

Berichte und Kommentare

Anton Quack (1946–2009)

Fr. Anton Quack SVD died on April 2, 2009. The Divine Word Missionaries and hundreds of anthropologists can look back over his more than 30 years of productive work at the Anthropos Institute, certainly with sorrow, but also with pride. All of his substantial talents and strength were devoted to the Anthropos journal, which was founded by Wilhelm Schmidt in 1906 as an international review of anthropology and linguistics.

Anton Quack was born on April 4, 1946 in Erfweiler-Ehlingen (today Mandelbachtal), in the Saarland, Germany. He was the seventh of eleven children. When he was eleven years old, he began his advanced high school studies in a gymnasium, which was run by the Society of the Divine Word in St. Wendel. He graduated from there in 1966 with his university entrance examination diploma in hand. In that same year he himself joined the Society of the Divine Word. After his novitiate he began his professional study of philosophy and theology at St. Augustine's Seminary. His graduation thesis marking the end of his theological studies in 1973 was titled: "Ancestor Worship and Belief in a Supreme Being among the Suku and Yaka on the Kwango (Zaire)." On October 15, 1972, he was ordained a priest in the Society of the Divine Word (SVD).

After a period of practical training working with drug addicts in Düren and Bourheim (North Rhine-Westphalia), he started his studies in ethnology with Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Schott in Münster (1974–



1975). After this he transferred to the University of Cologne to study ethnology and African Studies. For his Master's work he wrote about the "Rituals of Head-Hunting among the Puyuma of Katipol (Taiwan): Description and Analysis Based on the Unpublished Work of Fr. Dominik Schröder." For this he was awarded the Master of Arts degree in 1978. This was followed in 1978–1979 with language study and research in Taiwan (Taipei/Fu Jen university, Kaohsiung, Taitun/Chihpen [Katipol]). These language studies were very useful for his later work. In 1983, under the tutelage of Prof. Dr. Ulla Johansen he received his Ph.D. with a dissertation on "Female Shamans, Priestesses, and Female Healers: The *poŋgao* of Katipol (Taiwan)." Since 1980 he was a member of the Anthropos Institute and at the suggestion of the General Assembly of Institute members he was appointed as the gen-

eral editor of the *Anthropos* journal in 1983. For 10 years he held this position, after which he took on the responsibility of book review editor (1994–2009). This amounted to assigning and preparing about 120 book reviews each year. Since 1989 he was also a member of the group which prepared the bulletin *Anthropology and Mission* which alerted missionaries, especially Divine Word Missionaries, to recent literature in anthropology which might be useful to them in their mission work. This required giving a brief summary of some 70 books and 20 articles a year.

In 1985 Anton Quack became Assistant Professor and in 1989 Full Professor of Ethnology on the faculty of Philosophy and Theology in the university of St. Augustine's. From 1998 to 2001 he was the faculty secretary. Since missionary formation has been one of the tasks of the university, it was his special task to introduce both male and female students to anthropology and to show them what anthropological knowledge has to offer for theological reflection and pastoral practice. He put much value in developing an interest in other cultures in the course of the educational experience of the students. His seminars also contributed to this; they were often interdisciplinary, combining religion with anthropology, comparative religions, and systematic theology. Unfortunately he was unable to finish the video seminar "Pilgrimages in Different Religions and Cultures" which was scheduled for summer semester 2009. Based on short films, his intention was to study the institution of pilgrimage in different religions and cultural contexts from the perspective of anthropology: Christianity in Italy and in the Andes; Islam in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan; Hinduism in India; Buddhism in China; Lamaism in Tibet.

