

This is a paper draft, please do not circulate or cite. Thank you for reading!

Joshua Klein, PhD Candidate (Geneva Graduate Institute)

joshua.klein@graduateinstitute.ch

From the Field to the Self. French Anthropology, Social Psychiatry, and the Ambiguous Study of Acculturation in the Age of Decolonization, 1950–1980

Introduction. Towards a conceptual history of “acculturation”

My thesis historicizes the concept of acculturation, prevalent in midcentury human and social sciences, by following its disciplinary and institutional movements in three parts from its formation as a tool of social integration and nationalism in interwar and wartime North and Latin America, over its translation into an issue of technical assistance and economic development in postwar agencies (UNESCO) to its reception and renewal as a sociology of intercultural relations and racism in 1960s France. How did acculturation develop from a field that studied the social and psychological effects of ‘culture contact’ in British social anthropology and US cultural anthropology during the interwar years to becoming a ubiquitous, if elusive, concept in the human and social sciences after 1945, demanding interdisciplinary research in international organizations and provoking self-reflexivity in French anthropology? Once a “key colonial practice”,¹ engineered to enable European modernization universally, I’d argue that the conceptualization of acculturation is worth revisiting as it ultimately facilitated a debate on ethnocentrism and the changing function of the social sciences in a multicultural society. The following paper outlines ideas for the dissertation’s third part, which aims to put intellectual history and history of science into dialogue, by analyzing how French sociologist Roger Bastide’s (1898–1974) theoretical engagements with acculturation in the context of postwar migration to France from the oversea departments and (former) colonies culminated in a reevaluation of applied anthropology. Informed by contemporary sociology of knowledge, he argued that the diverse levels at play in the acculturative process (social assimilation, psychological adaptation, political resistance, etc.) would require a “multidisciplinary” approach and transnational cooperation which brought him to explore the emerging fields of social

¹ Stefanos Geroulanos: *Transparency in Postwar France. A Critical History of the Present*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2017, 96.

psychiatry and development sociology. Here, I would like to propose that the implicit reciprocity of acculturation theory as an exchange between at least two different cultures made Bastide reflect rather on the destructive forces of his own “civilization” and the involvement of the ethnological researcher than on the oppressed selves and societies, he and his colleagues went out to observe. Thus, reflections on the study of acculturation created a contested discourse on the methodological repercussions of decolonization. I follow here an understanding of decolonization that in the past two decades has gained the attention of historians of science and intellectual historians not as “a single coherent process but a multifaceted combination of forces working towards the dissolution of all vestiges of colonial domination, whether they were material, ideational, psychological or structural. Far from having ended with the passing of sovereignty, it remains ongoing.”² This perspective calls for an inclusion of the sciences that facilitated colonial practice in the first place and thus also puts the postwar metropole back on the map, however, this time not as the scientific hub for civilizing missions, but as a crisis-ridden site of political reconstruction and intellectual reckoning: “Decolonization’s effects rippled far beyond the borders of newly independent states, to reconfigure European societies and global political thinking just as profoundly.”³ Focusing on the interaction between intellectuals and institutions, the thesis aims at connecting the history of decolonization with a social history of the ideas and ideologies behind acculturation, “in which the abstract notion of discourse is supplemented by a more concrete investigation of how forms of knowledge were developed and deployed in particular institutional or social contexts.”⁴

In the study of acculturation, many contemporary issues overlapped: cultural relativism and the race question, late colonial tensions between the search for tradition and an imposed modernization, the political function of emerging international organizations, and ideas of “applied” social science. In recent scholarship, references to acculturation

² Andrew W. M. Smith, Chris Jeppesen: “Introduction. Development, Contingency and Entanglement. Decolonization in the Conditional,” in: Andrew W. M. Smith, Chris Jeppesen (eds.): *Britain, France and Decolonization. Future Imperfect?*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2017, 1–14, 12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Michael Collins: “Nation, State and Agency. Evolving Historiographies of African Decolonization,” in: Andrew W. M. Smith, Chris Jeppesen (eds.): *Britain, France and Decolonization. Future Imperfect?*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2017, 17–42, 40. See also, for a recent and critical expansion of such a ‘social history of ideas’, Stefanos Geroulanos, Gisèle Sapiro: “Introduction. The Society of Ideas,” in: *The Routledge Handbook of the History and Sociology of Ideas*, ed. by Stefanos Geroulanos and Gisèle Sapiro, London and New York: Routledge 2024, 1–28.

have been made in a growing historiography on the many aftermaths of Empire in the twentieth century that has focused, among others, on “the remnants of race science”, intellectual reconstruction in postwar France, the resurgence of civilizational discourses in Europe, colonial sociology, and the influence of the Second World War and Cold War organizations on the human and social sciences.⁵ Furthermore, “acculturation” has been rendered in decisively psychological terms as, for instance, the cause of psychosis in ‘traditional’ African societies and thus historicized as a problem of inter- and postwar ethnopsychiatry, colonial psychiatry, and the rise of universal mental health in a “global psychiatry” after 1945.⁶ However, many of these studies, speak of acculturation (and its conceptual variants of “counter-acculturation” and “deculturation”) rather in passing than as the main object of analysis. This is the point of departure for my argumentation. I argue that despite their late colonial omnipresence, concepts of acculturation, culture contact and social change – often used interchangeably – have been largely overlooked or taken for granted in the history of decolonization. These concepts, however, were vital for the renewal of social sciences that were formerly concerned with the description of traditional societies and in the midcentury decades transitioned into solving practical problems of economic development such as facilitating technical assistance and the diffusion of modern educational institutions. Going beyond the often arbitrary boundaries of colonial and native communities, the knowledge and methods they produced informed much of the cultural research on migration and social change in Europe. Thus, rather than telling the history of a fixed theory or a universal program of cultural homogenization, the discourse of acculturation might be more adequately addressed from the perspective of

⁵ Sebastián Gil-Riaño: *The Remnants of Race Science. UNESCO and Economic Development in the Global South*, New York: Columbia University Press 2023. Paul Betts: *Ruin and Renewal. Civilising Europe after the Second World War*, London: Profile Books 2021. George Steinmetz: *The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought. French Sociology and the Overseas Empire*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2023. Stefanos Geroulanos: *Transparency in Postwar France. A Critical History of the Present*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2017. Peter Mandler: *Return from the Natives. How Margaret Mead Won the Second World War and Lost the Cold War*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2013.

