants of such forms are still present and occupy part of our thinking.
> Nicholas Tarling

We live in a world of states. We have lived in such a world since the dismantling of the British and French empires after the Second World War. The remnants of both empires are still present, but the influence of Britain and France has waned as steadily as that of the United States, China, and other large states has grown. In the 1990s, the now global inter-state system penetrated deep into the former Soviet bloc (the last European empire) and into non-aligned Yugoslavia. The result was a host of post-socialist states, some of which have joined the European Union – a curious supra-state at odds with the statist logic of the global system (Tønnesson 2004). By 2004 the misleadingly named United Nations had recruited a record number of 191 member states. Together with other global institutions, the UN actively supports the present state system. By the same logic, these institutions and the powers that bolster them strongly discourage secessionism. Thus between 1944 and 1991 only two territories around the world – Singapore and Bangladesh – managed to secede from recognised states and join the United Nations (Smith 1994: 292). Many other secessionist attempts were thwarted during that same period, as they still are to this day.

This book examines a neglected aspect in the study of this world of states: how states use modern media to 'build' nations within their allocated territories. The case study is Malaysia, a state created in 1963 as part of a third, Afro-Asian wave of modern state formation. The first wave broke upon the Americas in the 19th century, the second across Europe in the 20th century, and we have recently experienced a fourth, post-Soviet wave (O'Leary 1998: 60).

The Federation of Malaysia was initially an amalgam of four erstwhile British colonies: Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah). Whilst Singapore seceded in 1965, the other three territories have remained united, and further separations seem highly unlikely. Malaysia's birth was inauspicious. It had inherited an economy wholly dependent on export commodities and a deeply divided multiethnic population. The new country faced the immediate threats of civil war, a belligerent Indonesia, and Filipino claims over Sabah. As I write these lines at the end of 2004, Malaysia is a stable polity with a prosperous economy, a quasi-democracy, negligible levels of inter-ethnic violence, and friendly relations with neighbouring states. In an era of 'failed states' and ethnic massacres, how can we explain Malaysia's undoubted success? What are the domestic and external factors that have contributed to Malaysia's survival and prosperity?

[FIGURE 1.1 HERE
   Figure 1.1. Sarawak, Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia.
   Source: Adapted from Andaya and Andaya (1982)
]

A comprehensive account of all the possible contributing factors is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, the present study concentrates on a single domain of state intervention – the media – and on a single Malaysian people – the Iban of Sarawak, on the island of Borneo. What we lose in scope, we gain in focus: by studying in detail Iban uses of state media over time, we can gain an appreciation of analogous processes in other parts of Malaysia and elsewhere[1]. I argue that state-led media efforts have been amply rewarded, for the Iban of Sarawak have become thoroughly 'Malaysianised'. I also suggest that the Iban experience has important implications not only for anthropologists, development experts and indigenous activists, but also for our understanding of media in a world of states. I study four foundational media forms common to modern states virtually everywhere, namely state propaganda, writing (literacy), television, and clock-and-calendar time. In the developed North it is easy to forget that even the latest media technologies rely on earlier – but by no means superseded – media. For instance, both email and mobile telephone messaging depend on writing and clock-and-calendar time. New media rarely replace old media, the two usually co-exist.

This chapter provides a theoretical background to the book. In the following section I clarify my usage of terms such as state, nation, nation-state, nation-building, and nation-making, and suggest that 'nation-building' is still a concept with social scientific validity. I then define this study as an *ethnological* contribution to a research area known as 'media anthropology'. My approach is ethnological in that it tracks the intertwined fates of the Iban and other Malaysian peoples (*ethnos*) across time and space through concepts such as diffusion, appropriation, cultural form, media form and culture area. In this respect, it differs from social anthropological (ethno*graphic*) studies centred on the embedded sociality of contemporary groups. I suggest that Malaysia is becoming a 'thick' culture area in its own right, distinct from both the Indonesian and Singaporean culture areas, and that the consolidation of Malaysian variants of global media forms is central to this process. This consolidation entails what I call 'sustainable propaganda', i.e., state propaganda fully assimilated into the life and institutions of a population. The chapter ends with an outline of the book.

Nation-building

There is broad agreement amongst scholars on the meaning of the term 'state'. In the contemporary world system, a state is an independent territory recognised by the United Nations, e.g., East Timor, Germany, or Canada. It is 'the major political unit in world politics' (Connor 2004: 39). In this book I use the term state interchangeably with the more colloquial 'country'.

Defining the term 'nation' is far more problematic. A vast literature has been devoted to this problem, which has acquired renewed urgency with the demise of the Soviet Union and the expansion of the European Union. As is often the case, no consensus has been reached on the matter. The debate is closely linked to the inter-disciplinary study of nationalism. Two broad camps have formed on the question of origins: those who argue that nations are modern creations arising from the Enlightenment and industrialisation and those who trace the roots of nations to Antiquity or even further back.

The first position – modernism – is commonly associated with Ernest Gellner (1983), the Czech-Jewish philosopher and anthropologist. Other influential modernists, also known as 'constructivists', are Anderson (1991 and below) and Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). For Gellner (1983: 140-143), the ideology of nationalism was the result of the economic modernisation of 19th century Europe. Industrialisation demanded a realignment of culture and state. The new economy could only develop if the population learnt to communicate fluently across ethno-linguistic divides, both face-to-face and through abstract media. The driving principle was 'one state, one culture'. Under these circumstances, most European states developed national languages and mass educational systems. The aim was to create a 'literate sophisticated high culture' that could cope with the demands of economic modernisation. As a result of these changes, some ethnic groups began to feel excluded from their polities and to demand autonomy in their 'own' homelands. The simple doctrine of self-determination became a rallying call across Europe and eventually the whole planet. This doctrine demanded that the governing and the governed be co-nationals (O'Leary 1998).

The second position has a strong advocate in A.D. Smith (1986, 2001, 2004), a proponent of the 'ethno-symbolist' theory of nationalism. A nation, for Smith, is a

> named human population which shares myths and memories, a mass public culture, a designated homeland, economic unity and equal rights and duties for all members (Smith 1995: 56-7).

Smith contends that although many of the ideals of nationalism are indeed modern, the roots of nations such as England, France or Japan can be traced to ancient times. Nations are not built out of thin air; they have solid ethnic foundations, myths of ethnic origin and election, and symbols of territory and community (Guibernau and Hutchinson 2004). They are patterned on, and often have evolved from, dominant *ethnies*, or ethnic communities. Yet the obdurate 'presentism' of modernist scholars, says Smith (2004), leads them to focus on elite manipulation, downplaying processes of national formation over the *longue durée*.

One criticism levelled at Smith is of special relevance to the present study. Connor (2004: 41) takes exception to Smith's questioning of the nation as a mass phenomenon, a questioning that contradicts Smith's own definition of the nation just quoted. To Connor, the notion of nation must necessarily imply 'a single group consciousness' that unites the elites and the masses. Such a consciousness cannot arise overnight; it requires many generations to spread from the elites to the masses. This poses a formidable methodological challenge for historians of nationalism, adds Connor, for illiterate masses are invariably 'silent'. It is here, I would suggest, that an ethnological approach can make a lasting contribution, in that it combines ethnographic and historical research. Thus the present work springs from a direct fieldwork engagement with, and historical work on, both the Iban 'masses' and the elites.

