TESTAMENT

Life and Work of

M.G. SMITH

1921–1993
INTERAMERICAS
Society of Arts and Letters of the Americas
Sociedad de Artes y Letras de las Américas

TESTAMENT
LIFE AND WORK OF
M. G. SMITH
1921 - 1993

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and Selections from the Work

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A TRIBUTE FROM
DAVID LOWENTHAL

Memorial Service, University College London, March 25, 1993
David Lowenthal is Professor Emeritus of Geography,
University College London

Mike Smith was for thirty-six years my truly fierce friend. I use fierce in the old sense, meaning ferociously devoted. He looked after me, as he did all those close to him, with a rare mix of unstinting commitment and utter honesty. Whether in the West Indies or elsewhere our own efforts owe more to Mike than to any other mentor.

The debts are manifold. Mike’s own studies are seminal for those who acclaim their perspectives. Those privileged to work with Mike owe him still more. We imbibed even if we fell short of his creed to be pertinent, to be thorough, to be objective. Mike also insisted that work be complete—and get completed. His impatience with procrastinators was proverbial.

Beyond this, Mike was our priceless because severest critic. Woe betide anyone who asked for his help without being ready to hear the worst. Page after page came back with Mike’s definitive green scribbles: ‘What does this mean?’ ‘it must be different in Dominica; Grenadians are not like this’ ‘where is your evidence?’ ‘how can this be a proper sample?’ ‘why do you rely on Scrimshaw; you know he is a scoundrel’ ‘don’t parrot Parliamentary experts—give your own gloss on share-cropping’ ‘an unlikely sequence of events’ ‘empty rhetoric—shame on you’. But you also heard the best: ‘Nice example’ ‘well argued’ ‘supporting data in that
monster Edward Long ‘amplify this vital point’. Mike would not waste your time or his with anodyne flattery or cursory dismissal. No wonder students both feared and loved him.

Mike’s famous fierceness cloaked an ingrained shyness and modesty. It was also belied by a customary mild manner, an aversion to bombast, and a delicious sense of fun. He was quick to spot the ludicrous and the outlandish. Strolls with Mike were streams of joy, his comments on passing novelties punctuating talk on everything under the sun. I was lucky to enjoy Mike not just in Jamaica but in New York and New England, Los Angeles and London. For me these scenes remain infused with Mike’s acute and risible perceptions.

It’s hard to resist recalling Mike, Mary and the boys along the boardwalks of spaced-out Venice, California, in the ’60s, and sedate secluded Dulwich in the ’70s. But I’m asked to say more of Mike in the Caribbean context, where I met him in the mid-’50s. Three points about Mike as a West Indian come forcibly to mind.

One is Mike’s essential Jamaican-ness. Sober realism along with national feeling led him to mistrust the far-flung West Indies Federation—which indeed proved a neo-natal casualty when Jamaica withdrew in 1961. Love for the Jamaican landscape and the Jamaican people suffuse Mike’s early poems, among them the island’s favourite anthem.

Intensely Jamaican, Mike all the same knew more about the rest of the Caribbean than did most ardent federalists. His books on Grenada and Carriacou are superb texts and empathetic sketches of their people. Our first evening together evoked his wry saga of inter-island travel. As the boat from Carriacou lurches through the reefs at night, what guides it into Grenada’s Grenville Harbour? The little light from a young lad smoking a cigarette on the harbour buoy. So ‘what happens’, Mike asks, ‘when the cigarette goes out?’

Mike’s Jamaicanism was neither narrow nor exclusive. He expressed his esteem of Derek Walcott, when the St. Lucian poet won the Nobel Prize just a few weeks before Mike died; Mike’s tribute is truly West Indian.
And his vision of a better future was for all West Indians; in Caribbean capacities he had a faith that was painstakingly proven.

The second point is that Mike’s catholicity embraced all strands of society. From his 1965 The Plural Society in the British West Indies through Pluralism, Politics and Ideology in the Creole Caribbean in 1991 Mike showed how colour-coded strata, black, brown, and white, stood for social categories distinct in life-style and belief as in wealth and power—gulfs that yet persist. In his own life Mike drew no such distinctions, dignified all with the same attentive courtesy. His Jamaican friends were equally black, brown, white—or Syrian and Chinese. I recall colloquies with Jamaicans seemingly as remote as the Ras Tafari, the Manleys, their subsequent rival Eddie Seaga, then Mike’s acolyte at the University’s Institute of Social and Economic Research, and Edith Clarke, Jamaican-white maverick who wrote My Mother Who Fathered Me. Mike shunned only the humbug and the hypocrite. As a much besought advisor to his government, Mike always came back to the need to listen—listen to what the people had to say about life, about themselves, and especially about the Jamaica they were expected to call home.

My third point is how Mike’s work and life were interwoven. He grew up among the pioneers who won Jamaica’s release from imperial rule, from the local plantocracy, and from social and racial stigmas induced by both. Norman and Edna Manley’s family was virtually Mike’s own; his commitment to their democratic socialism led to a stream of public services that earned him the rare distinction of Jamaica’s Order of Merit, to go with the Institute of Jamaica’s Musgrave Gold Medal and an honorary doctorate from the University of the West Indies.

Scrupulous about separating science from sentiment, Mike had no truck with partisan research. But from his own austere central enterprise spun off a stunning ancillary array that illumines West Indian lives. His inquiry into the Kingston Ras Tafari was the first to treat that sect as a positive force, not just a fearsome threat. The life of the Grenadian faith-healer Norman Paul, Dark Puritan, is an enthralling tale elicited by Mike
with gentle tact and self-effacing affection. These classic gems were cheaply printed in small editions for local Extra-Mural use; they must become better known.