⁶ Erik Linstrum: *Ruling Minds. Psychology in the British Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2016. Ana Antic: “Decolonizing madness? Transcultural Psychiatry, International Order and Birth of a ‘Global Psyche’ in the Aftermath of the Second World War,” in: *Journal of Global History* 17/1 (2022), 20–41. Megan Vaughan: “The Madman and the Medicine Man. Colonial Society and the Theory of Deculturation,” in: *Curing Their Ills. Colonial Power and African Illness*, London: Polity Press 1991.

historical epistemology as the very object of a “history of the categories that structure our thought, pattern our arguments and proofs, and certify our standards for explanation.”⁷

Le Prochain et le Lointain. Roger Bastide and the “Interpenetration of Civilizations”

Acculturation, planned or accidental, became a research problem in the middle of the twentieth century, because it disrupted the established ways of cultural reproduction and social transmission of the communities which anthropologists were studying. While colonial administrators and scientists were facilitating these acculturative processes by the implementation of imperial infrastructures – most importantly in the case of France: educational institutions such as schools and universities to build an intellectual elite of “évolués” –, many French social scientists rejected acculturation as the violent process of cultural homogenization that was ignorant of its damages to local customs and family structures and simplifying complex social-psychological processes of modernization.⁸ On the other hand, the concept of acculturation, as it influentially had been formulated by Franz Boas, was a common ethnological method to describe the way “in which foreign elements are remodeled according to the patterns prevalent in their new environment”.⁹ Consequently, the literary scholar and editor of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ writings, Vincent Debaene, recently pointed out two possible paths that histories of acculturation can take:

We can see two forms of history emerging here: on the one hand, a history of borrowings and exchanges between societies and of their development under mutual influence; and on the other, an external history of destruction, a tragic chronicle of the annihilation of ancient social forms by an exorbitant Western civilization. The first can constitute an object of scientific inquiry and is essential for the anthropologist; the second is a function only of the power imbalances at play and the hubris of a devastating modernity with respect to other cultures, as well as to a natural world it is irreparably defiling.¹⁰

In his concept of the “interpenetration of civilizations”, formulated in his Opus magnum on African religions in Brazil,¹¹ French sociologist Roger Bastide attempted to reconcile

⁷ Lorraine Daston, “Historical Epistemology,” in: James Chandler et al. (eds.), *Questions of Evidence*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1994, 282–289, 282.

⁸ Cf. Alphonse Dupront: “De l’acculturation,” in: XII^e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques. Vol. 1, Rapports, Wien: Ferdinand Berger & Söhne 1965, 7–36, 7: “In France, the social sciences remain virtually closed to it [acculturation, JK], despite the American popularity of the term and the many research projects for which it is the patented hallmark. It’s easier to say ‘encounter’ or ‘interpenetration’ of civilizations.”

⁹ Franz Boas: “The Methods of Ethnology,” in: *American Anthropologist* 22/4 (1920), 311–321, 315.

¹⁰ Vincent Debaene: “Introduction,” in: Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Structural Anthropology Zero*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2022, 1–32, 12.

¹¹ Roger Bastide: *The African Religions of Brazil. Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations* (1960), John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore/London 1978.

these two histories. By re-formulating acculturation as a social-psychological reality that emerges at the “crossroads” of different civilizations, Bastide not only broke with the primitive preference that at the time informed most of French ethnology and colonial sociology,¹² but also questioned the disciplinary sovereignty of cultural anthropologists who were quick to define acculturation and incorporate its study into their curriculum in the mid-1930s.¹³ To him, culture contacts involved more than the diffusion of cultural traits and empirical research on their acceptance or rejection by native individuals. Bastide pointed out the fact of creation, meaning that one culture would not simply dissolve through contact. Rather, the pressure of new economic and political conditions would necessitate a “reinterpretation” of established behavior or modes of thought. Consequently, acculturation cannot be understood as the sheer “meeting” of civilizations that enabled one-sided moral or technological transfers but as a “dialectical interplay of infrastructures” that determines the essentially social and psychological effects of this confrontation, ranging from assimilation to alienation, from resistance to readaptation.¹⁴ Bastide argues that the study of acculturation thus should be placed “within a sociological framework” and “freed from an underlying philosophy” such as the liberalism of North American cultural anthropology or the materialism of Marxist anthropology.¹⁵

In the late 1940s, when he was still at the University of São Paulo where he succeeded Claude Lévi-Strauss’ chair in sociology,¹⁶ but preparing for his return to Paris, Bastide lamented that acculturation was not of interest to his French peers: “In France, the problem has been studied by administrators such as Georges Hardy. But administrators are only interested in pathological phenomena, which is quite understandable, since what concerns them above all is order”.¹⁷ Indeed, in contrast to the indirect rule policy of British colonialism, in which administrative and scientific methods and resources – at

¹² Steinmetz; *The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought*, 158.

¹³ Cf., most notably, Robert Redfield et al.: “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation,” *American Anthropologist* 38/1 (1936), 149–52. Melville J. Herskovits: “The Significance of the Study of Acculturation for Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 39/2 (1937), 259–264.

¹⁴ Roger Bastide: “Problèmes de l’Encroisement des Civilisations et de leurs Œuvres,” in George Gurvitch (ed.): *Traité de Sociologie*. Tome II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1960, 315–330, 317.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 317f. Moreover, Bastide argued “that sociology enables us to ‘dialecticize’ phenomena between opposing poles – civilization and society, internal and external causality, structure and collective memory, etc. – while avoiding the pitfalls of cultural idealism, psychologism and Marxist materialism.”, *ibid.* 330.