Both Smith's and Gellner's theories suffer from weaknesses, but they also have much to recommend them. Gellner's linking of nationalism with modernisation is highly pertinent to Southeast Asia, a different region and historical period from those central to his thesis. As I explore in chapters 3 and 4, Iban and other Malaysian elites have

used media to 'modernise' the Iban through cultural standardisation under conditions of rapid economic growth. Smith's definition of the nation, on the other hand, captures succinctly the aspirations of Malaysia's nation-builders, including most rural Iban leaders, teachers, and schoolchildren. These varied social agents all hope that Malaysia will achieve full nationhood by the year 2020. There is an important caveat, though: there is no provision as yet for Malaysia's ethnic Chinese and Indians to be given rights equal to those enjoyed by the Malays – the dominant *ethnie* (see chapter 5 and conclusion).

The notion of 'nation-building' is no less problematic than that of nation. This term has long been marginalized from serious Western social theory for its association with modernisation theory (Smith 2004: 195, cf. Deutsch and Foltz 1963, Deutsch 1966). The latter had its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, as the U.S. government recruited scores of social scientists in its efforts to win the 'hearts and minds' of Third World populations in rivalry with the Soviet Union and China. Modernisation became an elastic notion used by U.S. academics and policy-makers to explain the persistence of traditional 'mind-sets' and ease the transition to market-driven, 'democratic' regimes in the postcolonial world. In other words, it was used to promote a form of nation-building modelled on an idealised United States (Latham and Gaddis 2000). In Vietnam, 'the other war', the propaganda war over hearts and minds, was fought and lost by American social scientists who failed to agree on a nation-building strategy for that country (Marquis 2000). At present, the term is often used in the Anglophone media and popular scholarship with reference to America's half-hearted attempts at 'reconstruction' in occupied countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq (e.g., Ignatieff 2003).

Given its pedigree, it is little wonder that anthropologists and other social scientists are wary of the term 'nation-building'. One recent search for an alternative term has been Foster's (1997, 2002) work on media and 'nation-making' in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In his book *Materializing the Nation*, Foster (2002) argues that although PNG inherited a weak state from the Australian colonists, the making of a PNG nation is well underway. Foster's notion of nation-making differs from that of nation-building in that it does not privilege state-led processes of change. In addition to the state, this notion directs our attention to the private sector and the wider population. Foster finds compelling evidence that PNG, independent only since 1975, is already far more than an 'imagined' political community (Anderson 1991). He analyses Coca-Cola advertising, law and order campaigns, letters to the English-language press, millennial cults, betel nut chewing and other practices, and reports the emergence of a distinctly PNG public culture. Foster follows Billig (1995) in stressing the significance of banal everyday practices in the maintenance of a national public culture, whether they be reading the PNG weather forecast or viewing street hoardings in *Tok Pisin,* the national language.

There are good reasons, PNG notwithstanding, to retain the term 'nation-building'. First, in contrast to PNG, Malaysia inherited a strong state from its colonial rulers. Efforts to create a Malaysian nation began in the early 1960s and are still given priority by the government. The state was, and remains, the most powerful agent of social and cultural change in Malaysia – as it does in many other countries. Second, Malaysian state propaganda on security, development and national integration soon percolated into even remote rural areas and began to shape people's worldviews, as I

show in chapters 3 and 4. Today official nation-building propaganda is hardly distinguishable from the views of Iban from all walks of life. Third, the term nation-building is still widely used by the 'beneficiaries' of America's Cold War largesse: the elites and middle classes of postcolonial states around the globe. It is also routinely used by inter-state organisations (the UN, World Bank, Commonwealth, etc.) and the media in relation to ongoing development strategies for East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, South Africa, and so on. The term captures the *built* nature of modern state and nation formation (Kolstø 2000). The close relationship between metaphors of development and building is clearly seen in the etymology of the Malay and Indonesian word *pembangunan* (development), derived from the term *bangunan* (building, structure). In the contemporary world, there is the universal expectation that a built infrastructure consisting of roads, airports, schools, hospitals, etc., will be put in place. Without such an infrastructure, not only is a country deemed underdeveloped, it cannot possibly operate in a capitalist world economy (Tønnesson 2004). A concomitant requirement is the existence of a mass workforce; a nomadic band of fifty hunters and gatherers can build neither a state nor a nation (Diamond 1999). In sum, the term nation-building both reflects and produces socio-economic realities. It has tangible effects on the world, often unintended ones, but far-reaching all the same. All this lends the term enormous practical and theoretical importance in a world of states. While not denying that the concept of nation-making has great analytical potential, in this study I deal primarily with state media interventions that fall under the rubric of 'nation-building'.

A final word on the term 'nation-state'. Strictly speaking, a nation-state is 'that relatively rare situation in which the borders of a state and a nation closely coincide; a state with an ethnically homogeneous population' (Connor 2004: 39). The term should be used sparingly when referring to present-day countries, but it is worth remembering that the nation-state as an *ideal* is still well entrenched in many corridors of knowledge and power, not least amongst politicians and social activists in Malaysia.

Media anthropology

This book is intended as a contribution to a research area known as 'media anthropology', the anthropological study of contemporary media (Askew and Wilk 2002, Ginsburg et al. 2002)[2]. Like the study of nation-building, the early history of media anthropology is tightly bound up with American foreign policy. Early functionalist fieldwork on media in small town America gave way during the Second World War to the study of enemy and allied media as part of the war effort (Mead and Métraux 2000). Some of the world's leading anthropologists, including Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, studied national cultures 'at a distance' through films, novels and other media produced in enemy countries they could not visit owing to the war. After the war, interest in the media diminished as anthropologists returned to field research. There was scant anthropological interest in the media until the late 1980s, the onset of a rapid growth in the number of studies that has continued unabated into the early years of this century (Peterson 2003).

Just as post-war anthropologists lost interest in the media, mass communications researchers in the U.S. became increasingly concerned with the effects of media (Morley 1992: 45). Their approach was often behaviourist. It assumed that mass

media could 'inject' a positive ideology directly into the populace – the so-called 'hypodermic needle' model. This optimistic model, like its pessimistic precursor from the Frankfurt School, presumed a passive, atomised audience unable to resist the allure of the mass media. The model proved popular with modernisation theorists working on nation-building projects within America's sphere of influence in the Third World (Peterson 2003: 44). It sustained the modernist ideology of the early Cold War through well-funded research and journals prone to scientistic jargon. At the same time, it failed to address critically questions of power, knowledge or economy (Lull 1990: 15). But a reaction against this mass communications 'dominant paradigm' was already underway in the 1960s. It came to be known as 'uses research'. If effects research had asked 'what media do to people', uses research asked 'what people do to media'. Its theoretical orientation was structural-functionalist. People were seen as active participants in the selection of media contents, not as passive recipients, seeking to meet their societal needs (Morley 1992: 52).