Even during his years of study, A. Quack made time to publish. Ever since 1976 he worked in the *Anthropos* Institute on the unpublished work of Prof. Dominik Schröder SVD (1910–1974). A. Quack's Master's thesis was the beginning of a critical edition of D. Schröder's extensive description of oral traditions of the Puyuma of Katipol (Taiwan). He analyzed additional ceremonial texts in the context of head-hunting, which he was not able to deal with in his Master's work. The size of the work he had done before almost doubled and appeared in 1979 with the title "Head-Hunting Rituals of the Puyuma of Katipol (Taiwan)" (Schröder and Quack 1979). A. Quack followed this edition with another volume "The Word of the Elders: Stories to Aid in Developing a History of the Puyuma of Katipol (Taiwan)" (1981). In this book he presents 29 stories related to the history

of the Puyuma. These were recorded, transcribed, and translated by Fr. Schröder and Fr. Veil in the 1960s. Fr. Patrick Veil SMB (1901–1988) worked as a missionary in Manchuria (China) from 1929 to 1949 and then worked for 30 years among the Puyuma who lived on the plain of Taitung (Taiwan). As a result both of repeated conversations with P. Veil and because of his Puyuma publications, A. Quack was able to tap into the recollections of P. Veil. Over many years he had been D. Schröder's host and close co-worker. For D. Schröder and A. Quack both, P. Veil's knowledge of Puyuma was of immense help. Indeed, P. Veil was the only European foreigner who spoke the Puyuma language. A. Quack worked with P. Veil during the many months of his research in Taiwan and consulted closely with him during the time he edited the Puyuma texts. As a result, A. Quack was also able to rely on an extensive index file of more than 3000 entries, which P. Veil had put together over many long years. Since A. Quack in this way was able to make such great strides in learning the Puyuma language and the dialect of Katipol, P. Veil gave him this card index and also very unselfishly turned over numerous other handwritten notes he had made. That A. Quack asked both P. Veil and Mr. Siro, who earlier had translated some works of D. Schröder, to check his work, speaks not only to the quality of his own editing, but also to the professional standard he set for himself when he later became editor of the *Anthropos* as well as the standards he also expected of the authors, whose manuscripts he had to read, both as to content and style. This work, in turn, often forced him to do additional editorial work.

His doctoral work, published as "Priestesses, Female Healers, and Female Shamans: The *poŋingao* of the Puyuma of Katipol (Taiwan)" (1985b), relies for its documentation on the hitherto unpublished research base of the work of D. Schröder. His focus is on the *poŋingao*, women in Katipol, who are the most important carriers of the religious functions which give the traditional society its characteristic stamp. His analysis of the institution of *poŋingao* illustrates many dimensions of shamanism: the call to be a shaman, illnesses surrounding this call, initiation rites, ecstasy, contact with the other world, formal conditions, social connections. His analytic work provides the material for cross-cultural comparison. During his two month study tour in 1992, which took him to the United States, Japan, Hongkong, Taiwan and the Philippines, he spent the longest time among the Puyuma.

As these publications show, it was his academic training which clearly set the tone for his future

work and his entire later career, especially his editorial work as well as his special world regions and research interests, namely, religious anthropology, shamanism, magic, syncretism, culture change, tribal religions, anthropology and mission. His primary regional interests were Africa and East Asia.

A. Quack devoted all of his talent, indeed, all of his creative strength to the *Anthropos – International Review of Anthropology and Linguistics*. As chief editor of the journal (1983–1993) he read carefully and critiqued 774 manuscripts that were submitted to the *Anthropos* for publication as articles, reports, or commentaries. Those manuscripts judged to have possibilities for publication were then sent out, if necessary, for peer review. Of these 774 manuscripts, 420 were eventually published in the journal. Indeed his work in choosing this content was important for the development of the journal. Neither were the mechanics of printing ignored. For example, just by changing the font size, materials which previously required 1000 pages now required 750 pages. At the same time, the journal no longer appeared three times, but two times a year. That all these editorial decisions made by A. Quack were carefully thought out is shown by the fact that *Anthropos* still maintains his layout. Under A. Quack's stint as editor, the *Anthropos* did not suffer in reputation nor in quality. On the contrary: the journal maintained its unique position, solidified it, and extended it. That all of the regions of the earth and all fields of anthropology are now covered, that discussions related to theory and method have their place in the journal as do broad ethnographic reports and documentation are all to the credit of A. Quack. As a scientist he treasured the Anthropos Institute library of some 100,000 volumes and 300 current journals as a formidable research tool and aid as he read and decided on whether to accept manuscripts for publication or not, or as he checked citations and bibliographic references in the *Anthropos*, or as he worked on his own publications. He was especially glad that in all the time he was editor, he did not have to defend his journal from external interference nor did the superiors of the Society of the Divine Word ever encroach on his editorial independence. With the historian, K. J. Rivinius SVD, and the anthropologist, Ernest Brandewie, A. Quack belonged to the generation which has documented in a competent and detailed way the work of Wilhelm Schmidt and the more than a hundred years old tradition of the *Anthropos*.

