Anthropology and Mission: towards a Historical Analysis of Professional Identity[1]

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From certain recent discussions about the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists, one gets the impression that this relationship is to be judged by an 'essential' difference between the two. Some say that the missionary cannot be equated with the anthropologist as the former comes to teach, while the latter comes to learn (Abbink 1985, Beidelman 1982: 16 n. 34, Delfendahl 1981, Hughes 1978: 65). Often, the next step in the argument is that the missionary is guilty of a form of cultural imposition characteristic of colonialism (Beidelman 1982: 5-6).

It is striking that in these discussions the concept of 'mission' is never made explicit; that both anthropology and mission, as *professions*, are usually not studied in any theoretical depth; and that the historical transformations of both enterprises are often ignored and even explicitly denied in the case of missions (Abbink in this volume, Beidelman 1982: xv). It might be worthwhile to consider whether in the history of the discipline anthropologists have always perceived such an essential difference with missionaries. I propose to do this by means of an approach governed by the theory of professions.

Mission

In discussions about missionaries and anthropologists, the concept of 'mission' is often taken to be self-evident. However, it carries various meanings ranging from a synonym for 'religious mission' to a gloss for colonial enterprises in general. This vagueness obscures an ambiguity in the use of the word which is, I think, central to the understanding of any mission, and which I hope to clarify by

juxtaposing a Roman Catholic view of 'mission' with some non-religious uses of the word.

In the Christian sense, mission means the divine task of the church to spread the message of the gospel everywhere. In daily use, however, the concept is more specific. In the Catholic context, the canonical sense of 'mission' applies to the act of investing a certain person with the juridical authority of the church (*missio canonica*). One can distinguish between the *sacrae missiones* for the conversion of sinners and the confirmation of the just, and the *missiones externae* for the spreading of the faith among unbelievers and heretics (Mulders 1950: 14-5). In theology, the emphasis is not so much on juridical authority but on the effort of communicating the gospel, and 'mission' is usually reserved for *missiones externae*, the planting of the church in those areas where it has not yet been established (Mulders 1950: 16)[2].

The concept of 'mission', however, is not restricted to religious contexts: bombers fly missions, French bureaucrats are *en mission*; a group of United States officials sent to the Netherlands to find out how badly drug-traffic is handled by the Dutch authorities are on a mission, just as a group of Dutch officials sent to Palestine to find out what kind of Dutch import is possible from there[3]. Maybe the most pernicious sense in which this concept is used is the application of the word to the research activities of the U.S. Department of Defense in Thailand, meant to aid the assurance of 'stability' there (that is, the repression of factions hostile to USA interests) with the help of anthropologists (Wolf & Jorgensen 1970).

The religious and non-religous uses of 'mission' are at least congruent: in both cases the concept refers to an activity in a peripheral region in which problems, defined in the centre, are dealt with. One may argue that there is a difference: most of the non-religous examples are research missions, while the Catholic mission is as practical as a bomber's (and for some anthropologists, as destructive). However, Christian missionaries are all too often taken to be merely practical activists; the fact that Christian missions have always had a research component is often ignored. Conversely, the ultimate goal of the research missions mentioned is to bring about the desired changes in practice: to stop drug-traffic, to import goods from Palestine, to replace more deadly forms of counter-insurgency, in Thailand or elsewhere, by 'peacefare'.

Therefore I do not think that the juxtaposition of research and practice in the use of 'mission' makes a decisive difference. In both cases, 'mission' refers to an activity based on a definition of a

problem produced in the missionary centre and not acknowledged in the mission area. It is crucial, however, to see that research and practical missionaries may be in disagreement about the politics of the mission in general. This potential conflict between research and applied specialties is present in professional institutions, too.

Profession

The sociology of professions has moved beyond the stage in which it emphasized a conception of 'profession' close to the image the professional was likely to uphold for himself. The view of a profession as a community with shared role definitions, professional autonomy, a shared ideal of service and mutual control guarding the quality of that service (Goode 1957) did not survive studies of, for instance, internecine warfare within the profession (Bucher & Strauss 1961), of the "conspiracy against the laity" (G.B. Shaw, in Johnson 1973), and of the breaking down of professional autonomy (Freidson 1984).