In Britain, media research followed its own paths. Like the old Frankfurt School, British cultural studies scholars in the early 1970s were keenly interested in media power. They shifted, however, the analytical focus from production to reception. Influenced by Gramsci and Foucault, they held the view that media producers have no monopoly of power; this is always shared with consumers (Askew 2002: 5). Although Raymond Williams, the Cambridge don, was the founding father, through the 1970s and 1980s Birmingham remained the centre of British cultural and media studies. For many years, Stuart Hall was the leading figure of a network of scholars who kept their distance from America's media effects researchers. They had an explicitly leftist agenda: to fight capitalism, racism and patriarchy (Lull 1990). Most practitioners followed Hall in his rejection both of economic determinism and of the structuralist stress on the autonomy of media discourses, i.e., the idea of texts as the sole producers of meaning. Instead they emphasized creativity and social experience, placing media and other practices within the 'complex expressive totality' of a society (Curran et al. 1987: 76-77). Hall argued persuasively that although media producers shape the future 'decoding' of their texts by encoding what he called 'preferred readings', they hold no ultimate control over their audiences' interpretations (Askew 2002). Most audiences actively appropriate media contents, turning them to their own uses, but within the constraints imposed by both medium and message.

The bulk of media research down the decades has been carried out in North America and Western Europe. Media anthropologists, who are relative latecomers, have helped to extend the geographical reach of media research beyond its North Atlantic heartland. In theoretical terms, however, they remain resolutely North Atlantic, yet they are far more influenced by Williams, Hall and other British cultural studies luminaries than they are by American media effects research. These anthropological studies share a careful attention to ethnographic detail and theoretical sophistication. There is a general rejection of the top-down 'positivism' of the American tradition, and a selective use of Hall's model of media reception. Media users are presented not as the passive recipients of powerful messages but rather as skilled interpreters (within bounds) of media texts (Askew 2002, Ginsburg et al. 2002).

Hall (1981 [1973]) distinguished three types of audience positioning with regards to mass media ideology: 'dominant', 'oppositional' and 'negotiated'. Media consumers who adopt a dominant position accept wholesale the broadcast ideology; oppositional

consumers challenge it; whilst the latter resist some elements of it. Most anthropologists working on media have regarded their informants' positioning as being 'negotiated'. For instance, Mankekar (1999) describes urban television viewers in India enjoying epic dramas yet being able to 'read through' to the encoded nationalist propaganda. My findings in rural Sarawak (chapter 5) suggest a very different positioning there. Most rural Iban have adopted a dominant position, that is, their interpretations of official broadcasts are fully in line with the state ideology. In 1997, for instance, when the region went through a series of alarming crises, Malaysia's propagandists succeeded in assuaging the rural population's fears. By contrast, the urban middle classes were more doubtful, as they had access to non-governmental sources of information and critique. These citizens 'negotiated' mainstream reports all through the crises. Finally, members or sympathisers of opposition parties in urban Sarawak adopted, not surprisingly, oppositional stances. This suggests that media anthropologists may have been too hasty in elevating marginal viewers to interpretive parity with the intelligentsia (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1997). As Morley (1980) has shown for Britain and Caldarola (1993) for Indonesian Borneo, media consumers' interpretive competence roughly correlates with their levels of formal education. It also suggests that Hall's model has stood the test of time.

Recent anthropological research into state-controlled media can be grouped into three categories. Coincidentally, these three categories overlap with the three types of political formation distinguished by Tarling in the quote that opens this chapter, namely tribes, states and empires. First, there are media ethnographies on the relationship between indigenous groups ('tribes') and the state in white-settler countries (e.g., Turner 1992, Ginsburg 1993, Perrot 1992). Second, there are ethnographies of low-income urban groups and their 'negotiated' consumption of official propaganda in non-Western countries (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1997, Mankekar 1999, Rofel 1994). Third, there are studies of Western propaganda across state borders, for example 1990s British propaganda in Afghanistan (Skuse 1999) and Kazakhstan (Mandel 2002) – i.e., contact zones between two former empires (Britain and Russia) reluctantly demoted to mere statehood.

One key subject-matter sidelined in these studies (but see Spitulnik below) is the uses of media in the making of modern states. Instead, we encounter ethnic minorities or the urban poor engaging with a fully formed state; both people and state are ethnographic givens. The chief reason for this neglect is anthropology's over-reliance on ethnographic research at the expense of historical research. In the present study I seek to redress the balance by adopting an ethnological approach as defined earlier; an approach centred on the comparative history and geography of peoples (*ethnos*) (Seymour-Smith 1986). Another common feature of much media anthropology (and indeed media studies) is the focus on a single medium, often television or film. In later chapters I study a range of media, from radio and television to karaoke videos, including understudied media such as clocks, wristwatches, and public-address systems. I also ignore the unhelpful division of labour between the study of literacy and that of media (chapter 6). This broad take on media allows me to investigate how different media were used in the latter half of the 20th century to crystallise a new set of ethnic and national identities in Sarawak, notably 'Iban', 'Dayak' and 'Malaysian'.

Finally, in the present study I borrow from both the U.S. and British traditions, as I see no reason to jettison the notion of media effects. For example, as I show in chapter 8, television has had a huge effect on rural Iban sociality. Prior to the advent of this technology in the 1980s, the main site of social interaction in Iban longhouses ('villages under one roof') was the public gallery (*ruai*), a manner of village street (Freeman 1992 [1955]). By the 1990s, most *ruai* were deserted at night, as longhouse residents 'migrated' *en masse* to the semi-private family rooms to watch television. In stark contrast, television sets have had no comparable effect on the Iban exchange system (chapter 7). Rather, they have been smoothly assimilated into a pre-existing system of gift-giving and monetary exchanges that cuts across divides of residence, occupation, ethnicity, and even life and death.

Media research in Malaysia

In Malaysia, media research has followed developments in the United States. Mhd. Handam (1990: 63-4) reported in 1990 that 66 out of 74 faculty members working on media surveyed were trained in the U.S., three each in the Philippines and Malaysia, and only one each in Britain and Indonesia. Lent (1994: 74) found among Malaysian scholars uncritical 'enthusiasm and devotion' concerning their American 'gurus'. Over the years, a worthy attempt at publishing Malay-language media textbooks has been made. However, in

> almost all cases, textbook translations are from books from the U.S., and the methods of selecting books for translation seem to be based on concepts of old boy networks (favorite U.S. professors of Malaysian lecturers or those who meander through the region occasionally), important guru, or politically safe topics…No better example of these pitfalls exists than the book, *Four Theories of the Press* [Siebert 1987], translated and published in Malaysia in recent years. Conceived and written in the Cold War mid-1950s, *Four Theories of the Press* sets up a dichotomy of good (U.S. and Western Europe) and bad (Soviet Union) press systems, ignores what has since become the Third World, and labels all Communist systems under Soviet Communist. Although the book has had a number of reprintings, not a word has been changed (1994: 78).

Besides the influence of mainstream, often dated, American works, governmental constraints on media research have stunted the growth of 'critical' media studies in Malaysia[3]. One much neglected region is East Malaysia (Borneo), the setting of the present study[4].

The implications of this Americanisation go beyond Malaysia's academia. As we shall see in chapters 3 and 4, the hypodermic needle and other models of media effects have also strongly influenced the work of media professionals in Sarawak. Another social legacy of modernisation theory is the notion of 'mind-set', a term originally used by radio and press propagandists which has entered everyday Malaysian English. It is commonly employed to refer to the purportedly conservative mentality of rural residents (chapter 4).

