Cultures of Relatedness

New Approaches to the Study of Kinship

Our understanding of what makes a person a relative has been transformed by radical changes in marriage arrangements and gender relations, and by new reproductive technologies. We can no longer take it for granted that our most fundamental social relationships are grounded in 'biology' or 'nature'. These developments have prompted anthropologists to take a fresh look at idioms of relatedness in other societies, and to review the ways in which relationships are symbolised and interpreted in our own society. Defamiliarising some classic cases, challenging the established analytic categories of anthropology, the contributors to this innovative book focus on the boundary between the 'biological' and the 'social', and bring into question the received wisdom at the heart of the study of kinship.

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1 The Bedamini dancer. Photo: Annette Sletnes. Reproduced by kind permission of the Oslo University Ethnographic Museum


3 Plan of the Royal Frederiks University, Christiania, around the mid nineteenth century. The library is on the left; the museums occupy the central building, Domus Media; and the lecture theatres are on the right-hand side. Source: Oslo University Library


5 Fourteen wax heads in glass boxes on the central staircase of the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo. Photo: Ann Christine Eek. Oslo University Ethnographic Museum
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Acknowledgements

The chapters in this volume were all originally presented in October 1996 as a panel which formed part of a 'Boundaries and Identities' conference held to celebrate fifty years of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. I am grateful to Tony Cohen for providing the space and the occasion, furnishing administrative support, and giving his warm encouragement then and since.

The introduction was written during the tenure of a Nuffield Foundation Social Science Research Fellowship. I am grateful to the Nuffield Foundation, and also to my colleagues in the Department of Social Anthropology at Edinburgh for providing the opportunity for a period of writing and research.

Various people have given me help in the sometimes bumpy process of seeing this book into print. I owe a particular debt to Marilyn Strathern and to Sarah Franklin for giving me detailed comments on an earlier draft of the introduction, and for their encouragement and advice when it was most needed. I am also grateful to Jessica Kuper for her support, and to the anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press for their comments.

Jonathan Spencer not only persuaded me to jettison an earlier version of the introduction, he has also been characteristically generous with his ideas, his critical comments, and his support at every stage. Needless to say, I lay claim to the remaining lapses in the editing and introduction.