Mike lived intensely in art as in science. As a poet and a devotee of painting and sculpture, music and theatre, he had creative bonds with Jamaica's burgeoning art world, notably through the sculptor Edna Manley. Caribbean education and history had his critical support. His all-but-completed collaborative study of four West Indian states is probably the first field-based comparison of educational ideals measured against attainments and social impacts. Of the still potent colonial legacy that limits most West Indians to technical training, Mike concludes: 'Education should not be narrowly vocational'; it must 'prepare children adequately to live in the modern world'. The same entrenched mind-set makes his injunction as pertinent for schooling here as there.

Mike was not merely the Caribbean's most eminent anthropologist, but a grand polymath and an exemplary citizen.
Social science is a mode of institutionalized cooperation. Its theoretical structures are the work of many hands and take form slowly. No sociological perspective of major importance can be elaborated in an appropriate analytical scheme without undergoing continuous development in the process. Even Marx and Weber, whose early work contains the essence of their developed theoretical systems, died after most productive careers, leaving their expositions unfinished or unsystematized.
ON THE SCIENTIFIC AGENDA

M. G. Smith

Corporations and Society:
The Social Anthropology of Collective Action
George Duckworth, 1974

The value of a new point of view on science is shown by the research which it stimulates, as well as the material which it brings into ordered relations.
ON PREDICTION AND THEORY

M. G. Smith

Short-range Prospects in the British Caribbean
Social and Economic Studies, Vol. II, No. 4
Institute of Social and Economic Research
University of the West Indies, Jamaica
December, 1962

Prediction is not the favourite pastime of social scientists. It can be risky business, even for journalists. When unavoidable, one favourite solution is to develop oracular statements, cryptic or general enough to rule out disproof. An alternative evasion is to set up a chain of dichotomous contingencies without indicating their relative probability.

It happens that I have been gradually developing two relevant bodies of theory which can provide the basis for reasoned projections about British Caribbean probabilities in the near future. One of these theories applies a framework of social and cultural pluralism to the study of Caribbean societies. The other deals with processes of structural maintenance or change. By combining relevant ideas in these two theories, and applying these to the Caribbean future, it is possible to avoid ad hoc guessing, to test the general conceptions, and to explain both the present and the future which spring from it. To merit scientific consideration, projections must be grounded on formal theory as well as on empirical knowledge of the relevant field.
ON THE NEED FOR NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

M. G. Smith

Corporations and Society:
The Social Anthropology of Collective Action.
George Duckworth, 1974

It seems to me that social anthropology and sociology currently need some new conceptual framework free of unverifiable postulates on which to base comparative or monographic studies of societies and their major components. For several generations social scientists have sought such a framework in the idea of society as a functional system having such institutionally or analytically differentiated sections as government, economy, religion or education as subsystems, each operationally and normatively integrated in itself and with the others. However, although this conception of societies as normatively and functionally integrated systems of action has inspired major advances in social theory and research, it is so heavily laden with questionable assumptions that it can neither supply a neutral analytic framework nor an objective set of research procedures for the comparative or intensive analysis of societies or their components, synchronically or over time. Too many generalizations that remain problematic and others at variance with fact must be accepted a priori, and too many social phenomena of equal prevalence and significance must be ignored or devalued in order that we may describe societies or their institutional sectors as functional systems in terms of this theory. Moreover, despite many modifications to these old ideas, modern systems theory has neither entirely repudiated their dubious foundations
nor their objectives and predicates. At the very least, then, our traditional ideas of societies as normatively and functionally integrated systems of action need to be supplemented and perhaps replaced by concepts that suspend such assumptions and allow us to study social units, their components and relations, directly as concrete empirical structures. The various shortcomings of our traditional theory and models indicate that we should neither conceive societies as 'systems', nor postulate their functional integration, structural consistency, normative consensus, equilibrium, closure or homogeneity, as general features. Such postulates constrain us to document the ways in which empirical collectivities illustrate the theory, often by casuistry or data manipulation. For an objective, analytic framework, free of such presuppositions, the notion of corporations...may thus provide social science with a basis superior to the familiar system-model. At least this alternative seems worthy of exposition and trial.
ON CORPORATIONS
AND SOCIETY

M. G. Smith

The Affairs of Daura
University of California Press, 1978

The structural units of a political system are those that serve to regulate the collective affairs of its members. Such units are always corporations, of which there are several varieties, the corporate group being perhaps the most widespread and familiar. Despite important differences in their bases, scale, organization, and other attributes, corporate groups share certain common features, being presumptively perpetual aggregates with unique identities, determinate boundaries and memberships, and the autonomy, organization, and procedure necessary to regulate their exclusive common affairs. Some corporate groups contain other collegial or conciliar corporations which are constituted as presumptively perpetual decision-making bodies staffed by a minority of the members of the corporate group such colleges regulate. As governmentally specialized corporations, such colleges are thus distinct from the corporate groups of which they are part and whose affairs they regulate. Yet another class of corporations aggregate lacks the comprehensive organization and effective procedures required for the regulation of collective affairs and accordingly lacks the autonomy to regulate them. These imperfect corporations must therefore have a categorical form and limited capacities for positive collective action. Despite their presumptive perpetuity, determinate boundaries and memberships, and unique identi-
ties, they are constituted as categories by their lack of the organization, procedures, and autonomy necessary to regulate the affairs of their collective memberships exclusively. Such corporate categories are accordingly often subject to external regulation by others, being structurally incapable of common action to protect their members' interests.