The uneven diffusion of media forms

In recent decades, many social theorists have sought ways out of a perceived bias towards static social structures. In their search for theoretical models that can

accommodate human agency, some have outlined theories of social practice as 'structured improvisation' (Bourdieu 1998), others have allowed non-human 'actants' into actor-network theories (Latour and Woolgar 1979), devised scenarios where social agents and 'patients' interact (Gell 1998), or called for the analytical blending of structure and action by way of 'structuration theory' (Giddens 1984). More recently, Mark Peterson (2003: 15) has intriguingly claimed that anthropologists

> have always recognised the tension between cultural representations (myth, ritual, media) and social formations (families, communities, polities). But they have also significantly focused on systems of exchange as the third leg of a theoretical triad.

This dynamic anthropological model, adds Peterson,

> differs from a transmission or producer/consumer model [of media]. Exchanges may be of many types – exchanges of spouses, linguistic exchanges, sharing of food. Exchanges may take place in markets, involve redistribution, or be organized by forms of reciprocity. *Anthropological models have traditionally examined cultural representation, exchange, and social formation in tension.* The elements of this triad are not separate or separable: exchanges occur only according to a set of cultural representations that renders them meaningful, and it is through exchanges that social formations are created, reproduced, and contested. ...Cultural representations provide scripts and schemas for understanding the values of things exchanged as well as models for exchange. Yet cultural representations exist only insofar as they are themselves exchanged – if not shared, they are not social and collective (Peterson 2003: 15, my emphasis).

This passage captures an ideal synthesis rather than actual anthropological practice. In actual practice, anthropology still has great difficulties integrating the notion of cultural representation, on the one hand, with those of social formation and exchange on the other. For instance, a senior social anthropologist, Tim Ingold (2000b), has decried the growth of memetics, a field of study derived from the concept of 'meme' (Dawkins 1976). To memeticists, cultural representations (e.g., catchy tunes) are memes, i.e., mental 'viruses' that spread from one human brain to another through imitation. For instance, I can 'pick up' a catchy tune from my neighbour's radio and pass it on to my workmates, who in turn may spread it in their homes, and so on. Against what he rightly deems a crude model (see Sperber 2000, Aunger 2002), Ingold stresses that the key to understanding human life is its embedded sociality. It is for this reason that ethnographers study social context, not 'transferable content'. Similarly, Maurice Bloch (2000) takes issue with the memeticists' idea of discrete cultural units diffusing across social and cultural boundaries. Most of culture, he argues, cannot be divided up into discrete elements; there is much more to culture than catchy tunes. Furthermore, those rare elements that retain some degree of cultural integrity usually blend with other elements, losing their original meanings across social contexts. The catchy refrain 'Don't worry, be happy' can mean one thing in Jamaica, quite another in Romania. To both Bloch and Ingold, cultural selectionism (the survival of the 'fittest' cultural elements through cultural selection) is a doomed Social Darwinist enterprise.

Whilst I share some of these misgivings about memetics, having worked on the social uses of media I have to question the privileging of social context over transferable content. Surely, we need to consider the dynamic relationship between the two. How

is a neighbourhood's 'production of locality'(Appadurai 1996) affected by the adoption of new media contents? What kind of cultural work do people carry out to assimilate or reject different contents? Why are some cultural forms more widely distributed across the planet than others? What are the environmental, genetic and cultural factors influencing the uneven distribution of cultural forms? These are questions that the anthropology of media can and should address, questions that are of interest to all branches of the discipline.

Bloch and Ingold's views echo the rejection 80 years ago – during professional anthropology's formative years – of the very idea of diffusion. Diffusion can be defined in simple terms as 'the transmission of elements from one culture to another' (Barfield 1997: 118). An influential theory in 19th and early 20th century anthropology, it gave rise to the inter-disciplinary field of innovation diffusion, a field almost bereft these days of anthropologists (Rogers 1995, Barnard 2000: 54)[5].
In the British anthropological tradition, the demise of diffusionism has been linked to the post-First World War emergence of functionalism under Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. These two founding fathers disregarded earlier debates about the relative weight of diffusion versus independent invention. Although accepting that cultural traits can diffuse, they stressed that their function was usually transformed beyond recognition within the adopting society (Kuklick 1996: 161, King and Wilder 2003: 56).

By contrast, neither the German-American Boas nor his students saw any incompatibility between identifying the selective principles behind the appropriation of diffused traits and studying the adopting society. On the contrary, those principles could tell us a great deal about social change and continuity in the importing society (Kuklick 1996: 162). By the Second World War, however,

> the question of independent invention *versus* diffusion had been rendered nonsensical in sociocultural anthropology: either it was irrelevant to explanation of the dynamics of social life or it represented a false dichotomy. It persisted in certain anthropological quarters, however. In particular, archaeologists remained concerned to specify the nature of innovations, because, unlike sociocultural anthropologists, *they had not abandoned the effort to account for world historical change* (Kuklick 1996: 162, my emphasis).

In this book I am as keenly interested in world historical change as any archaeologist. The evidence I present in subsequent chapters lends support to Boas' position on this matter. It shows that we can indeed learn a great deal about change and continuity in Malaysia – and other modern states – from the study of diffused cultural traits, including near-global media forms such as writing, propaganda, and television. By this I am not subscribing to the cultural relativism of Boas and his student Margaret Mead (see Eriksen and Nielsen 2001: 40). On the contrary, I concur with Derek Freeman's view that cultural practices are often deleterious to a people and its environment (e.g., Tuzin 2001), and that anthropologists should not refrain from pointing this out, whether they are conducting fieldwork 'at home' or abroad (see chapter 2).

An example from postcolonial Africa will illustrate the need to rehabilitate the notion of diffusion. Debra Spitulnik has carried out anthropological research into the circulation of radio sets (2000) and radio discourse (1996) in Zambia. She contends

that meta-pragmatic discourse is particularly amenable to being decontextualised, recontextualised and creatively reworked beyond the immediate listening event. By 'meta-pragmatic discourse' she means 'speech that is about the communication context or about the functions of language in context' (1996: 183 f.), for instance 'Over to you!' or 'That was well put'. The long-lived radio programme *Over to You*, now broadcast in six languages, is run jointly from the Lusaka and Kitwe studios. Two disc jockeys take turns to present musical selections by uttering the words "Over to you", a meta-pragmatic English phrase that has now been assimilated into several Zambian languages, e.g., *Ofata yu* (ChiBemba) and *Ovata yu* (ChiNyanja). Spitulnik recorded the recycling of this routine in the context of song turn-taking during a traditional wedding, at a 'modern' singing event, at an Adventist choral rehearsal, and along the bottom of an envelope she received from a 14-year-old girl. Following Bauman and Briggs (1990), she asks what we might call 'diffusionist' questions:

1. How are decontextualisation and recontextualisation possible?
2. What does the recontextualised text bring with it from its earlier context(s)?
3. What formal, functional, and semantic changes does it undergo as it is recentered? (Spitulnik 1996: 165)

She hazards three hypotheses as to why meta-pragmatic discourse is so 'readily seized upon' and reproduced by radio listeners. First, it is transparent in both form and function, for it helps to segment and coordinate communicative practices. Second, since it is 'speech about speaking', it can be easily transferred to non-media speech events. Third, this kind of discourse is exceedingly common in Zambian radio broadcasting, often in connection to celebrities, or in humorous or dramatic instances (1996: 167). Meta-pragmatic discourse exhibits 'a peculiar built-in detachability and reproducibility' that allows it to spread and circulate through the population more successfully than other forms of discourse (1996: 181).

