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Welcome

It has been a hugely busy start to the academic year 2013/14 for staff and students alike. Our Anthrosociety has held a successful debate, hosting Dr Jo Cook and Dr Lucio Vinicius on the topic of Piece of Mind. Staff put the finishing touches on the Research Excellence Framework submission due this November and began to discuss the directions which research and teaching will take in the Department over the next seven years. With the arrivals of the new President & Provost, Professor Michael Arthur, and the new Dean of the Social and Historical Sciences (SHS), Professor Mary Fulbrook, the College is abuzz with debate about the vision for UCL reaching forward into the 2020s.

The past academic year has seen a consolidation of all of our activities in the Department, with a now fully staffed administration, thanks to the arrival in April of Jolanta Skorecka as Undergraduate Administrator. A successful Internal Teaching Quality Audit delivered much praise for our staff and students and the wonderful creative, productive and supportive atmosphere that we enjoy in our department. The committee's advice on how to tighten some of our internal processes and committee structure were implemented straight away and staff and students should see the benefit already this year in a smoother flow of information up and down the spine of our command structure. As always, however, changes induced by UCL's vast engine room are keeping us on our toes and promise to make this academic year far from boring.

The first year BSc students are looking forward again to their field trip in February, and we are busy with planning the implementation of a 2nd year field trip, directed to life skills, as requested by our students. We are awaiting the first running of the new compulsory 2nd year course, 'Being Human', on which all staff will teach following a

new teaching format inspired by the Oxbridge tutorial structure.

Sadly we had to remove the staff book covers from the main stairwell, but thanks to Paul Carter-Bowman in the office, our master's student Shweta Barupal, and recently completed PhD student Aaron Parkhurst, most of the covers have already been rehung beautifully on the ground floor and in the staff common room, with further hangings planned on the 2nd floor near the Seminar room. Towards the end of this academic year we have been promised the start of a huge renovation project for our walls, carpets and common rooms, and I am sure that this will be welcome news for us all.

Perhaps the greatest credit to the excellent teaching and the huge energy invested by our staff in the care and attention to advancing student learning is the repeat of the stellar performance of our 3rd year students, which saw almost half of our students leaving the College in June with a First Class Honours degree, two of our students being put forward to the Dean's list, and the remaining students being awarded good and very good Upper Second Class Honours degree results. Four of our students have left us with PhD studentships at the LSE and Cambridge, and we are very proud to have been able to fully fund a fifth student with an ESRC studentship to stay with us. Three of our PhD students won competitive postdoctoral research grants and are supported for 2 and 3 year periods by the ESRC, Leverhulme Trust and Marie Curie. Two of our staff are shortlisted for ERC grants, results pending. And so we are rejoicing in the success of our students and staff and are looking forward to the new academic year with confidence and a desire to match or improve upon these results.

I wish you all a very happy and productive year.

Professor Susanne Kuechler, Head of Department

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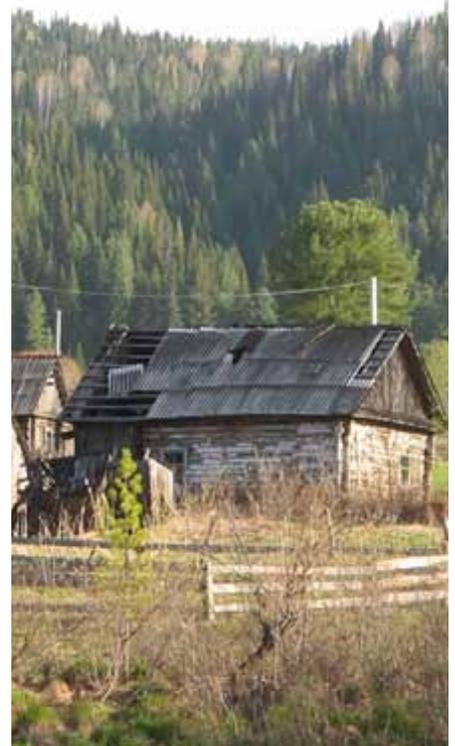
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Being a Spy or a Black Shaman in Southern Siberia: Fieldwork Among the Shors

Charlotte Loris-Rodionoff

MPhil/PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology

“Remember the most important thing: shamanism is not something exotic, and it brought the death of civilisations! We watched her. You sent us a person who serves the dark forces. We understand their interests. Do not try to understand – do not go in this sphere if your life is dear to you! The dark forces do not know how to have pity or how to pardon. Stay in your own scientific sphere.”