Offices are corporations sole that possess the four formal and four operational features which distinguish perfect corporations, such as groups and colleges, and endow them with the structural capacities for continuous regulatory action. Characteristically, like the college, the office is attached to, and embedded in, some corporate group of which it is the regulatory organ; and often a single corporate group or public is simultaneously regulated by one or more offices and colleges which maintain an appropriate division of labor and authority among themselves. Lacking offices, colleges, or equivalent coordinative agencies, corporate categories thereby lack the organization requisite for positive collective action. Occasionally one of these categories may be mobilized and coordinated by a charismatic leadership which temporarily or permanently reconstitutes it as a corporate group and directs its collective action. More rarely the category may constitute itself as a group by establishing a college and devising procedures to regulate its affairs.

Charismatic leadership represents one type of commission, an imperfect form of corporation sole, of which magisterial, military, ecclesiastical, and bureaucratic commissions, organized into presumptively perpetual structures that contain ranked series of indefinite numbers of identical substitutable units, illustrate another variety. Unlike such serially organized commissions, the charismatic leadership is a unique self-authenticating organ of collective regulation, which accordingly lacks the prescribed procedures, organization, or spheres of action that characterize all units of public authority that derive their legitimacy from traditional or legal rules, norms, and precedents. In contrast a charismatic commission mobilizes its own public and establishes its own authority, procedures, and regulatory structures. Yet another type of unique discontinuous commis-
sion, which is commonly found in centralized polities, is the statutory commission created by presidential or parliamentary action to discharge specific tasks, whether investigatory or administrative. Although normally endowed with a wide discretion to pursue its purpose, such statutory commissions cease to exist on completing the tasks for which they were created. There is thus no presumption of perpetuity for either of these three kinds of commission.

These different types of corporations and quasi-corporations—groups, colleges, categories, offices, and commissions—provide the structural units and regulatory agencies of all political systems. A political system accordingly represents a specific and articulated complex of corporations of differing type and base whose institutionalized relations provide its articulation. Since colleges, groups, offices, and commissions each regulate particular sets of public affairs, although the basis on which they claim such competence differs, all are in differing degrees and ways units of public authority. In consequence they all provide focuses for the concentration and distribution of public power and often compete with one another to defend or expand their regulatory competence. Thus corporations together constitute the political system, whose boundaries and formal features they also define by their type, bases, and articulations, while delimiting its substance, content, or scope as the sum of the affairs that they severally regulate for the members of the polity they constitute. In addition, since corporations are either organs or objects of public authority that concentrate distributions of public power within, around, and among themselves, they simultaneously embrace the administrative and political sectors of the governmental system of the society they organize and delimit. Thus the particulars of its corporate organization define the structure and substance of the political and administrative sectors of the governmental system. Accordingly, changes in the scope or form of the system should be reflected in the articulations, bases, or types of the various corporations that together constitute it.
The term pluralism has widely different meanings. As used here, following the lead of J. S. Furnivall, it denotes those conditions in which the members of a given society are divided on grounds of race, religion, language, culture, ethnicity, history, ecology and social organization, separately or together. Thus the term applies to various social situations and conditions that may differ significantly from one another.

Culture being the universal criterion and distinctive condition of humanity, cultural pluralism expressed in institutional differences is the most general basis and mode of plural division. This is so since culture includes and subsumes language, religion, conceptions of race, ethnicity, kinship, ecology, community and normative models of social organization and conduct. It thus pervades all spheres of social life that exhibit differences of institution organization. Just how significant such differences or commonalities of culture may be in structuring collective relations depends primarily on whether they are relevant criteria for participation in the public domain.

As noted long ago by Fortes, societies consist of two complementary levels of organization and action, namely, their public and private domains. The public domain consists of those corporate relations and units
that regulate and organize the collectivity by constituting and articulating its components and authorizing them to recruit, regulate and represent their members. In short, the public domain corresponds with the societal macrostructure of corporate units and relations to which every population owes its coherence and capacity to cope with environmental and other exigencies. All else—that is, all those activities, relations, resources and interests that do not fall within the public domain, and do not directly affect its organization and operation—belong to the private domain of social life in which, within limits laid down by custom or law, differences of practice and idea are expected and open to all, being regarded as structurally equivalent. For example, in New York or Paris, differences of domestic language, religion, cuisine, family patterns, gender concepts and relations, etc., are equivalent within the limits set by national law, and do not differentiate the rights and duties of their adherents in the common public domain. Under such conditions of universalistic incorporation, insofar as cultural pluralism obtains among the members of a common society, it lacks institutional significance in the public domain. Under those conditions, cultural pluralism exists without corresponding social or structural pluralism.

When two or more culturally diverse collectivities operate as mutually exclusive segments of equivalent or complementary status in the public domain of a common society, their cultural differences are institutionalized as social pluralism by their incorporation as equivalent parts or segments of the whole, which then has consociational form. The basic components of consociations may or may not be culturally diverse, and consociations may or may not be states. For example, the precolonial Nuer, Tallensi and Tiv, though stateless and socially homogeneous, all had consociational form. However, the equivalent incorporation of culturally distinct segments establishes a consociational plurality, as illustrated by Switzerland, by Nigeria from 1960 to 1966, and by Lebanon before and despite its civil war. While the Swiss, and the Nigerian population at that date, were constitutionally organized in mutually exclusive and equiva-
lent divisions, namely, the Swiss cantons and the federated Nigerian regions, before the civil war in Lebanon the various religious congregations shared power by agreements and traditions which, though always upheld, had no place in law. Thus, like Switzerland, Nigeria from 1960 to 1966 was a consociation de jure, while the Lebanon, lacking a legal base, was such de facto. In either case, under the mode of equivalent incorporation the rights and status of individuals as citizens in the inclusive public domain are mediated by the requirement of their prior membership of one or other of its basic components. When the equivalent or complementary social segments that constitute them are simultaneously contraposed by mutually exclusive differences of culture, community and social organization, such societies exhibit social pluralism, de facto or de jure.

