CLASSICS SERIES I

THE MAORI AND HIS RELIGION IN ITS NON-RITUALISTIC ASPECTS

JØRGEN Prytz-Johansen

NEW EDITION

INTRODUCTION BY
MARSHALL SAHLINS

Hau
The HAU Classics of Ethnographic Theory series aims to provide access to unedited or out-of-print exemplifications of ethnographic theory, for both teaching and research purposes, and to illustrate the contribution of ethnographically-inspired insights to larger debates in anthropology and the human sciences. To highlight the continued relevance and interest of these works, prominent contemporary anthropologists also provide original commentary in the form of introductions, prefaces, or afterwords.
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Contact

Email  giovannidacol@haujournal.org
Facebook  http://on.fb.me/haujournal
Twitter  @haujournal
Postal Address  HAU, Journal of Ethnographic Theory
c/o Social Anthropology
School of Social Sciences
University of Manchester
Manchester M13 9PL, UK
SUPPORTED BY HAU-N.E.T.

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EDITORIAL NOTE TO THE NEW EDITION

“Mana is a kind of fellowship.” It all began with Jørgen Prytz-Johansen’s spell-binding sentence encountered in Valerio Valeri’s Kingship and sacrifice. What followed was a long quest for unearthing this neglected gem and to offer it—open-access—to scholars worldwide. The quest involved purchasing a yellowed copy of the tome in a Danish antique bookshop, tracing the elusive copyrights for months, and preparing for lingering and taxing editorial work. We believe the outcome was worth the journey. With his magnum opus, Prytz-Johansen achieved an unsurpassed study in anthropological keywords where traditional texts become the tool-kit for unlocking the moral totality grounding Maori society. Through an exhilarating immersion into a non-Western philosophical system and the universe of mana-terms, this volume offers a signal contribution to the study of religious and ethical cosmologies. We are confident that Prytz-Johansen’s memorable musings of the kinship “I,” “life” and vitality, mana, gifts, fortune, and tapu will continue to challenge the imagination of anthropologists, philosophers, and historians of religion for years to come.

Our thanks go first to Bo Alkjær, Prytz-Johansen’s literary executor, who granted permission for the reprint and to Morten Nielsen who managed to locate him in Copenhagen. Bo Alkjær also kindly supplied the errata and an extraordinary unedited postscript that Prytz-Johansen had prepared for a planned second edition of his monograph. The postscript appears in HAU’s edition along with a biographic note of Prytz-Johansen authored by Mr. Alkjær.

This new edition has been made possible by the generous volunteer labour of the HAU editorial team and a group of dedicated interns. We have digitized the original manuscript and incorporated the errata that Prytz-Johansen himself had outlined for the planned second edition of the volume. We then reconfigured Prytz-Johansen’s original citation system into one closer to the Chicago style employed by HAU. The style originally employed by the author only cited journal articles by using an abbreviation of the journal title and author name, rather than an author-date system. In the list of references only the journal title that had been abbreviated appeared, rather than the full reference details. In the case of monographs, the original system provided the author name and an abbreviation of the monograph title and page number, rather than the year of publication. In this process of substituting these into the text, we decided not to convert Prytz-Johansen’s original footnotes into in-text citations so as to avoid disrupting the flow of the text. The resulting style aims to facilitate an ease of reading as much as possible for a contemporary reader, while preserving the original flow and format of Prytz-Johansen’s often gripping rhetorical style. The original spelling of Maori words and names has been preserved as they appeared in the original text.
The symbol that appears between the pages throughout the volume is used with the permission of the New Zealand artist Julie Krone, from the body of her work called Mis-translated. The image relates to the Maori koru—a symbol of unfurling life—and also to the English letter “a” as a symbol of written language. Like this new edition of the Prytz-Johansen text, this design symbolizes new life of the written word, and also the interplay and mutual “reading” between Maori and European cultures. We would like to thank the artist for her kind permission to use this image. The second Maori symbol employed in the chapters titles’ headings is is the pukana, taken from Jeffrey Holman’s photo of Elsdon Best’s Tuhoe: Children of the mist (1925). Pukana is a word in Te Reo (Maori) meaning “to stare wildly.” The grimace face, with eyes dilated and the tongue stuck out, can be seen during performances of the haka, the ancestral war dance of the Maori. We are grateful to Piers Locke for suggesting the use of this image.

Many thanks to the interns who did the bulk of the digitalization, proofreading, and referencing work: Juliette Hopkins and Gina Krone. Holly High directed brilliantly this taxing stage of the editorial process. Gratitude should be extended to Philip Swift for his precious help in digging references and bibliographic details, Henrik Hvenegaard for designing the cover, Randolph Mamo for carving the layout to perfection, and Luis Felipe Murillo for creating the Classics website. Last but not least, thanks to Marshall Sahlins for honoring us with a unique “Kantian” preface to the new edition of the text and Rupert Stasch, Gregory Schrempp, Paul Tapsell, and Anne Salmond for their scintillating endorsements. Indeed, working with all of them resulted in a beautiful fellowship.

The Series Editors
Quietly famous among Polynesianists, Prytz-Johansen’s classic has a strange timeliness for ethnographers today, many of its old-school values standing well in front of our cutting edge. His discussion of kinship as “living together,” his comments on the cultural ordering of historical temporality, his inquiry into moral ethnopsychology, and his idea of the expansiveness of what counts as “religion,” were all decades ahead of his time. Anthropologists of all generations and studying all topics will be repaid generously by engagement with this remarkable text.

Rupert Stasch, author of Society of others: Kinship and mourning in a West Papuan place

In defining the problems and potentials of portraying a society and its conceptual repertoire through its texts, I find myself continually returning to three towering models: Max Weber’s Ancient Judaism, Franz Boas’ Tsimshian Mythology, and J. Prytz-Johansen’s The Maori and His Religion. The last I regard as the single most illuminating work on traditional Maori religion and its social context.

Gregory Schrempp, author of Magical arrows: The Maori, the Greeks, and the folklore of the universe

The Maori and his religion is a fascinating assemblage of early recorded accounts of the Maori. It draws on a wide range of credible writings, providing an insightful approximation of the genealogically-ordered belief system apparent at time of early European contact. It is an invaluable reference for any scholars seeking to delve deeper into the wealth of early ethnographic Maori publications.

Paul Tapsell, Professor of Maori Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand

If Immanuel Kant was able to sit with the Maori experts in an ancient school of learning and talk over cosmological questions, one would wish for J. Prytz-Johansen to be their scribe. By immersing himself in old Maori texts, this Danish scholar acquired remarkable insights into their intricate philosophies. This book is an extraordinary feat of ontological teleportation.

Dame Anne Salmond, Distinguished Professor of Maori Studies and Anthropology, University of Auckland