This SMS – where ‘her’ is ‘me’ - was sent to my hosts a few weeks after my arrival in Gornaya Shorya, a mountainous area located in the Kemerovo region in the north of the Altai-Saian, 3,700 km south of Moscow. I aimed to study shamanism among the Shors, a small Turkic people, who live in mountains covered with *taiga*, a dense evergreen forest. But as soon as I arrived after a three-day long train trip, Petr confidently announced that: “there are no shamans left among the Shors”. Surprisingly, he sent me an email about a month earlier offering to introduce me to a shamaness, Anna, with whom I could work. I was puzzled to hear that there were actually no shamans left in the region. However, I quickly understood that Petr did not mean that there were no shamans left at all among the Shors, rather that there were no *genuine* shamans left: only “incomplete”, “unauthentic”, “non-traditional” shamans live in Shorya. This absence of “genuine” shamans strongly contrasted with the omnipresence of

shamans and shamanism in jokes and talks.

Nonetheless, people did not speak ‘seriously’ about shamanism with me; not because of the so-called absence of shamans, but because people did not see why they should speak about it with me - a foreign anthropologist. People started to speak to me about shamanism

“A few hours after the SMS was sent, the shamaness Anna called my hosts, warning them against me, saying that I was a black shaman and a spy.”

after my place in this communicational situation changed: I had to be a part of this shamanic discourse for me to be told (and taught) about it (Favret-Saada 1980). The situation shifted after two shamanesses decided that I was not a scientist to keep away from their esoteric knowledge and practices, but rather a potential initiate. Given that I

“still did not choose any religion”, they resolved to “teach me shamanism”. They thus had to unveil things shamanic. However, my position of initiate was unstable: after two days spent with the shamanesses, they sent my hosts the SMS copied above. I was now “a person who serves the dark forces”: a black shaman. Yet I was not ‘just’ a black shaman. A few hours after the SMS was sent, the shamaness Anna called my hosts, warning them against me, saying that I was a *black shaman* and a *spy*. This double accusation was followed by immediate reactions: the doors of the community closed one after the other on me, and, apart from my hosts, no one would speak to me anymore. I no longer enjoyed the “comfortable” position of the foreign anthropologist, but I was in the uncomfortable one of a black shaman/spy.

Indeed, after the accusation spread in the city, one thing was certain: I was working with the dark forces, I

was 'not quite an enemy'. Everybody was worried about the possibility of a bad omen, and/or of problems with the local police, or worse, with the FSB (Federal Security Service). Even Makar, a convinced atheist, was not certain that I was harmless: he kept mentioning, sarcastically laughing, that I must be a very good spy, since I did not look like one. This suspicion was partly grounded on my fuzzy status, since there are practically no foreigners in Shorya, and my identity was unclear, for I introduced myself as French, but I also revealed my Russian descent



as it explained my knowledge of the language. But the accusation was also cosmological: I was a black shaman. I found myself in a reverse situation to Favret-Saada (1980). Whilst she became an intimate friend and an assistant of a magician in the French Bocage, I became an intimate enemy of the Shor shamanesses of whom I was a potential initiate.

This tricky position yet gave me a better understanding of contemporary Shor society: first, it made me realise that shamanism and politics are intimately

intertwined, and that there is a troubling "isomorphism of form" between these two spheres in Shorya (Pedersen 2011). Second, it gave me a better insight into Shor social relations. The Janus-like figure of the black shaman/spy made clear that suspicion of spies (politics) had a shamanic dimension. And, indeed, any outsider, political opponent, rival shaman, or Shor with whom another Shor is in conflict, is referred to as a black shaman; while any foreigner, anyone having a fuzzy status, is called a spy.

In short, this experience revealed that even when perceived 'negatively' and suspiciously by one's informants, one can still do fruitful fieldwork! Although I was seen as a suspicious person, rather than an anthropologist, and I could not establish relations other than those based on mistrust and deceit with my informants, this fieldwork experience gave me an intimate access to the Shor society.