When the members of a common society who differ in culture, race, ethnicity, religion, social organization or language also differ at law and in the polity, de jure and/or de facto, as citizens and non-citizens, free and unfree, privileged and disprivileged, their differential incorporation establishes the society as a hierarchic plurality based on structural pluralism. Under slavery and colonial rule the British Caribbean territories were clearly such, having differentially incorporated their culturally distinct components by restricting rights of political participation to the ruling white and a few wealthy non-whites. Being thus hierarchically ordered by differential status rather than segmentally contraposed, the basic components of these hierarchic pluralities are best distinguished as social sections from the social segments of equivalent status that constitute the segmental or consociational pluralities. While consociational organization neither requires nor entails cultural diversity of its basic segments, the differential incorporation of two or more collectivities never occurs apart from differences of culture and social organization. This is so because however homogeneous in culture the units may have been initially, their differential incorporation inevitably generates fundamental differences in their culture and social organization.
ON SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND REALITIES

M. G. Smith

The Study of Social Structure
Manuscript in press, 1994

When Europeans first created colonies overseas, whether by conquering other peoples and settling their territories, as in the New World empires of Spain and Portugal, or by importing new populations from Africa as slaves after eliminating the aborigines, as in the Caribbean, the assumptions of ethnic and cultural homogeneity from which social philosophers of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries derived their theories of natural law, social contract and human rights, being clearly irrelevant, were either ignored entirely, or restricted exclusively to citizens of the imperial state. It is therefore especially ironic that, having assumed ethnic, cultural and linguistic homogeneity as the indispensable basis of human society, in their colonies West Europeans created plural societies peopled by diverse races, speaking different languages, worshipping different gods, practising different economies and ecologies, and sharply divided by conflicting interests and needs as rulers and ruled, exploiters and exploited, slaveowners and slaves, Christian and heathen, whites and non-whites, etc. Nonetheless, whatever the philosophers said, each of those European colonies became a distinct new society, despite its non-contractual foundations and the ethnic and cultural differences of its people.
ON EARLY SOCIAL SCIENCE IN
THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

M. G. Smith

A Framework for Caribbean Studies
Extra-Mural Department
University College of the West Indies, 1955

Systematic social study of the British West Indies is a recent development, hence the slenderness of our sociological literature, and its dependent character. This dependent character reflects the fact that hitherto most of the researches in this area have been conducted by visiting social scientists from America or Britain, and have been guided by theories and themes of interest developed in studies of societies and cultures outside the British Caribbean. The resultant diversity of approaches has undoubted value for the systematic study of British West Indian society, as this diversity directs attention to a wide range of problems and aspects of local life. On the other hand, these researches have an ad hoc, exploratory character, and require careful sifting and collation if they are to form the background of a systematic programme of area studies. Yet it is patent that to build soundly and quickly, we must use the old foundations, testing them first, and then assimilating all that proves useful and valid into the newer structure.
We often speak loosely as though we think that education is or should be the process of social reproduction, that is, the means by which a society perpetuates itself by transmitting its culture fully to the next generation so that as adults they will be equipped to fulfil their roles, to manipulate and sustain the technology, and properly to educate the succeeding generation, thereby ensuring full social reproduction. For many, any process of inter-generational cultural transfer which does not indefinitely replicate itself and perpetuate the culture that surrounds it, at best involves imperfect social reproduction. Yet the history of most human societies, both those with schools and those without, that leave their educational processes embedded in socialization, demonstrates the universality of cultural change, and, accordingly, the imperfect character of human social reproduction. Societies with schools have on the whole higher rates of cultural change than those that lack them, even those with schools that taught the preservation and worship of the past, as in Confucian China, ancient Egypt, India or Byzantium, when the culture changed so slowly that for many the change was imperceptible, and the ideal of education as social reproduction seemed quite true. By contrast, since medieval times, Western societies, having institutionalized the school, have known more continuous and rapid cultural change. This is so...
partly because, to serve efficiently as mechanisms for cultural transmission, schools and the academic complex to which they give rise, and of which they are part, are inevitably involved in cultural critique and creation, thereby ensuring the simultaneous revision and development of the culture they transfer.

That fact alone is sufficient to expose many hidden assumptions we generally make when we regard education as social reproduction. Even the Soviet Union and other Marxist states that prescribed for everyone education in state schools whose curricula were designed in detail to create generations of model Communists, as ‘the system’ required, regularly produced a quota of radical dissidents besides many covert ones, including some who later became nomenklatura, and sought to use the ‘system’ for their own ends, thereby subverting it. Moreover, even when reproduction by the maintenance of system structure had priority over all else, the USSR continuously had to incorporate new programs such as collectivization, industrialization, militarization, nuclear fission and the atom bomb, space research, global cold war, and finally perestroika, which pulled down the house upon itself. In its futile effort to “reproduce” itself, the Marxist state had greatest need of education to transform its culture and society at every generation. We may therefore consign to mythology the silly ideal of perfect social reproduction, and ask instead what more modest aims should education realistically seek to fulfil in modern societies.
ON NORMAN PAUL

M. G. Smith

Dark Puritan
Department of Extra-Mural Studies
University of the West Indies, 1963

This story begins in Grenada, a Caribbean island of about 120 square miles, situated ninety miles north-east of Trinidad or one day's sail by local schooner. Its narrator, Norman Paul, was born in Grenada around the turn of the century, travelled extensively throughout the Southern Caribbean in early manhood, and returned to settle in Grenada in 1951. He relates the story of his life and experiences.

