

ANTHROPOLITAN

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Welcome

The academic year 2014/15 has started well for staff and students alike. The department now hosts 27 post-doctoral research staff, the majority of whom are seated in a lovely room on the 5th floor of Wolfson House, joined by advanced doctoral students who have given up their desks in the department for our first year MPhil/PhD students. We were very sad to have to say goodbye to our esteemed lecturer Dr Matthew Skinner, who joins his partner at the University of Kent. Meanwhile we have welcomed two new teaching staff, Dr Kimberly Chong and Dr Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic, who both join us for a period of three years.

With six large and numerous smaller research teams operating from the department, the sharing of research work across the department's internal sectional divisions is more important than ever. To meet this demand we have created two new annual memorial lectures, the Dame Mary Douglas Memorial Lecture, delivered by Professor Paul Richards from Njala University in Sierra Leone and the Daryll Forde Memorial lecture, to be delivered by Professor Bruno Latour in February. To take a break from our usual weekly section-based seminars we are holding, during the month of November, special all-department seminars, with international speakers and three of our own European Research Council grant holders. In addition, a series of workshops organised by staff and students out of the department's numerous Research and Reading Groups are keeping everybody busy.

The range of our new activities is extended to students. In addition to the Anthropology in the Professional World occasional lecture series, we are now also organising two alumni gatherings per academic year to which we invite our former graduates to speak about their work and careers. At the end of the spring term we will hold a 3rd year dissertation conference to which all staff and students will be invited. We are continuing with our acclaimed new 2nd year compulsory module Being Human, taught in an Oxbridge style tutorial system, enabling our students to discuss readings with staff in small groups. This innovation in teaching has been praised as a model to be followed by other departments within the Faculty.

My thanks to PhD student Jesse Bia, who gave six hours of lectures to A Level Anthropology students at Bradford College, commencing a new initiative in Widening Participation.

And finally, my congratulations to Michael Stewart, who has been promoted to Professor, and who will give his inaugural lecture on 5th May 2015 entitled 'The Porous University: Creating Partnerships in a Global City'.

Fun, intellectual rigour and collective aspiration are the trademarks of our department and we are looking forward to a very successful year for our staff and students.

Professor Susanne Kuechler
Head of Department

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Harley Buddha. On the Road in America's West

Volker Sommer

Professor of Evolutionary Anthropology

“Like a true nature’s child / We were born, born to be wild.” How I wish I had written those immortal lines. Because little does the wider populace know about my true calling: lyrics. But then, my poetic passion at least provided me with the perfect excuse to go on a trip fuelled by adrenaline and other things epinephrine that I can’t possibly talk about. If you think that this trip was a midlife crisis with bells on, I might point out that for this to be true, I would need to live to be 120.

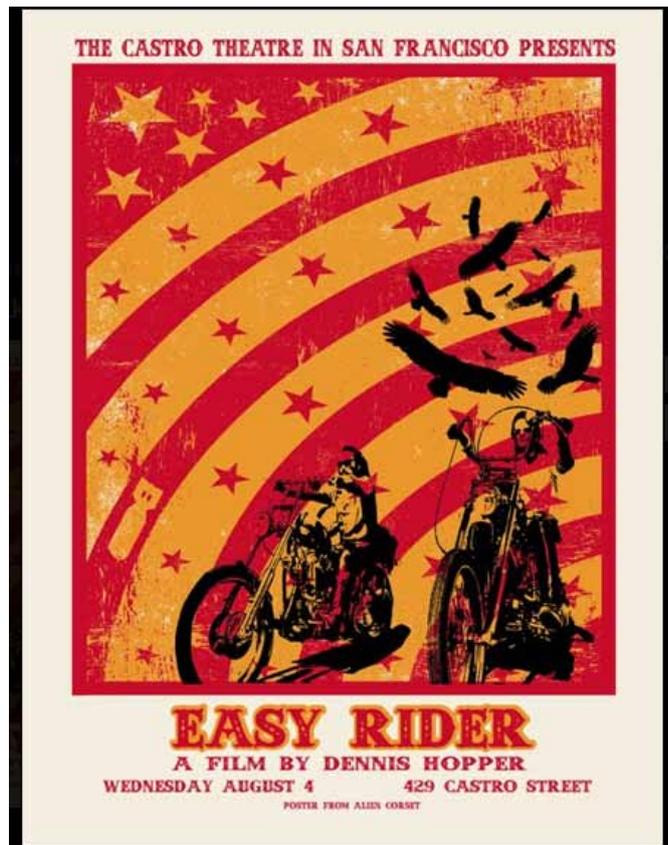
Anyway, the untamed anthem counsels, “Get your motor runnin’ / Head out on the highway / Lookin’ for adventure / In whatever comes our way”. I did exactly that – riding thousands of miles under a blistering September sun and into autumn fogs through Nevada, California and Arizona, across painted deserts and serene mountain ridges that would have prompted any Donner party to engage in unbridled cannibalism. What’s more, I negotiated megalopolitan gridlocks, sheering winds on

suicide bridges, hairpin needle curves along the Pacific coast – and I camped in foggy redwoods and motel rooms right out of Coen Brothers movies.

For this, of course, I did not mount any old motor-powered moped, but a badass Harley-Davidson. To be specific: a Road King. Such an ogre weighs 800 pounds and propels its 7 feet of length with a little help from 1584 cc and 80 hp. Basically, it’s a car on two wheels. It sure costs as much as a decent convertible.

But as they say: travelling in a car is like watching a film; riding a Harley is like starring in one.

The trick for any actor is to keep the shiny side up. That part is easy when doing 80-90 on some freeway. Not so much when manoeuvring through a simple sandy creek or while trying to bring the beast to a gracefully balanced halt. That's when gravity – Isaac Newton, I hate you! – in an instant might unceremoniously fell the 400 kilograms, resulting in a sudden and complete understanding of what “heavy metal” means. You'd then better keep your legs away from the smouldering exhaust pipe or the roll bars, lest you risk multiple fractures from simply *sitting* on a bike. Another potentially fatal mistake is marked by using the handlebars to steer through curves. Mind you, a hefty Harley will not obey such feeble instructions, but instead will guide you straight into the haze and over a cliff. On the contrary, you have to become one with the apparatus and *lean* your way through serpentines. Only then can your guardian angel fly as fast as you drive.



Sometimes, even angels get sidetracked. In mid-July 2008, I waited in my UCL anthropology office to discuss research with my colleague next door, a star in palaeoanthropology at age 37. But he never arrived. Charles Lockwood had duly set out on his motorbike, but just before reaching the campus, he collided with a truck. My trip thus had an element of remembrance (and exorcism) to it: to honour Charlie's tragic death. And also to touch base with Brian Villmoare, who had worked with Charlie and then filled his position. Coincidentally – or not? – Brian is also a biker. We met up in Vegas, where Brian mounted his 1930s BMW with spectacular coolness, his leatherjacket sporting vintage striae that had surely been scraped by some *Homo erectus* when they butchered large game.

I excelled in human-machine fornications only because I was tutored and accompanied by an experienced biker-guru who made sure that our Road Kings roared their potatopotatopotato-symphony ever so serenely. Like myself, Horst “Häppy” Hoppe hails from the tiny village of Holzhausen in the forested German heartlands. Consequently, we wore leather jackets with the stitching “Deutschholzhäuser go West”. This was



Above: *Easy Rider* movie poster and Jack Kerouac's typewritten scroll of *On the Road*

meant to elicit respect from those lucky Americans who happened to bump into us – as nothing is more awe-inspiring to members of God's own nation than a seemingly endless German word garnished with a confusing Umlaut. (That's why Häagen Dazs ice cream works over there.)

This is where metrics meets metal. To those of you who were born after the Pleistocene had already climaxed: I probably need to point out that Steppenwolf's *Born to Be Wild* is heard in the opening credits of *Easy Rider*. That's when the freewheeling hippies Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper kick-start their Harley choppers to ride through the America of the late 1960s – an era when counterculture and redneckism didn't easily mix. The band's name alludes to *Der Steppenwolf* by German author Hermann Hesse, a novel that centres around hallucinations and carnalities to be experienced in the "Magisches Theater" (courtesy of a local guide-ess named Hermine; you are welcome to speculate about

connections to the Hermione of *Harry Potter* fame...).

The *Easy Rider* characters willingly reenact such hedonistic dimensions: skinny dipping in pools, getting stoned in brothels, weeping on headstones. Captain America and Billy the Kid thus join a time-honoured stream of tradition – that Jack Kerouac, 15 years earlier, had set in motion on an endless type-written scroll that became his novel *On the Road*. A key persona is Carlo Marx – in real life known as Allen Ginsberg. Kerouac's follow-up narrative, *The Dharma Bums*, features Japhy Ryder – based on Gary Snyder, also known as the "poet laureate of Deep Ecology".

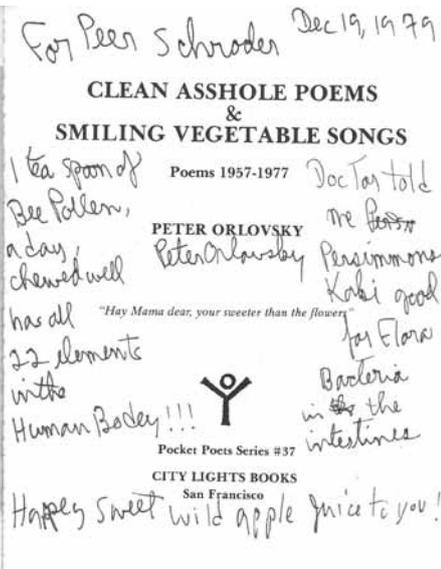
This is a lot of reference to poetry, innit? It is, however, entirely justified because, of all the unlikely places on Earth, the vicinity of my village harbours hardcore factions of German beatniks. Here, founding heroes of the movement such as Peter Orlowksy and Allen Ginsberg felt at ease to squat, and the German clique still travels to the foothills

of the Sierra Nevada where the camp takes up its last stand – to fraternise with a superannuated Gary Snider and accomplished acolytes such as Chris Olander and Will Staple.