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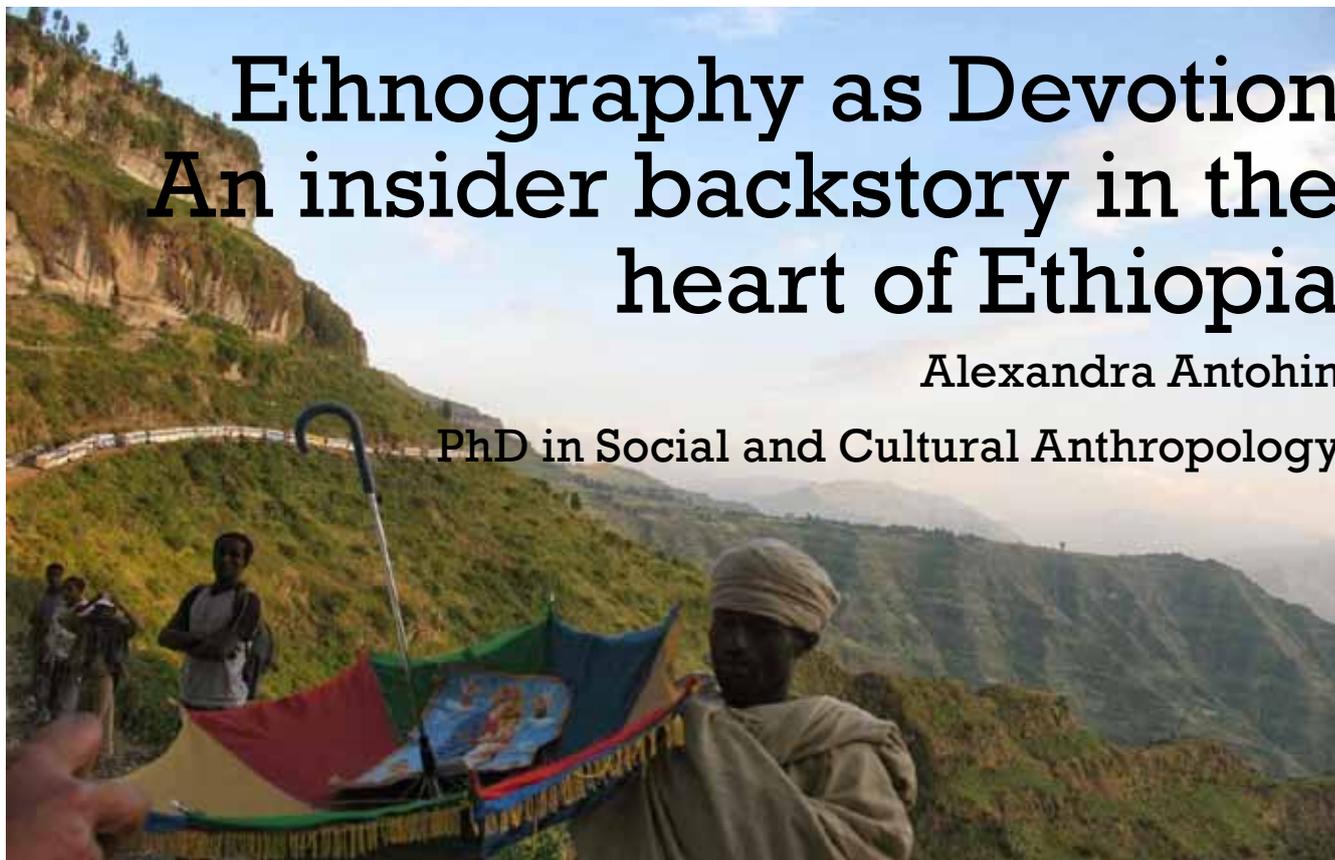
Left: Map showing the location of Kemerovo region in the Russian Federation (en.wikinews.org)

Ethnography as Devotion

An insider backstory in the heart of Ethiopia

Alexandra Antohin

PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology



A priest accepts a donation for the sake of St. Mary: in the background, a trail of buses parked at Gishen.