The circumstances in which the narrative was collected may be of interest. In 1952-3, I was engaged in a field study of Grenadian Society and culture as a member of the Institute of Social and Economic Research of the University College of the West Indies. I soon learnt about Norman Paul by repute as a healer, diviner and seer who practised a highly individual form of cult. I decided to seek this autobiography when opportunity arose. Months passed, and then as luck would have it, we happened both to visit the tiny island of Carriacou at the same time. Carriacou is a small dependency of Grenada, about 13 square miles in size, and 23 miles further northeast. Learning of his presence, I determined to call on Mr. Paul, and set out one morning for his quarters, early and unannounced. In partial excuse, I have heard that Norman often knew in advance who would visit him that day without express communication. He met me at the door, led me in, and offered me a chair. I told him I had
heard a great deal about him, and hoped that he would be willing to work with me on a full account of his life, which I wished to prepare for possible publication. He seemed mildly relieved. 'This morning,' he said, 'I had a vision as I woke that a stranger from the East was coming to see me to-day, and I must do whatsoever he wished as it would bring a blessing. I was wondering what this would mean.' I said that this may have referred to my visit, since I had come indirectly from Africa via London, and our understanding was sealed. We arranged to begin the autobiography when we returned to Grenada and then talked discursively for a while. Our paths crossed occasionally during the next weeks in Carriacou, thus giving us a chance to get to know one another; but it was another month or two before work on the autobiography began.
TESTAMENT

M. G. Smith

Excerpted from the 381-line poem written in 1945 after demobilization from the Canadian Army and later published in Focus: An Anthology of Contemporary Jamaican Writing Edited by Edna Manley Extra-Mural Department University College of the West Indies, 1956

There is a limit to all human ways
There is a limit to all human love
And a great darkness in all human light
Yet faith flows down the river, peace fills trees,
And glory lights the morning when she comes
All wet and radiant from the golden clouds
And walks upon the mountains like a bride.
For there is promise in all human pain
There is a morning in all human night
And life and birth and beauty beyond death.

We have constructed Time with fear and greed
We have imprisoned Space with avarice
And murdered Life, the Vision, with our Sloth
We have constructed Time
We have created Death in all our walks.

... 

This is the splendid sunlight of our birth
This is the day in which we were conceived
The light and islands of the home we left
This is the mountain of the given grace
And peace and nescience and the living touch
Of a spontaneous presence flowing through
The earth, the water, wind and light and trees
This human village and these human ways
This is the glory of such steep ascent
From which we were begotten to beget
Within the sea of vision bright new isles
Beyond the midnight's conquest, this the light
Into its stillness this our splendid Sun.

... This poem is the world about you
Revealed by night and day
This is the structure of the world within you
And the vision of the source.
So only let these words be accurate to show
What stillness dwells the light in
Though none can remember all
Or what way the Lord appears in
Though to speak is to leave the way
Then for the rest let this forever be
The poem of the unimportant words.

... To come near into the light and be fulfilled
Strip from the spirit all its social coils
And all the misconceptions and desires of self
And cease the Will and let the Stillness be
So deep, so vast, so true it knows no time
Nor is it swayed by space or circumstance
But like a silent great abiding stream
Moves to the vision beyond dark or light.
This spirit of the stillness is the Lord
And unto this there is no thing beyond.
But this, the Stillness of the Utmost Light,
Fills with its truth the spirit stripped of self
And shews a lonely traveller to dawn
The horrible diversions, dreams and strife
Heaped on his knowledge of the Light, to waste
And blind and overcome his spirit with the Dark.
MG. Smith's paternal grandparents went to Jamaica from England, some time in the mid-19th century; they were probably small business people—I don't think they were farmers. After Emancipation in the 1930s, there was a policy of encouraging white settlers, and a few British and some Germans (who settled in 'German Town') went to Jamaica at that time, but of course it didn't compare with the other emigrant destinations such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa.

His father, Charles Garfield (C.G.) Smith, worked as an agent for the United Fruit Company; he must have been buying bananas. 'He spoke Spanish, and he used to say he was the lightning calculator of the Costa Rican coast'. At the end of the first World War—perhaps aged around 40? we don't know—he seems to have invested his savings in a store in Kingston, and married Lucille Campbell from Linstead, who was a brown Jamaican, a nurse and amateur pianist. She died giving birth to her second son, Michael Garfield. Shortly afterwards, his father sold the shop and bought a small banana property near Timsbury in St. Mary, in a rather remote valley of the Blue Mountains. He became a local magistrate and Methodist lay preacher. The elder son was the favorite, and Mike grew up feeling somewhat unwanted; perhaps the fact that Charles Smith had lost his wife at Mike's birth contributed to his negative feelings. He seems to
have had a knack for quarrelling with all his family (as well as with his black neighbors and laborers), so as a child, Mike did not know his mother's people, though much later he contacted her sister, who was a lawyer in New York, and he and I used to visit her whenever we had the opportunity.

Various Aunts and a devoted Nanny, Miss Kate Gregory, took care of the two boys until they were old enough to go to boarding school—Jamaica College (J.C.), modelled on the English 'public' (i.e. private) school pattern. This offered a good academic education, and seems to have been a harsh but maybe exhilarating place, if you could keep out of reach of Authority, peopled by a lot of wild sons of Jamaican planters and farmers—the really important white families sent theirs to England to school. There were also some middle class boys like Mike, and fortunately at some point their excellent English and Jamaican teachers fired them with interest in science, history and literature, with help from the new 'Penguin' sixpenny paperbacks, and in the late thirties, a remarkable explosion of poetry and other writing occurred in the Sixth Form, coincident with increasing demands for self government in the British Islands, and a growing recognition that West Indians had something of their own to be proud of, and weren't doomed to be permanently unsuccessful copies of nineteenth-century English people. Mike, like many of his classmates, wrote poetry and plays, some of which appeared in a locally published magazine called 'Focus'.