By now you might have guessed that my bike ride was actually a historic mission in lyricism. Such a trip might not seem like noble environmental activism, given that a Harley, according to the Urban Dictionary, is "the most effective way to turn gasoline into noise without producing any horsepower". Even so: doing something utterly useless and unnecessary is the whole point of a dignified quest!

Therefore, the saddlebags of my Road King held heaps of a freshly printed *Trompete 8*. This bilingual 2014 collection, edited and produced in my neck of the woods, assembles poetry from extant German and American beatniks – and those that aspire to be such (like myself, but don't tell anybody). Each poem is congenially translated into the reverse





Peter Orlovsky's dedication to Volker Sommer's hometown friend Peer Schröder

language. Of course, we could have FedExed the anthologies to the antiestablishmentarianistic community in Nevada City. But, slowmo delivery across the pond by hand and Harley seemed much more noble. And so I drove my mighty two-wheeler across high Sierra passes into the flaming horizon of where the West is about to end. To celebrate the cross-Atlantic recognition that poetry is to dancing as prose is to walking – and to convey hardcopies of this message.

My pilgrimage thus came to a crescendo. Still, finding the Harley

grail cannot suit an orthodox beatnik. Because the spiritual odyssey is about transient bliss, it is about *beatification*: the recognition that salvation is not found on arrival, but *On the Road*.

Don't believe me? Whatever – here's one for the road: "I like smoke and lightning / Heavy metal thunder / Racin' with the wind / And the feelin' that I'm under. / Yeah Darlin' go make it happen / Take the world in a love embrace / Fire all of your guns at once / And explode into space."

Literature: Köppen, Theo, Peer Schröder & Katja Töpfer (eds) (2014). *Trompete* 8. Edition Michael Kellner. Göttingen: Steidl.

Volker Sommer is Professor of Evolutionary Anthropology. In one of his other lives, he is notorious for fieldwork with monkeys and apes in Africa and Asia.





Bears & Fear

Leanne Phelps

MSc Anthropology, Environment and Development

Bears are highly unlikely to injure or kill people, but is it still useful to fear them? My research in the remote Kennicott Valley of Southcentral Alaska put an interesting spin on bear fear, also known as ‘bear-anoia’. It’s a place where people live in close contact with Black and Grizzly bears and have character-filled stories to share for it. It can be difficult to discuss feelings about fear in a place where daily life is full of backcountry risks – whether it’s collecting enough food and firewood to wait out weeks of minus 40 weather, the combination of wild terrain and no hospital for hundreds of miles, or avoiding the hungry winter Grizzly snarling about town. By analysing bear fear through a mixed methods approach, I was able to understand its nuances and see how it could be transformed in order to serve a practical purpose.

The majority of interviewees were unwilling to admit that they feared bears, or they replaced the word ‘fear’ with something else, such as respect, awareness or apathy:

“I didn’t feel... It’s not that I felt threatened. It’s that I felt I was at risk of becoming threatened.”

“It’s just an awareness. It’s not a fear.”

“Respect them. You don’t have to fear them.”

“Well I don’t know if feeling threatened is quite the word. Bear consciousness.”

“1: We’re fine...45-70 (rifle), faith in God.

2: Pretty good combination.

1: Bears are not a threat to us (laughter).”

Despite most interviewees’ avoidance of the word ‘fear’, hints of it would peek through their colourful bear stories. In most anonymous questionnaires there was also some admittance of fear. So why downplay it? I was able to grasp the nuance of these answers by probing further in interviews about the usefulness and hindrance of fearing bears. I then backed up these inquiries with anonymous questionnaires, from which the data could be statistically analysed. The results were both intriguing and multi-layered.

I found that persecutory attitudes towards bears were significantly lower when respondents had lost some of their bear fear over time ($\rho = -0.30$,

$p < 0.01$). This makes sense: you cannot remain paralysed by fear in an environment dominated by risks. Interviewees spoke about coming to terms with bear-anoxia:

It's like shark attacks...once you live near water, you don't worry about a shark attack. You have to be aware of it, but I want to walk, I want to live here, I want to do what I'm doing... I don't fear, although if I was afraid, I wouldn't call it irrational, because there's a rational reason to be cautious.

1: Well, I've decided I do not fear bears. I've decided I'm going to be afraid of bears when I see one. You spend a lot of time being afraid of bears when there's none around.

2: Do you feel like that helps you deal with their existence more?

1: Very much, yeah. I just accept the bears and their danger as part of living here. Every place you live has inconveniences and I embrace this one.

Living in the Kennicott Valley is a choice, and when people move there, they usually know that they are moving into a risky environment where environmental awareness is a survival skill. It's like an unspoken contract, whereby you choose a life with more risk and shut out a lot of fear to make that life possible. But what happens when someone claims that they never feared bears at all? Is that healthy for human-bear coexistence?

Shortly, I found that it was not. People who admitted very little fear, or no fear at all, when they first moved to bear country were more likely to have killed bears ($\rho = -0.24, P < 0.03$), more likely to kill bears to reduce population numbers ($\rho = -0.29, p < 0.01$), and more likely to kill bears for food ($\rho = -0.29, p < 0.01$). So it appears that initially fearing bears – or being able to admit some bear fear at some point – is helpful for coexistence. And if the person learns to deal with their bear fear, they are probably more likely to lose that fear over time,



which in turn makes them less hostile towards the bears.

Interviewees also discussed how too much fear was problematic, pinpointing ways in which they had worked through their fears:

“When I say “bear”, is fear your number one [response]? If fear is your first response, you probably shouldn't live here really, because you're not going to act rationally and fear causes people to do bad, stupid things sometimes.”

“I remember when I first went hiking in places where there's potentially bears...then I hiked with the gun in my hand, ready to shoot, I mean ready to go like in combat. And I realized that that can't possibly work; that's not fun...I started reading up on things.”

“The more you know, the less fear you have, and it's less of an onus on you. Knowledge replaces fear.”

So in short, is it practical to fear bears? Yes...at least a little, and as long as you learn to deal with it.

Reading Bear Behavior

Good Behavior:

- Keeps a safe distance from people
- Avoidant of people
- Spooked by humans
- Seeks out natural foods
- Never receives a human food reward
- Stays out of inhabited areas
- Shows you its backside as it runs away
- Preoccupied with eating natural foods
- Climbs up a tree (Black bears)



Bad Behavior:

- Food-conditioned (seeks out human foods)
- Human-habituated: Unafraid of humans
- Comes too close/Advances on people
- Destructive to property
- Aggressive nature (doesn't back down)
- Charging (bluff or otherwise)
- Scraps with dogs
- Gnashing/popping/clicking the jaw
- Huffing, stomping, growling

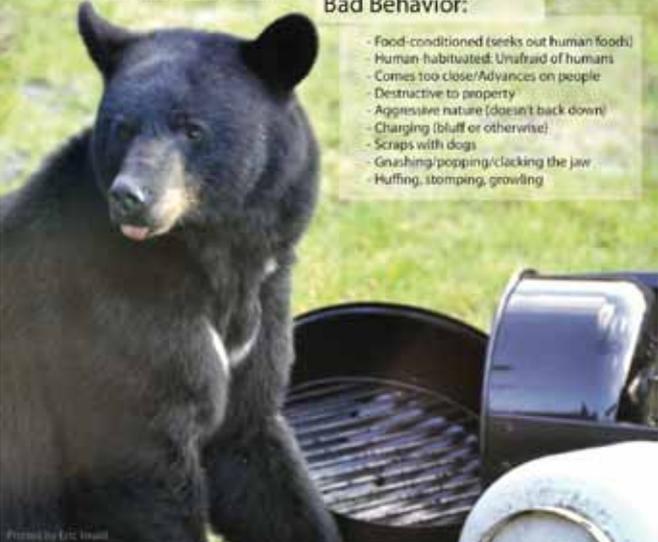


Photo by Eric Isenhardt

Reflections from the field: Entering the Women's World

Caroline Ackley

PhD Candidate in Medical Anthropology

The entire country is run according to the *qaat* delivery schedule. *Qaat*, a leafy green stimulant recently banned in the UK, is delivered via truck three times a day from Ethiopia. The arrival of the trucks are sounded by a distinctive *toot-toot-toot* of the horn; children imitate it, women roll their eyes in disgust, and men laugh. Some men begin their day with a few sprigs on the bus, others wait for the capital city's daily siesta from twelve to four pm to chew, many sit all day in one of the hundreds of *qaat* stalls lining the city streets, and some stay up all night chewing with their friends.

On the surface, Somaliland is run by men and, according to many, their chewing schedules. This of course is not to say that all men chew; there is a fierce debate surrounding Islamic morality and health issues stemming from consumption of *qaat*. Many of my male contacts deride chewing, and, of course, some women chew, just not in public.

I knew upon embarking on my fieldwork the daily schedule of city life in Hargeisa was determined by *qaat*, or as many prefer to point out, the prayer schedule. I also knew that a majority of men chewed the bitter leaf throughout the day, and as a stimulant, meeting and speaking with men would be fairly easy. Not to mention the twenty plus men a day who call out to me, slowly drive their cars beside me as I walk, and the students who want to practise the English they recently learned (stemming from insults on the television to greetings learned in class). The real challenge is not being one of the only visible foreigners in Hargeisa, dealing with my many layers of clothing, or trying to navigate my world in Somali; the challenge has been following a commonly referenced onion analogy and peeling away the layers of society to access the intimate relationships of women.

My research is focused on the intimate lives of

Somalis and what that intimacy is "doing" in society. I am exploring the ways in which individuals negotiate morality within intimate relationships between families, the community, God, and between men and women. To understand the intimate lives of individuals I developed methods to enter the women's world and explore potentially sensitive topics with both men and women.