However, a minimal characterization of a professional as someone combining a certain technical competence with an ideal of putting this competence at the service of others (Wilensky 1964: 138) might still be of use if we take these two characteristics as necessary elements of professional strategies[4]. These strategies can be directed at several different audiences. The argument that the professional possesses a technical competence absent in others will usually be directed against possible competitors (rival professions, charlatans) and students. The argument that they feel the duty to put it at the service of others can fulfill the same functions, but also identifies others - clients - as people in need of the commodity (health, justice, salvation) the professional claims to offer. Lastly, both strategies can be employed to convince third parties that it is necessary to provide the funds or the institutions the professional needs, or thinks he needs, to conduct his business.

It is in the use of these strategies that the professional can become missionary. Towards his clients, for instance, the professional claims to be able to define their problems on the basis of his superior knowledge or doctrine. In Christian terms, one speaks of 'ministry' when the clients acknowledge this inequality in competence by accepting the professional's authority (the *sacrae missiones* referred to above). One speaks of 'missionizing' when clients are unaware of the fact that they are clients, in other words, when the

authority of the professional is not taken for granted (*missiones externae*). One of the crucial elements in the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists is that at a certain period in the history of anthropology, the mission of the latter is directed at the former, in other words, that anthropologists have tried to convince missionaries of the fact that they were the clients of the anthropological profession.

There is a second sense in which a profession can become missionary: towards potential rivals or benefactors. These, too, have to be convinced of the fact that the definition of the problem the professional can give is superior to other definitions. Thus, a new segment of a profession has a 'sense of mission' towards other segments of the profession or towards third parties providing its funds, because it has to establish its definition of the problem among those who do not yet endorse this definition (Bucher & Strauss 1961: 326-7). This also applies to the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists: the latter have had to show that their competence in diagnosing cultural problems was superior to that of the missionary ethnographers; especially when trying to convince colonial officials of their need of anthropological expertise, anthropologists have had to claim that their missionary rivals were not up to that task.

Nevertheless, by using these strategies the professional may also commit himself to identifications that contain a potential source of dissent. To be able the deliver a service, one has to have technical competence ready at hand, as a tool. During its use, one does not question the adequacy of the tool. On the other hand, the professional claim for technical competence should be constantly renewed and adapted. One should be in touch with developments in the academic field where the adequacy of the technical arsenal - whether the tool works - is checked and revised. To identify oneself as a member of a profession, therefore, may result in a double bind: on the one hand, the professional may feel the practical necessity of commodifying his technical competence in order to be able to deliver professional services. On the other, he has to face the research necessity of resisting this commodification by questioning the adequacy of his technical competence in order to uphold the claim that his professional service is as advanced as it should be. This partly explains why academic segments of a profession can come into conflict with those who are more committed to practical implementation of professional skills (for an example from the medical profession, see Bucher 1962).

Thus, professional work shares with mission work the same potential division in research and practical activities. The majority of anthropologists can be said to be more committed to the research specialty. It should be clear, however, that anthropological research nearly always takes places within the political structure characteristic of any mission: anthropologists do research on problems defined in the centre of learning which are not usually acknowledged in the research area. This suggests that anthropological research is a form of "scientific colonialism" (Galtung 1967). The main difference is that a research mission is directed at enlarging the knowledge of the missionary centre, while practical missions are aimed at changing the problematic situation which is thought to afflict the mission area. During the professionalization of anthropology, anthropologists' missions have often been directed, not at the mission areas of the Christian missionaries, but at the Christian missionaries themselves. In doing so it meant that these anthropologists had to endorse - be it passively - the civilizing mission in which the Christian missionaries participated[5].

The nineteenth century: partners in mission

I do not know of any systematic study of the historical relations between missionaries and anthropologists. To historians of anthropology 'mission' is rarely a subject of study[6]. Thus, it is difficult to give a comprehensive account of the professionalization of both enterprises. The following is merely a sketch of phases in the history of the attitudes anthropologists have adopted towards missionaries, and a parochial one, too, because of its concentration upon the history of British anthropology. That implies that, for instance, the enormous amount of work done by missionaries in linguistics (more acknowledged in the U.S.A.) is not taken into account. The first phase in this history, the second half of the nineteenth century, seems to be one of compatibility of mission and anthropology. This is illustrated by the following story.