¹⁶ On Bastide’s far-reaching and long-lasting entanglements with Brazil, cf. Ian Merkel: *Terms of Exchange. Brazilian Intellectuals and the French Social Sciences*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2022.

¹⁷ Roger Bastide: *Initiation aux recherches sur les interpénétrations de civilisations* (1948), Bastidiana: St Paul de Fourques 1998, 29. My translation.

least institutionally – converged almost completely during the interwar period, French colonial theory was thinking about colonial subjects and societies rather in terms of “assimilation” and “association” than being informed by cultural discoveries on kinship and religion made by anthropologists.¹⁸ One of the few exceptions to mention “acculturation” was the colonial sociologists René Maunier who, however, preferred the term “race contacts” and whose work was driven by imperial ideology.¹⁹ The study of “culture contact” – yet another formulation –, which the social anthropologists under guidance of Bronislaw Malinowski at the London School of Economics had established in close cooperation with British colonial administrations in the mid-1930s, therefore did not leave its mark on French ethnology until another decade: “Only in the new post-war context did the theme of ‘cultural contact’ become important, and above all, the subject of massive borrowings from British social anthropology.”²⁰ Recent scholarship pointed out how Malinowski’s participant observers “proposed that a hybrid culture was emerging out of the interaction of colonised and coloniser.”²¹ How, then, did French anthropologists, who eventually made similar observations in late colonialism after the Second World War, react methodologically towards this hybridity?

As a consequence of his fieldwork on the acculturation of African-Americans and race relations in post-slavery Brazil, Bastide argued that French anthropology should learn from the British research agenda and its “dynamic” understanding of cultures since the social changes in both oversea departments and former colonies would soon be felt in

¹⁸ Raymond F. Betts: *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory 1890–1914*, New York and London: Columbia University Press 1961, vii: The historian Betts describes the “shift in theory from the idea of assimilation to the idea of association. Rather than attempt to absorb the native societies administratively and culturally into the French nation, France was to pursue a more flexible policy which would emphasize retention of local institutions and which would make the native an associate in the colonial enterprise.” While this policy appears inclusive, it was based on evolutionist and racist ideas of incompatibility of civilizations: “Affected by these thoughts, French theorists soon denied the possibility of assimilation and insisted on a policy in keeping with the discrepancies among human societies.”, *ibid.* 59.

¹⁹ René Maunier: *The Sociology of Colonies. An Introduction to the Study of Race Contact, Vol. 1* (1932), London: Routledge 1949. George Steinmetz called him a “lifelong supporter of French colonialism.”, cf. Steinmetz: *The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought. French Sociology and the Overseas Empire*, 11.

²⁰ Cf. Benoît de L’Estoile: “Un Échange Impossible? Anthropologie Sociale Britannique et Ethnologie Française dans l’Entre-Deux-Guerres. Le Cas du ‘Culture Contact’,“ in: *La Lettre de la Maison Française d’Oxford* 7 (1997), 21–40, 39 f.: “It was then as part of a strategy of professionalization and self-affirmation as specialists in social phenomena in colonized societies, during the establishment of colonial research institutions, that recourse to British social anthropology took on a new meaning; indeed, it provided these researchers with a previously unknown legitimate model for reconciling the assertion of an interest in practical colonial problems with scholarly legitimacy.” My translation.

²¹ Freddy Foks: *Participant Observers. Anthropology, Colonial Development, and the Reinvention of Society in Britain*, Oakland: University of California Press 2023, 148.

the metropole as well: “It is useful for France, which has remained a great colonial power, and, because of its low birth rate, is becoming a country of immigration, to study the problem of assimilation of cultures, the problem of interpenetration of civilizations, that of contacts between races or ethnic groups.”²² Bastide’s passionate plaidoyer for the implementation of sustained fieldwork on migration and minorities – both in the colonies and in rural France – as an integral part in French social science, clearly demonstrates the disciplinary “borrowings” from professionalized interwar social anthropology:

It would be great if future sociologists could spend a few years doing research, after their essentially bookish university studies. Some could be sent to certain French provinces to study, for example, French families, or immigrants such as the Poles in the northern mines [...]. Others could be sent to the colonies for research, to unite practical work with theoretical study, field work with book study.²³

While Bastide was open to the functionalist perspective of British anthropologists since their theorizations on, authority, leadership and “social structure”, were grounded in thoroughly conducted – almost sterile – fieldwork, he was more ambivalent about their pragmatism towards the applications of their research as the next section will show. Bastide continued to delve theoretically into the concept of acculturation and culture contact after his return to Paris where, in 1954, he began to work at the Sixth Section of the *École pratique des hautes études*.²⁴ What is important to note here, is that he framed the study of acculturation as an interpenetration of *civilizations* at a time when European civilization itself was under scrutiny: “The loss of Europe’s overseas possessions not only afforded a fundamental transformation of Asian and African history, but European history as well, and new ideas of civilisation gave meaning to these political upheavals on both sides.”²⁵ Cultural exchanges were thus not exclusively happening to and to be examined with subjects in colonial societies, it also already had formed European nations – and Bastide’s contemporaries were eager to find out how exactly. For instance, in 1950 the influential *Annales*-school historian Lucien Febvre and his colleague François Crouzet wrote “a revisionist account of French history as the product of global influences over the centuries” which had remained an unpublished book manuscript under the title *Origines*

²² Bastide: *Initiation aux recherches sur les interpénétrations de civilisations*, 74. My translation.

²³ *Ibid.* My translation.

²⁴ His recruiting involved the help of the French *Annales* historians Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel who knew Bastide from their joint time in Brazil, cf. Ian Merkel: “Brazilian Race Relations, French Social Scientists, and African Decolonization. A Transatlantic History of the Idea of Miscegenation,” in *Modern Intellectual History* 17/3 (2020), 801–832.

