MICHAEL LAMBEK

Knowledge and Practice in Mayotte:

Local Discourses of Islam, Sorcery, and Spirit Possession

Contents

Tables and Figures xi
Preface xiii
Stylistic Conventions and Conundrums xvii
Dramatis Personae xxi

PART I INTRODUCTIONS

1 Knowledge and Hubris 3

Knowledge, Power, and Morality 3 Towards an Anthropology of Knowledge 8 Transcending Subdisciplinary Boundaries 15 Ethnography as Hermeneutic Practice 19

2 Locating Knowledge in Mayotte: Structure, History, and Practice 31

Cultural Diversity in Mayotte 32
Historical Overview 40
The Three Traditions 48
Historical Practice 53
Islam 'Versus' Possession? 62
From the Sweep of Traditions to Local Views 66

3 Village Organization and the Distribution of Knowledge 68

The Social Distribution of Knowledge 68
Portrait of the Villages 71
The Social Organization of the Village from the Perspective of Knowledge 84

viii Contents

The Village *Fundis* 90
The Economic Basis of the Experts 95

PART II THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF TEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

4 Islam: The Perspective from the Path 103

Prayer and the Projection of Moral Imperatives 104
The Social Production of Prayer 112
Prayer and Reciprocity 116
The Politics of Prayer 121
The Economy of Justice 127

5 Educating Citizens: The Reproduction of Textual Knowledge 134

The Three 'R's': Reading, Writing, and Recitation 137
The Transmission of Knowledge and Authority 144
Learning as the Embodiment of Knowledge 149
Individuation through Learning: An Example of an
Educated Citizen 156
The Value of Learning 159

6 Islamic Experts: Practice and Power 162

The Vulnerability of Authority 163
Islam and Politics: Two Public Figures 168
Styles of Practice: Two Village Fundis 170
Moral Intervention and Understanding 175
Friday Prostrations: A Conflict of Interpretations and
Modes of Legitimation 179
The Articulation of Heterogenous Knowledge in Practice 185
Certain Knowledge, Contestable Authority 189

PART III COUNTERPRACTICES: COSMOLOGY AND THE INS AND OUTS OF SORCERY

7 Knowledge with Power: The Discipline of Cosmology 195

Relations of (Re)production 196 Divination as Calculation 209 Contents ix

World and Body 212
Indispensable Knowledge, Amoral Authority 219
Interdisciplinary Challenges 227
A Cut in Time 233

8 Knowledge and Antipractice: Committing Sorcery 237

The Dark Side of Knowledge 237
The Imagination of Evil 245
A Dead End 249
Sorcery in Practice 254
Postscript: Unleashed Accusations 262

9 Removing Sorcery: Committing (to) the Cure 266

Extractor and Client 267
Extraction in Theory 270
Tumbu in Practice 274
Scepticism and the Conversation between the Disciplines 280
The Extraction Itself: Experience and Sincerity 287
Extraction as Performance 290
Conviction and Good Faith 295

PART IV EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF SPIRIT MEDIUMS

10 The Reproduction of Possession: Gaining a Voice 305

Spirit Possession as Embodied Knowledge 305 Gaining a Spirit as Moral Agency 320 Public and Personal Aspects of Succession 332 Emerging Voice 335

11 Tumbu and Mohedja: Excerpts from the Healers' Practice 338

Sources of Knowledge and Agency 339
Ethics 347
Multiple Voices and Gender Politics 354
Intimacy and Solidarity: Curing Halima 361
Embodied Knowing, Polyvocality, and the Therapeutic Alliance 371
Knowledge as Relationship 374

CONCLUSION

12 Granaries, Turtles, and the Whole Damn Thing 379

Collapsing Granaries, Emerging Stories 380 Culture: Concurrent Perspectives 392 Culture, Incommensurability, and Conversation 396

Epilogue, 1992 407 Notes 409 Glossary 437 Bibliography 441 Index 453