Around 1840, T. Fowell Buxton was the leader of a large humanitarian faction in the British House of Commons which directed its attention to new goals after slavery had officially been abolished. Under Buxton's chairmanship the African Civilization Society was formed. It supplied the scientific staff to the Niger Expedition, a large-scale research adventure which was also meant

to support the combat of slavery, the spread of Christianity, and the promotion of commerce (Curtin 1964: 298-303).

Shortly before the expedition, in 1835, Buxton formed a House Committee for the protection of the Australian aborigenes, for which a professor of anatomy, Thomas Hodgkin, acted as an informal advisor. The latter, a friend of the anthropologist J.C. Prichard, founded the Aborigenes Protection Society in 1838. This society had a dual purpose: to save the aborigenes from possible extinction and to study them before they disappeared. It was from this merging of anthropology and humanitarian concerns that ethnology, both in Britain and France, grew in the nineteenth century. Hodgkin suggested to a friend to form the Société Ethnologique in Paris in 1838. In 1843, Hodgkin and his scientific colleagues decided, for the sake of organizational efficiency, to meet separately from the APS as the Ethnological Society of London (Curtin 1964: 329-31, Reining 1962)[7]. Prichard was one of most important members of this group; he drew his data preferably from mission sources, as missionaries stayed among natives longer than others and could claim mastery of native languages (Stocking 1983: 74). This shows that at that time, ethnology was part of the research mission that accompanied the practical mission of British Christian culture[8].

These relationships between government, mission and anthropology were to continue until the demise of evolutionist anthropology in the beginning of this century. Before the advent of the professional fieldworker, British anthropologists mainly used data collected by government officials and missionaries, while a segment of the missionary movement drew on ethnology as a tool in developing missionary methods. E.B. Tylor, for instance, depended for information on reports from missionary ethnographers such as Lorimer Fison; he had Codrington as a student. When he set up the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada with Horatio Hale, they appointed a Reverend Wilson as their agent (Stocking 1983: 72-4). F. Max Müller was invited to give a lecture before a missionary audience, in which he justified missionary expansion by identifying a missionary religion with health and non-missionary religions with stagnation. In this lecture, Müller also put forward a selective critique of mission methods, denouncing the policy of some missionaries to destroy native customs as ineffective (Müller 1873). This latter approach, the selective critique of missionary methods by means of ideas drawn from the study of culture, was central to the ideas of elite segments of the missionary profession. Protestants like

Gustav Warneck, and the papal letters from Gregory XVI's *Neminem Profecto* (1845) onwards, stressed that indigenous culture should be respected as much as possible (Kasdorf 1980, Kieran 1969)[9].

The seeds for dissent between missionaries and anthropologists were also sown in the period of fused humanitarian and scientific interests. Prichard, though nominally a defender of the monogenist view which saw humanity as descending from a common ancestor (i.e. Adam), was very much influenced by the debate with polygenists, those who maintained that humanity's ancestry was multiple. The latter view was more common with those uninhibited by religious orthodoxy (Stocking 1968: 39-40). This possible point of divergence between missionaries and anthropologists - religion - was to be developed further by evolutionists, especially Frazer, whose *Golden Bough* can be read as a critique of religion in general by means of the intellectual backwardness diagnosed in primitive religion (Evans-Pritchard 1959). However, it seems as if this point of debate remained on the level of theoretical argument until the professionalization of anthropological fieldwork in the first decades of this century.

Rivals and clients

As seen from the perspective of anthropologists, the professional relationship with missionaries in the first decades of this century is ambiguous. For the promotion of their professional interests, anthropologists had to point to the fact that they could deliver services (i.e. research competence) of use to missionaries and government alike; on the other hand, they had to show that they could deliver these services better than any other professional. The latter strategy was mainly directed at missionaries, especially those who were, like Father Wilhelm Schmidt, co-founders of the discipline (see below).