At that time one scholarship per year was awarded by the Jamaican government to the boy who came first in the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Schools Certificate exams, and Mike won it in 1939 with, he was told, the highest marks in the British Empire. Fired with anti-colonialism, he wanted to study in Bombay, but this was naturally vetoed by the (British) Governor of Jamaica. His second choice was University College London, but U-boats put a stop to that. So it was McGill University in Montreal, to read English.

The first-year syllabus at McGill repeated the final year's work at
J.C., so Mike, disgusted, went off to join the Canadian Navy—but as they had a long waiting list, he joined the army instead, in a Montreal armoured regiment (17th Duke of York’s Royal Canadian Hussars), and declined officer training ‘because I didn’t want to be responsible for getting any more people killed than I could help’. I think he came over to England in winter 1941 but we were never sure of the dates, it was all pretty hazy. They all froze below decks in the liner ‘Queen Mary’, which was trooping solo because of her speed, and that crossing she went way up into the Arctic circle to avoid the U-boats—successfully, since they got here.

We met one Saturday afternoon exactly 50 years ago (January 1943) waiting to buy tickets for the gallery of the St. James’s Theatre in London, Donald Wolfit playing King Lear. Mike talked about the Jacobean playwrights, and generally behaved unlike the average soldier, and after that he used to come and spend weekend leaves at my mother’s flat in Battersea, often bringing his buddy Keith Saunders, alias ‘Slim’, a Canadian with a passion for classical music. I had left school aged 15 at the beginning of the war in 1939, and worked as a typist in a social welfare office in Battersea (London) until I was called up in summer 1943 and trained as a War Office radio operator. In June 1944 Mike landed in Normandy with his unit on D+6.

Mike always loved literature, music and art, as well as the strictly rational scientific subjects, and wrote quite a lot of poetry during his last years at school, and during the war; Slim wrote me this year, recalling how Mike would while away the time in a foxhole during a bombardment, reciting great chunks of ‘Paradise Lost’. He wrote poetry after the war too, but one day, while he was a student in London, a fellow lodger in the same house in Battersea took him to see the Fulham Power Station, where he worked as an apprentice; this was shortly after Mike had written his long mystical poem ‘Testament’. He told me, ‘We climbed right up to the top of the main hall in the power station and looked down on the great turbines. Producing electricity to make life easier for thousands of people. That’s the modern world. That’s what we have to try to understand and cope with.
No more poetry for now. Of course we know that the other world’s there, but we have to live and work in this one.

In July 1945 the Canadian Army demobilised him in England because he had a Jamaica scholarship and a place at University College London (UCL). He arrived in battledress on the first day of autumn term, initially to study Law. Meanwhile the War Office was glad to get rid of its now surplus W/T operators from its secret stations, so I also got out and into the London School of Economics to do a two-year Certificate in Social Science and Administration, thanks to a kind letter from the Secretary of the Family Welfare Association where I had worked as a typist for two years before being called up. I suppose she said I should make a good social worker. How easy it was in those days! In 1947 we got married, and having finished my course, I was employed as a caseworker with the same family welfare agency in London.

After a year Mike switched from law to anthropology because ‘the law was an ass’ (and not, as he had hoped, about justice). I had encountered social anthropology as part of my course, and we thought that would be a more useful subject for him to study. Professor Daryll Forde at UCL was a good teacher and that batch of ex-service students was quite remarkable. Mike had to do an external general degree (Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology) in two years, because he had lost a year doing law and the scholarship only ran for three years; nevertheless the external examiner, Professor Max Gluckman at Manchester, recommended on the strength of his B.A. papers that he go on to postgraduate work in anthropology. So Daryll Forde put him in for a Colonial Social Science Research Council studentship, and in April 1949 we went off to Nigeria. An economic survey of Zaria Province was all that was wanted—oh yes, they will provide you with a kitcar, no problem. We took our bikes just in case, and a good thing we did, since no kitcar materialised. In fact, a government lorry to the nearest point on the road, and then bicycles, and carriers for the loads, to whichever village we planned to study worked perfectly well. The bikes were invaluable.
I had worked for a year and a half in London as a social worker, while Mike finished his degree and studied Hausa, and I accompanied him to Nigeria simply as his wife. However, we soon found it was very useful to work as a team, especially in that Muslim field situation, and I quickly acquired enough Hausa. I studied the domestic side of life with the women, while Mike did farming, craft, trade and political life with the men. My typing was also useful for copying all kinds of records, district notes, tax returns, and so forth. While we were working in Giwa, I became friendly with an old lady called Baba, and recorded her reminiscences in Hausa, later translating them into English as 'Baba of Karo, a Woman of the Muslim Hausa'.

During that first field trip in Nigeria; besides doing socio-economic studies of Hausa communities and collecting oral data on Zaria history from elderly informants, M.G. also did brief studies of the non-Muslim Kadara and Kagoro people of southern Zaria.

We returned to London in December 1950 and during the following year Mike wrote up his study of Hausa communities for his Ph.D. I remember typing the thesis, with our eldest son, born in 1951, in a basket on the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952-1958</td>
<td>Institute of Social and Economic Research, University (College) of the West Indies (UCWI), Jamaica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-1953</td>
<td>Grenada and Carriacou fieldwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-1958</td>
<td>(1954: Second son born.) Writing up Grenada and Carriacou; various papers and articles; Jamaica Labour Survey; West Indian Family Structure. (1957: Third son born.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-1959</td>
<td>M.G. to Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) to record local documentary and oral histories from the ancient states of Daura, Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Bornu. (I stayed in London with the three children.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>UCWI, Jamaica again; teaching new sociology courses; Rastafari study and report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) teaching; National Science Foundation (NSF) grants for writing up Hausa histories during 1960s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1969-1975 University College London (UCL); Head of Department of Anthropology. Adviser to Jamaican Prime Minister in vacations.

