

EMOTIONAL WORLDS

Are emotions human universals? Is the concept of emotion an invention of Western tradition? If people in other cultures live radically different emotional lives, how can we ever understand them? Using vivid, often dramatic, examples from around the world, and in dialogue with current work in psychology and philosophy, Andrew Beatty develops an anthropological perspective on the affective life, showing how emotions colour experience and transform situations; how, in turn, they are shaped by culture and history. In stark contrast with accounts that depend on lab simulations, interviews, and documentary reconstruction, he takes the reader into unfamiliar cultural worlds through a narrative approach to emotions in naturalistic settings, showing how emotions tell a story and belong to larger stories. Combining richly detailed reporting with a careful critique of alternative approaches, he argues for an intimate grasp of local realities that restores the heartbeat to ethnography.

ANDREW BEATTY has done five years' fieldwork in Indonesia. He teaches anthropology at Brunel University London and is the author of four other books, most recently *A Shadow Falls: In the Heart of Java* (2009) and *After the Ancestors: An Anthropologist's Story* (Cambridge, 2015).

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Emotional Worlds

Beyond an Anthropology of Emotion



ANDREW BEATTY



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For Mercedes

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is a study of how emotions operate in the world, how they differ from one place to another, how they are a part of what makes those places different. Anthropological in its comparative coverage and reflexive stance, the book joins a broader conversation with writers and researchers in other scholarly fields who are interested in emotion. Readers with backgrounds in psychology, philosophy, sociology, and history will, I hope, get something out of it. Anthropologists may be surprised (amused, ruffled, piqued: let's hope for a spread of emotions, excepting that dubious candidate, boredom). It is not, in any sense, an orthodox textbook or introduction. Rather, it develops a distinctive approach, plunges readers into the thick of debates, and brings them close to the ethnographic field at its most intimate. The 'beyond emotion' of the subtitle expresses both a wish to escape the limitations of the central concept and a call for a more emotionally engaged ethnography, an enhanced realism that captures the richness of the fieldwork encounter and the complexity of human relations.

For most people, emotions and how we think about them begin with the family. So it is with this project. My wife Mercedes accompanied me on fieldwork in Nias and shared its most intense moments, high and low (in Nias there is no middle). Our children, Sofia and Daniel, came with us to Java, a golden period that contributed much to an understanding of Javanese emotional ways. For this book, Mercedes and Daniel helped

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clarify arguments and made decisive suggestions and cuts. I owe much to their acuity and tact. Thanks to those we lived among for several years, mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, and have known for over a generation, cannot easily be specified: affection, regret, yearning, hope, and a kind of love would all be part of it. I am grateful to the people of Bayu (Java) and Orahua (Nias) for their patience and shared curiosity; more than anything, for their friendship. The correct acknowledgement in Nias would be the downbeat formula (to be explained later), ‘there is no resentment’; in Java, an even lower-key ‘begging your sincere pardon, inside and out, for my shortcomings’ must do. These local sentiments, as well as the others enumerated, are a reminder that the experience of fieldwork vastly exceeds its narrow purposes. May anthropology rise to the challenge.

I have drawn haphazardly on the following publications, reworking, borrowing, and sometimes contradicting their original arguments. ‘Emotions in the field’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11: 17–37 (2005); ‘Feeling your way in Java: An essay on society and emotion’, *Ethnos* 70: 53–78 (2005); ‘How did it feel for you: emotions, narrative, and the limits of ethnography’, *American Anthropologist* 112: 430–443 (2010); ‘The tell-tale heart: Conversion and emotion in Nias’, *Ethnos* 77: 1–26 (2012); ‘Current work in anthropology: reporting the field’, *Emotion Review* 5 (4): 414–422 (2013); ‘Anthropology and emotion’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20: 545–563 (2014); *After the Ancestors: An Anthropologist’s Story* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). I am grateful to the publishers Sage (*Emotion Review*: <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/emr>), Wiley Blackwell (*American Anthropologist*, *JRAI*), Taylor & Francis (*Ethnos*: www.tandfonline.com/toc/retn20/current), and Cambridge University Press for permission to use this material. My thanks to an anonymous CUP reviewer for very useful advice, which I have tried to follow. Finally, heartfelt thanks to series editors Michael Lambek and Jonathan Spencer, and to Andrew Winnard, my editor at CUP, for their encouragement, guidance, and patience.