Anthropology needed the missionaries. The shift from the amateur ethnographer to the professional fieldworker, embodied by people like Franz Boas, A.C. Haddon, W.H.R. Rivers and W.B. Spencer, was not possible without the help of missionary ethnographers in the field (Stocking 1983: 74, 76, 78). Missionaries were also needed as *clients* in the attempts to expand anthropological teaching facilities at the academy. A committee appointed

by the British Association for this purpose in 1914 reiterated the central elements of anthropological professional identity:

> An accurate acquaintance with the nature, habits, and customs of alien populations is necessary to all who have to live and work amongst them in any official capacity, whether as administrators, executive officers, missionaries, or merchants, because in order to deal effectively with any group of mankind it is essential to have that cultured sympathy with them that comes of sure knowledge (Proceedings 1914: 58).

Obviously, the anthropologists claimed to be the only ones capable of delivering that service.

A year before that meeting, W.H.R. Rivers had written in a new edition of the *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* that the anthropologist should be a specialist, as missionaries and colonial officials had little time after their ordinary duties, had insufficient training, and occupations which brought them into conflict with native ideas and customs - to the point of wanting to destroy them altogether in the case of missionaries (Stocking 1983: 80). In diffusionist circles, however, this did not amount to anything like a principled attack on the missionary enterprise in general. In 1920, Rivers would repeat the selective critique of missionary enterprises already announced by Müller in 1873 and endorsed by the culture-conscious segment of the missionary profession: some missionaries have destroyed native life and produced a psychological epidemic of apathy in native peoples. Anthropology should teach the missionary that "lowly forms of religion" are not the work of the devil but the preparation for higher forms (Rivers 1920: 211-2, 215). In Rivers' perspective, the missionary is more a client than a rival or colleague of the anthropologist. The critique of missionary methods is not combined with a critique of their religious motivations. The theme of the improvement of missionary method by anthropological expertise recurs in both anthropological and missionary writing of the time (see Hocart 1914, Smith 1924).

But those who were eventually to replace the 'speculative history' of evolutionists and diffusionists in the British anthropological establishment had already had their first skirmishes with missionaries. Radcliffe-Brown had a discussion with Father Wilhelm Schmidt, since 1906 the founder and editor of the journal *Anthropos* ("with the cooperation of numerous missionaries"). By

means of *Anthropos*, Schmidt wanted to promote the ethnographic work of missionaries by giving them a platform for publication. Schmidt was not himself a fieldworker, but he was to promote professional fieldwork at the Anthropos Institute (Brandewie 1983a, 1983b).

In the fourth year after the founding of *Anthropos*, Schmidt felt compelled to respond to a critique of Radcliffe-Brown on one of his sources, the Andaman missionary E. Man. Brown argued that because of his Christian background Man was not able to understand the nature of Puluga, the highest being of the Andamanese. Schmidt answered that Man had lived on the Andaman Islands for 11 years, and Brown not more than a year. Moreover, Brown did not speak Andamanese while Man did; Brown spoke to his informants in Hindustani which was not well mastered both by himself and most of his informants. To Brown's claim of Christian bias, he responded that Brown himself had an evolutionist bias and was therefore not prepared to accept a High God among the 'low' Andaman Islanders (Brandewie 1983b: 111-2). Schmidt did not often counter the allegiations of Christian bias; though he did argue that a believer actually had an advantage of a non-believer in understanding religion (1983b: 116).

In those same years, Bronislaw Malinowski was building up his "hatred of missionaries" (1967: 31). Working in the field, his first departures from the model of fieldwork done on the veranda of the mission post were merely prompted, it seems, by the fact that the missionaries from whom he hoped to get his information were not present (Stocking 1983: 92, 98). On the other hand, he was truly vexed by the missionary Saville:

> Saville's underhand dealings with Armit annoy me, as well as the persecution of people unfriendly to the mission. Mentally I collect arguments against missions and ponder a really effective anti-mission campaign. The arguments: these people destroy the natives' joy in life; they destroy their psychological *raison d'etre*. And what they give in return is completely beyond the savages. They struggle consistently and ruthlessly against everything old and create new needs, both material and moral. No question but that they do but harm (1967: 41).