²⁵ Betts: *Ruin and Renewal. Civilising Europe after the Second World War*, 25.

internationales d'une civilisation. Éléments d'une histoire de France until it was discovered and edited in 2012.²⁶ This reflection on the social, political and technological forces that 'made' French civilization was inextricably linked to the contemporary decline of the French Empire and the crisis of the human sciences that had sustained it.

Applied Anthropology and the Anxiety of the Researcher

For Bastide, the problem of acculturation posed the opportunity to dive into the conflicted history of anthropology and his ambiguous relation to the application of social science. In the early 1970s, he concluded that "applied anthropology was born from studies of acculturation, even if later it enlarged its scope; it appeared when acculturation became planned instead of free."²⁷ Written in the style of a handbook for the next generation of French sociologists and ethnologists, *Anthropologie appliquée* was published at the heyday of critical "tiers-mondistes" to who anthropology represented the 'handmaiden of imperialism' and whose controversies became canonical.²⁸ The book provides somewhat of a scientific synthesis of Bastide's scholarship combined with practical lessons, but also an outlook on how the field was soon to be transformed by the growing presence of behavioral studies, economics, and political science in the development industry. Here, Bastide drew from his own experiences from when he occasionally shared his scholarly expertise with international organizations, notably UNESCO's Social Science Division and Alfred Métraux's Race Relations Division. Despite the public and scientific contestation of the field in French social science, Bastide urges his students and colleagues not to leave applied anthropology altogether, but to improve its theory and practices, especially those relating to acculturation. He fears that otherwise, the overly data- and policy-driven version of social and economic development schemes will be without counterbalance which he saw in a culturally sensitive and psychologically informed applied anthropology. These warnings echo similar concerns that Alfred Métraux had raised two decades before on the governmental usages of ethnological knowledge that reduced anthropologists to attitude-measurers in the name of forced cultural change and the imposition of social

²⁶ Ibid., 451. Cf. Lucien Febvre, François Crouzet: *Nous sommes des Sang-Mêlés. Manuel d'Histoire de la Civilisation Française* (1950), Paris: Albin Michel 2012.

²⁷ Roger Bastide: *Applied Anthropology* (1971), New York and London: Harper & Row 1974, 37.

²⁸ Cf. Benoît de L'Estoile: "The 'Natural Preserve of Anthropologists.' Social Anthropology, Scientific Planning and Development," in: *Social Science Information* 36/2 (1997), 343–376.

norms when working for the United Nations agencies: “No change will be accepted or produce a lasting effect unless it is based on a system of values. The chief task of the anthropologist in technical assistance programs will be to discover the psychological motives underlying customary behavior.”²⁹ Bastide’s book was an unusual endeavor for the French social sciences. Unlike Britain or the US, “France presents no institutional body such as an association of applied anthropology in general, nor any specific university training about applied anthropology”,³⁰ which makes the book even more surprising. Disguised as a manual, it actually provided a critical intervention to the field. Throughout the book, Bastide worries about the usages of anthropology regarding the new paradigm of economic development which in his perspective means nothing else than a situation of “planned acculturation”. He claims that ‘we’ would know much about the means, but only little about the ends of social science: “the science of the era of liberalism encounters an obstacle which it cannot overcome – that of ends. Applied anthropology can only supply the social engineer with a set of means. But means toward what, and with what in view?”³¹ Since there is no universal morality that could guide the social engineers, they orientate themselves against the backdrop of institutional policy or national values. Therefore, Bastide warns: “We may ask ourselves whether actually these ends which we assign to human action in the control of social forces are not those of one culture – our own – which we wish to oppose to those of other cultures. This would mean that planning is in fact nothing but a contemporary form of racism, a cultural racism.”³² For Bastide, if applied anthropology was to have a future, it needed to acknowledge the psychological and social damage it had done in the past: “The term ‘genocide’ was not fashionable at the time. But could not all policies of forced acculturation, assimilation and change of native mentality or values be seen as a veritable ‘cultural genocide’?”³³ These overt criticisms on the colonial pasts and present of French anthropology mirrored contemporary reflections on cultural losses written by African intellectuals focusing on

²⁹ Alfred Métraux: “Applied Anthropology in Government. United Nations,” in: Alfred L. Kroeber (ed.): *Anthropology Today*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1953, 880–894, 886.

³⁰ Jean François Baré: “Applied Anthropology in France. Comments from a Collective Survey,” in: *Studies in Third World Societies* 58: *The Global Practice of Anthropology* (January 1997), 97–138, 98: “For many French anthropologists, the very idea of ‘applying’ a ‘science’ in a definite way is an absurdity, since research cannot know what it can find; it cannot be ‘piloted’ through questions that are not of its own.”

³¹ Roger Bastide: *Applied Anthropology*, 5.

³² *Ibid.*, 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

“deculturation” as the flipside of acculturation.³⁴ For example, the Senegalese poet and, alongside the Negritude writers Aimé Césaire and Alioune Diop, member of the Africanist cultural journal *Présence Africaine*’s editorial committee, Lamine Diakhaté insisted that: “We can’t talk about acculturation if we ignore the phenomenon that gives rise to it, i.e., deculturation. Deculturation is based on a disorganization, a methodical disruption, in all its brutality, not of a state of affairs or a thing, but of a community.”³⁵ Diakhaté’s literary description of the “homme-produit” brings to the fore the consequences of “successful” French acculturation and educational politics, ending in a sense of depersonalization and alienation. Bastide thinks that applied anthropology should reflect such effects of “action research” and thus be considered less “a rational art” or “an objective science” but rather “a science full of value judgements” that accounts for “desires for dominion, hopes for liberation, worries about improvement, searchings for cultural identities”.³⁶ However, and most importantly, such desires were not one-sided. For Bastide, part of the attraction ‘to think with’ acculturation was its reciprocity, the fact that there are (at least) two parties involved in culture contact, which becomes apparent in his formulation of civilizational interpenetration. While the measurement and observation of the anthropologist’s object of analysis, for instance, the behavior and intelligence of colonized subjects, had not been called into question, Bastide pressed for a turning of the examination towards the social status and mentalities of the involved experts themselves: “if applied anthropology takes account of individuals in the recipient culture, it does not seem preoccupied by those in the donor culture – specialised experts, educators, or others who are assumed to represent the totality of their civilisation”.³⁷ Who can vouch for the rationality and sound-mindedness of these presumed professionals? They too, Bastide argued, cannot represent a whole culture, civilization, or social class and might be maladjusted in their culture of origin. Therefore, Bastide’s main concern in applied anthropology was “less the

