Introduction to the Twixt Cancer & Capricorn Collection

Twixt Cancer & Capricorn is a product of "phenomenological research" (see description below) in various regions of the tropical world. The proposed seven volume compendium will eventually consist of: 1) The Lore of Madagascar, 2) The Lore of the African Indian Ocean, 3) The Lore of Melanesia, 4) *The Lore of Greater Melanesia,* 5) *The Black and Indigenous Lore of Central & South America*, 6) *The Lore of Africa*, and 7) *The Lore of the Caribbean.* Those titles in italic script are, due to their length, being published in segments. The Black & Indigenous Lore of Bolivia, Peru & Ecuador, for example, is the first segment of *The Black and Indigenous Lore of Central & South America*. The second segment will deal with Brazil; the third with French Guiana, Surinam and Guyana; the fourth, with Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama; the fifth with Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay; the sixth with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico; and the seventh with Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Belize.

My primary aim in these "guided tours" is to expose the reader to those customs and traditions which at the time of writing played (and perhaps will continue to play) an important role in the livelihood, psyche, and world-view of the people dealt with. The series is, in effect, a collection of seven voyages (i.e. multi-segmental volumes) dealing mainly with the cultural legacy of peoples of African and / or Melanesian descent who reside in the tropics (here defined as the region between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn).

My thanks to Noro Andriantiana for providing me with excerpts from two articles (Family Relations, April 1995; and "*Introduction to Interpretive Inquiry*" by Francine Holm Hultgren) dealing with "phenomenology", an approach which is said to have historical roots in 19th Century German philosophy. Though I was unaware of the existence of such a theoretical framework until having already published the first three volumes in the series, they, too, fall very much within the parameters of "phenomenological interpretive research" as described below:

> Phenomenological research is a branch of study that seeks a deep understanding of what it means to be what or who one is. It is, in effect, a study of every day lived experiences and the meanings we attach to them. Phenomenology attempts to understand the target society, not objectively and not from one's own perspective; but rather from the perspective of the target society. That is, phenomenology presents reality not as we conceive of it; but rather as we experience it in the text.
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> In the process of reading a phenomenological text, the reader gradually sets aside his or her way of looking at things (world view) and comes to appreciate the meaning of life as perceived by the target society. By comparing and contrasting one's view of life with the new view he or she is exposed to, the reader will obtain a greater understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of reality, and possibly (as a consequence) reshape his or her views to conform to a "greater reality".

Phenomenology, therefore, does not seek laws that govern behavior; but rather reveals different possible ways of looking at the world - possibilities which, if incorporated into our lives, will lead to a deeper comprehension of reality and possibly to greater world harmony as we come to understand how we can better relate with others in this rapidly shrinking world of ours. The value of the approach is realized when, according to Linge in Gademer (1975):

> ...the interpreter genuinely opens himself to the text by listening to it and allowing it to assert its viewpoint. It is precisely in confronting the otherness of the text – hearing its challenging viewpoint – and not in preliminary methodological self-purgations, that the reader's own prejudices (i.e., his present horizons) are thrown into relief and thus comes to critical self consciousness... Collision with the other's horizons make us aware of assumptions so deep-seated that they otherwise remain unnoticed.

In the course of this series, the author leads the readers (through words and pictures) into a dialog with the people of the region being visited, such that the essence of each society in question is gradually revealed in a non-judgmental fashion. The reader is, in short, exposed to the history, geography, religion, language, cuisine, customs, people, literature, songs, philosophy, etc., of a given culture through representatives of that culture in such a way that the "world-view" of that culture is readily discernible.

Phenomenology means "to let that which shows itself to be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself". According to Max Van Mahen (1984):

> "Phenomenology asks the question, "What is this or that experience like?". It does not seek to control or explain the world; but rather to offer more insightful descriptions of the way the world is experienced so that we are put in more direct contact with it..."

For a more detailed presentation of phenomenology and its differentiation from ethnography, see section pgs. 1213 – 1219 of my Three Northern Nguni Nations**.** Publications in the "Twixt Cancer & Capricorn" series to date are enumerated on the following pages:

Twixt Cancer & Capricorn

This is presently a seven volume collection composed of: 1) ***The Lore of Africa*** [which presently includes The Lore of Africa Part I: Three Northern Nguni Nations (Zulu, Swazi, and Ndebele); 2) **The Lore of Madagascar**; 3) **The Lore of the African Indian Ocean;** 4) **The Lore of Melanesia**; 5) ***The Lore of Greater Melanesia*** [Which presently includes Hanuman's People and Negritos of the Philippines: Books I & II]; 6) ***The Black & Indigenous Lore of Central & South America*** [which presently includes the Black & Indigenous Lore of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador]; and 7) ***The Lore of the Caribbean*** [which presently includes Lore of the Caribbean Part I: The Black Caribs]. Those titles in italic script have been partially researched but not yet published in their entirety. What follows is a description of publications to date in the series:

1) ***The Lore of Africa –***

The Lore of Africa Part I: Three Northern Nguni Nations (Zulu, Swazi, and Ndebele) – this, the sixth volume of *Twixt Cancer & Capricorn*, takes the reader on a journey to learn about the life and culture of the Zulu of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, the Swazi of Swaziland, and the Ndebele of Zimbabwe and Gauteng. Highlights of the journey include: a) meetings with traditional healers, Shembe church services, the Shaka Day Celebration, the Reed Festival, and a female coming of age ceremony in KwaZulu-Natal; b) a soldier's initiation rites, the King's Royal Incwala Ceremony, and a rural wedding in Swaziland; c) the Amakhosi cultural center, the Khami ruins, and a male initiation ceremony in Zimbabwe; and d) the painted Ndzundza homes in Gauteng. Like other books in the series, this volume contains comprehensive appendices dealing with the history and geography of the region as well as an illuminating cultural glossary. Perhaps the most comprehensive book ever written on the subject, Three Northern Nguni Nations (with its 1220 pages and 732 accompanying color photos) offers the reader a truly informative and exciting armchair journey.

2) **The Lore of Madagascar** – This, the first volume of the series (available in color or black and white) takes the reader on a tour of the island and introduces him/her to its 39 ethnic groups. Through words (585 pages) and pictures (over 260 photos), the reader is taken on a breath-taking journey and is left with a vivid impression of the Malagasy people and their culture. The book contains four appendices dealing with the ethnic groupings, language, geography, and history of Madagascar. A typical chapter contains information dealing with the origin of the ethnic group in question, a description of the location where it is found, a discussion of a custom which members of the group believe make them distinctive from their neighbors, and a folk tale illustrating some aspect of that custom. In this way an unforgettable composite picture of Malagasy culture is produced. The book is written in the first person plural ("we") and thus the reader will feel that he/she has become a character in the narrative. Nearly all the information in the book was obtained directly from representatives of each of the groups visited in Madagascar during a year long journey made by the author from August 1992 to August 1993. All photographs were taken by the author and are intimately linked to the narrative with which they are associated.

3) **The Lore of the African Indian Ocean** - Through pictures (385 color photos) and words (over 1,000 pages), the reader is taken on a breath-taking journey through the African-Indian Ocean and is left with a vivid impression of its people and culture. This volume contains separate sections dealing with the Comoros archipelago, the Seychelles, Mauritius, Rodrigues, Diego Garcia (British Indian Ocean Territory), the Maldives, and Reunion. A typical section contains: 1) a country briefing – treating the land, people, language, history, folklore, and principal attractions; and 2) a journey through the islands where the reader comes face to face with local people, their customs, and traditions. In this way an unforgettable composite picture of the region is produced. The book is written in the first person plural ("we") and thus the reader soon feels that he or she has become a character in the narrative. Much of the information in this book was obtained directly from representatives of each of the islands visited in the Indian Ocean on a year-long voyage made by the author from October 1994 to September 1995. All photos were taken by the author and are intimately linked to the narrative with which they are associated.

4) **The Lore of Melanesia** - Through words (334 pages) and pictures (170 color photos), this book takes the reader on a breath-taking journey through Melanesia and leaves him/her with a vivid impression of the Melanesian people, their habitat, and their folklore. The book is divided into seven chapters, each corresponding to one of the seven regions which constitute present day Melanesia: 1) Irian Jaya (West Papua); 2) Papua New Guinea; 3) Vanuatu; 4) the Solomon Islands; 5) Fiji; 6) New Caledonia; and 7) Torres Strait. A typical chapter contains a description of: 1) the land; 2) the people and their languages; 3) the history; 4) the lure (i.e. attractions); and 5) the lore (i.e. selected customs). Each chapter also contains revealing photos and an "adventure poem" which deals with some important aspect of the material presented. In this way, the reader is left with a comprehensive and unforgettable picture of each of the various sub-sections of Melanesia as well as a profound understanding of their interrelationship with one another. Subjects dealt with under "lore" include traditional religion, rites of passage, festivals, music, art, body decorations, traditional attire, dances, songs, stories, myths, shark and snake cults, kava drinking, "grade-taking", sand-drawing, pottery making, "land-diving", yam cultivation, traditional food, and cannibalism. There are 4 appendices, one of which deals with the languages of Melanesia.

5) ***The Lore of Greater Melanesia*** – This volume presently includes:

(A) **Negritos of the Philippines Book I: The Aeta of Bataan** – Through pictures (192 photos) and words (316 pages) the reader is taken on an exciting journey to the Bataan peninsula in the Philippines and is left with a vivid impression of its Negrito communities. The journey is divided into 19 segments, each corresponding to a specific population cluster. There is also a comprehensive appendix treating, among other things: 1) Negrito groups of Southeast Asia; 2) Negrito groups of the Philippines; 3) Negrito groups of Bataan; 4) the notion of race; 5) important elements of Negrito culture; and 6) a discussion of phenomenology. Throughout this text, the reader is made aware of the "trials and tribulations" and "lore and lure" of these soft-spoken and genial people resulting in an unforgettable and intimate composite picture.