Stocking suggests that Saville provided the model for "the minor cast of cramped minds" figuring as an antithesis to "the Ethno-

grapher" in the first chapter of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1983: 123). However that may be, in *Argonauts* the missionary is one of the "average practical men" full of biassed and prejudged opinions - though there are exceptions (Malinowski 1922: 5-6). As we will see, Malinowski himself did soften his attitude towards missionaries when expedient. But his students internalized the view presented in *Argonauts*. In *We, the Tikopia*, Raymond Firth pays respect to the sincerity of the missonaries' vocation, but nevertheless questions the justification of the missionary enterprise as a whole (1936: xxiii, 49-50). To the students of the Malinowski seminar in the late twenties.

> ...missionaries were an enemy, except for Edwin Smith and H.A. Junod, who apparently were more interested in learning about the tribal peoples than in converting them (Powdermaker 1966: 43).

This is a considerable shift in attitude: from an overall agreement on the necessity of a civilizing mission to criticizing the disruption of an "adjustment to life (...) which has been on the whole a satisfactory one" (Firth 1936: 49)[10].

Several explanations may be offered for this. Malinowski's personal 'hatred' may have been important; the holistic perspective of the functionalists may also have made them generally suspicious of social change, while the relativist admonition to study the 'native point of view' may have led to doubts about missionary premises (see Stipe 1980). But it is at least plausible to suggest that we deal here with professional strategies when the fact is acknowledged that though missionaries were an enemy, colonial officials were apparently much less so. In Malinowski's seminars, officials on leave were allowed to participate "so as to make them less disrespectful and less disruptive of native life" (Powdermaker 1966: 43). The slow establishment of professional anthropology at the British universities saw colonial officials, not missionaries, take chairs at Cambridge[11].

This suggests that the development of professional identity of British anthropologists in the interbellum was directed at missionaries in particular. They were a convenient rival profession, as is witnessed by Radcliffe-Brown's and Rivers' attempts to show that missionaries were not capable of the task anthropologists wanted to keep to themselves. In a context where it was hardly convenient to question the political relationships in which anthropology was

set and on which it thrived, anthropologists could comfortably identify themselves as the brokers of the "native point of view" (Malinowski 1922: 25) *against* those whose religion seemed to predispose them to ethnocentrism. Only in this way, it can be explained that Malinowski took the 'minor cast of cramped minds' as his target while condemning missionary ethnography to the status of being an 'exception'.

This suggestion is confirmed by the fact that anthropological professional strategies were not maintained against all odds. In 1935, Malinowski published an essay in the *International Review of Missions* on "native education and culture contact". This was partly a critique of mission schooling in Africa. His attitude to missionaries is apparently softened:

> ...if the missionary and the anthropologist could, as matters stand, see eye to eye, they would not have much to learn from each other. As it is, the future of their co-operation must involve a greater sympathy on both sides and, incidentally, a reform of anthropological methods and outlook from the old antiquarian point of view to a much greater interest in the psychological and cultural difficulties of the changing Native (1935: 495).

It seems surprising that the 'enemy' is now treated with such deference. But in the situation of British anthropology of that time, cooperation was strategic: the critique of 'antiquarianism' was directed at the remaining members of the diffusionist persuasion around Elliot Smith and others, who were competing with the functionalists for the money of the Rockefeller Foundation (see Stocking 1985). In 1929, Malinowski joined forces with J.H. Oldham of the International Missionary Council. In response to an initiative taken in 1924 by mission leaders critical of native policy in Africa, Oldham had founded the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures in 1926 with the cooperation of other missionaries (Father Dubois, Edwin Smith, Paul Schebesta, Wilhelm Schmidt) and colonial officials (like Lord Lugard, the architect of Indirect Rule - Kuper 1983: 105, Lugard 1928, Stocking 1984: 166, 1985: 123). Malinowski participated in seminars with missionaries and colonial officials to discuss culture contact in Africa, while both he and Radcliffe-Brown participated in drafting the IAI's five-year plans (Kuper 1983: 106, Stocking 1984: 166). The Rockefellers' support to British functionalists gave them the lead

over competing professional segments in anthropology (Stocking 1985: 125 ff.).

