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Time and Mind

The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture

ISSN: 1751-696X (Print) 1751-6978 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rtam20

Editorial

To cite this article: (2018) Editorial, Time and Mind, 11:4, 343-345, DOI: 10.1080/1751696X.2018.1541124

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1751696X.2018.1541124

TIME & MIND
2018, VOL. 11, NO. 4, 343–345
https://doi.org/10.1080/1751696X.2018.1541124

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Editorial

Anthropologists, folklorists, and those in some social and behavioural sciences will be long familiar with the terms 'emic' and 'etic', which refer to two kinds of research viewpoints – emic, from within the culture or social group being studied, and etic, from outside it. This special issue is devoted to a multivalent approach to the extraordinarily complex Oceanic idea of *mana* – complex, at least, as far as modern Westernised ways of thinking are concerned. The set of four papers in this issue come out of discussions about the nature of *mana* conducted over several years among a group of anthropologists and other scholars. The papers' authors adopt an overall mix of emic and etic elements, because they contend that an experiential, phenomenological, aspect must be included if the subject is to be adequately studied and understood. Although numerous contemporary ethnographies (as opposed to the 'classic' works that appeared until after World War II) at least pay lip service to (and are often written explicitly from) the emic perspective, this is still a fairly controversial thing to do in an academic publication (perhaps less so in anthropology than some other disciplines) because the accusation of 'going native' still haunts some of the halls of Academe. Including an emic factor in research of certain topics, and *mana* is decidedly one such, does not, should not, mean dispensing with scholarship. And that is what *Time and Mind – the Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture*, by its very title description, is prepared to entertain.

The term *mana* occasionally creeps into common parlance when one is trying to express the idea that an object, person, or performance exudes a certain aura of intangible power, a kind of magical gravitas. But anyone who thinks the term can be understood narrowly to mean a magical or supernatural power will be thoroughly disabused of such simplicity by the content in the following papers, and none more so than by the opening one in this collection, authored by Karen Fox. She describes how her delving into Hawaiian linguistics and plethora of meanings of the term and its cognates led her to appreciate that *mana* is held within the 'ontological and epistemological nets' of the indigenous Hawaiian people and relates to 'a pattern not immediately obvious from simple definitions'. Her study was driven by a need to understand an experience she had during a ritual at a site on the Big Island. She uses a description of this experience with which to open her paper.

In similar vein, Marth Noyes in the next paper, 'The Celestial Roots of *Mana*', describes some *mana*-related experiences and feelings she had in Hawaii, and

goes on to explore precontact Hawaiian cultural astronomy 'from the point of view of its cosmogonic, ontological, and metaphysical roots of *mana*'. This was occasioned by her relationship with the site of Kūkaniloko, on the Hawaiian island of O'ahu, which she describes as 'a place of considerable *mana*' – what we might perhaps interpret in Western terms as numinosity, or spirit of place, *genius loci*. She further states that 'experiences of that *mana* informed my work'. That work at Kūkaniloko reveals previously unrecognised links between topographical features and their place-names with astronomical events – so literally linking heaven and earth.

The third paper in this collection, 'Experiencing *Mana* as Ancestral Wind-Work', is the most emic of all the papers, and is by Marianne 'Mimi' George, a seasoned anthropologist and highly experienced and regarded ocean sailor. She outlines her years of learning about indigenous Polynesian navigation from various sources, but especially from the late Polynesian master navigator, TeAliki Kaveia. The specific aspect of the remarkable and rather mysterious ways of native Pacific sailors that she focuses on in her paper is their ability to accurately forecast and profoundly understand the behaviour of the winds – 'wind-work'. In the ontological model of native Oceanic mariners, it is very much linked with concepts of ancestral power and that elusive property, *mana*. There are aspects of wind-work that actually seem to involve a limited control of the winds – appearing to Western eyes as a kind of superstitious, sympathetic magic, though that might in fact be an extraordinarily detailed, advanced knowledge of wind behaviour coupled with, or expressed by, ritual actions. In the Polynesian navigator model, it involves *mana*, and though unacceptable to modern ideas, the key fact is that on the practical level *it works*. George proceeds to describe a few actual, personal experiences of ocean-based *mana* she has had, culminating in an utterly remarkable one that strongly emic-allergic academics may find difficult to stomach. But the intriguing thing is that she describes these experiences within a modern navigational framework. Accept them or not, George is a scholarly and skilled observer and experient, and casual dismissal does a disservice to the subject being discussed. Nevertheless, her paper does require today's Westernised academic to make the effort to temporarily put his or her culturally drenched worldview on hold. Doing so can afford a glimpse into earlier and other ways of knowing that are not necessarily inferior but merely different to today's models of scholarship, potentially offering extra dimensions to modern thought, if absorbed wisely. Otherwise, that fragile and still-working but disappearing vestige of traditional knowledge will be bypassed, like a ship in the night, and lost to sight.

The final paper, '*Mana*: Psychic Energy, Spiritual Power, and the Experiencing Brain', is by the neuroanthropologist Charles Laughlin, a former co-editor of this journal and occasional contributor. He argues that *mana* is but an Oceanic version of essentially similar concepts in other traditional cultures,

such as the *n/um* of the Kalahari San, the *wakonda* of the Sioux, the *ch'i* and *ki* of ancient Asian cultures, Hindu *kundalini*, the *baraka* of North Africa, and countless more similar concepts around the globe. He seeks to explain that behind this similarity of concept with so many different cultures lies the universality of human neurophysiology. Although beliefs about this 'psychic energy' vary from culture to culture, he argues that because of the basic fact of the human 'nervous system in company with the endocrine system and other metabolic systems', the core experience remains essentially the same, however differently it may be interpreted and whatever cultural structures are built around it.

So, there is ample food for thought in these papers, as there is in our Book Review section. This issue we have *Myths on the Map: The Storied Landscapes of Ancient Greece* (ed. Greta Hawes), reviewed by Bob Trubshaw; *Visualising a Sacred City: London, Art and Religion* (eds. Ben Quash, Aaron Rosen, and Chloë Reddaway), reviewed by Ethan Doyle White; *The Archaeology of Darkness* (eds. Marion Dowd and Robert Hensey), and *Archaeology of the Night: Life after Dark in the Ancient World* (eds. Nancy Gonlin and April Nowell), both titles reviewed by Laura Slack, and *Ritual Failure: Archaeological Perspectives* (eds. Vasiliki G. Koutrafouri and Jeff Sanders), reviewed by Ethan Doyle White.