³⁴ On the Negritude movement and the inversion of civilization, cf. Gary Wilder: *The French Imperial Nation-State. Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2005. On the function of language in the discourse on deculturation see Sarah C. Dunstan: “La Langue de nos maîtres.’ Linguistic Hierarchies, Dialect, and Canon Decolonization During and After the *Présence Africaine* Congress of 1956,” *Journal of Modern History* 93/4 (December 2021), 861–895.

³⁵ Lamine Diakhaté: “Le Processus d’acculturation en Afrique Noire et ses rapports avec la Négritude,” *Présence Africaine* 56 (4e trimestre 1965), 68–81, 68. My translation.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8. Bastide continues, not without pathos: “Applied anthropology places us in the midst of the struggle. That is why it is the most intriguing aspect of anthropology, though also certainly the most disappointing one for the reader who awaits triumphant tomorrows. He will pardon us if, more often than not, this book leaves him with the taste of blood and ashes.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

scientific analysis of theoretical postulates, even though this is an important aspect, than the scientific analysis of the ‘application’ drawn from them, that is of action in the process of occurring.”³⁸ This turn towards the psychologies of the (European) researcher-self was evoked most rigorously by Bastide’s close colleague Georges Devereux and his pioneering studies in ethnopsychanalysis. Like Bastide, Devereux was an eclectic thinker who, in his anthropological fieldwork in the 1930s with the Navaho studied the “antagonistic acculturation” of Native American communities, meaning their mistrust and resistances against governmental strategies to integrate them into the US welfare state system, but only selectively refusing exchanges. In his attempt to understand the ethnopsychiatry of his subjects, that is, the ways in which shamans and medicine men cared for the mental wellbeing of their people that became threatened by the acculturative forces – in particular institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, but also popular media –, Devereux, in his frustration with the impossible task of understanding cultures, became obsessed with the imprecision and subjectivity of anthropological work. Devereux, in the formulation of the equally psychoanalytic-minded anthropologist Weston La Barre, who wrote the preface to his 1967 study *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*,

has raised the alarming possibility that field ethnography (and indeed all social science), as presently practiced, may be a species of autobiography. Where once the hairy-chested anthropologist could suppose that he entered the field wholly innocent of any ideas, motivations, theories or apperceptive culture of his own, we are now invited to discern the anthropologist at once as sapiens and culture-bearer and person, and the possibility that his simple ‘science,’ if undisciplined by awareness of countertransference, may be a self-indulgent branch of lyric poetry, telling us how he projectively feels about the unknown.³⁹

The data gathered by behavioral scientists can produce an epistemological anxiety in them that had to be tamed by methodology. No methodology, however, had accounted for the countertransference of the observers so far, whose documentation of the behavior of their subjects might be disturbed by projections, personal trauma, ideologies, etc. To objectify the subjective knowledge produced by anthropologists (and other behavioral scientists, Devereux did not define this category), one has to find out about and filter these disturbances, meaning that: “Not the study of the subject, but that of the observer gives us access to the essence of the observational situation.”⁴⁰ Translated into the field of anthropology, this psychoanalytically informed interpretation of behavioral science

³⁸ Ibid., 196.

³⁹ Weston La Barre, “Preface,” in George Devereux: *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*, The Hague and Paris: Mouton & Co. 1967, VII–X, VIII f.

⁴⁰ George Devereux: *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*, XIX.

had far-reaching implications. Anthropologists always produced more data than the evaluated behavior and measured mentality of the subject. One also had to take into account the behavior of the observer, their research strategies and decisions, that is to say, how, for instance, they would attribute meaning to their observations. Devereux laments in his book that it is about this “type of behavior that we have the least information, because we have systematically refused to study reality on its own terms.”⁴¹ In his preface to Devereux’s essays on ethnopsychiatry, Roger Bastide enthusiastically points out how the distortion evoked by the presence of the social scientist in the field, rather than hindering an objective description can reveal new truths about the observed subjects by this complementarity of anthropological and psychoanalytic lenses. In short, the participant observers need to become aware of the disturbance they are causing and take their own positionality into account when assessing the behavior of others.⁴² What is important for the argumentation of the paper is that the examples that Devereux gives of studies who in his view succeeded in appraising the influence of their presence in the field, their instruments, methods, and frames of reference are by French anthropologists who, reflecting on their expectations and the lack of ‘native’ societies began to describe situations of acculturation instead. Mentioned together with Claude Lévi-Strauss’ “Tristes Tropiques” (1955) and Georges Condominas’ “L’Exotique est Quotidien” (1965), Georges Balandier’s “Afrique Ambiguë” (1957) indeed reflects on the personal motivations of field work and the researcher’s desires – such as to go on an adventure, find a “more authentic existence”, and simply leave the ruins of postwar Europe behind.⁴³ Drawing from his field trips that brought him to the Lébou society in Senegal and late colonial Brazzaville, Congo, Balandier, in his words, wanted to “show the complexity of the relationship which is established between the ethnologist and his research, and the peculiar position he occupies in his own society.”⁴⁴ When he arrived in Brazzaville, equipped with Rorschach

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Roger Bastide: “Préface,” in Georges Devereux: *Essais d’ethnopsychiatrie générale*, Gallimard: Paris 1970, VII–XIX.