It's still early days of my fieldwork, but through



finding a routine the doors are slowly opening. People are recognising me from when I lived here in 2010 and visited in 2013, and the people I encounter on a daily basis have stopped asking me the question "when are you leaving?" because most foreigners are NGO workers, shuttled around in big cars who come for a few weeks then take their "R&R" outside of Somaliland. People have accepted that I ride the bus and walk freely around town. They have begun to protect me from the pestering gang of nine-year-olds who throw stones at me like I am a goat, and then, when I turn the corner, sheepishly ask, "lacag? Lacag?" or, "money? Money?"

I have established a routine that involves visiting the same women selling fruit and vegetables in the market, studying henna and Somali cooking at a nearby beauty salon, teaching basic writing and English, visiting the gym during women's hours, and now, sipping tea and having meals in the homes of

the friends I have made. It is in such spaces that the women I have met share intimate details of their lives and similarly probe into mine.

The moment I step off the bus and walk to the market people stare and gossip about me. It's been difficult accepting the amount of gossip but I'm learning not to take things personally. Luckily, the gossip chain has also spread my Somali nick-name, *Kahaa*, around the market. *Kahaa* means shining and brightness, both referring to my character and the fact that as a foreigner I "get red and sweaty." The women call "*Kahaa*" to their stalls asking endless questions as I bargain for my fruit and vegetables.

I'm learning to put my ingredients to good use in a cooking course with 15 other girls. All the girls are secondary school age but most have never been to school. The course is taught at a nearby beauty salon and the girls lessons are subsidised by a local youth NGO. We are taught to salt our food according to "our husbands' tastes" (or potential husbands) and the girls are constantly battling and crying over the teacher's insistence that they remove their hijabs (here understood to be the more "tent-like" dress) so they can safely cook.

Many of the girls also take henna classes with me. We've learned various designs and have "practicals" where we learn how to mix henna and then draw on each other's hands and feet. One day a friend in the class lifted up her dress, pulled down her underskirt, and lifted her sagging stomach to show me a fresh caesarean section scar. During labour she had to have an emergency caesarean, without pain medication, and her baby was pulled out already dead. She matter of factly told the story while allowing me to explore her scar tissue, her stretch marks, and her ripped belly button. It was only last week as I was leaving that she pulled my ear to her mouth and whispered that she was pregnant again. I worry because 98% of women here have undergone infibulation, the cutting of the clitoris, the inner and outer labia and then are sewn completely closed. One friend said her "hole was the size of a grain of rice" and when I asked about child birth she said "the woman is only fully cut open when the child's head is coming out."

Ideas of beauty appear to be changing, not only have rates of infibulation dropped in the last five years influenced a new government policy but women



from abroad are returning and bringing with them beauty standards unheard of here, including “losing the fat!” The women I encounter at the gym during women’s hours (8am-4pm) are consumed with losing weight and their stomachs. They exercise for hours and have group exercise sessions to “lose the baby weight.” In addition to ideas about size women have begun using dangerous skin whitening creams. Although these creams are common in many parts of the world they are relatively new to Somaliland. One contact told me “the educated women know of the health dangers and don’t use these creams;” however from my teaching I’ve seen its use spans across all knowledge levels.

I’m teaching English to university students and at the same time I’m teaching writing and basic Somali to the girls in the cooking and henna classes. The disparity in knowledge is similar to other places but considering that the education system only resumed after the civil war ended in 1991 the gap in knowledge is sometime jarring. The girls in my writing class don’t know how to write their names or the Somali alphabet. Many of them are in the cooking and henna courses as preparation for

marriage; it is not uncommon for girls in secondary school to marry 50, 60, even 70 year old men as second and third wives. In contrast the women in my university English course still struggle but engage in debates about whether or not a woman can be president or a judge (a resounding “no” to both).

Some of these women have invited me to their homes for tea or a meal but I’m still developing my relationships with women across different sectors of society. I’m still slowly being let into their intimate world of gossip, clannism, anxiety, and sometimes sex. I’m still developing common themes and threads that I could have never planned for in London. It is over the next year that I hope to probe deeper into the ways in which these women and the men in their lives balance intimacy and morality in their day to day.



Bunbangfai: Time and Laughter in a Thai Festival

Dr Paul Twinn

Social Anthropology



The concept of the carnivalesque, as depicted by Bakhtin, conjures up images of cross-dressing, inversion, the comic, the grotesque and the cacophonous. In his description of the world depicted in the writings of Rabelais, Bakhtin provides a prism through which modern carnival forms have been viewed. From Rio to New Orleans, from Trinidad to Notting Hill, carnival is presented in contradistinction to hierarchy. Indeed, one of the key critiques of modern, highly structured carnivals is that they have somehow lost their (transgressive) “spirit” and have been absorbed within processes of commodification and globalisation.

The carnivalesque, on the other hand, always forms part of a duality. It is the profanity of the street and in particular the market in opposition to the sacredness of the solemn processions of, for instance, Holy Week. According to Bakhtin, it is the basis for a demotic culture that stands in opposition to the hierarchical forms of state and church. For anthropology this raises a particular question regarding such folk festivals that do not exist within an ostensibly Christian context and, consequently, are rooted in historical processes where cosmological belief and state power combine differently. When operating within different cosmological systems and/or through dissimilar modes of state power, street festivals can be seen to juxtapose the hierarchical and the demotic, the

sacred and the profane, the tragic and the comic in ways that seem to blur the simple distinction between the orderings of hierarchy and the excesses of the carnivalesque which has become such a staple of carnival studies. Here I wish to consider a traditional Thai/Lao festival that seems to epitomise ambivalence between hierarchy and the demotic, the solemn and the festive. *Bunbangfai*, or the Rocket Festival, is ubiquitous in the North-eastern region of Thailand and in Laos. In recent years, in Thailand at least, it has become closely associated with the provincial city of Yasothon.

On my recent visits I have stayed in a small village which is approximately 7 kilometres to the north of Yasothon. My trips to Yasothon prior to 2014 have been in the rainy season, several months after *Bunbangfai*. Nonetheless, when discussing with locals why people should visit Yasothon this was always the centre of the conversation. The festival had become famous within Thailand as it had expanded from a small village-based practice to a provincial event organised by the municipal administration. Moreover it has also become the basis of international tourism, albeit constrained by the relatively small number of hotel beds that Yasothon can supply. Given its relative importance as an event in the tourist calendar, there has been much discussion of the commercialisation of *Bunbangfai* in Thai academic literature. However, this

discussion is mainly focused on the large municipal celebrations and tends to ignore the multitude of smaller, village-based festivals.

These smaller festivals themselves vary from very small affairs consisting of little more than a scaffold for firing the rockets, a couple of makeshift food-stands and a place for the judging in a field adjacent to a lake, to much larger festivities that include a stage for music and dancing girls, a large area in front of this for dancing by the audience, numerous places for food and drink and generally much larger scaffolds for the firing of the rockets. However, the three elements of rockets, water and judges constitute the essential requisites for this aspect (part) of the festival.

Bunbangfai is an annual festival associated with the commencement of the rainy season. Its mythological basis lies in folk beliefs concerning a war between the Sky God, *Phaya Thaen* and the Nagas. These latter are usually depicted as serpentine creatures associated with water, both subterranean and surface. The Naga King is consequently associated with the most significant river of the area, the

Mekong, or Kong River as it is called by the locals. The myths of Bunbangfai have specific local variations. In the myth as it is usually described in Yasothon, the Nagas and Phaya Naga (the Naga King) in particular, are clearly allied with men against the Sky God, Phaya Thaen, who is holding back the rains. They are unsuccessful in their endeavours and their fortunes only change with the intercession of Buddha in the guise of the Toad King. The Sky God sues for peace and promises that in future he will send the rains every year. The firing of the rockets at Bunbangfai is thus not to commemorate the war with the Sky God, but to remind him of his promise to provide the rains that are essential for the growing of rice. Bunbangfai is thus representative of festivals which demarcate time in intervals defined by the annual round of life. But annual rains do not occur with the regularity of the oscillations of a quartz crystal: human intervention is necessary. It is for this reason that it is necessary to construct rockets. Their firing acts like the winding of an ancient grandfather clock: to ensure that it chimes, or in this case rains, at the appropriate time. Whilst bun indicates Buddhist merit-making within the context of Isaan, the comedic elements of the bun are just





as sacred as the more serious and austere aspects. In everyday speech locals will translate bun simply as “a fair” and rather than seeing it in terms of Buddhism, it is viewed almost completely as a rain-making festival. Whereas in carnival, defined stricto sensu, the comedic elements of revelry appear as a temporary and extreme period of profanity based on pagan traditions which act as a precursor to the austerity of Christian Lent which supersedes them, festivals such as Bunbangfai and the traditions that underlie them augment Buddhism. The relationship of Theravada Buddhism as found in Thailand and folk beliefs is one of syncretism rather than encapsulation.

The rockets that are now used in the festival are made from plastic piping (as used in construction). Bamboo is still retained for the long pole attached to the casing. Specialists construct the rockets by hand and usually manufacture their own “powder”. Originally the art of rocket making was restricted to monks and there are still a few monasteries where they are made. Today most rockets are constructed and fired by teams, usually with one man who prepares the powder and constructs and carefully packs the casing. The large quantities of explosives make these locations extremely dangerous. Whilst I was visiting at the time of the festival there was a report of an explosion at a rocket factory in Ubon Ratchathani province which resulted in fatalities. The packing of the casings is one of the most important

aspects of the construction of the rockets since any small pocket of air within the powder could result in an explosion rather than propulsion. Such an incident occurred at a village festival whilst I was there and film footage, taken on a mobile phone, was broadcast on the news. The rocket exploded on take-off killing some eight spectators. These incidents are a regular occurrence of the festival and the danger intrinsic in both the preparation and the spectacle itself is widely acknowledged. But the danger has to be construed as something intrinsic to the festival, there can be no sanitised version of Bunbangfai. Indeed, one of the things that confronts the observer is the almost casual way in which safety is observed by the teams. Prior to launching, each rocket is brought to a preparation area covered by a canopy. Here the teams would make last minute adjustments to the flights and make a final tamping-down of the powder within the casing. There may be half a dozen team members engaged in these preparations and it is not uncommon to see them casually smoking whilst standing next to a two metre rocket packed with explosives. That is not to say that the team members are reckless, or are not aware of the dangers: rather it is that danger is somehow embraced and accepted. Moreover it is accepted with humour rather than trepidation, since it is humour which is perhaps the most distinctive manifestation of the sacred in Isaan.