The cooperative work with missionaries and the legacy of W. Schmidt to make the *Anthropos* from its very earliest years a scientific publication fo-

rum for the anthropological work of missionaries piqued A. Quack's interest and he repeatedly returned to the question of the relationship between missionaries and anthropology. In a meticulous way, he took it upon himself to work on the materials which missionaries had collected. For many years, for example, he worked closely with the missionary, ethnographer, and anthropologist Fr. Dr. Johannes Frick SVD (1903–2003), who himself was a longtime member and contributor to the *Anthropos*. Many publications by A. Quack were a result of this relationship with J. Frick. For example, he edited and published "The Formation of the Lamaistic Gurtum" (Eichinger, Frick, and Quack 1988), which was based on the notes of J. Frick and his colleague F. Eichinger, a missionary and medical doctor. Then, in 1995, A. Quack edited and wrote a general introduction to an authorized collection taken from Johann Frick's unpublished works "Between Heaven and Earth. Rites and Customs in Northwest China." This gives a glimpse into the way of thinking and living of a peasant society in the region of Sining. It was here that J. Frick spent his last fruitful years as a missionary in China. A. Quack appreciated very much J. Frick's collection of 1200 proverbs from Heitsuitzu which he had collected and written down in their Chinese original with explanations. Many discussions together improved the manuscript (by transcribing and translating the proverbs and with J. Frick's comments on them). It was no longer possible to publish this material and it is now entrusted to the Anthropos archives. Nor could A. Quack get around to publishing another of J. Frick's manuscripts (2008b), this one of 222 pages: "A Missionary in China: Recollections of Fr. Johann Frick SVD (1931–1952). Part 1: Notes from Gansu (1931–1946) and Part 2.: Tsinghai Notes (1946–1952)." Very informative in this context is the review essay "Anthropology and Missionaries" in which Quack reports extensively on the anthropological engagement of the SVD missionaries working in Qinghai in northwest China (2008a).

A. Quack was regularly engaged with the ambivalent and stressful, even antagonistic, relationship between mission and anthropology, between missionaries and anthropologists. He went further and made serious efforts to carefully look into this relation to get a better understanding of it. With regret he admitted that old prejudices continued to be handed on (1994f). He was occupied with this issue already in 1985 in his report "Anthropology and Mission: From Confrontation to Cooperation?" and again in "The Ambivalent Relationship between Mission and Anthropology" (1986c).

For this same reason, A. Quack involved himself with the anthropological publications of Fr. Dr. Martin Gusinde SVD (1886–1969). Some uninformed and vague criticisms had been leveled by anthropologists against the ethnological work of missionaries, claiming that it was unscientific and even false as presented. One of the Divine Word Missionaries who was the object of these kinds of criticisms was M. Gusinde. While he was a teacher in the Liceo Alemán in Santiago, Chile, and on the staff of the Museo Histórico de Chile, M. Gusinde made four research trips (1918–1924) to study the remnants of the three groups of the Tierra del Fuego Indians, who were dying out, in order to get to know and understand their culture. Quack's work made distinctions between the four monographs and in doing so took a meticulously careful stance towards M. Gusinde's ethnographic legacy. Without quibble, the more than 1000 photographs of the Selk'nam, Yaghan (or Yamana), and Halakwulup, preserved in the archives of the Anthropos Institute (at St. Augustine's), are of documentary quality, as A. Quack clearly established in his critical essay "*Mank'ácen – The Shadow-Snatcher: Martin Gusinde as Ethnographer and Photographer of the Last Indians of Tierra del Fuego*" (2002a, b; 1990c).