⁴³ Georges Balandier: *Ambiguous Africa. Cultures in Collision*, trans. by Helen Weaver (1957), Chatto & Windus: London 1966, 245: “When I arrived in Dakar in 1946, I was motivated primarily by a desire for escape and expatriation. The ethnological experience I was anticipating had the value of a retreat in the original sense of the word: I was looking for a withdrawal which would enable me to recover from a period during which I had scarcely enough time to think; I felt the need for a radically different form of existence. I approached Africa less for her own sake than for mine.”

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10. He continues: “He has an unconscious influence, difficult to assess, upon the facts to which he addresses himself, and he finds himself affected in turn by the discoveries to which his study leads him.”

tests and carried away by the revelatory potential of psychodiagnostics, he eventually questioned their use and the “unconscious racism” in assessing the capacity and grade of African assimilation.⁴⁵ Ambiguous Africa was testament to postwar Europe’s cultural anxiety towards the outcome of the colonial process and the emerging independency of African nations. Balandier ultimately projected the transitional state of African subjects, his main research object in the West African “‘laboratories’ of decolonization where the changes are rapid and the experiments diversified”,⁴⁶ back onto European societies:

Does not the ambiguity of modern Africa reflect the ambiguity we carry within ourselves? [...] In Africa as in Europe, all is called into doubt with equal violence. In one sense their destinies seem interdependent, not because colonization had bound them together, but because both must abandon categories of thought and behavior which are out of tune with the world under construction.⁴⁷

What we can learn from Balandier’s sentimental autobiography, despite such distorted comparisons, is that acculturation made it necessary for the human and social sciences to question their motives and readjust their methodologies, if they wanted to keep up with and adequately frame the ongoing changes. By including his research persona into the scene of the colonial situation, Balandier put emphasis on the ambivalent position that researchers who studied acculturation found themselves in, enabling the very process they came to document. If “going native” started to mean to maintain your own ways, for French anthropologists this raised questions about the purpose of the diffusion of their culture and the function of their own discipline in this diffusion. This was not a self-evident reaction towards facing social changes ‘in the field’ as I am attempting to show in another part of my thesis. In the 1950s and 1960s especially social psychologists embraced these changes, since they allowed them to make use of their assessments of acculturation as empirical material to construct universal theories of human behavior. Knowledge about attitudes towards authority, leadership, family structures and the workplace of colonial subjects would ultimately improve industrial psychology and pedagogy in the West as well, they argued.⁴⁸ While Balandier transformed his field work

⁴⁵ Ibid., 38. Balandier also mentions how he took inspiration from the psychiatrist André Ombredane “who began his investigation in the Congo by rejecting a large part of the testing material with which he had come equipped. In this instance he demonstrated that a severe critique of methods may constitute a first step toward the exploration of this other who has become the object of observation, as well as a necessary condition to genuine understanding.”

⁴⁶ Ibid., 255.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 243.

⁴⁸ Cf. Leonard W. Doob: *Becoming More Civilized. A Psychological Exploration*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1960. On how changes in “preliterate cultures” were used to formulate a psychology of economic development, see David C. McClelland: *The Achieving Society*, New York: John Wiley & Sons 1961. This

on African acculturation into a self-centered and, at times, reflective intellectual biography, it can be argued, with Bourdieu, that “[i]t is not the individual unconscious of the researcher but the epistemological unconscious of his discipline that must be unearthed”.⁴⁹ This seems to be the way that Roger Bastide saw it, when – as successor of George Gurvitch (1894–1965) in directing the Laboratory of the Sociology of Knowledge in 1965 – he eventually re-visited the study of acculturation as a methodological problem and translated it into the fields of social psychiatry and intercultural relations, arguing for multidisciplinary collaborations that should replace the single researcher.

L'autre et l'ailleurs. From Social Psychiatry to Intercultural Relations

If there is a common denominator between Bastide’s fieldwork in Brazil and his later studies in Paris, it is probably his interest in the mentality of his subjects and the myths they lived by, both in non-European societies as in France. Himself a protestant from the South of France, Bastide was influenced by the missionary theologian Raoul Allier who, in the 1920s, researched the effects of conversion on the psychology of “non-civilized” people.⁵⁰ Religion was but one way to open the minds of others and so Bastide had been writing on the complementary relationship of sociology and psychoanalysis,⁵¹ criticizing the abstract models of culture and personality studies,⁵² and interpreting dreams of African-Americans in Brazil to assess the aspirations and identity formations of “acculturated”, i.e. in this case: newly industrialized and urbanized communities in São Paulo.⁵³ These psychological affinities eventually transitioned into what he termed the “sociology of mental disorder” that was motivated by contemporary research on North African and Algerian immigrants in France and their “psychological reactions” to the

reductive understanding of acculturation that glossed over the emotional and material damages of economic development was met by economists who proposed the collaboration with anthropologists and sociologists, see Bert F. Hoselitz (ed.): *The Progress of Underdeveloped Areas*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1952.

⁴⁹ Loïc J. D. Wacquant: “Toward a Social Praxeology. The Structure and Logic of Bourdieu’s Sociology,” in: Pierre Bourdieu, Loïc J. D. Wacquant: *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Polity Press: Cambridge 1992, 1–60, 41.

⁵⁰ Raoul Allier: *La Psychologie de la Conversion chez les Peuples non-civilisés*, Paris: Payot 1925. Bastide refers to him in his conceptualization of formal acculturation, cf. Roger Bastide: *Le Prochain et le Lointain*, Paris: Éditions Cujas 1970, 137–148.

⁵¹ Roger Bastide: *Sociologie et Psychanalyse*, Presses Universitaires de France: Paris 1950.

⁵² Roger Bastide: “The Field, Methods, and Problems of the Basic Personality School,” in: *The British Journal of Sociology* 3/1 (March 1952), 1–13.