Having imagined my home for the next year and a half on Google Maps, my doctoral fieldsite was a location I could not find. Gishen Debre Kirbe was a flat-topped mountain, its plateau distinguishable as resembling the contours of a cross, where in the church of St. Mary my grandmother was baptised in 1934. A difficult journey on mule and winding dirt roads that took nearly a month to complete, brought mother and child to this remote place to fulfil a vow. This act broke the misfortune of many failed pregnancies by giving the new-born to Gishen Mariam, more specifically to the *tabot* (ark and altar) of this church. The intrigue of not finding its coordinates on a map and the draw of the personal connection spurred my interest to start with Gishen.

Rather strategically, I also recognised that this personal story would be useful with the Orthodox Christian communities I planned to work with.

Whatever privilege the “insider” anthropologist role was expected to afford me, I aimed to exercise a certain versatility of shifting positions due to my claims to roots (Narayan 1993). My “way in” would be as a participant in an intergenerational rite of promise, representing the newest link in this chain by honouring the memory of Gishen, how “*Mariam* listened and protected”. This logic would translate well, I anticipated, giving the ethnographer context. And, sure enough, when this backstory disappeared, I became a foreigner, causing individuals to be genuinely mystified at my extended presence at Gishen.

To study pilgrimage (lit. ‘spiritual journey’ in Amharic) required committing oneself to a sort of mission.

Surely, this anthropology business was a guise. In my case, a scholastic curiosity about the devotional customs of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians was interpreted by many as an inner, spiritual

motivation to be closer to the religious heritage of my generations past. Both my biographical details and Christian personhood were constantly recast in an interactive exchange between the ethnographer and her informants (Reitsikas 2008). It was accurate to call me an Orthodox Christian, one knowledgeable and intimately familiar with its traditions but not a confessing one, as I had never taken communion. Fears of proselytism in the way Blanes (2004) discusses in his strategising of an “unfinished agnosticism” were not a concern, though I did engage in a similar open-ended possibility of the deeper Christian I might become as a result of this project. My ethnographic activities, for many of my interlocutors, were about stretching my belief.

Several weeks before thousands of travellers would head an additional 300 km north to the town of Lalibela, I decided to visit this famed holy site early. This experience had all the

hallmarks of a typical long-distance journey in Ethiopia, particularly the combination of a reckless driver and fatal or near-fatal accidents along the road. Despite these known factors, the trip was an absolute nightmare, directly life-threatening and inauspicious on both legs of the journey. One reaction to these events by my cousin was not at all surprised that our entrance was “rejected” as he put it. “One doesn’t just go to a holy place in a hurry” he said. To “get permission” is an active, dialogic negotiation that is based on reinforcing ties with God and by giving offerings to the church. My lack of subscribing to a regime made glaring the importance of making promises to reconfirm links, defining belief, through devotional acts, as “the quality of a relationship, that of keeping the faith, having trust” (Ruel 1982: 22).

Brushes with death on pilgrimage can also indicate signs of spiritual proximity and potency. On one occasion while descending Gishen, a large bus tipped over to the side of a road no more than four meters wide. Fisseha, a fellow pilgrim, prompted me to take photographs of the accident. Horrified and a bit stern in my response, I refused, and kept silent my opinion that this act glorified tragedy and showed a flippant reaction to the fragility of



life. He looked at me blankly, not comprehending my indignation. “But it’s a miracle. They didn’t die. This is proof of God’s power and love. That’s what we are celebrating.” This thin line between tragedies and miracles, rather than demonstrating a much-cited emphasis on “god-fearing” by Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, in fact stands for a certain relishing of the unknown. It is a type of communication that Orthodox Christian direct to what they label as “the sacred”, as “a way of coping with certain epistemological problems – maybe necessary ones?” (Bateson & Bateson 1988: 86). Belief, rather than a statement of truths we know, represents the truths we don’t. It is this confrontation that is being sought after and the work that implicates individuals to realise this encountering between this and the other world. As it was stated to me by one pilgrim to Gishen, “the journey to the sacred place is always trying and exceedingly long. The return to the world is short and easy.”



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Top left: Pilgrims descending after the conclusion of the feast day.

Top right: Approaching a monk outside his cell. Left: Celebration of liturgy and the offerings to church.

Now Delhi is Not Far

Christopher Pinney

Professor of Anthropology and Visual Culture

My most recent trip to India (late August through to end September 2013) was chiefly to organise a photographic exhibition in a New Delhi art gallery, part of Delhi Photo Festival. The exhibition was a selection of prints made from negatives dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s salvaged from a small-town studio's warehouse in central India.