Journey to Fire Island

Haidy Geismar

Reader in Digital Anthropology and
Material Culture

Every year I receive a few phone calls from documentary production companies reaching out to me as one of the few UK based anthropologists working in Vanuatu, an island nation in the southern Pacific. After several conversations with a certain production team working for BBC2, I was invited to join them on their visit to Ambrym Island to make a film about the “science and culture” of the active volcano that in fact makes up the entire island. One of two parts (the other filmed on the island of Tanna), the documentary is to be presented by Kate Humble, and focuses on presenting the dramatic visual intensity of volcanoes in the context of their impact on local environment, life-ways, and cultural practices.

It was a fascinating experience for me to be situated as both a fieldworker (in a place where I first visited 14 years ago!) and as part of a bustling film crew. With my own interests in visual culture and the politics of representation I got to see how a television show is put together from the start almost to the finish. The programme is slated to go on air before Christmas and, at the time of writing, (I have not seen any footage or edits) by a team of people, each with their own technical role. For two weeks we were based in North Ambrym. We travelled from village to village documenting every day life and recording the presence of the volcano (from leaves eaten by acid rain on the West side of the island, to the emergence of new sand drawings depicting the volcano in the North). There are many things I could talk about here, but I want to focus on some of the politics of filming and the impact of documentary crews, like the one I became a part of for a short time, on the island.

The programme was built around a dramatic



PHOTO: CHRIS FIRTH

abseiled descent into, Mount Marum, one of the craters located in the central plateau of the island. A New Zealander called Geoff Mackley (famous for his television series, *Dangerman*) had essentially created a semi-permanent camp at the top of the volcano. Equipped with showers, toilets, a dining tent and enough food rations to last out a tropical storm, Mackley was brokering the visit of numerous film crews prepared to brave the toxic gases and film less than 30 meters away from the bubbling lava lake. Mackley, who started his career listening into emergency services in order to get to the sites of disasters and accidents to capture sensational footage, prides himself on his ability to weather and document, extreme situations. By the time we arrived, he had already had visits from national television crews from Australia, Korea, and Japan. He had created a new settlement on the crater, and a new economy for the island, with many of his visitors flying by helicopter directly to the summit, often bypassing the coastal areas where people actually live.

Many local islanders were unsure just what was going on at the top of the volcano – they heard rumours and occasionally saw discarded ration packets on the ash plain. Mackley used one particular route (one of the easiest walks) across the ash plain to the summit, working closely with villagers from the same village we were based in, Ranvetlam, in the north of the island.

On Ambrym, as in many parts of Vanuatu, discourses of rights and entitlements structure access to both the natural and cultural environment. The profits being received from this venture by the North Ambrymese, and specifically by villagers from Ranvetlam, were provoking concern in other parts of the island, and even within Ambrymese communities living in Port Vila, Vanuatu's capital. Just before our arrival, the airport at Craig Cove on the west of the island was the scene of a violent face off between islanders and Mackley who, along with the Japanese film crew he had taken to the crater, were held hostage with machetes until they paid compensation to the people of that area, who they were told were also the custodians of the



PHOTO: DAVINA BRISTOW

A good deal of our time was spent documenting narratives about the origin of the volcano which locate it as a resource to be not only managed but controlled and owned by specific family groups. Ambrym islanders do not think of the volcano as a geological entity that predates their presence, nor do they think of it as unpredictable and uncontrollable, as raw nature. Rather their origin story for the volcano describes how it was planted in its place by their ancestors, and many of their ritual traditions focus on mechanisms for controlling the eruptions and fiery activity of the two craters, Marum and Benbow. It was clear to me that this discourse about the meaning and significance of the volcano was at odds with the geological story we were being told by the volcanologist we also had on the team, which focused on the emission of sulphur dioxide, the effects of acid rain, and the unpredictability of the eruptions.

Despite the sensitivity of the crew to these issues when I brought them up during filming, I am guessing that this documentary will not show us the island from an Ambrymese perspective. Rather, as we spent more time filming, it became clear that this would most likely be a conventional “popular science” documentary, showing the physical basics of volcanoes, with some spectacular footage of both the volcano and the cultures that live alongside it. Outside this frame, what is truly important to the Ambrymese - the economy of filming, the impact of film crews and who owns and controls the volcano – is likely to be entirely invisible.



PHOTO: CHRIS FIRTH

volcano and should share in the money being paid to access it. After this incident the local airport was closed as there was also a land dispute over the rights of Air Vanuatu to use the airstrip. By the time we arrived, landing in the South East of the island and helicoptering over to the north, it had been decided that the money charged to film crews would be paid into a disaster relief bank account in Port Vila to be used for the benefit of the entire island should there be a destructive eruption.

Dissertation Travel Diaries: Photographs from the Field

This summer, Masters students throughout the department dispersed around the globe to conduct their dissertation fieldwork: Peru, China, Guatemala, San Francisco... and the equally intrepid corners of Essex and Shropshire. Flora Bartlett has gathered together some of the photographs that showcase these adventures.



Beth Isaac (Social and Cultural Anthropology); *The village that saved their local pub: understanding social transformation through relations of property;* "My fieldwork research was completed during visits throughout May to July 2014 at the UK's first co-operatively owned local village pub in Cumbria - The Old Crown in Heskett Newmarket"



Alejandra Silva Ronc (Social and Cultural Anthropology); *Lost, converted, and forgotten. Tracing the myth of the Land-Without-Evil among the Ava Guarani;* "I went to Y'apy Santa Isabel, San Pedro, Paraguay, for four weeks"



Carolina Silbermann (Social and Cultural Anthropology) *Women Weaving an Indigenous Future: Tourism, Cultural Revival and Empowerment in Guatemala.* "I focused my fieldwork on a Mayan textile cooperative in San Juan La Laguna, Guatemala, examining the way that textile art becomes a vehicle through which women empower themselves socially and economically in their community."

Dissertation Travel Diaries: Photographs from the Field

Flora Bartlett (Social and Cultural Anthropology); *Hidden Histories: Photography and Personhood in the English Home*; "I spent two weeks in an English town eating biscuits and interviewing elderly residents about their photography"



Isobel Grad (Material and Visual Culture); *Global Grounds, Transnational Tastes*



Peter Lockwood (Social and Cultural Anthropology); *The Solitude of the Stance: Gym-work and Boxing as Corpo-poetics in an Essex Town*; "my fieldwork was at a boxing club and a local gym and was about forms of movement and resistance as logics of being"



Joel Vincent (Social and Cultural Anthropology); *The Gap between Dream and Reality: Changing Forms of Rural-to-Urban Migrant Families in Beijing*; "I went to two migrant communities in one of Beijing's outlying districts to research how families were changing for internal Chinese migrants over six weeks in June and July"



Theodora Sutton (Digital Anthropology); *Recommended Digital Allowance: Digital Detox*; "I went to two weekend sessions of a digital detox camp in California"

Lobot-Onyom, the Pajok defensive spirit: On cosmological (in)security in Acholi South Sudan.

Ryan Joseph O'Byrne

PhD Candidate in Social Anthropology

Some ethnic groups in South Sudan – like the Azande, Dinka, and Nuer, among others – are among the best known and most famous in the anthropological literature (Evans-Pritchard, Godfrey Lienhardt et al.). However, alongside the recent history of widespread and genocidal conflict in the area, deep structural changes and cultural transformations at all levels of society means many of the important ethnographic findings of this work no longer applies to people currently living within the new nation of South Sudan.

On the other hand, despite the pervasive impact of these changes, it is equally problematic to see South Sudan as a sociocultural space being reinvented at the interface between contested postcolonial indigenous and Western institutions. Indeed, a major finding of my ongoing PhD fieldwork in a rural South Sudanese community is that the insecurities, injustices, and other tensions of everyday life in South Sudan are understood and negotiated through recourse to the cosmological knowledge.

The significance of cosmological phenomena in Acholi lives is immediately apparent to anyone who has spent any length of time among them, and their rich cultural systems are replete with a multitude of local spiritual entities who positively and negatively affect the health and fortunes of the people they live amongst. Baines (2005: 72) noted that for the majority of Acholi 'jok [non-human spiritual forces] and ancestor spirits guide the Acholi moral order, and when a wrong is committed, send misfortune and illness (*cen*) until appropriate actions are taken'. The everyday cosmological negotiation of (in) security and (in)justice thus inhabit the very core of Acholi ontological understandings.

The Acholi are a Nilotic ethnolinguistic group straddling the Uganda – South Sudan border. My wife and I have been living in the South Sudanese community of Pajok for the last 15 months. Here I highlight findings from research I conducted for the Justice and Security Research Project (JSRP) at LSE. In this research I make an empirically grounded argument for the importance of the cosmological dimensions of (in) justice and (in)security in everyday Acholi life.

A dominant theme emerging from my JSRP project is that people not only experience (in)



Young man shows the head of a goat slaughtered as part of a traditional ritual PHOTO: MARIE CANNY

security and (in)justice in multiple socially and spiritually determined ways but that they adopt a diverse array of strategies to orient everyday governance structures – including governmental and customary posts as well as spirits and other cosmic forces - towards their own needs. I further argue that because of these findings, such governance structures should be defined as broadly as ethnographic circumstances require. Therefore, this piece focuses upon Pajok's most important and distinctive governance-related cosmological actor: *Lobot-Onyom*, Pajok's principal *jok*. In doing so, I seek to contextualise the notions of security and justice in Pajok's own indigenous religious terms.