The book is written in the first person plural ("we") and thus the reader soon feels that he or she has become a character in the narrative. Much of the information in this book was obtained directly from representatives of the Bataan Negritos on a three-month journey to the Philippines from May 26, 1998 to August 22, 1998. All photos were taken by the author save for a precious few that were submitted by informants for inclusion in this publication.

(B) **Negritos of the Philippines: Book II: Meeting the Mamanwa** - Through pictures (239 photos) and words (296 pages) the reader is taken on an exciting thirty day visit to the island of Mindanao in the Philippines where s/he meets and interacts with members of a number of Mamanwa communities, as well as with government officials and other local people in the provinces of Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Norte. The journey is divided into two parts, each corresponding to a different province. During this journey, you will: 1) receive three briefings (One for Caraga Region XIII and one for each of the provinces) which provide detailed information concerning the people, geography, history, economy, folklore, and principal attractions; and 2) come face to face with local people, their traditions and customs. In this way an unforgettable composite picture of the Mamanwa, their setting, and their associated culture is produced. The book is written in the first person plural ("we") and thus the reader soon feels that he or she has become a character in the narrative. Much of the information in this book was obtained directly from representatives of the Mamanwa leaders on a three-month journey to the Philippines from May 26, 1998 to August 22, 1998. All photos were taken by the author save for a precious few that were submitted by informants for inclusion in this publication.

(C) **In Search of the Vanaras in Tamil Nadu & the Andamans: Hanuman's People** - Through pictures (over 350 color photos) and words (615 pages), the reader is taken on a breath-taking trip through Tamil Nadu and the Andaman Islands in the first leg of a journey to those areas of the Indian sub-continent where the author hopes to find remnant aboriginal populations who may (or may not) be descendants of the Vanaras ("Hanuman's People"). Hanuman, as all Indians know, was that legendary figure who helped deliver Lord Rama's wife from the clutches of the Demon King Ravana in the famous Ramayana epic. Throughout this "armchair journey of discovery" the reader: 1) comes face to face with representatives of a number of local Melano-Indian populations and their neighbors, and 2) is referred to a number of fascinating appendices that provide detailed geographical, historical, religious, and cultural descriptions of the peoples and lands visited. Highlights of this trip include a stay in Chennai (formerly Madras) and visits to the Nilgiri Hills, Madurai, Rameswaram, and the Andamans. The book is written in the first person plural ("We") and thus the reader soon feels that he or she has become a character in the narrative. Much of the information in this book was obtained directly from representatives of each of the communities visited from September 2003 to February 2004. All color photographs were taken by the author (save for a precious few that were either purchased or given to him by helpers).

6) ***The Black & Indigenous Lore of Central & South America*** which presently includes:

Black & Indigenous Lore of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador - Through pictures (570 color photos) and words (1168 pages), the reader is taken on an exciting journey to the Andean nations of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia and is left with a vivid impression of the Black and Indigenous populations of the region and their associated cultures. The journey is divided into three parts, each of which treats a different country. Each part contains: a) a country briefing dealing with the land, people, language, history, folklore, and principal attractions; and b) a journey through the country in question where the reader comes face to face with local people, their traditions, and customs. In this way an unforgettable composite picture of region is produced. There is also a comprehensive appendix which presents further details about the ethnic groupings, indigenous languages, history, geography, and religious beliefs of the region. The book is written in the first person plural ("we") and thus the reader will feel that he/she has become a character in the narrative. Much of the information in this book was obtained directly from representatives of each of the countries visited on a nearly eight month journey to South America from July 11, 1996 to March 2, 1997. All photographs were taken by the author and are intimately linked to the narrative with which they are associated.

7) ***The Lore of the Caribbean***, which presently includes

Lore of the Caribbean Part I: The Black Caribs - Through pictures (633 color photos) and words (1184 pages), the reader is taken on a breath-taking journey through those areas of the Caribbean associated with the origin and diffusion of the Garífuna (also known as the Black Caribs) where he/she will be exposed to their history, culture, and traditions and be left with a vivid impression of their trials and tribulations. This volume contains separate sections dealing with the Black Caribs of St Vincent & the Grenadines, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Nicaragua as well as a section that links this proud race to sister populations in Dominica, St. Lucia, and elsewhere. It also presents the notion of a new race of people which the author calls "People of the Coconut". Throughout this armchair journey of discovery the reader will: (1) come face to face with representatives of a number of local Garífuna populations and their neighbors; and (2) be referred to a number of interesting glossary entries that provide detailed geographical, historical, and cultural descriptions. The book is written in the first person plural ("We") and thus the reader soon feels that he or she has become a character in the narrative. Much of the information in this book was obtained directly from representatives of each of the countries visited on three separate trips to the Caribbean and Central America from March 1999 to June 2001. All photographs were taken by the author and are intimately linked to the narrative with which they are associated.

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