Thus, in the second phase of the professionalization of anthropology in Britain the functionalist anthropologists' desire to establish themselves led to a renewed cooperation with missionaries. In Malinowski's first contribution to the Institute's journal, *Africa*, on 'practical anthropology' he lays down the typical claims for competence and service of a professional. The anthropologist has knowledge which is needed by 'practical men in the colonies', missionaries included. Though he can give advice, he is not to judge how this knowledge is used (1929: 23). But it must be clear that the reports of administrators, missionaries and other amateurs are "essentially erroneous" (1929: 31). The anthropological knowledge needed is not constituted by the circular route via the priestly king of Nemi and other "sensational and antiquarian interests", but by the direct observation by the *functionalist* anthropologist (1929: 25, 27, 38). The vocation of the anthropologist to criticize ethnocentrism, and thus to question the goals to which his knowledge is put, is subordinated to the practical interest of establishing anthropology as the instrumental rationality of colonial administration and Christian mission. The "expansion of one form of civilization over the whole world" is more or less taken for granted (1929: 36).

The reaction of missionaries to functionalist claims was as ambiguous as the attitude of the functionalists to the missionaries. It is clear that the latter did not simply accept the anthropologist's claim to professional authority. We already saw that Father Schmidt tried to put the scientific competences of the missionaries at the service of professional anthropology instead of the other way around. Others tried to soften the demand for professional training: "In reality, the most important thing is to have an observant eye for the life going on all round" (Westermann 1931: 166), or ventured a redefinition of the anthropological profession more congenial to the missionary (Junod 1935).

On the other hand, missionaries like Smith accepted that professional mission work could not do without anthropology (Smith 1924). And at times, missionary ethnography could become a form of self-critique of the missionary profession. This is most apparent in the career of *Aequatoria*, a journal founded in 1937 by two missionaries of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart posted in the former Belgian Congo. As its editor, Gustaaf Hulstaert, wrote:

> ...Aequatoria has always defended the principle that individuals, families, clans, nations are not in the service of the colonizer, but that on the contrary the state, the economy, charity, schools and missions should be at their service (cited in Vinck 1988: 96 - translation mine).

The Apostolic Delegate was disconcerted by the resulting ethnographic publications, which were denounced as "pornographic", "apologies of pagan infamies" (Vinck 1988: 88). Only after submission to the diocesan censor was the journal able to continue its often troubled course.

In the meantime, from 1930 to 1960, the public occasions where anthropologists would confront missionaries and vice versa seem to have diminished. The former acknowledgments of missionary help (by Firth, for instance) were often deleted from ethnographic accounts. The dependence of the anthropologist on the missionary during fieldwork was obviously not a boost to anthropological professional identity, so it is not surprising that in those years "the missionary factor" was suppressed in ethnography (Van.der Geest n.d.), a fact which made missionaries angry at times (Nida 1966). But the image of the missionary as enemy conjured up by the Malinowskian establishment probably continued as oral tradition within most anthropological circles.

Missiology grew rapidly in those years (Müller 1980). This was partly recognized by the larger anthropological establishment, where Eugene Nida and Kenneth Pike were acknowledged as accomplished scholars. But the professional anthropologists working with Practical Anthropology, the Summer Institute of Linguistics or Wheaton College, were usually missionaries-become-anthropologists, and the 'increasing interaction' between missionaries and anthropologists since 1945 described by missiologists seems to have been a rather one-sided affair (see Hiebert 1978, Smalley 1963 - the same goes for the early career of the *Anthropological Quarterly*). In all publications, anthropology is never more than a important tool, an 'auxiliary science' for the communication of the gospel (see Luzbetak 1961, Nida 1959: 843, Taber 1967: 9).

Simultaneous political upheavals

As we have seen in the case of *Aequatoria*, critique of the political relationships between the professional centre and the people in the

mission area itself was possible before political decolonization but remained an exception (for anthropology, the exception is Leiris 1950). But the normal relationship between anthropologists, missionaries, and the colonial government, was that the latter was able to profit from the work done by the former two.