This point is critical. Where most media ethnographers would focus on how Zambians adapt mass media content to their own cultural goals (e.g., Kulick and Stroud 1993), Spitulnik also asks *why* certain discursive elements (or traits) spread and circulate more widely than others. Spitulnik's ultimate aim is to understand the role of radio in the emergence of a Zambian public culture across ethnic and linguistic divides. Her dual research strategy – one that considers *both* diffusion *and* appropriation – serves this aim admirably. She demonstrates that Zambian radio has formalized language hierarchies, influenced speech styles, and come to embody the state (Ginsburg et al. 2002: 11).

Social anthropology still has to overcome its 80-year old resistance to the diffusionist idea that some cultural forms, including media forms, have a very high degree of integrity, autonomy and reproducibility. This is certainly the case with the phrase 'Over to you' across Zambia, as it is with radio and television worldwide. Recognising this fact does not commit us to the view that human beings are passive recipients of contagious memes or pernicious media effects. Humans often do select and use cultural forms in accordance with their own interests, but some forms (e.g., television) are intrinsically fitter for diffusion and survival across cultural boundaries than others (e.g., Chinese opera or Shakespearean theatre). This uneven fitness is fundamental to the ongoing making of a global state order.

Culture areas, not imagined communities

One of the key contributions to the study of nationalism and nation-building has come from Benedict Anderson, the author of the acclaimed book *Imagined Communities* (1991 [1983]). Anderson locates the first wave of nationalism in the Americas. The pioneers were 'pilgrim' Creole (*criollo*) functionaries and provincial Creole printmen. 'Print-capitalism' stabilized and standardized dominant languages, so that today we can still understand 17th century English or Spanish. According to Eley and Suny (1996), Anderson contributed, with Hobsbawm and other Marxists, to the 1980s shift from a material to a discursive focus. In fact, he never underestimated the material and ecological effects of new media technologies. In the second edition of his groundbreaking work, Anderson stresses the joint effect of temporal and spatial media upon the history of the world's political communities[6]. The effect of 'empty, homogenous time' wrought by clocks and calendars was reinforced by that of maps, censuses and museums. Thanks to John Harrison's invention of the chronometer in 1761, longitudes could be precisely calculated. Eventually, the colonial powers put the entire planet into 'boxes' (Anderson 1991: 173), delimiting quite precisely territorial boundaries in those areas they considered to be strategic.

Today a global grid of independent states supports the present world order. This territorial grid provides the rugged surface through which people, representations, and commodities migrate and circulate. In this section I wish to suggest, first, that modern independent states are the prime 'culture areas' of our age; and second, that a range of media are integral to their formation and maintenance. The notion of 'culture area' is closely linked to the school of diffusionism discussed earlier. Like diffusion, it is no longer a popular concept. In the present climate of social constructivism, anthropologists prefer to speak of 'ethnographic regions' or even 'regional traditions of ethnographic writing' (Fardon 1990). Originally the term culture area was applied to geographical regions with identifiable clusters of culture traits. For instance, East Africa was said to have a 'cattle complex' consisting of cattle, nomadic life, patrilineal descent, age sets, and bridewealth. Similarly, Dutch scholars identified a 'structural core' (*structurele kern*) beneath the bewildering cultural variations to be found across the Indonesian Archipelago (Barnard 2000: 55-58). Prior to the Dutch, P.W. Schmidt (1910), a Viennese diffusionist, discerned two complexes in the Archipelago: one associated with moon symbolism in the West, and another associated with sun symbolism in the East. This scheme was later discredited by Rassers and other Dutch ethnologists (King and Wilder 2003: 52).

In the 1970s, a set of concepts compatible with the notion of culture area was developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1998). In his comprehensive survey of French practices of 'taste' and social distinction, Bourdieu discovered clusters of cultural forms that correlated with people's relative amounts of economic and cultural capital. Thus, he found a cluster of whisky, golf, tennis, bridge and piano among the professions, and a cluster of pétanque, Pernod, and sparkling white wine among farm labourers (1998: 5). It may seem at first as if Bourdieu were positing a number of discrete, static class-based 'complexes' or clusters, but on closer inspection a more dynamic picture emerges. The whole of France is what Gellner (1983) would call a 'cultural space' with a continual readjusting of people's relative positions partly through visible practices of consumption. For example, when a low-capital group adopts a given hobby from a high-capital group, the latter will often abandon it in

order to maintain its 'distinction'. In ethnological terms, France is a 'thick' culture area, that is an integrated system of cultural institutions and practices (albeit one with significant regional, class, age-group and ethnic variations). By contrast, both the European Union and France's former empire are 'thin', overlapping culture areas fractured by country-specific cultural systems. In France, a dense tangle of media-saturated social formations (families, schools, universities, radio and television stations, ministries, cinemas, post offices, banks, restaurants, etc.) sustains a distinctive culture area, some elements of which are exported to its former colonies in various media forms. France being a heavily centralised polity, the Paris region remains the main hub in this cultural network (Scott 2000). Analogous, yet less well integrated, cultural networks criss-cross newer independent states such as Malaysia, Papua New Guinea (Foster 2002) and Zambia (Spitulnik 1996).

Besides the strong scholarly evidence supporting this notion of modern states as today's prime culture areas, many of us have a wealth of personal experience to corroborate it. When moving to a foreign country, we soon discover fundamental contrasts with our country of origin in climate, language(s), administration, transport, cuisine, leisure, media, etc. Even when the total 'way of life' (or culture) of both countries is similar – particularly if they belong to the same geographical region – our overall 'cultural competence' (Bourdieu 1984) can never match that of a native. Such a competence relies as much upon visible forms of social interaction as it does upon subtle cues and tacit knowledge acquired over many years (Bloch 1998, Fox 2004). Yet current social theory tells us, against all the evidence, that the congruence between place, culture and people was a figment of a previous generation's imagination. The efforts by Ruth Benedict and her Second World War associates to identify Japanese and German 'patterns of culture' are seen today as having been misguided by their faith in such a congruence (e.g., Peterson 2003: 45-51). Few social scientists today share this faith, having turned away from notions of cohesion, stability or structure towards notions of porous cultural boundaries and multiple identities (Eriksen 2004). Instead, many make the opposite assumption, namely that there is no such congruence. For example, Ginsburg et al. (2002: 1) open their media anthropology reader by calling for 'a critical anthropological project that refuses reified boundaries of place and culture'.

This common stance explains the long-lasting popularity of Anderson's metaphor of modern nations as 'imagined communities'. The idea of an imagined national community harks back at least to Hegel, born in 1770, who described newspapers as modern man's substitute for morning prayers (Anderson 1991: 35). To illustrate his metaphor, Anderson portrays a newspaper reader imagining a national 'community' of millions simultaneously reading the same newspaper. It is ironical that Anderson's perceived contribution is so often reduced to this static metaphor, considering that he rightly emphasized, as did Gellner, the link between nationalism and mobility, e.g., the pivotal role of itinerant functionaries in Spanish America (1991: 205). It is a metaphor that recalls the atomised individual media consumer of both the Frankfurt School and American media effects research.