⁵³ Roger Bastide: “The Sociology of the Dream,” in: G. E. v. Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (eds.): *The Dream and Human Societies*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1966, 199–212.

national culture of the new environment with statistics showing that “the rate of hospitalization is three times as great among West Africans in France as among European immigrants.”⁵⁴ In the study of “madness”, psychosis, and trance, Bastide saw a field for the human and social sciences to explore subjectivity, to reconcile the individual with the social. Thus, he understood it “less as a branch of medical pathology than as a branch of philosophical anthropology” and linked it to the contemporary ideas of, among others, structuralism and semiology.⁵⁵ Bastide saw in what was called mental disorder in French psychiatry a gateway to interrogate the very concepts and pathologizing language used by medical professionals and social scientists to construct their object on one hand, and on the other to better understand the involved social processes, notably alienation and oppression, that caused and defined the “diseases of freedom” in the first place.⁵⁶ Unlike Devereux, Bastide had no training in psychiatry or psychoanalysis. His motivation to engage with these fields were driven by an intellectual curiosity of how they might improve the social sciences. He did not see them in any disciplinary conflict: “since the distance between psychiatry and sociology is so great that the uses of concepts provided by the two disciplines are unlikely to compete, and may therefore appear more as complementary.”⁵⁷ When working with ‘acculturated’ subjects, psychiatrists would reversely profit from the particular sociocultural knowledge anthropologists provided:

In a society where specialization is increasingly becoming the rule, the only solution to the dangers it is bound to entail is cooperation between specialists in teamwork. Moreover, when psychiatrists work in a culture other than their own, they are quickly obliged, faced with the difficulty of fitting the cases submitted to them into Western nosographic frameworks, or with the failure of the preventive measures and hygiene rules they wish to impose, to call on the collaboration of the ethnologist.⁵⁸

Inspired by the likes of French psychiatrist Henri Collomb and Georges Devereux who both had been examining social-psychological aspects of patients and subjects in non-European cultures, Bastide transformed his chair in “Race Relations and Culture Contacts” at the École Pratique des Hautes Études into the “Center for Social Psychiatry” in the early 1960s. This allowed him to appoint the psychiatrist François Raveau who had

⁵⁴ Roger Bastide: *The Sociology of Mental Disorder*, transl. by Jean McNeil (1965), New York: David McKay 1972, 142.

⁵⁵ Roger Bastide: “Introduction,” in: *Les Sciences de la Folie*, Paris/La Haye: Mouton & Co. 1972, 9–36, 20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Bastide refers to mental disorders as “maladies de la liberté” to implicate that in alienation, the mind is not only a prisoner of the body (medical perspective) but of social and political conditions, too.

⁵⁷ Roger Bastide: “Approche interdisciplinaire de la maladies mentale,” *Social Science Information*, 6/4 (1967), 37–52, 45.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

worked with migrant patients. This collaboration was deemed necessary, since the pressure for foreign subjects to adapt to French society and the exposure to discrimination and prejudice in the migratory situation, in Bastide's view, brought with them profound inner conflict, frustration and resistance in "hidden forms" that psychotherapy had more experience in examining.⁵⁹ In this vein, Bastide developed and directed research projects on the acculturation of African and Antillean populations, mostly students, in France with a particular focus on the effects of racism.⁶⁰ While Bastide's papers at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC) about the work at the Center for Social Psychiatry are scarce and mainly of administrative nature, some published articles suggest that Bastide's motivation to explore the connection of migration and mental health was primarily methodological. The only major outcome of this period was a research project on Black Haitian students living in France. However, more interesting than the results of this study and more revealing about French postwar social science at large are its research design and institutional contexts. Conducted in the late 1960s at the *Centre d'Études des Sociétés et Pathologie Mentale* and published in 1974 – the year of Bastide's death – in the collection of the *Institut d'études et de recherches interethniques et interculturelles* (IDERIC), the study combined late Bastide's idea of multidisciplinary research in teams with the emergence of "intercultural" relations in France. A collaborative effort – Bastide collaborated with the anthropologist Françoise Morin and psychiatrist François Raveau – "Les Haïtiens en France" was for the most part based on evaluations of questionnaires and interviews conducted in 1967/68 with roughly 200 members of the Haitian diaspora in Paris and Strasbourg. In retrospect, the study is more telling as a source of the contemporary difficulties of conducting interdisciplinary social science than as a historical account of how Haitians actually have adjusted to life in France. For instance, Bastide deplores the scatteredness of migration studies in French social science in a remark on disciplinary formation in the book's introduction:

⁵⁹ Roger Bastide: "Méthodologie des Recherches Inter-Ethniques," in: *Ethnies* 2 (1972), 9–20, 15.

⁶⁰ Cf. François Raveau: "An Outline of Color in Adaptation Phenomena," *Daedalus* 96/2 (Spring 1967), 376–389. This research expanded on earlier studies, Bastide conducted for UNESCO on the conflicting goals in the education of "African elites" in France, in which "the most serious difficulties have been associated with the change in psychological climate [...], and with the tragic misunderstanding of what the elite was to be, the French themselves having in mind the formation of a system of 'intellectual relay stations' between the whites at the top and the bulk of the native population, or, at most, an elite of assistants, while the Africans, on the contrary, were thinking of a new elite to replace the old one." Roger Bastide: "African Students in France," *International Social Science Bulletin*, 8/3 (1956), 489–492, 489 f.

