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ROSALDO, MICHELLE ZIMBALIST

Michelle (Shelly) Zimbalist Rosaldo (1944–1981), an American anthropologist, was one of the central figures responsible for revitalizing feminist anthropology in the 1970s and early 1980s. She also made signal contributions to symbolic, linguistic, and psychological anthropology and laid the groundwork for unifying the study of gender, kinship, and politics.

Biography and Major Works

Rosaldo was born in New York City and attended Radcliffe College, earning her bachelor's degree from Harvard in history and literature. While an undergraduate, she spent a summer in Chiapas, Mexico, under the supervision of George A. Collier and Evon Z. Vogt. She conducted graduate studies in social anthropology in the Program in Social Relations at Harvard, where she and her husband, Renato, completed their PhDs. With Renato, she conducted fieldwork between 1967 and 1969 among the Ilongot of northern Luzon, in the Philippines. Her dissertation, *Context and Metaphor in Ilongot Oral Tradition*, concerned the figures of speech through which the Ilongot expressed notions of self and emotion. It exemplified her distinctive approach to emotion, one that placed the emphasis on the symbolic and discursive production of self in a social order rather than on interior states. This would later lead her to question the idea of different logics or systems of meaning separate from the relationships of rank and order that make up a particular social world.

After receiving their PhDs, the Rosaldos were appointed to the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. It was still rare at that time for women to be hired at elite universities. Ben Paul.

full-time position and split it between Jane F. Collier and Shelly. Jane and George Collier occupied 1½ slots and the Rosaldos, the other 1½. The Rosaldos continued to sit on a 75% position each for several years. At Stanford, Shelly began her inquiry into the apparently universal devaluation of women relative to men. With Jane F. Collier and others, she developed a theory of gender based on social constructions of prestige that could provide a cross-cultural account of women's inequality without recourse to biological determinism. They also rejected the concept of subordination since even where women were powerful and not subordinate to men, men's activities were still more highly valued.

At Stanford, Rosaldo organized and cochaired the university's first Committee on Feminist Studies in 1980–1981 and helped develop curricula and programming for the Center for Research on Women. She participated actively in two Faculty Seminars, one on interpretative approaches in social inquiry and the other on feminist studies. She received a residential fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University in 1975–1976 and at Stanford's Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences in 1979–1980.

Rosaldo was active in campus politics, working to draft a University Statement on Academic Freedom in the aftermath of the firing of the tenured English professor H. Bruce Franklin, a Melville scholar who led a group of students to occupy the Stanford computer center to protest the U.S. invasion of Laos in 1972. Rosaldo became a strong voice for ethical investment policies, academic freedom, and affirmative action. She was elected by her peers to serve on Stanford's Academic Senate. She was also known as an excellent teacher, and in 1979, she received the Dinkelspiel Award in recognition of her service to undergraduates.

She returned to the Philippines in 1974 and again in 1981 on a Fulbright with the University of the Philippines at Baguio, where she was beginning a project with Renato among the Ifugao. While walking along a path with two Ifugao, she slipped and fell to her death 65 feet down a ravine and into a river. In addition to Renato, she was survived by her two sons, Samuel Mario and Manuel Zimbalist Rosaldo. Members of her immediate cohort of colleagues, and many anthropologists of her generation, experienced the loss acutely. She was widely regarded across the field of anthropology as one of its leading lights.

Anthropologists from subdisciplines that would profoundly diverge in the 1980s attributed to her some of their best insights and dedicated their work to her.

Critical Contributions to Anthropology

Rosaldo's contributions span feminist and gender studies, symbolic anthropology, the anthropology of emotions, and cognitive and linguistic theories of language use.