During and after the wave of decolonization (and the cultural upheavals in the West that followed it) this questioning of political relationships became possible. It was partly an initiative of the colonized. In Africa and among native Americans, both the missionary and the anthropologist were lumped together with the colonial administration[12]. In Africa, this resulted in the near-removal of anthropology from the national universities (see Chilver 1977: 107) and a stream of publications denouncing the role of missionaries in the establishment of colonial rule (Ajayi 1965, Ayandele 1967, Ekechi 1971). But there were also members of both professions who acknowledged the value of the critique and who tried to reduce the inequality characterizing the definition of professional problems. There were two ways in which this could be done: a *reversal*, the initial definition of the problem should be the work of the people served, no longer of the one to serve them; and a *decentralization*, the professional gave up total control of the way problems should be defined.

In anthropology, the reversal appeared in the attempts by anthropologists to study *themselves*. The historiography of anthropology became a respectable specialization at the same time that an 'anthropology of anthropology' or 'reflexive anthropology' came into being (see Hymes 1969, Scholte 1966, Stocking 1968). Reflexivity was intimately associated with critique of the politics of anthropology (see Scholte 1969). This critique led to suggestions of alternatives that were meant to decentralize anthropology. A radical version of this was 'action research' (Gough 1968, Huizer & Mannheim 1979: passim) in which the anthropologist's research should be at the service of the people among whom research is done. Another version was the critique of the ways anthropology had served the ends of the colonial powers (Asad 1973, Goddard 1972). More recently, the critique is directed at the ways in which anthropologists create their objects and define their problems unilaterally (Said 1978, Fabian 1983), or it calls for a more decentralized presentation in ethnography: 'dialogue', or 'polyphony' (Clifford 1983, Dwyer 1977). Obviously, such an upheaval is accompanied by severe blows to professional identity; it is not surprising that most anthropologists commonly refer to their

profession as being in a 'crisis' since the late sixties. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the newer developments exist side by side with those anthropologies they have tried to criticize and surpass.

As André Droogers shows elsewhere in this volume, missionary circles have dealt in similar reversals and decentralizations. The experience of 'crisis' is present here, too: Droogers speaks of "different Christianities" that do not seem to be the same religion anymore. The missionary has also lost important props to his identity (Boberg 1979, Hesselgrave 1975). One notices the same kind of fragmentation of the profession: new initiatives exist side by side with older practices.

Conclusion

From this historical sketch, it becomes apparent that the perception of missionaries by anthropologists depends very much on the professional context in which it is caught. Before the professionalization of anthropological fieldwork, the missionary ethnographer was in frequent contact with anthropologists and was perceived by them as a useful scientific assistant. But when the professionalization of anthropology is well under way, the missionary ethnographer becomes a rival. Anthropological perceptions of missionaries in that context stress their lack of research competence, their nefarious influence on the natives, and anthropologists question the justification of efforts towards cultural change based upon Western religious motives. On the other hand, missionaries in general are potential clients; perceptions of anthropologists in that respect reduce missionary work to practical work, ignoring missionary ethnography. But to have missionaries as clients implies an at least passive agreement with the goals the missionary has set; thus, when expedient the question of the justification of the missionary enterprise in general is ignored.

After the political upheavals in the sixties, when both anthropology and Christian missions were in a state of identity crisis, another perception of missionaries seems to have grown. Instead of the lack of anthropological competence of the missionary it stresses his 'essential' commitment to a different form of activity: teaching instead of learning. This 'essence' on which the critique of anthropologists is based is no longer religious but political, denouncing the power differences of missionary and professional