Anderson's metaphor has nevertheless spread as widely in academic circles as the 'Over to you' catchphrase has among Zambians. It is time, however, to abandon it, for it distracts us from cultural changes and continuities 'on the ground'. In its stead, this book sets out to demonstrate that modern independent states are culture areas with

intricate webs of social formations, cultural forms and exchange systems. As John Thompson (1995) has argued, modern media do not sever the bond between cultural traditions and territories. Rather they 'reterritorialise' such traditions. Where Thompson has it that modern media yoke cultural traditions to *larger* political entities, I would qualify this position by recourse to Tarling's tribe-state-empire trinity. From the second half of the 20th century onwards, modern media have helped to reterritorialise cultural diversity in our planet around states, undermining in the process the two main political alternatives to the state: 'tribes' and empires. In other words, the 20th century global rescaling of human cultures has moved both upwards (from 'tribal' units to states) and downwards (from empires to states) – a massive process of political homogenisation (cf. Asad 1992). As both Foster (2002: 151-174) and A.D. Smith (2001: 137) have concluded, *national states constitute the global, they do not resist it*.

Book outline

In this section I provide a sketch of the remaining chapters. Chapter 2, 'What became of the Iban?' is a review of the Iban literature, with special reference to the work of its two most influential figures: the New Zealand anthropologist Derek Freeman, and the native Iban ethnohistorian Benedict Sandin. In 1981 Freeman, renowned for undermining Margaret Mead's once celebrated work on Samoan sexuality, published a scathing attack on Sandin's unscientific ways. The polemic reveals some of the dominant themes and preoccupations of both the anthropological and indigenous traditions, as well as their essential complementariness. Neither tradition has dealt with the question of media and nation-building, even though both Freeman and Sandin made important print media contributions to this process.

Chapters 3 and 4, 'Propagating the state', form a two-part history of Iban and Malaysian state media production, including the work of Sandin and fellow state-sponsored producers who sought to salvage the Iban oral heritage through print media and radio. In the early years of independence, this aim was pursued whilst defending the new country from both a hostile Indonesia and home-grown 'communist terrorists' through Iban-language propaganda. With peace, the propagandists turned from psychological warfare to socio-economic development. The arrival of television in 1977 (chapter 4) coincided with the demise of the Borneo Literature Bureau, until then the main outlet for indigenous literature. It is alleged that the federal authorities burnt and buried virtually all vernacular books published by the Bureau. This mass media grave signalled the accelerated 'Malaysianisation' of media in Sarawak in accordance with Gellner's (1983) theory of nationalism as the pursuit of the 'one state, one culture' principle. The history of Iban media production reveals a field of 'indigenous media' at the service of the state, in marked contrast with the indigenous media of white-settler countries such as Australia (Ginsburg 1993), Canada (Perrot 1992) or Brazil (Turner 1992).

Chapter 5, 'Sustainable propaganda', shifts the analytical focus from media production to media consumption. It suggests that state propaganda in Iban lands has become a sustainable form of development, an integral part of people's lifeworlds. This chapter analyses a range of media practices and texts (school essays and homework, school textbooks, viewers' television commentary, longhouse speeches) across various social formations in rural Sarawak. It shows that in spite of this

practical diversity, the ideological space is highly uniform and coherent. People make sense of media reports through what I call a local 'ideolect', that is a parochial 'dialect' of the state ideology. This is exemplified by a series of extraordinary crises that afflicted the region in 1997, including widespread headhunting and gigantic forest fires in Indonesian Borneo, a mysterious viral epidemic in Sarawak, and the collapse of Southeast Asia's financial markets. All through these crises, rural Iban media consumers lacked an independent ideological space from which to critically assess the official reports. This chapter addresses the old question of to what extent (state) media influence their audiences, an area where research results have so far been disappointing (Ginsburg et al. 2002: 12-14).

Chapter 6, 'Writing media', opens with the protracted anthropological debate surrounding the cross-cultural significance of literacy. An earlier school of thought (Goody 1968, Ong 1982) associated literacy with the emergence of science, democracy, and complex states in Ancient Greece and modern Western Europe. A later school rejected this approach as being Eurocentric and ascribing 'autonomous' powers to writing. Instead this school celebrates human agency and the myriad 'literacies' found around the world (Street 1993, 2001, Olson and Torrance 2001). Like most media anthropologists and cultural studies theorists, scholars of this latter persuasion privilege creative appropriation at the expense of diffusion. This chapter examines the Iban evidence and suggests that both approaches are needed. On the one hand, Iban have indeed creatively adapted literacy to certain parochial goals. For instance, in some areas they employ Catholic prayer books containing pagan notions of efficacy. On the other hand, Iban parents (like parents in other developing countries) are well aware of the economic value of standard forms of literacy. As a consequence, the vast majority of Iban children are sent to state schools.

Chapter 7, 'Media exchanges', documents the biographical profiles of television sets in rural Sarawak, an approach inspired by the work of Kopytoff (1986) and Appadurai (1986). Two stages in the life cycles of television sets are analysed: their acquisition and their disposal. The aim is to explore the materiality of a much valued medium and its relationship to processes of nation-building. Iban continually reckon one another's relative position within their modernising state. For the purposes of such a reckoning, a code including a television's price, brand, model, and size, has evolved. Not all, however, is 'nationalisation' or the search for Bourdieuesque distinction through differential consumption – some pockets of parochial practice do remain. Thus the semantic openness of material objects (Miller 1994) allows for flexible customary uses, for instance the burial of television sets as part of a deceased person's grave goods (*baya'*).

Chapter 8, 'Clock time', opens with a critical review of the anthropological study of time. Where anthropologists theorising writing have debated the degree to which this medium has been transformed across societies (chapter 5), a similar debate has yet to take place amongst those theorising time. Inexplicably, Alfred Gell (1992), Nancy Munn (1992), and other major contributors have failed to recognise the effect of wristwatches, radio, television and other media on time-reckoning and social scheduling. This chapter analyses the uses of media in the daily cycles of activity that bind together local Iban children, women, men and the elderly. Whereas most men and children manage their time through the waged workplace and school, most women and the elderly rely on radio during the day. In the evening, all four segments

of the longhouse community jointly 'domesticate' Malaysia's national time by watching television in the semi-privacy of the family rooms (*bilek*). Television has had a major impact by shifting the social locus from the communal gallery (*ruai*) to the family *bilek*. This finding challenges recurrent doubts among media anthropologists and other media scholars regarding the notion of 'media effects'.

Chapter 9, 'Calendar time', follows logically from the previous chapter. The emphasis here is on the festive uses of chronometric media, with the annual Dayak Festival chosen as a case study. The data presented derive from ethnographic fieldwork among both elite and non-elite Iban. As Anderson (1991) and others have noted, clock-and-calendar time is essential to the formation of modern states. This technology creates a sense of collective destiny and coordinated action. The Dayak Festival was 'invented' by native intellectuals in the colonial period and resisted by the British, who feared it may lead to political demands. It was finally officially launched in 1965 by the first independent state government and met with instant popular success. Rather than fostering Dayak rebellion, the festival has become an integral part of Malaysia's nation-building process. In this chapter I rethink Nick Couldry's (2003) concept of 'media ritual', stripping it of its mythic component. As I define them, media rituals are rituals designed to provide remote access to a modern country's seats of power.