1975 Resigned from UCL to become full-time Adviser in Jamaica.

1977 Resigned from full-time Jamaican appointment in September. MGS and MFS: 7 months fieldwork in Nigeria attached to Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, until April, 1978.

1978 To Yale University in September as professor of anthropology. Continued as part-time Adviser in Jamaica until October 1980.

1986 Retired from Yale and returned to live in London.

1988-1990 Directed study of Caribbean Education for the Research Institute for the Study of Man (RISM) with grant from Spencer Foundation.

1990 MGS and MFS: 2 months fieldwork in Grenada for Education study.

October 1992 We finally achieved the long-awaited move to our new home in Glastonbury, Somerset.

Christmas Day 1992 Mike was suddenly taken ill and admitted to hospital.

January 5, 1993 He died peacefully in his sleep in Cardiac Unit, Bristol Royal Infirmary.

We have 'adopted' a young tree in the beautiful grounds of the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, close to our home, in Mike's memory, with the following inscription:

TILIA CORDATA (SMALL-LEAFED LIME)

ADOPTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF

MICHAEL GARFIELD SMITH, PH.D.
SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST
JAMAICA (1921)—SOMERSET (1993)

BY HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

M.F.S. December 1993


1960e (with R. Augier and R. M. Nettleford). *The Ras Tafari Movement in


1964b  "Historical and cultural conditions of political corruption among the Hausa." Comparative Studies in Society and History 6 (2): 164-194.


1990a  (with Mary F. Smith) "Kyanship & kinship among the Tarok." Africa 60 (2): 242-269.


1991a "Pluralism and social stratification." In Social and Occupational Stratification in Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago. Selwyn Ryan, ed. St. Augustine, Trinidad: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies. p. 3-35.


UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

1957 Politics and Society in Jamaica. 70p.
1965 The Two Katsinas. Incomplete, unrevised. c. 800p.
1975 Jamaica’s Social Service, 1974-5. c. 120p.
1985 Race, Ethnicity and Pluralism in Social Thought and Theory. 120p.
1986 Lectures on Political Anthropology.
1990 The Study of Social Structure.
A TRIBUTE FROM
MURRAY LAST

Anthropology Today, Vol. 9 No. 3, June 1993
Royal Anthropological Institute, London

Murray Last is a Reader in Anthropology, University College London

When M.G. Smith died on 5 January this year he had just started revising three monographs for publication. He had finished some further fieldwork in Grenada in 1990, and in 1991 had published Pluralism, Politics and Ideology in the Creole Caribbean. Now it was time to turn to his other main field—northern Nigerian political structures and their history. These two research domains of his—northern Nigerian Hausaland and the Caribbean—he had always kept working at over a period of 45 years, though he rarely interwove the two analytically (his comparison of slavery in Jamaica and in pre-colonial Muslim Hausaland, written and published in Jamaica, was exceptional). Indeed colleagues abroad have remarked to me that they had not thought of the two Smiths—the Caribbean Smith of The Plural Society in the British West Indies and the Hausa Smith of Government in Zazzau—as the same man. Given the other Smiths who have worked in the Caribbean (R.T.) and Northern Nigeria (H.F.C. or Abdullahi Smith), a certain confusion is perhaps forgiveable.

I am emphasizing the regional dimension of M.G. Smith's work since it is, I think, in that context that his books and articles will be read and quoted, being set as classical texts to argue with or develop new ideas from. This is not to say that in his writing, theory takes second place to
ethnography. But if field data are the bricks of a durable ethnography, then M.G. Smith was indefatigable in ensuring those bricks were the best available. Indeed the rigour of his fieldwork technique was legendary. Informants, on occasions, had to swear on the Holy Qur-an that they were telling the truth. Others were checked and rechecked on their consistency—whether it was in the details of their annual income and expenditure or their genealogical connections: and his interviews could take a long time. This was not bullying—though I have heard informants comment much later on their experience—but a formidable concern for the truth and for accuracy. The subject, he felt, was simply too serious for sloppiness—and, by and large, people agreed and started to share his quest for precision.

That quest for precision and the utter seriousness of anthropological enquiry, as unfashionable then as it is now, sprang I think from two important sources. First, growing up as a Jamaican in the colonial world and then working in colonized communities, he recognized that the key, as a colonial subject, to confronting that colonial culture lay in the methods of law and lawyers. You won the day by being better briefed, by having your case more tightly argued and by carefully cross-examining your opponents' data. M.G. Smith seldom ducked overt conflict. Not for nothing was his initial choice of career the law. He brought an advocate's sharpness to ethnography. The second source of his seriousness was his strong distaste for the flippant, self-deprecating styles of middle-class, metropolitan British anthropologists, who identified socially with the colonial administrators if not always with the colonial project. In northern Nigeria, where the Muslim emirates were staffed by Fulani and British who together cosily enjoyed an aristocrat's dominance over the peasantry, M.G. Smith found the collusion and the exploitation, even in the booming 1950s, particularly offensive. He was not to be won over, as so many were, by the myths of benevolence, by the appeals to consensus.