To understand the role of *Lobot-Onyom* in Pajok, one must first understand what is meant by *jok*. *Jogi* (the plural of '*jok*') are best understood as powerful non-human spiritual forces, are deeply unpredictable, have the power to possess people, and thus can be both helpful and dangerous. Associated with deeper cultural logics of productivity and destruction, they are connected with giving and taking productivity of all kinds, agricultural and social as well as biological. A fundamental structuring principle among most Nilotic communities, *jok* and *jogi* are central in Acholi understandings of the world.

Lobot-Onyom (meaning 'the bachelors can now get married') is Pajok's pre-eminent *jok* and is one of very few 'free' *jogi* in Pajok – 'free' meaning that it has no fixed place of abode and is not connected to any one *kaka* (subclan). Most of Pajok's other *jogi* are 'fixed' cosmological entities attached to particular *kaka* and having specific *wang jok* (places of sacrifice and residence). Essentially, what this means is that *Lobot-Onyom* will protect and defend all Pajok community members as long as the *jok*'s goodwill is maintained with the annual sacrifice of a large male sheep. This is unlike fixed *jogi* who only protect members of a particular subclan.

What is the origin of *Lobot-Onyom*'s name? As *Lobot-Onyom* is so powerful, Pajok is guaranteed victory if the *jok* is called on during conflict. After defeating the warriors, the women of the opposing group are captured to be used as brides for those Pajok men who, owing to youth or poverty, have not yet married. Although bride capture probably originated with 19th century slave trading, it quickly became a



A man asks a clan elder for forgiveness during a traditional ritual
PHOTO: MARIE CANNY

culturally appropriate means for an Acholi man to find a wife and is still practiced today, albeit in some important and fundamentally different ways.

Lobot-Onyom protects Pajok through manifold means: firstly, the coming of a wind which confuses or destroys an enemy. This is linked to the sending of an *ajoro* (whirlwind) that disorients them, leaving them vulnerable; secondly, by removing sickness or disease, especially 'airborne' diseases like measles; thirdly, by guiding someone lost in the bush back to their home; lastly, protecting citizens of Pajok who are fighting elsewhere. For example, despite the number of deaths in South Sudan due to the current civil war, no 'son of Pajok' has so far been killed in this violence. This is because *Lobot-Onyom* protects Pajok citizens even while away.

Lobot-Onyom has defended Pajok during war several times in the past, most recently during the 1983-2005 Sudanese War. In this instance, *Lobot-Onyom* saved Pajok from an assault by SPLA forces on 1st March 1989. During this attack, retreating Sudanese government troops were followed by a superior SPLA contingent. Surrounded, Pajok residents called on *Lobot-Onyom* and, owing to its intervention, the SPLA left a gap in their encirclement. Following an unseasonal storm, many people escaped to Uganda. People know it was *Lobot-Onyom* who helped because of the coming of the storm: throughout history *Lobot-Onyom* has used the power of wind and several people spoke of an earlier war with the community of Obbo in which *Lobot-Onyom* gave similar wind-borne assistance.



Female mourners approach a grave on hands and knees at a Christian funeral PHOTO: MARIE CANNY

Importantly, the help *Lobot-Onyom* provides is contingent upon the performance of the annual appeasement ritual, a point of contention among Pajok's population and especially problematic for Born Again Christians who view the *jok* as a demonic rather than positive force. The necessity of a ritual for provision of security is not surprising, however since, in a cosmological system based on maintaining harmonious relations between all social entities, failure to complete the rituals would be a public slight to *Lobot-Onyom* and the explicit negation of shared sociality.

Despite being predominantly protective in nature, *Lobot-Onyom* may also threaten the security of Pajok citizens. Firstly, because *Lobot-Onyom* is so powerful, the rituals involved are very dangerous. Participation can cause blindness or infertility and therefore only those past child-bearing age can be involved. A second source of insecurity also involves the appeasement ritual: if not conducted correctly or frequently enough, or if someone insults the *jok* by its breaking rules, *Lobot-Onyom* will get enraged and calamity may strike either an individual or even the community as a whole. Finally, if someone calls on *Lobot-Onyom* for aggression without being threatened themselves, *Lobot-Onyom* will not protect them. Instead, they will be attacked by the irritated *jok*, resulting in blindness, impotence, infertility, or madness.

As mentioned above – although not true for all Pajok citizens – the majority of Pajok's residents

are now Christian and consider *jogi* fundamentally problematic, essentially evil or demonic forces linked with Satan. Indeed, some say *jok* and Satan are identical, and this demonising of tradition is apparent even for *Lobot-Onyom*, the one *jok* that continues to have everyday salience. However, not all Christians subscribe to simple demonising analyses. For example, one Pajok church leader said 'people, they used to respect *jok*. Now some are saying that it is Satan. But that is not true. Because they used to respect as God... before the missionaries came... But people are mistaken that *jok* is the same as Satan'. Further, despite what most people self-narrate as their own steadfast Christianity, there is an obviously pragmatic element in which they attempt to guarantee their cosmological security by maintaining multiple religious orientations simultaneously, including with ancestor spirits and local *jogi*.

The complex tensions within such conceptualisations and practices thus demonstrates that, despite what some Christians may say, customary cosmological elements continue to have relevance in the contemporary experience of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok. Furthermore, such contradictions demand that researchers do not uncritically adopt dominant, normative, or hegemonic discursive constructions of the world such as those propagated by some Pajok Christians. Instead, it is better to theorise the ongoing and contested everyday negotiation of the cosmological dimensions of (in)security and (in)justice, even if they disagree with our own existential and ontological assumptions. Indeed, if we do not, we may very well only impose new forms of insecurity or injustice instead.

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Biotechnologies, temporalities and caipirinhas: Summer School in São Paulo

Katrina Holland

MRes Anthropology

In August four students from UCL's Anthropology department joined experts and students from across the globe to attend a five day summer school dedicated to the social study of 'Biotechnology, Biosocialities and the Governance of the Life Sciences' at the State University of Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil. The purpose was to explore the social, political, legal and ethical concerns in the fields of genomics and biotechnology brought about by rapid developments in medical and life sciences.

One of the themes that emerged throughout the week was that of temporalities: pasts, presents, and futures that are entangled with novel biotechnologies, and particularly the hype and hope-filled predictive and preventative technologies.

Rayna Rapp (New York University) urged that we critically examine the claims to novelty and revolution associated with assisted reproductive technologies. Indeed, the routinisation and perceived simplicity of a blood test in the U.S. - a technique conducted as part of "non-invasive prenatal testing", standard procedure even for those not considered to be



Rayna Rapp (second left) with UCL Anthropologists Aaron Parkhurst, Sahra Gibbon, Katrina Holland, Mia Hassoun and Joe Simpson

at risk of a defective pregnancy - arguably conceals the neoeugenic interests that have played a role in the development of the new reproductive technologies.

It is also recent past events that were implicit in Noela Invernizzi's lecture on national union's perspective of the occupational risks of working with nanoparticles. In her research, Invernizzi found workers anxious that history may be repeating itself, as they articulated a fear that nanotechnology might become the new asbestos.

Future possibilities were addressed too. In asking why certain unimaginable innovative technologies are made imaginable, at the expense of others, Stephen Hilgartner (Cornell University) presented two interacting visions of the future. First, he offered the idea of "vanguard visions", typically held by elite groups, and second, "sociotechnical imaginaries" (Jasanoff and Kim), which are the collectively held visions

of the nation. Sociotechnical imaginaries develop over time and are relatively durable, in contrast to the more fleeting impact of vanguard visions.

In addition to lectures and student presentations, we visited the National Laboratories of Brazil where we had a tour of the Synchrotron Light Laboratory. There were also opportunities to sample the local nightlife of Campinas, involving caipirinhas and samba dancing.

Another trip highlight included our stay in a *pousada* (small-scale home-stay accommodation). Our wonderful host, Ademilde, who served us bountiful breakfasts and dinners, introduced us to Brazilian delicacies such as farofa and açai pudding.

The week generated illuminating discussion between different disciplinary perspectives and new international relationships were fostered with the hope of future collaborative research and engagement.



Tulalip Bay

The Tulalip Tribes: investing in art

Jack Davy

Collaborative Doctorial Award PhD

Many peoples the world over have used their environmental resources to secure wealth, but few perhaps have done so quite in the manner of the Tulalip Tribes of Washington State. The Tulalip Reservation was formed by the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855, at which the regional American authorities forced the relocation of villages inhabited by peoples from several separate Salishan tribes living in the northern Puget Sound area into a single designated community supported by 22,000 acres of hinterland.

Over the decades that followed, the peoples of the reservation were forced to contend with government supervision which limited access to their own resources, withholding control of the fishing and forestry licenses upon which the Tulalip peoples depended for income. Landmark legal battles in the early 1970s restored these rights and helped forge a united tribal identity as the Tulalip,

taking their name from the reservation, which was named for the purse-shaped bay at its centre. (In the local *Lushootseed* language *tulalip* means “purse”)

In the 1990s, in common with many other Native reservations, the Tulalip legalised gambling and opened a small casino at the village of Quil Ceda. The Quil Ceda casino marked the beginning of a remarkable change in Tulalip fortunes. When the Tulalip reservation was established in 1855, it lay in the middle of a trackless wilderness, miles from any substantial European settlement. By the turn of the twenty-first century however, the urban sprawl of Seattle was less than 30 miles from the reservation, and commuter towns dotted the nearby countryside. Better still, the I-5, the principal West Coast artery of American transit, marked the Eastern boundary of the reservation, passing right through Quil Ceda. With such easy access and so little nearby competition, the casino boomed.