Women in Culture and Society

Rosaldo's landmark collection, *Woman, Culture and Society*, was coedited with Louise Lamphere and gathered together essays by 16 women social scientists (mainly anthropologists) to examine the devaluation of women to men cross-culturally. In assuming universal sexual asymmetry, Rosaldo explicitly challenged evolutionary and certain more vulgar Marxist approaches that searched for the origins of gender inequality rather than trying to understand it in light of ongoing social relations. She called attention to what she termed the public and domestic spheres, the former encompassing and limiting the latter. The public/domestic dichotomy was a heuristic device to understand how child-rearing and "home" tasks limited women's participation in other affairs and how they subsequently came to be symbolically and socially devalued. Rosaldo speculated on the broader social and political consequences were men to assume a larger role in child rearing. Other contributions in the book focused on the variability among women's positions within and across societies, opening up the ethnography of women. Later, Rosaldo would recognize that the public/domestic dichotomy was a product of class-based, capitalist societies and not a neutral analytical tool. With Collier, Rosaldo expanded her work by comparing models of gender and kinship in various "simple" societies—those characterized by other anthropologists in terms of bride wealth and bride service. The focus was on socially created systems of inequality and prestige. Collier continued this work in her volume *Marriage and Inequality in Classless Societies* (1988); and Collier and Sylvia J. Yanagisako, also at Stanford, carried on the analysis in *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis* (1989). Second-wave feminist scholars in the 1970s discovered the field of anthropology, hoping to find there evidence of women in other cultures

who were valued as men's equals or betters. Rosaldo was critical of this quest. For Rosaldo, the ethnographic record could not sustain such an assertion, and the demand for anthropology to contribute to feminism in that way was born more of a quest for origins than a response to actually existing, and varied, social arrangements in which women and men find and make themselves.

Emotions and Social Life

Rosaldo's book *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (1981) is a rich ethnographic account of the way the Ilongot talk about emotions. Headhunting was practiced by men during her first visit in 1967. It continued even after the state's attempt through martial law to abolish it in 1972. It remained a significant part of the men's narration of self. Rosaldo redescribed headhunting not as the acquisition of the vanquished's soul substance or energy but rather as the lifting of a weight from the headhunter's heart. Delving into Ilongot metaphors and categories associated with headhunting, hearts and passion, and knowledge and health, Rosaldo argued that the Ilongots did not make a utilitarian calculation that taking a head would convey to the hunter the energy of the dead, and that the Ilongots did not take home the severed heads. Rather, headhunting helped organize and explain a social world where people felt weighted down with envy at others' accomplishments and needed a way for energy to be released and renewed so that they could achieve more productive ends. Her account was thoroughly social. She argued that earlier accounts of headhunting suffered from the anthropologist's desire to locate a motive—an interior state—which presumed a model of self foreign to the Ilongots' repertoire of personhood and society. Rosaldo invoked Wittgenstein on the need to seek out the "tone" of discourse and the "forms of life" rather than local logics. The book was exemplary of a new kind of interpretive ethnography and was influential in psychological and linguistic anthropology.

The Things We Do With Words

Rosaldo's work on language took Western theories of linguistic action as the ethnography of Western societies and social preoccupations, not descriptions of universal truths. Rosaldo set Ilongot

notions of language alongside the speech act theory of J. L. Austin and J. Searle. Developed while she was at the Center for Advanced Study with Michael Silverstein, and after reading Derrida and Grice, this work linked language use to social rank and forcefully argued that relations, not intentions, should come first in the analysis of language. Rosaldo argued that promises and performatives, Austin and Searle's modal speech acts, presume an interior, autonomous self to the neglect of the social relations in which such selves are made. Notions of sincerity central to the felicity of such speech acts fall away when speakers like the Ilongots issue directives not about interior states or actor-based intentions but rather the affirmation and maintenance of ongoing social life.

Rosaldo's Legacy

Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo's legacy remains her contributions to feminist anthropology and the effort to account for universal sexual asymmetry without biological reductionism. She posed a profound reformulation of anthropological relativism and reflexivity, which, despite their attempt at critical purchase, still reproduced contemporary Western assumptions about human personhood. Her emphasis on the relational and thoroughly social aspects of human existence and her insistence on humans as social persons first and individuals second—if at all—remain a profound challenge to anthropology.

Bill Maurer

See also *Feminist Anthropology*; Gender and Anthropology; Lamphere, Louise; Rosaldo, Renato

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