“Prior to this Suresh had been rather puzzled about the reason for the exhibition, assuming that his workaday portraits would appeal only to ‘foreigners’ who would be struck by the ‘strangeness’ of Madhya Pradesh life.”

The printing was done in London and I took the images to the framers when I arrived in Delhi before then heading

south by train to Madhya Pradesh for a few weeks in the town where I’ve worked intermittently since 1982. The exhibition was due to open on 25th September and I was returning to Delhi a few days before to set things up. Suresh Punjabi, the small-town photographer would come up very early on the day of the opening with his family and stay one night in the New Delhi bungalow of the local MP before returning to the continuing work in the studio.

Two days before I returned to Delhi the local media fervour started. Suresh arranged a series of group interviews with local reporters and video journalists, his planned news conference having been cancelled through lack of a suitable space. Prior to this Suresh had been rather puzzled about the reason for the exhibition, assuming that his workaday portraits would appeal only



to “foreigners” who would be struck by the “strangeness” of Madhya Pradesh life. He also engaged in his own acts of visual translation, deciding that the invitation to the opening which had been prepared by the gallery (Art Heritage), while excellent, was inappropriate for the aesthetics of a small-town. The gallery had sent 50 copies for Suresh to distribute locally but he decided to print 300 of his self-designed invitation



because the Delhi-produced one was *zyada hai* (“too high”, ie “too high class”).

In the numerous interviews in the days before I left it became clear how important key facts were in defining what kind of event this should be: the location of the gallery (its central position in New Delhi being of great importance), the fact that all the images in the show were by Suresh (they were not mixed with and hence diluted by the work of others), that the name of Studio Suhag would be outside the gallery, and that important photographers would be present at the opening. Having established these key elements of the narrative with reporters from *Nai Duniya* and *Dainik Bhaskar* (the two major Hindi newspapers), these elements were then formalised in a press release which found its way into stories used by numerous other local Hindi publications with much smaller circulations. We also did numerous video interviews for local cable networks in which I stressed, with Suresh’s encouragement, the aesthetic power of his images since he





had started to understand that it wasn't only "foreigners" who would find them striking and interesting. Suresh also decided that he would send one of his videographers, Ankit, to record the whole event since he wanted the *pura clip* ("whole clip") of the event.

I had a midnight train to Delhi and an astonishing late monsoon storm raged all day. Torrential, lashing rain was accompanied by terrifying thunder. My train, which had departed twelve hours earlier from Mumbai was three minutes late. The day of the opening arrived and the show looked great:

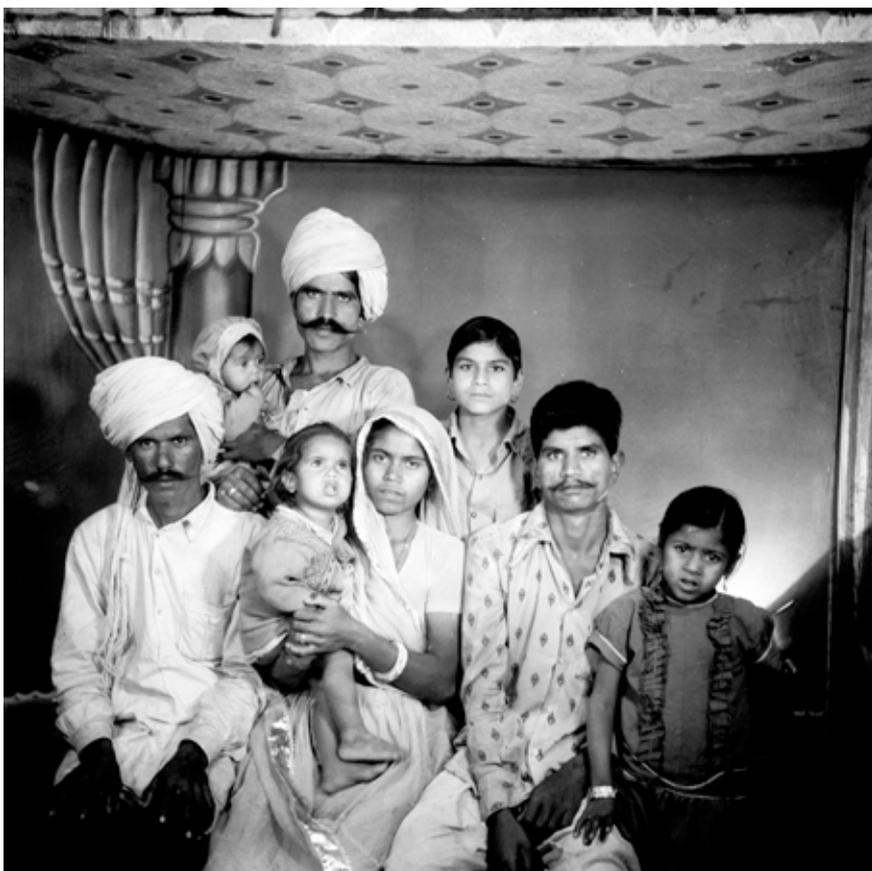
Suresh and his family were finally faced with the translation of his studio work from several decades ago into the white cube of Art Heritage in the Kala Triveni Sangam arts complex. Now Delhi was not far (*Ab Dilli Dur Nahin* was the title of a famous 1950s Raj Kapoor movie about migration to the city). My anxieties about the collision of two very different worlds faded as Suresh talked amiably with the celebrated performance artist Pushpamala N, the World Press Photo award winner Pablo Bartholomew, and the renowned photographer Ram Rahman who "released" the book which accompanied the exhibition