In 2007 the Tulalip Board of Directors invested in a new resort casino and began a sustained marketing campaign in Asia. With SeaTac airport only 45 minutes away, Asian gamblers poured in and the Tulalip Resort Casino remains one of the most popular tourist attractions in the North-Eastern continental United States. The income from the casino was invested back into the reservation, with a new council building, a hospital, schools, data services, the police force, a museum and cultural centre provided by casino wealth. These buildings were all decorated by newly commissioned artwork from the tribe's own carving workshop, established to provide the most successful Tulalip artists with a state-of-the-art facility from which to produce high-quality works in metal and cedar to decorate tribal facilities.

I was lucky enough to be invited to spend several weeks over the summer observing the tribe's carvers at work and discussing their approach to material culture production with them. My PhD project is a study of miniaturisation as a phenomenon in Native American material culture and it was a great privilege to see how these contemporary carvers utilise modelling as part of their process. The younger generation of Tulalip carvers are mostly fine art graduates and as a result are as comfortable with the works of Picasso and Pollock as they are with Tulalip master carvers of the past such as William Shelton or Jerry Jones. They are enthusiastic adopters of whichever technological processes will assist their work and as a result have persuaded the tribal directors to provide them with a digital imaging suite where they can develop 3-D designs of their artwork before they ever lift a chainsaw.

Once carving begins, modelling remains highly important. By creating maquettes of the large-scale installation art they produce, the carvers can experiment with design and technique as they carve as well as present these models to the directors as evidence of the direction and progress of each commission. Apprentice carvers are instructed to rough-out the huge cedar logs, acquired from natural tree falls in the Cascade Mountains as the locally grown wood is of insufficient quality for really detailed carving. The trunks are seasoned, sometimes for years, in order to minimise the splitting that naturally occurs as cedar, a durable and insect-resistant tree in life, dries out.

Chainsaws are used to cut the trunk to the approximate dimensions and then hand-made adzes employed to smooth the wood into the required shape. As work progresses, increasingly fine tools, especially homemade adzes, are required to achieve the detailed finish until the carving is complete. In common with historic poles, the new carvings are painted in vibrant black and red designs before being raised at great ceremonial occasions which emphasise both the cherished cultural traditions and the new-found wealth of the Tulalip Tribes.

I plan to return in 2015 to continue my fieldwork with this vibrant and inventive tribal collective.



Above Top: The workshop. A printed digital design hangs over a more traditional tool bench.
Above Below: A work in progress

A Grocery Food Bank

Lauge Kristian Noe

MSc Social and Cultural Anthropology

“When you go to the grocery and you choose your own food, maybe you don’t realise it, but it is a dignified process. That makes you a human being. If you have to rely on donations of other people and if you are just at the mercy of whatever they give you that is a degrading process”

(Food bank volunteer)

In the US, as well as in many other countries, wasting of edible food is frowned upon. The contention that groceries should not throw out fresh food when so many families are not able to afford proper nourishment is often vocalised as a matter of optimisation: Why not give the food to charity? Why not make it profitable for grocery stores to donate the food before it passes sell-date? These questions are almost rhetorical. The discussion does not address the problem that receiving is demanding. In the endeavour to reduce food waste, one must not forget that ‘free’ food can be symbolically tainted with a stigma, which makes it problematic to give. The paradox is that the giving of food often degrades those whom the intention is to help.

A solution to food waste in the US is the organisation of a food bank, which was the subject of my Master’s thesis. ‘Food bank’ is a blanket term for a philanthropic organisation that provides food aid to needy citizens. They differ considerably from each other: the suburban church that, sponsored by the congregation, provides a limited selection of bagged food every Monday night to the well-run non-profit warehouse food bank that recovers food from ten to fifteen local groceries on a daily basis. During my fieldwork I was curious about how the food given in the food bank is said to be ‘free’ for everyone but only certain groups of people use them, namely,



the homeless, the unemployed, elderly people, and low-income families. The reason, I suggest, is the built-in means testing that the food is intended for the disadvantaged. It is humiliating to be reliant and if you can afford to go to a real grocery store, you opt for that instead. Thus, receiving ‘free’ food in a food bank is somehow at the expense of honour, or at least goes against the idea that you can purchase for yourself.

I spent a good part of my time in a food bank in Seattle that is designed like a real grocery store. It came into being after years of hard work of raising money by the two directors in charge. In the grocery food bank the recipients are handed a paper ticket at the check-in that states how much food they are allowed to take. They walk around with carts and critically assess each product that they are going to ‘purchase’. The volunteers play along as well. They give customer service similar to real grocery stores such as small talking and wishing the recipients a good day. They bag the food at the checkout and ask the recipients if they brought their own bags as clerks often do in a typical Seattle grocery store.

The grocery food bank is also well organised. For instance all the volunteers have assigned specific types of jobs. Those who enjoy interaction with



breaks when the children are out. The idea is that the clandestine gift protects the children from the humiliation of their parent's inadequacy in the eyes of their classmates.

Since Mauss, the gift has been apprehended in terms of its force to create relations. Giving is a form of social interaction that creates a symbolic debt because a gift is supposed to be reciprocated. But as Laidlaw (2000) has shown, a genuine free gift without any strings attached makes no friends. In the same way it can be argued that it is hardly giving when the recipients actually pick and choose the food from the shelves. By employing techniques of professional customer service, the volunteers are able to create short-term but acceptable bonds with the recipients and, by the same token, downplay the gift-giving activities. Moreover, food donations are converted into the commodity sphere whereby the language of gifting becomes escapable. Thus, the relation becomes one between customers and employees rather than a humiliating hierarchy between the feeder and the fed.

the recipients (locally referred to as 'clients', 'guests' or 'customers') work in the 'shop' while others prefer working in the warehouse section. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the professionalisation of the food bank is about optimisation, although the grocery food bank does provide more services than regular food banks. As I learned during my fieldwork, shopping for food aid is actually more time-consuming and takes-up more space. Nonetheless, the reason why the marked settings are better, I was told, is the principle of bestowing dignity: that having, at least the appearance of choice makes it less shameful to visit a food bank.

The inability to consume is often connected to ideas about identity. For instance as Bauman (2005) suggests, in today's fast-changing society, a humiliating hand-to-mouth existence displays your exclusion from society. Consumption distinguishes the integrated from the marginalised. A case in point is a service provided by the food bank to schoolchildren, whose parents are not able to provide for them. Everyday the grocery food bank delivers food to public schools in the local area. Instead of giving the food directly to the children, it is handed over to the teachers, who then distribute the food discretely in their backpacks during the

It really seemed to me that the volunteers enjoyed working in a pseudo-grocery store. However, the food bank is not without its problems. The altruistic ideal to enable choice has led to the rise of a group of critical consumers who have expectations about the quality of the food. Although the bulk of recipients are grateful for the aid that they are given, there is often someone who complains. It is not always vocal. They snort, throw the food back on the shelves or avoid eye contact. This is demotivating for the volunteers who try their best to understand why the recipients behave like they do. Giving customer service is helpful in situations like these. If the recipients are rude, the volunteers bite their tongue and say: "I'm really sorry but that is our policy". The grocery food bank allows the volunteers to provide genuine care for a group of people for whom choice is a rare privilege.

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Elizabeth Elliott

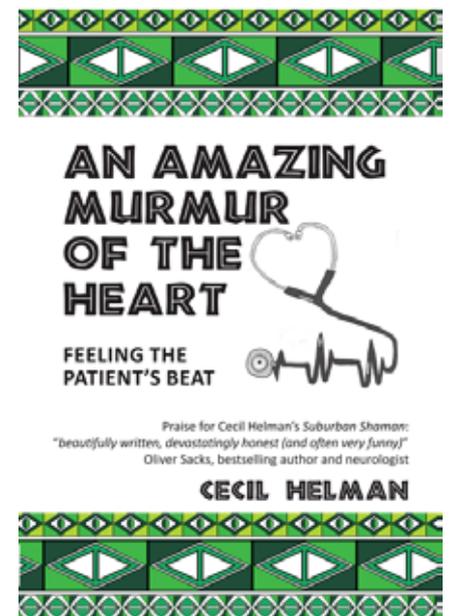
PhD Candidate in Medical Anthropology

Cecil Helman, GP, pioneering medical anthropologist and an influential figure at UCL, helped to shape the field of cross-cultural medical practice until his death from motor neurone disease in 2009. Written at the end of his life and career, *An Amazing Murmur of the Heart* is a deeply personal reflection upon the experience of suffering, and the difficulties faced by the 'wounded healers' - the exhausted physicians who, like shamans, must search for meaning in the midst of pain and chaos; he suggests that *'perhaps, deep down, by dismantling the human forms before us, we are also, in some sense, dismantling ourselves.'* An advocate of the 'scientific method' in medicine, Helman's intention is not to critique the discipline of biomedicine itself, but rather to question why, despite rapid advances, the public has become increasingly dissatisfied with the medical treatment they receive. He asks, in an age of increasing reliance on medical technology, *'Where has the patient gone?'*

Drawing parallels with myth, ritual, shamanic practice and psychological archetypes, Helman provides thoughtful and often humorous accounts from his many years of clinical practice that should resonate with a

diverse audience. His tales are at their most interesting when describing the practical benefit of incorporating an anthropological approach in order to understand his patients' distress. He is unable to help a man with chronic and unexplained pain until he begins to explore the story and character of the pain itself, referencing the legend of the *dybbuk*, a malevolent spirit who appears to be acting out all that is suppressed in the man's own personality. Likewise, the mysterious entity described as 'stress' or simply, 'It', by chronic IBS sufferers is compared to the experience of spirit possession, in which an invisible force originating outside the body attacks the person's weakest point, creating blockages and pain as it enters. The power of personal myth is shown in the tale of Gary, who, misdiagnosed with a faulty heart, begins to suffer with chest pain and anxiety. Eventually, as in the stories of the San people, the myth of his heart disease has taken on a life of its own, occupying his body and leaving his life fundamentally changed.