Chapter 10 is a summary and a conclusion. It recapitulates the evidence and argument presented with reference to Smith's (1995) above mentioned definition of a nation.

Notes

[1] Fausto Barlocco, a doctoral student at the University of Loughborough (UK), is currently undertaking a comparative study of media and nation-building in the East Malaysian state of Sabah (formerly North Borneo) under my co-supervision.

[2] An online review by Matthew Durington of the two media anthropology readers to date – Askew and Wilk (2002) and Ginsburg et al. (2002) – can be found in *American Ethnologist* 31 (1) August 2003 (www.aaanet.org/aes/bkreviews). Earlier discussions of media anthropology include Spitulnik (1993), Ginsburg (1994), Dickey (1997), and Drackle (1999). See also Peterson (2003) for an historical overview.

[3] Among the exceptions listed by Lent (1994: 84-7) are Mohd. Hamdan Andan's (1988, 1990) and Frith's (1987) studies of mass communications and consumerism, Grjebine's (1988) case studies of prostitutes and the media, Banks' (1985) content analysis of women in Malay films, as well as other women-related studies by Rodrigues (1983-84), Nasri Adbullah (1983) and others. Lent himself has worked on the issue of freedom of expression (1979, 1984a, 1989), on the ownership of Malaysian media (1984b, 1987) and on telematics (1991). Other, more recent work includes Boulanger (1993) on government and press in Malaysia, Rahmah Hashim (1995) on television programming, McDaniel (1994), Anuar and Kim (1996) and Nain (1996) on media production, Gomez (1997) on the privatisation of Malaysian television, Uimonen (2003) on new media and nation-building, Karim and Khalid (2003), Yong (2003) and Postill (2004) on e-governance, Tong (2004) on the online newspaper *Malaysiakini*, Gomez (2004) on the press under Mahathir, and Anuar (2004) on media censorship.

[4] As far as Sarawak is concerned, among the few exceptions are Reece's (1981) article on the first Malay newspaper in Sarawak, Lent's (1982) survey of mass media in East Malaysia and Brunei, Ngidang's (1993) article on the Bornean media's treatment of the land rights movement, and Amir and A.R. Awang Jaya's (1996) *Isu-Isu Media di Sarawak,* an uncritical study influenced by mainstream and dated American works, including *Four Theories of the Press.*

[5] One exception is Dan Sperber's (1996) 'cultural epidemiology', a cognitivist brand of diffusionism that remains marginal to the discipline but has greatly influenced my thinking on these matters. Sperber's programme is being followed by Pascal Boyer (2000, 2001) and others.

[6] By his own admission, in the first edition he had not considered spatial media such as maps or censuses (Anderson 1991: xiii-xiv).

References

Abu-Lughod, L. 1997. The interpretation of cultures. after television. *Representations* 59, 109-34.

Amir, J. and Jaya, A.R.A. 1996. *Isu-isu media di Sarawak,* Kuching: Gaya Media.

Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 2nd edn London: Verso.

Anuar, M.K. and Kim, W.L. 1996. Aspects of ethnicity and gender in Malaysian television. In: D. French and M. Richards, Eds. *Contemporary Television: Eastern Perspectives*, pp. 262-281. London: Sage.

Appadurai, A. 1986. Introduction: commodities and the politics of value. In: Appadurai, A., Ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Appadurai, A. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Asad, T. (1992) 'Conscripts of Western civilization', in Gailey, Christine Ward (ed.) *Dialectical Anthropology: Essays on Honor of Stanley Diamond*, Vol. 1: *Civilization in Crisis: Anthropological Perspectives,* Gainesville: University Press of Florida: 333-51

Askew, K. 2002. Introduction. In: K. Askew and R.Wilk, Eds. *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Askew, K. and R.Wilk 2002. *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Aunger, R. 2002. *The Electric Meme: A New Theory of How We Think,* New York: The Free Press.

Barfield, T. 1997 *The Dictionary of Anthropology.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Barnard, A. 2000. *History and Theory in Anthropology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, R. and Briggs, C.L. 1990. Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 59-88.

Billig, M. 1995. *Banal Nationalism,* London: Sage.

Bloch, M. 1998. *How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview.

Bloch, M. 2000. A well-disposed social anthropologist's problems with memes. In: R. Aunger ,

Ed. *Darwinizing Culture: the status of memetics as a science*, pp. 189-203. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Boulanger, C.L. 1993.   Government and press in Malaysia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* XXVIII, 54-66.

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*,   Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1998. *Practical Reason*,   Cambridge: Polity.

Boyer, P. 2000. Functional origins of religious concepts: ontological and strategic selection in evolved minds. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute N.S.* 6, 195-214.

Boyer, P. 2001. Cultural inheritance tracks and cognitive predispositions: the example of religious concepts. In: Whitehouse, H., Ed. *The Debated Mind: Evolutionary Psychology versus Ethnography.*, Oxford and New York: Berg.

Caldarola, V.J. 1993.   *Reception as a Cultural Experience: Mass Media and Muslim Orthodoxy in Outer Indonesia*,   New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Connor, W. 2004. The timelessness of nations. *Nations and Nationalism*   10, 35-48.

Couldry, N. 2003. *Media Rituals: a Critical Approach*,   London: Routledge.

Curran, J., Gurevitch, M. and Woollacott, J. 1987. The study of the media: theoretical approaches. In O. Boyd-Barrett and P. Braham (eds). *Media, Knowledge and Power*. London: Croom Helm, pp. 57-79.

Dawkins, R. 1976 *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Deutsch, K. 1966. *Nationalism and Social Communications,* 2nd edn New York: MIT Press.

Deutsch, K. and Foltz, W. eds. 1963. *Nation-Building*,   New York: Atherton.

Diamond, J. 1999. *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*,   New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co.

Dickey, S. 1997. Anthropology and its contributions to studies of mass media. *International Social Science Journal* XLIX 3., 413-427.

Drackle, D. 1999. Medienethnologie: eine Option auf die Zukunft. In W. Kotot and D. Drackle (eds) *Wozu Ethnologie?*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Eley, G. and Suny, R.G. eds. 1996. *Becoming National: A Reader*,   New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eriksen, T.H. 2004. Place, kinship and the case for non-ethnic nations . *Nations and*

Nationalism   10, 49-62.

Eriksen, T.H. and Nielsen, F.S. 2001. *A History of Anthropology*,   London: Pluto Press.

Fardon, R. 1990. General introduction. In: R. Fardon Ed. *Localizing Strategies: the Regionalization of Ethnographic Accounts*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Foster, R.J. ed. 1997. *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia* ,   Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Foster, R.J. 2002. *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption and Media in Papua New Guinea*,   Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Fox, K. 2004. *Watching the English* ,   London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Freeman, J.D. 1992.   *The Iban of Borneo*,   Kuching: Abdul Majeed, First published: Kuching: Government Printing Office, 1955 as Report on the Iban of Sarawak.

Frith, K.T. 1987. Advertising and the consumer movement in Malaysia. *Forum Komunikasi* 43-48.

Gell, A. 1992. *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images*,   Oxford : Berg .