(Artisan Camera: Studio Photography from Central India). We were also graced by the presence of Ebrahim Alkazi who has probably had more impact on visual arts and drama in India in the last fifty years than anyone else. After the opening I gave a lecture in the adjacent open-air auditorium. It was raining heavily in most parts of Delhi but somehow we

were saved from the deluge. Suresh is no longer simply a small-town photographer but has gained a foothold in the Indian Artworld and been written about in many of the national daily newspapers. Google "Studio Suhag" to see his responses on Facebook (mediated by his English-speaking son

Pratik). A new circuit of representation and visibility has been created in part through anthropological participant transformation. The show will go to Chennai in a few months and then, funds permitting, I'll hire a shop front in that town in Madhya Pradesh where we will create its first pop-up art gallery.



Stigmatising HIV/AIDS in Malawi

Hannah Luck

MSc Medical Anthropology

In 2010, after my first year of studying Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, I travelled to Malawi to work with a community development charity in feeding centres for HIV orphans in the Southern region. During my time in Malawi, I was able to form close friendships with a group of 18-20 year old men involved in the local Scout group. I was able to talk frankly with them about issues such as their expectations of girlfriends and wives, church and their religious beliefs. Our conversations were mainly centred on the Malawian men mocking me and proclaiming how awful it would be to be

married to a woman as disobedient as me (a sentiment I can't disagree with).

After returning from Malawi, I became increasingly interested in the role Pentecostal churches play in the HIV epidemic across Southern Africa with specific focus on how religious teachings on sexual purity and divine retribution have contributed to the stigmatisation of people living with HIV/AIDS. I looked at how the stigmatisation of seropositive people has directly affected how likely people are to get tested for HIV. Additionally, I wanted to look into the role of masculinity constructions in



the spread of HIV whilst looking at the efforts of Assembly of God churches in Zambia to create a 'biblical masculinity' in response to the epidemic. My time in Malawi was the inspiration behind my work throughout my undergraduate studies and continues to be a source of interest for me today.



God Bless the Tools

Aarthi Ajit

MA Material and Visual Culture (2012)

Surely everyone has a favourite festival or holiday. There are so many locally and internationally, it's near impossible not to have at least one. One of my favourite festivals is known as *Ayudha puja*, part of the nine to ten-day series of festivals across India generally acknowledged as *Dasara*. I remember *Ayudha puja* also as *Saraswati puja* from my childhood, where we would happily give up our schoolbooks for one entire day, in order to make a worthy assemblage of objects for the *puja* or ritual, and subsequent blessing by Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of wisdom, learning and the arts. We were allowed to bunk off school as well – which is why school-going children are particularly fond of this festival. Simply put, *Ayudha puja* is held to give thanks for the divine force that keeps safe and functional the tools and implements that enable our professional lives to run smoothly. Traditionally, the items put up for blessing are books, tools, machines, weapons, motorised vehicles, even musical instruments. But it's not surprising to hear of laptops, juice blenders and other more contemporary tools being included in the *puja*.