In the academic field, there has unfortunately been a split between the study of human migration, left to historians, demographers and sociologists, and the study of institutional migration, left to ethnologists and anthropologists. However, this break does correspond to something real, namely that each of these two migrations presents students with different problems, on the one hand those referred to in terms of accommodation and integration, and on the other in terms of diffusion and acculturation.⁶¹

Having returned to France an expert in African-American religious practices, Bastide was unsurprisingly focusing on the ‘institutional migration’ of “Vodou”, the Haitian Voodoo, and how it changed in the metropole vis-à-vis urban and rural Haiti. In Bastide’s view, this was an important cultural institution as it allowed to release the social and psychological pressures of acculturation and adjustment through trance. In search of a Parisian Vodou, Bastide found that the study’s subjects were at first shy to talk about this matter with the white researchers or denying any knowledge of the practice, presumably fearing accusations of being superstitious. However, this changed when other Haitians were present. Yet, the Haitian Voodoo, advertised as an authentic performance, already existed in metropolitan France and was frequented primarily by white bourgeois Parisians. Thus, Bastide eventually turned to the analysis of French attitudes towards Haitians:

What’s important, what we had to point out, is that the institution in diaspora poses different problems than the individual in diaspora. The dominant perspective, which guides the research, changes; in one case it’s the Haitian who interests the researcher, in the other it’s a French milieu; and as regards the more specific study of transformation processes, in one case we have a group of psycho-social transformations, in the other a group of socio-cultural transformations.⁶²

While the Haitian students were adapting to a new social, cultural and psychological environment and seeking confirmation of the “European part” within themselves, the French were looking “for a technique of exaltation *made in Africa* to fight against ‘the European part’” and replace it with an authentic experience that they assumed in the encounter with Haitian mentality.⁶³ Such examples of French exoticizing and the underlying prejudice lead Bastide and his colleagues to follow on the effects of discrimination and racism in their study. This happened at a time when both colonial sociologists and anti-colonial thinkers had transitioned into assessing racial prejudice in France.⁶⁴ However, it was not until one of Bastide’s students, the feminist sociologist

⁶¹ Roger Bastide et al.: *Les Haïtiens en France*, Paris and La Haye: Mouton & Co. 1974, 50. My translation.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 51. My translation.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 61. My translation, original emphasis.

⁶⁴ Paul Hassan Maucorps, Albert Memmi et al.: *Les Français et le racisme*, Paris: Payot 1965. Maucorps: “Les problèmes d’acculturation réciproque en recherche inter-ethnique”, in: *Ethnies* 1 (1971), 151–156.

Colette Guillaumin (1934–2017), wrote her dissertation on the history and language of the ideology of racism that race would be studied more rigorously in French social science.⁶⁵

The study of race relations and racism was facilitated in France by way of intercultural or “interethnic” relations which became an emerging field in the 1960s when the last French oversea territories had gained formal independence. As Bastide put it: “The phenomena of cultural contact are linked to and conditioned by race relations.”⁶⁶ In 1966, the French Ministry of Education created the National Commission for the Study of Interethnic Relations, promoting research of thus far disregarded aspects of cultural interaction and integration in French society. Its founders were the scholarly advisors Henri Laugier and Charles Morazé who, after having collaborated with UN agencies for several years, both made major contributions to the institutionalization of the human and social sciences in France.⁶⁷ The emergence, a few years earlier, of the concepts of economic development, intellectual cooperation and technical assistance in international organizations prompted the creation of research and teaching programs on ethnic and cultural relations. The historian Morazé who – alongside Lucien Febvre – had advised UNESCO’s International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind, argued for the institutionalization of interethnic studies on a national level by pointing out how Europe and France had been historically shaped by cultural exchanges and that the contact between different ethnicities was subject to science.⁶⁸ More specifically, Morazé seemed to acknowledge the importance of dialogue between

⁶⁵ Colette Guillaumin: *L'idéologie raciste. Genèse et langage actuel*, Mouton: Paris and La Haye 1972. Guillaumin studied sociology and psychology in the 1950s and 1960s. The book was based on her 1969 dissertation and published in the same collection at IDERIC as Bastide’s intercultural study on Haitians.

⁶⁶ Bastide: *Problèmes de l'Encroisement des Civilisations*, 323. My translation.

⁶⁷ While Laugier was the president of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in the late 1930s and early 1940s and helped shape the postwar research agenda of the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED), Morazé was prominently involved in founding the sixth section on economics and social sciences of the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) alongside Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel. Cf. Brigitte Mazon: *Aux origines de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, le rôle du mécénat américain, 1920–1960*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 1988.

⁶⁸ Charles Morazé: “Introduction aux études inter-ethniques”, in: *Ethnies 2* (1972), 29: “Today, everything is mixing everywhere. Extractions and abstractions clash within every culture and in every place. Hence the extraordinary multiplication of discoveries, but also the multiplication everywhere of frontiers of incomprehension. Europe is made up of many nations and many more ethnic groups. The presence of African populations in America and of European populations in Africa only translates into violence insofar as black and white societies are each divided by contact with the other.” My translation.

anthropology and the psy-disciplines, since “we have to start with mental phenomena when we want to consider relations between ethnic groups.”⁶⁹

In 1970, IDERIC developed out of the Center for the Study of Interethnic Relations (CERIN) at the University of Nice and, until its closure in 1992, welcomed researchers from a variety of disciplines working on intercultural relations. As Bastide’s and Guillaumin’s books can demonstrate, these relations were primarily understood in terms of psychosociological mechanisms, the effects of migratory movements on collective identities, situations of plurilingualism and linguistic change, and the literary productions of minorities. Even though the Institute’s main publication, the journal *Ethnies* (four volumes between 1971 and 1974) was short-lived, it managed to connect contemporary issues such as the development of the Third World, the administration of a multicultural society, and the methodological reverberations of decolonization on the social sciences. The Institute’s history provides an example of how the race question was brought to “color-blind” France.⁷⁰ It incorporates the transition of acculturation from moderating the end of colonialism into the analysis of racism and reflection of the social scientific researcher’s function. It is this conceptual change and circulation that I would like to focus on in my presentation and be happy to hear your thoughts about in Philadelphia.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 23. My translation.

⁷⁰ Cf. Narguesse Keyhani: La “question des races” dans un cadre administratif républicain. La création de la Commission nationale pour les études des relations interethniques, in: *Cultures et Conflit* 107 (2017), 62–76.