

Michael J. Egan

1940–1977

Michael J. Egan's death at the young age of thirty-six has deprived South Asian scholarship of one of its most promising young scholars. Michael studied at Stanford and later at Cambridge, England, where he worked with Edmund Leach and obtained his Ph.D. in 1970. In the same year he joined the Anthropology faculty at the University of British Columbia, where he remained till his death in May 1977.

One of Michael's major interests was the ethnography of South Asia—especially that of Sri Lanka, where he carried out his first field research. At the time of his death, he was finalizing for publication the draft of his book *A Configurational Analysis of a Sinhalese Healing Ritual*. This work is one of the most detailed, carefully documented, and exhaustive studies of any ritual complex that I have read. Michael was devoted to Sri Lanka studies; he organized several conferences on that country's ethnography, including a highly successful symposium at the *American Anthropological Association* meetings in 1973. He recently edited these papers in a special issue of *Modern Ceylon Studies*.

Michael's second major area of interest was Cognitive Anthropology—especially cultural differences in color perception, and the relationship between color and emotion. He wrote several papers on this theme, including an important one he co-authored with Roy D'Andrade in the *American Ethnologist* (I, 1, 1974). He was planning more ethnographic and theoretical work when he was cut off in his prime by an incurable illness.

Michael Egan was a quiet, self-effacing, and generous human being, thoughtful and considerate of others. Those who knew him will miss him deeply.

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