relationships in general. But to perceive missionaries as essentially different in this sense, anthropologists have to abstract from the actual relationships existing within and between the two professions by means of a double reduction. First, they reduce professional activity to fieldwork, ignoring the fact that the anthropologist comes to learn mostly for the profit of his own career and professional peers. They also ignore the fact that what the anthropologists 'learns' is usually based on problems not defined by the people from whom he learns. Only in this way the activity of anthropological 'learning' can become politically innocent. Secondly, anthropologists ignore the historical parallels with missionaries by reducing their activity to a form of religious imposition characteristic of a period in which anthropologists, themselves, passively endorsed this sense of mission. In a period where mission in some circles has gone in reverse this can not be justified either. The conclusion can only be that to proclaim an essential difference between missionaries and anthropologists is more a part of present day anthropological professional strategies than a studied assessment of the relationship between the two.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Nil Disco for giving me an introduction to the sociology of professionalization, and Johannes Fabian for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper. All remaining errors are, of course, mine.
2. For the sake of the argument, I refer here to a Catholic concept of 'mission' used shortly after World War Two; in the section on post-1960 missions it will, I hope, become clear that this is not the only concept of 'mission' possible.
3. The last two examples are taken from the *NRC-Handelsblad*, 1987-8-11 and 1987-11-13.
4. 'Strategy' refers to something different from 'ideology'. The use of the concept of ideology suggests a discontinuity with reality, a distorted representation of the latter by the former. A Marxist notion of ideology, for instance, stresses the alienation of the self in support of the glorification of an external force (Bloch 1987: 48). But professional strategies do not just distort reality, they (partly) *shape* it. They are directions a professional may take to produce or reproduce a reality which fits his orientations and interests in the world (see Bourdieu 1972). Here, the 'self' is not a hypothetical reality denied by ideology but a professional *identity constituted* simultaneously with the 'external force'.

5. Jon Kirby SVD and Albert de Jong CSSp pointed out to me that it is unfair, and partly incorrect, to try to reduce the work of the missionary to the language of professionalism. I acknowledge that criticism; in fact, I wanted to elaborate the limited use of the strategy adopted here, but was not able to because of the admonitions of stern but righteous editors. For an analysis of the way in which the missionary profession has to revise its occupational boundaries, see Huber (1988).
6. Missionary ethnography is not taken into account in most histories of anthropology except when Father Schmidt is discussed (but see Clifford 1982). This does not happen always (Evans-Pritchard 1981, Leaf 1979), but when he is mentioned, his missionary background is usually not considered to be of any interest (Honigmann 1976, Kuper 1983, Lowie 1937: 193, Voget 1975). The obvious exception is Harris (1968: 389), but he is an adherent of a rival religion.
7. Reining argues that the academic faction of the APS disagreed with the missionary faction because they preferred to study native races instead of immediately bestowing on them the privileges of civilization (1962: 593). However, he fails to give sources for this assertion. Curtin does for his argument that there was no serious disagreement between the two factions, so I preferred to accept the latter's scholarship.
8. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the polygenists, who were in conflict with monogenists like Prichard and split off from the Ethnological Society to form the Anthropological Society of London in 1863, claimed that they were able to produce practically relevant knowledge (Reining 1962: 594). It might be a good guess to say that they thereby tried to keep up with the monogenists, whose more religiously orthodox point of view was in line with the practical anthropology of the missionary movement.
9. These repeated admonitions to missionaries, however, were made because most of them did not follow this 'culture conscious' elite. Publications that paid sufficient attention to missionary ethnography were swamped by those that stressed the savagery and primitiveness of the natives in order to gain (financial) support for the missions from the Christians at home. These publications in their turn influenced the missionaries sent out to pagan lands (Curtin 1964: 324, Kieran 1969: 348).
10. This is not to imply that all British anthropologists shared this distrust. In *The Nuer*, Evans-Pritchard repeatedly shows his indebtness to the members of the American Mission at Nasser (1940: vii and passim). I wish to thank Fred Spier for drawing my attention to this passage.
11. The first William Wyse Professors at Cambridge were T.C. Hodson and J.H. Hutton, both former members of the Imperial Colonial Service. Only in 1953, they were succeeded by a professional anthropologist, Meyer Fortes (Fortes 1953).
12. Nkrumah possessed a painting in which a colonial official, a missionary and an anthropologist are fleeing before the black giant breaking his bonds (Verstraelen 1986. See also Declaration of Barbados 1973, Deloria 1969: 83 ff., 105 ff.).

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