Quack occupied himself throughout his professional life with discriminating discussions on mission and anthropology. He regularly reviewed books which dealt with topics such as missionaries, culture and church, inculturation, and the like, or materials which were written by missionaries. In 2008 he wrote: "an unbiased look into the history of mission work on the one hand and the history of anthropology on the other shows ... that the close relationship between anthropology and mission is no accident; the importance of their relationship must not be minimized" (2008a: 565) and in his last book review on the role missionaries play as anthropologists and ethnographers, he clearly makes the statement that "studying the texts of incidental ethnographers such as missionaries is of great value for the discipline." And he confidently concluded: "It seems that today such texts more than ever stimulate the unbiased interest of the academic community of anthropologists" (Reviews 2009: 621 f.). The ideal of the life as a missionary and anthropologist in the 20th century was exemplified, as he suggested, in the work of Johann Frick. He worked in China from 1931 to 1952 and could be a real model for both a missionary and an anthropologist. Fr. J. Frick's "Life and work as a missionary and anthropologist is an example, an illustration, and a proof that missionaries can qualify as good anthro-

pologists but it also shows that a basic grounding in anthropology is absolutely essential for a missionary" (2003a: 521).

The publication of "*Tribal Religions in Dialogue with Christianity*" (2009b), in which he goes into the cultural changes that occurred as a consequence of the contact that was brought about when the Puyuma of Katipol (Taiwan) and the Rembong of Flores (Indonesia) encountered Christianity came too late for A. Quack. Tribal religions, however, in all their variety were a centerpiece of his research over the years as the bibliography shows graphically. What separates tribal cultures from other complicated cultural kinds of organization according to Quack, what actually is characteristic of them, is their "relatively great unity, the fact that for all of them culture and religion are generally quite coextensive. Culture and religion and rules regulating their relationship are basically the same for the members of such a cultural grouping" (2009b). And when it is a question of the religion or the social institutions of a tribal culture, one must also talk about the way values are organized. In this context he takes up various issues, among them rites and ritual activities, syncretism, sacrifice, possession, sorcerers/sorcery, trances, fetishes/fetishism, the relationship between magic and religion, and so on. In his work "*Healers, Sorcerers, and Shamans*" (2004a) he offers a well-grounded, representative overview of the traditional religions of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and America. Rituals related to yearly changes and life cycle changes, ancestor cults and ancestor reverence, myths, healing of the sick, hunting ceremonies, sacrifice and forms of shamanism were thoroughly and clearly described.

For some time he had been busy with a new book project with the working title "*Between the Traditional and the Modern: The Cultural Change and Its Effects on Traditional Religions and Cultures*." He planned on the following themes: Contact between religion and culture – forms of syncretism; Adat and Islam among the Minangkabau; Adat and Christianity in Indonesia; traditional culture/religion and culture change – pastoralism: the example of the Masai; folk religiosity/syncretism – pilgrimage in Islam, in Christianity; religious dualism/syncretism – people of the Andes; the spread of Islam in East Africa in the 20th century – the example of the Pokomo and Oromo; ethics and culture. While he was still busy with the preparations of the different chapters, he was able to finish the chapters on the Minangkabau and the Masai.

In 1997 his health was very weakened by a virus infection; his immune system never fully recovered and his health gradually deteriorated. The follow-

ing years often brought him to the hospital. His health got much worse in March of 2009 and his internal organs became weaker and weaker. In this compromised condition his system was no longer able to stabilize itself. He died unexpectedly in the afternoon of April 2, 2009.

His family lost a loved member, the Society of the Divine Word and the Anthropos Institute a loyal confrere and well-qualified scholar, his colleagues an outstanding colleague, co-worker, and close friend, and his students, finally, lost a motivating and dedicated teacher of anthropology.

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