This year *Ayudha puja* was held on October the 13th. A text message I received early morning read: "Happy Ayudha Puja – to all material things!" I happened to be vacationing with friends on the banks of the Krishna Raja Sagara dam/lake, near Mysore, India, and the guesthouse owner mentioned that his cook's family would be doing their

version of *Ayudha puja* around noon. Would we like to see it?

The ritual begins with us removing our shoes and approaching an arrangement of polished knives, several agricultural implements, power tools and a ladder, which have been decorated with jasmine flowers and chrysanthemums, mostly yellow in colour, as well as fruits and a halved coconut. A suitably decorated bicycle rests to the side. The *puja* is conducted by the cook's adult son, first by smearing each of the objects individually with turmeric, vermilion and sandalwood paste, and then by lighting a piece of camphor, which in turn is used to light a few incense sticks. The incense envelops the objects; no words are uttered. A chicken is silently sacrificed at the very end of the ritual. In less than ten minutes it is over, and the objects are left in peace for the rest of the day.

What is interesting is that the cook's family are Christian, not Hindu, but have been celebrating *Ayudha puja* as a part of their annual festival repertoire, just as their ancestors (prior to conversion to Christianity) would have done. This would explain why there were no pictures of Hindu goddesses on the dais, a common occurrence elsewhere. I like this festival because it seems to allow for a veneration of gods and objects in a religious and/or ritualistic way – a more inclusive approach for Indians of diverse religions to say "thanks for the tools".

Aarthi Ajit has a MA in Material and Visual Culture (2012), from the Department of Anthropology, UCL. She is pursuing a PhD in Ethnology at Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense and can be reached at: a.ajit.11@alumni.ucl.ac.uk.

Below: Household tools being blessed on the occasion of *Ayudha Puja*



An Interview with Joe Calabrese

Lecturer in Medical Anthropology, His research focuses on the study of culture and mental health, ritual healing, traditional medicines, therapeutic narratives, postcolonial revitalization movements, and comparative human development.



Joe (right) and Chief Psychiatrist of Bhutan Chenchu Dorji in Traditional Men's Dress

What are you currently doing research-wise?

At this point, I am pondering my dual identity as an anthropologist and practitioner psychologist, exploring various concepts and approaches at the interface between anthropology and clinical disciplines. This dual identity leads me to practice a different mode of ethnography and a different mode of clinical practice. In my current fieldwork in the Kingdom of Bhutan, I am again employing a clinical ethnography approach, embedding myself as a member of the clinical team at the country's main referral hospital during the last three summers. This has stimulated reflection on the best uses of clinical ethnography, both for improving healthcare and for the development of anthropological understanding.

I've just published a monograph on my earlier work with the Navajos, called *A Different Medicine: Postcolonial Healing in the Native American Church*, and I continue to explore concepts developed in that work, including culturally embedded therapeutic employment, clinical paradigm clash, the dynamics of postcolonial healing, the multiplicity of the normal, and an

alternative semiotic/reflexive paradigm of psychopharmacology. I also recently co-edited a book called *Understanding and Using Experiences of Health and Illness*, with colleagues from Oxford, which reviews various methods used to study health experiences.

I am interested in clarifying the best uses of modern medical/psychiatric approaches and the best uses of traditional ritual-based approaches. In *A Different Medicine*, I argue that ritual interventions are the most appropriate and clinically useful approaches to alcoholism and many other behavioural disorders among the Navajos. For many problems, modern medical approaches remain the most useful approaches. However, we need to "decolonize" clinical knowledge, becoming aware of the European and Euro-American cultural values embedded in it like individualism, materialist focus on biological reductionism, capitalist focus on healthcare as a commodity rather than a basic human right.

What current projects are your students involved in at the moment?

I really enjoy working with students and have had so many wonderful students

at UCL, both anthropologists and clinicians. Their projects encompass studies of embodiment, traditional medicine, psychotherapy, racial categories as they impact clinical trials, gender roles as they impact HIV testing, medicalization of childbirth, trauma and social reintegration of African child soldiers, traditional hospitality and hosting practices in Bhutan, and many other fascinating topics.