Gell, A. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*,   Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*,   Oxford: Blackwell.

Ginsburg, F. 1993. Aboriginal media and the Australian imaginary. *Public Culture* 5, 557-578.

Ginsburg, F. 1994. Culture/media: A (mild) polemic. *Anthropology Today* 10(2): 5-15.

Ginsburg, F.D., Abu-Lughod, L. and Larkin, B. 2002. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*,   Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Goody, J. 1968. *Literacy in Traditional Societies*,   Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Guibernau, M. and Hutchinson, J. eds. 2001. *Understanding Nationalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, in association with Blackwell and ASEN.

Hall, S. 1981. Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall *et al* (eds). *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, R. and Ranger, E. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*,   Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ignatieff, M. 2003. *Empire Lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*, London: Vintage .

Ingold, T. 2000b. The poverty of selectionism. *Anthropology Today* 16, 1-2.

Karim, M.R.A. and Khalid, N.M. 2003. *E-Government in Malaysia*,   Subang Jaya: Pelanduk.

King, V.T. and Wilder, W.D. 2003. *The Modern Anthropology of South-East Asia: an Introduction*,   London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Kolstø, P. 2000. *Political Construction Sites: Nation-Building in Russia and the post-Soviet States.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview.

Kopytoff, I. 1986. The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In: A. Appadurai , Ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, pp. 64-94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kucklick, H. 1996. Diffusionism. In: Barnard, A. and Spencer, J., Eds. *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 160-2. London and New York: Routledge.

Latham, M.E. and Gaddis, J.L. 2000. *Modernization As Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation-Building" in the Kennedy Era* , Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Latour, B. and Woolgar, S. 1979. *Laboratory Life: the Social Construction of Scientific Facts*, Beverly Hills and London: Sage.

Lent, J.A. 1991. Telematics in Malaysia: room at the top for a selected few. *Ilmu Masyarakat* 18,

Lent, J.A. 1994. Mass communications. In *Studies in Third World Societies, no. 44* edn, Virginia, USA: Dept of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.

Lull, J. 1990. *Inside Family Viewing: Ethnographic Research on Television's Audience*, London: Routledge.

Mandel, R. 2002. A Marshall Plan of the Mind: The Political Economy of a Kazakh Soap Opera. In: Ginsburg, F.D., Abu-Lughod, L. and Larkin, B., Eds. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, pp. 211-228. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Mankekar, P. 1999. *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: an Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India* ,   Durham and London: Duke University Press.

McDaniel, D.O. 1994. *Broadcasting in the Malay World: Radio, Television and Video in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore*,   Norwood, N.J.: Aplex.

Mead, M. and Metraux, R. 2000. *The Study of Culture at a Distance.* Oxford and New York: Berghahn.

Miller, D. 1994. Artefacts and the meanings of things. In: Ingold, T., Ed. *Companion*

Encyclopaedia of Anthropology, pp. 396-419.

Morley, D. 1980. *The 'Nationwide' Audience: Structure and Decoding*,   London: BFI.

Morley, D. 1992. *Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies*,   London: Routledge.

Munn, N.D. 1992. The cultural anthropology of time: a critical essay. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21, 93-123.

Ngidang, D. 1993. Media treatment of a land rights movement in Sarawak, East Malaysia. *Media Asia* 20 (2) 93-99.

O'Leary, B. 1998. Gellner's Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview of What is Living and What is Dead in Gellner's Philosophy of Nationalism. In: J. A. Hall, Ed. *The state of the nation: Ernest Gellner and the theory of nationalism*, pp. 40-88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Olson, D. R. and Torrance, N. (Eds.) (2001) *The Making of Literate Societies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ong, W.J. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*,   London: Methuen.

Perrot, M. 1992. La radio et la télévision dans les sociétés inuit: Groenland, Canada, Alaska et Tchoukotka. *Etudes Inuit* 16, 257-289.

Peterson, M.A. 2003. *Anthropology and Mass Communication: Myth and Media in the New Millennium*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn.

Postill, J. 2004. Running suburbia: new media and local governance in Subang Jaya. Paper to the 4th International Malaysian Studies Conferences, UKM, Bangi, Malaysia, 3-5 August 2004, URL (consulted 3 November 2004): http://www.jamesgomeznews.com/article.php?AID=156.

Reece, R.H.W. 1981. The first Malay newspaper in Sarawak. *Sarawak Gazette.*

Rofel, L. 1994. Yearnings: televisual love and melodramatic politics in contemporary China. *American Ethnologist* 21, 700-722.

Rogers, E.M. 1995. *Diffusion of Innovations,* fourth edition,   New York: Free Press.

Schmidt, P.W. 1910. *Grundlinien einer Vergleichung der Religionen und Mythologien der austronesischen Völker*,   Vienna: Alfred Hölden.

Scott, A.J. 2000. *The Cultural Economy of Cities: Essays on the Geography of Image-Producing Industries* ,   London : Sage.

Seymour-Smith, C. 1986. *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*,   London: Macmillan.

Siebert, F. 1987. *Empat Teori Akhbar*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Skuse, A. 1999. *'Negotiated Outcomes': an Ethnography of the Production and Consumption of a BBC World Service Soap Opera for Afghanistan*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of London.

Smith, A.D. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, A.D. 1994. The crisis of dual legitimation. In: J. Hutchinson and A.D.Smith, Eds. *Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, A.D. 1995. *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge: Polity.

Smith, A.D. 2001. *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Smith, A.D. 2004. History and national destiny: responses and clarifications. *Nations and Nationalism* 10, 195-209.

Sperber, D. 1996. *Explaining Culture: A naturalistic approach*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Sperber, D. 2000 An objection to the memetic approach to culture . In R. Aunger ed. (Ed.), *Darwinizing Culture: The Status of Memetics as a Science.* (pp. 163-173). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spitulnik, D. 1993. Anthropology and mass media. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22, 293-315.

Spitulnik, D. 1996. The social circulation of media discourse and the mediation of communities. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 62.: 161-187.

Spitulnik, D. 2000. Documenting radio culture as lived experience: reception studies and the mobile machine in Zambia. In: R. Fardon and G. Furniss eds., Ed. *African Broadcast Cultures: Radio in Transition*, Oxford: James Currey.

Street, B.V. 1993. *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Street, B.V. 2001. *Literacy and Development: Ethnographic Perspectives*, London: Routledge.

Tarling, N. 1998. *Nations and States in Southeast Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, J.B. 1995. *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* , Cambridge: Polity Press.

Tong Y.S. 2004. *Malaysiakini*: treading a tightrope of political pressure & market factors. In: S. Gan, J. Gomez and U. Johannen, Eds. *Asian Cyberactivism: Freedom of Expression and Media Censorship*, Bangkok: Friedrich Naumann Foundation

Tønnesson, S. 2004. Globalising nation states. *Nations and Nationalism*   10 1/2.: 179-194.

Turner, T. 1992. Defiant images: the Kayapo appropriation of video. *Anthropology Today* 8, 5-16.

Tuzin, D.F. 2001. *Social complexity in the making: a case study among the Arapesh of New Guinea* ,   London: Routledge.

Uimonen, P. 2003. Mediated management of meaning: on-line nation building in Malaysia . *Global Networks* 3 (3) 299-314.