The metaphor of the heart for personhood reoccurs throughout the text. Helman is struck by the meaning present



in the newly invented heart transplant, in which, for the first time, *'the borders of one human being had been breached by the symbolic core of another.'* It is not surprising therefore that the recipient's wife is relieved that his personality and capacity for love had not been altered. As a student doctor, Helman and his colleagues seek out an 'amazing' heart murmur, but pay no attention to the life of the man in whom it resides- his anxiety over losing his job, his childhood illnesses and his troubled marriage. Comparing the patience and empathy of an old family doctor with the methods of a young specialist who is more comfortable communicating

with his computer, Helman later realises the need to attend to his patients' stories and emotions: to try to hear, beyond the words themselves, the *'faint, almost inaudible, murmuring of their hearts.'*

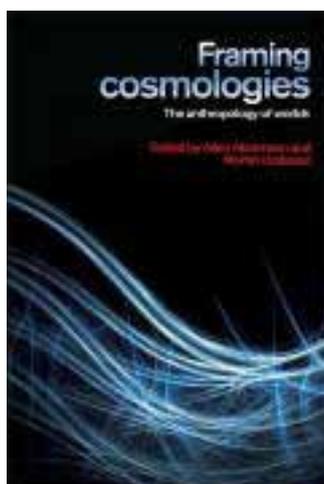
Reflecting upon his medical training, Helman examines the way in which, beginning with the study of anatomy, the body becomes fragmented, broken down into increasingly tiny pieces in the eyes of the physician, never to be completely reassembled. He maps the changing forms in which the patient has been conceptualised by the medical profession. This has progressed from a focus on physical symptoms- a person may be described as a difficult

gall bladder or an interesting spleen- to 'paper patients' made up of scans, tests and slides; and ends with the contemporary abstraction of digital data, in which the patient is *'reduced not only to a pair of ailing kidneys, but to a long series of fluorescent numbers leaping off the computer screen and then flowing swiftly to and fro across the desk.'* This is an eloquent argument for the existence of the 'post-human body', a disembodied virtual being with no clearly defined self, whose functions can be controlled more easily than the unreliable material body of flesh and blood.

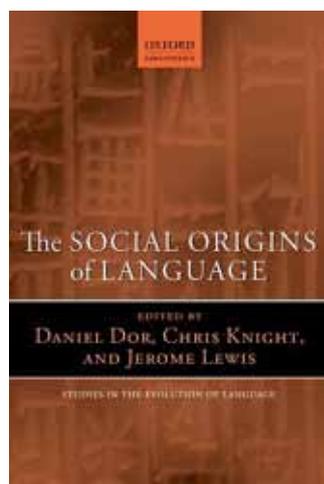
This informational body thus absorbs the attention of the modern 'techno-doctor' who can

himself be viewed as an extension of the machines with which he works. Helman further observes that, in a postmodern age of rapid social change and movement, the sense of a loss of a clear personal identity and bounded self is very often experienced by the patient too; the 'skinless self'. In a plea for a more compassionate, self-reflective and personally engaged medical profession, he argues that by listening to and trying to understand their stories, the whole person can still be found. The patient has not in fact gone anywhere, but instead, *'they are still here, staring hopefully up from their hospital beds...waiting for their doctors to notice them again.'*

New Books in the Department



Framing cosmologies:
The anthropology of worlds
Edited by Allen Abramson and
Martin Holbraad
Manchester University Press



Social Origins of Language
Edited by Dan Dor, Chris Knight
and Jerome Lewis
Oxford University Press



L'angoisse cosmopolite.
La citoyenneté et l'appartenance
remises en question par les
Turcs d'Allemagne
Ruth Mandel
Presses de l'Université Laval

Different masters: part-time education at UCL

Ben Eyre

MSc Social and Cultural Anthropology

“There’s such a difference ... it must be difficult being ... between two worlds,” one of my fellow masters students comments over a post-seminar drink.

We have been musing over the perceived gulf between the realities of ‘doing fieldwork’ and writing it up with the linguistic and theoretical nuance of writers we would like to emulate. But he is actually referring to my morning pre-lecture dash: off comes the tie (Hermes, but second-hand) and shoes (black, polished); on go the jeans (Gap? label faded) and trainers (holey, stinking). I sneak out of the basement back door of a glass building in the City and virtually skip to Bloomsbury, untucking my shirt on the way.

I am a second year part-time Masters student supported by an employer for whom I work during most of the week. Part-time study during what might otherwise be mid-career is often thought of as an inconvenient or inferior option. It can be disconcerting to orientate oneself in different worlds. But world-shifting is good practise for an aspiring anthropologist, I would like to argue, not compromised pedagogy.

In a recent article, Tim Ingold (2014) expressed serious concerns about the studying and learning that goes on in anthropology, as part of a polemic against the term ethnography. Reservations about how rarely students carry out the methods of the discipline seem particularly valid at Masters level. Introductory material, theoretical complexity, and original research are typically crammed into what can turn out to be a single (lop-sided) year.

As a part-timer (one whose work is not my field site) I am regularly able, even obliged, to employ the research techniques I am introduced to in seminars during my working week. After discovering the *chaîne opératoire*, a method to visually depict ‘the series of operations involved in any transformation of matter, including our own bodies’ (Lemonnier, 1992), I put it into action in a brainstorming session with colleagues during the same week. One even asked to borrow a copy of Lemonnier (*ibid*) afterwards!

Disparate fields now deploy anthropological techniques for a variety of aims. This poses new challenges and opportunities for

anthropologists. But these aren’t all a matter of pitting the applied against the comparative and the cosmological nor trying to reconcile the two.

My experience of enacting anthropology with non-anthropologists has encouraged me to think through participant observation using the symbol of a figure-ground reversal, (Wagner, 1986) summarised as a kind of cultural dialectic between invention/convention analogous to the birds/fish in MC Escher’s *Sky and Water I* (1938). Participant observation seems to yield simultaneously different truths for my colleagues [about our work] and different truths for me [about our work] without distortion. It addresses different questions with specificity, but does not obscure the relational, the mutually constitutive, nor block the challenging. This does not privilege ‘knowing that’ over ‘knowing how’ any more than it distinguishes between theoretical and practical knowledge. This would not reflect truths’ protean qualities: which include temporality as well as versatility.

Separately I recently had the opportunity to take part in a legal graffiti session with colleagues.

This was offered as a chance to depict our work through the mawkish lens of what we 'love' about our jobs – a sentiment no more aggravating to my academic sensibilities than to a scepticism and reserve shared with my team, and duly subverted. Nevertheless I enjoyed thinking through the chance to represent my work in a novel graphic form. I didn't try to activate some latent potential for participant observation by suggesting we spray paint a chaîne opératoire: the whole exercise followed a different 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003 [1987]).

Avoiding hierarchies of the studied and studier and of different forms

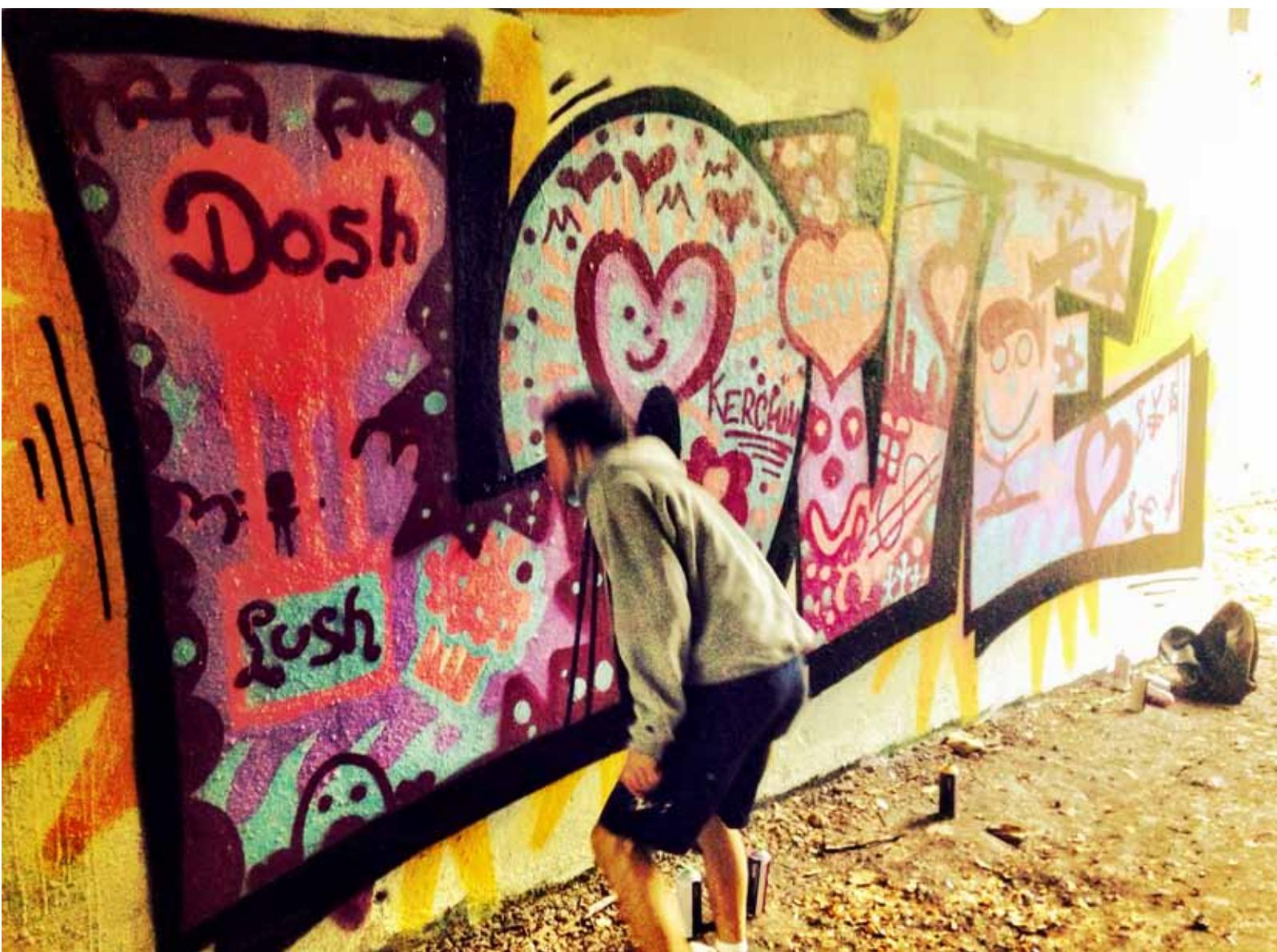
of incommensurable truth leaves spaces in which to remain open to the possibilities of different types of knowledge (Viveiros de Castro, 2014). For me this is not an act of equivocation but a technique of motility in and through different worlds of part-time study and work.