Hausaland, like the Caribbean, was to M.G. Smith essentially a plural society in which ethnic identities and their history play an impor-
tant role. Both places were heavily affected by the experience of slavery, however differently implemented. Though no one would think of the Hausa emirates as distinct 'islands', the differences between them presented a similar opportunity for structural comparison. As in the Caribbean, his perspective on the Hausa, deepened by the existence of documents and palace bureaucracies, covered a period of at least 150 years, and compared the structures created by the jihad both with those that preceded them and with those that followed under colonial rule. Although Zaria ('Zazzau') was the first of these comparisons, he researched and wrote four more: Daura (published in 1978), Kano, Katsina and Sokoto; these last three are due to be shortly published, because of his death now largely unrevised since they were rewritten in the early 1970s.

As historical studies, they contain extensive interview material from the late 1950s and early 1960s, from elderly informants who have long since died. As sources they are invaluable to historians. Although histories of these emirates have already been written by Nigerian and other scholars, M.G. Smith's severely critical approach to the politics and motivations of the whole 'Sokoto Caliphate' culture offers not just interesting oral data but a fresh interpretation of what has tended to become for many a 'golden dream'...

His Caribbean work is still controversial. A central argument is that the component groups in West Indian society, defined locally by colour, essentially formed separate coherent cultures—and were held together within the Caribbean whole through the domination of one of these groups—usually the 'white' one, in alliance with the 'coloured'. He argued that there was not the normative consensus shared by all groups that would permit Caribbean culture to be analysed as a single cultural system. He was accused by other scholars of reifying a local sense of difference into a theory, even an ideology—but he refused to fudge, in favour of a sugary social solidarity, the crucial divisions he could recognize as a 'native' (as he styled himself); nor would he agree to transform the reality of ethnicity and race into the discourse of class and class struggle. Indeed in the last
telephone conversation we had a few weeks before he died, he spoke of how the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia and elsewhere surely confirmed his stance over the central importance of ethnicity in political analysis.

Despite his preoccupation in recent years with constructing a systematic, global account of the roots of conflict, for most people M.G. Smith's name will be linked to 'corporation theory' and his vigorous elaboration of ideas associated with Sir Henry Maine and Max Weber. Just as in his development of J.S. Furnivall's concept of the 'plural society', so in taking up the rather wooly but widely used concepts of corporateness and 'corporate group', M.G. Smith sought to turn corporate analysis into a method through which the specific characteristics of social units within a society could be tabulated and compared systematically, over time and space. Given the current lack of interest among anthropologists in political theory and structural analysis, M.G. Smith's fundamental contribution to tidying up this area of anthropological usage is not widely read, though I understand from political scientists that his incisive discussion of the various kinds of corporate groups and what corporateness might entail remains important for them, though more so perhaps in the USA than here.

Anthropologists' work seems to fall into one of two kinds. The first, anthropology-for-export, has resulted in making anthropological ideas and ways of seeing become commonplace well beyond the anthropology seminar room. These are our 'big ideas' that other disciplines pounce upon and use. Without the wide sale of such work, anthropology could have remained a small cult. But there is the other kind of anthropology—the monograph, the scholarly article—whose long-term contribution lies either within the discipline or in the libraries of the countries whence the monograph's data derive. M.G. Smith's work is of this second kind—but with a slight difference: he was not writing simply as an academic, but as a scholar of the Third World committed to telling the truth, sharply and irrefutably.
ON M. G. SMITH

Birth: 1921, Kingston, Jamaica
Education: B.A. (Anthropology), London, 1948
Ph.D. (Social Anthropology), London, 1951

Awards
1953 Wellcome Medal for Anthropological Research, Royal Anthropological Institute
1955 Curle Bequest Essay Prize, Royal Anthropological Institute
1960 Amaury Talbot Book Prize, Royal Anthropological Institute
1965 National Science Foundation grant, one year
1968 National Science Foundation grant, seven months
1972 Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, California
1972 President, Section N, British Association for the Advancement of Science
1972 Musgrave Gold Medal, Institute of Jamaica
1972 Order of Merit, Jamaica
1976 Doctor of Laws (Honoris causa), McGill University, Montreal, Canada
1986 Caribbean Review Award
1989 Doctor of Literature (Honoris causa), University of the West Indies, Jamaica
Teaching, Research and Administrative Posts

1952-1956  Research Fellow, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
1956-1958  Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
1958-1959  Senior Research Fellow, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan, Nigeria
1960-1961  Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
1961-1969  Professor of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles
1969-1975  Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University College London
1972-1977  Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Jamaica
1978-1986  Franklin M. Crosby Professor of the Human Environment, Department of Anthropology, Yale University
1986-1993  Franklin M. Crosby Professor Emeritus of the Human Environment, Department of Anthropology, Yale University
1986-1993  Senior Research Fellow, Research Institute for the Study of Man, New York, New York

Field Research

Grenada and Carriacou  1952-1953, 1990
Testament: M. G. Smith is a joint project of the Research Institute for the Study of Man and InterAmericas/Society of Arts and Letters of the Americas/ Sociedad de Artes y Letras de las Américas. The exhibition was organized by Maria Friedrich. The panels were designed by Abigail Sturges Graphic Design.

Research Institute for the Study of Man (RISM) was established in 1955 as an educational and scientific foundation with a specific geographical focus on the Caribbean region. Over the years, RISM has initiated new thrusts in social scientific study, mounted and carried out its own research, helped train several generations of field researchers, and supported the work of many American, European, and Caribbean scholars specializing in this region. Through its regional and international conferences, publication subsidies, bibliographic research, and library service, RISM has played an active role in disseminating the results of scholarly labor on Caribbean issues.

InterAmericas/Society of Arts and Letters of the Americas/Sociedad de Artes y Letras de las Américas, a project of the New York Foundation for the Arts, was created in 1992 to provide both funding and venue for programs that celebrate the richness and diversity of the arts and humanities in the Americas. Of special and continuing interest are works by artists and scholars that define the cultures of the circum-Caribbean.