This brings me back to Ingold (2014), and the question of what anthropology is for And I've got to iron a shirt for an early work meeting tomorrow. Part-time study is different and difficult. In this, it seems like an ideal anthropological education during my Masters and perhaps beyond.

References:

Ingold, T. 2014. "That's enough about ethnography!" *Hau* 4 (1): 383-395.

Lemonnier, P. 1992. *Elements for an Anthropology of Technology*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.



An Interactive Lesson at the London Zoo

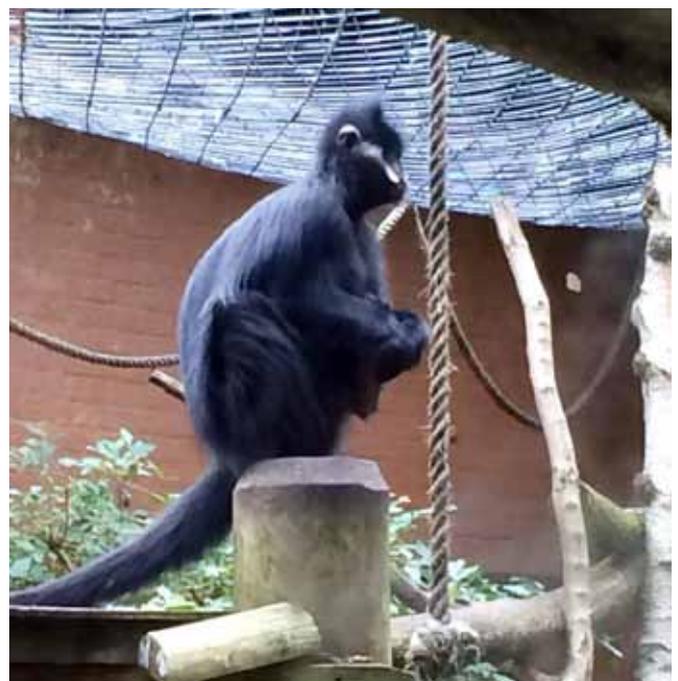
Parker Taylor and Sophie Kirklin

MSc Human Evolution and Behaviour



Primate Socioecology is the study of how primates are socially adapted to the environments that they live in. Anyone who studies primates should have at least some understanding of how any given species' social behaviour may have been shaped by its environment, and that means seeing some of the species in action. Our class was on a mission to see the entire primate collection that the London Zoo has to offer!

We were lucky enough to have Volker Sommer as our guide, and at each enclosure we visited came new facts and stories. There's no doubt that going to London Zoo with our primatology classmates was a new experience; that zoo holds childhood memories of exciting days staring at unfamiliar animals. To the dismay of their parents, the children on their own trips were also audience to teachings



Anthropology Students Win Open City Docs Fund

Farhana Hoque

PhD Candidate in Medical Anthropology

of primate sexuality and sexual morphology, as well as reality checks about animal behaviour. A personal favourite being the revelation that meerkats, who are socially quite similar to Callitrichid monkeys, are not 'cute' as they seem but are actually cannibalistic baby-killers! The little girl staring adoringly at the meerkats did not appreciate that.

Our trip gave us a chance to truly gauge our interests in specific primate species and help us understand diversity in the primate order. More importantly, it refreshed our interests. Sitting in classes and seminars discussing primate social organisations is helpful and informative, yet it lacks the practical interaction that many of us are excited about. The trip to London Zoo was a reminder of why we have chosen the field that we are studying, and it led us to questions that a classroom could not have.



Seven teams were invited to pitch for Border Crossings Development Fund, supported by UCL Grand Challenges in the blue room of the BFI. The industry judging panel selected the winning proposal, 'The Coin Garland' from director Ed Owles, producer Alison Rooper and UCL academic Farhana Hoque. The team will receive £5,000 to develop the film project.

The Coin Garland is the incredible story of a lost kingdom - a people who fled a war-ravaged Burma in the 1600s, became part of the British Empire and who now fend for themselves within Muslim Bangladesh. UCL anthropologist Farhana Hoque has unique access to the Marma community – both its royal family and subjects. This film will explore their extraordinary existence in the stunning but heavily militarized Chittagong Hill Tracts bordering Burma. It will follow several charismatic Marma as they struggle to balance the lure of modernity with the pull of ancestral custom.





Anthropology A2 Class at Bradford College

Out of the Ivory Tower, Into the Classroom

Jesse Bia

PhD Candidate in Medical Anthropology

In November, I travelled up north to Bradford College to guest lecture at their two A Level Anthropology classes. The Anthropology A Level was first instituted in 2010, with a curriculum co-designed by the AQA and the Royal Anthropological Institute, presently provided at 25 sixth forms around the country. It aims to offer students the chance to grapple with fundamental questions of human life, while developing skills for critical enquiry, cultural sensitivity, and an appreciation for relevant topical debates. An equal emphasis is placed on both biological and social anthropology, along with methods training, thus offering a comprehensive overview and synthesis of the varied work we do here in the diverse atmosphere of the UCL Anthropology Department.

At the A Level course terminus, students apply their knowledge to a small-scale research project on an anthropological topic of their choosing. Given my own area of expertise, and the breadth of their prospectus, I thought it would be best to provide a “Medical Anthropology 101” primer for my lectures, including delving into my own research in Japan on regenerative medicine.

It was a wonderful experience - both classes were extremely dedicated and enthusiastic. Beyond being impressed, I was refreshed. Talking about anthropology outside of a typical university environment proved a potent reminder of why I enjoy the discipline in the first place: it’s fun and it’s interesting! We didn’t drown in theoretical terminology, but talked through it. We worked with actual case studies. Students posed succinct and pointed questions, reflecting a bit of practicality I believe is often missing from our own discussions in academia.

When it comes to unencumbered objective and concrete analysis, I believe we have just as much to learn from these A Level students as they do from our lectures. It was a privilege to take part!

This was the first of several such lectures that UCL Anthropology PhD students will be delivering to A Level students throughout the academic year. We thank UCL’s Widening Participation Office for providing support.

RECENTLY AWARDED PHDS

Arsim Canolli - *Behind open doors: restaurants and food culture in Kosova*

Marie-Annick Moreau - *“The lake is our office”:
fisheries resources in rural livelihoods and local
governance on the Rufiji River floodplain, Tanzania*

Eitan Buchalter - *Ideas in science: an ethnographic
study*

Anna Barros - *Ontogeny, phylogeny and functional
morphology of the hominoid shoulder girdle*

Claire Bedelian - *Conservation, tourism and pastoral
livelihoods - wildlife conservancies in the Maasai Mara,
Kenya*

Sarah Wilkes - *In search of sustainable materials:
negotiating materiality and morality in the UK materials
industry*

Pwyll Ap Stifin - *The post-9/11 voice: sound,
materiality and relationality as memory*

Suzanne Harvey - *Infant socialisation in olive
baboons (*Papio anubis*)*

Fiona McDonald - *Charting material memories: an
ethnography of visual and material transformations of
woollen blankets in Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand,
and the United States*

Alexandra Antohin - *Expressions of sacred promise:
ritual and devotion in Ethiopian Orthodox Praxis*

DATES IN THE DIARY

Daryll Forde Memorial Lecture
12 February 2015

**Inaugural Lecture by Professor Michael
Stewart**
5 May 2015

MARY DOUGLAS MEMORIAL LECTURE 2014

The first Mary Douglas Memorial Lecture, in
memory of Dame Mary Douglas (1921-2007), was
held at UCL on Thursday 23 October 2014.

Professor Paul Richards
Njala University (Sierra Leone)

IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICTS?

Civil Wars From The Perspective Of An Institutional
Theory Of Culture

Post-Cold War armed political conflicts have been
called many things: asymmetric wars, insurgency,
terrorism, new barbarism. These are civil wars
where group values rather than national interests
are at stake. Such conflicts, Mary Douglas thought,
were especially hard to resolve because any
compromise appears to the parties a threat to their
continued social existence. What then should be
the peacemaker's approach to civil wars? Douglas
departed from the mainstream in pointing out that
violent political conflicts are often irreconcilable
through bargaining approaches. She advocated
two analytical moves in such circumstances. The
first was to undertake a cultural audit, in order to
pinpoint the institutional roots of non-negotiable
social values. The second move, as exemplified in
her late work, was to return to ethnography, to
understand how civil wars do eventually end. This
threw a spotlight on the importance of complex (so-
called “clumsy”) institutional arrangements in post-
conflict settlements, and drew renewed attention
to ritual ordering as a means to “compose” the
unprecedented social taxonomies required by
such durable settlements. For Douglas, “listening to
the enemy” was a way to allow radically different
social taxonomies to mesh, and not a tool for
bargaining-based compromise. The lecture applies
this perspective to three concrete instances of
civil wars and their aftermath: the Dutch revolt, the
“culture wars” in France at the end of the 19th
century, and the recent civil war in Sierra Leone.



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Cover Photo Courtesy of Volker Sommer