What is next?

Bhutan is my main field site going forward. I am studying the lives of Bhutanese people with mental illness, the effectiveness of modern psychiatric treatments in this context, and the role of ritual healing, traditional medicine, and Buddhism. I am also trying to support the medical system in Bhutan through training and research that informs policy and practice. They are trying to establish a University of Medical Sciences and I have been invited to become a Visiting Lecturer (during my breaks from UCL). I plan to develop curricula in Medical Anthropology and mental health.

How did you become an anthropologist? Tell us a bit about your career so far?

It has been a long and twisty path. During my undergraduate education, which was in a School of Music, I became interested in ethnomusicology. I had connections to the Haitian community in Chicago, where I grew up, and spent a summer in Haiti, living with a Haitian family and attending Vodou ceremonies each weekend (I had been impressed by recordings of the polyrhythmic drumming of these rituals). This first experience of fieldwork changed me in many ways. For one thing, I observed incredible poverty, which stimulated an interest in postcolonial populations and inequality. In addition, I had been raised in a Catholic family and the prevailing image of Vodou in Catholicism, and in American society generally, was that it was evil Devil worship. But I found the people at Vodou temples to be normal people going about the religion in which they were raised, which, of course, was very different from the religion in which I was raised. I was welcomed and fed (those "evil" Vodou sacrifices end up as a tasty chicken and rice dish). The men shared their rum with me and the old women tried their best to teach me the complicated Vodou dances (at which I utterly failed). I became fascinated by the non-pathological spirit possessions I observed, which drew me into psychological anthropology and away from ethnomusicology. I also became sick in Haiti and was cured by a horrible tasting leaf tea, which drew me into the study of traditional medicines.

Soon after this, I became aware of a Native American postcolonial healing tradition that was under attack in a Supreme Court case: the Native American Church (NAC). Members of this tradition use the psychoactive peyote cactus as a sacred medicine. As I got into fieldwork on the NAC, I completed an MA in Anthropology at

the University of Illinois and entered a doctoral programme at the University of Chicago. Chicago is known for its interdisciplinary committees and I entered the Committee on Human Development, which allowed me to be trained in both anthropology and clinical psychology. My supervisor was Ray Fogelson, who was a student of Hallowell and Wallace and an ethnographer of the Cherokee. One of the co-founders of the Committee on Human Development was Carl Rogers, so my clinical training was very humanistic with a strong dose of cultural psychology (though I also took medical courses such as neuropsychopharmacology and developmental biopsychology). I completed two years of fieldwork on the NAC. In my Navajo fieldwork, I combined anthropological immersion in Navajo communities with a year-long clinical placement at a Navajo treatment program that incorporated traditional healing rituals into the treatment process in response to the local demand for culturally appropriate healthcare.

After Chicago, I went on to complete my training in Clinical Psychology with a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School, during which I treated adult psychiatric patients at the Cambridge Hospital. I focused on mind/body approaches, including hypnosis, biofeedback, and mindfulness, though

I had supervision from psychodynamic and cognitive orientations as well. I then completed the Medical Anthropology Research Fellowship at Harvard, working with

Byron and Mary-Jo Good and Arthur Kleinman. There I collaborated on an ethnographic study of the Harvard teaching hospitals that was published in the book *Shattering Cultures*. After a time as the first Cannon Fellow in Patient Experiences and Health Policy at Green Templeton College, Oxford, which resulted in some publications on health experiences in the UK, I settled into my current position at UCL.

Are you only an anthropologist?

That's a bit complicated. I see myself primarily as an anthropologist ... and I see this not as a profession but as a basic orientation to life. I am also a practicing clinician and I feel that this clinical involvement makes me a better anthropologist. It's like one side of my brain is an anthropologist and the other half is a clinician. I continually subject the anthropological half to clinical critiques and the clinician half to anthropological critiques. So hopefully no idea goes unchallenged. My basic philosophy is dialectical, so I tend to believe that truth is a more encompassing perspective getting beyond the initial dichotomy. And I am still a musician, currently obsessed with the 24 string baroque lute (though I play primarily for therapeutic purposes).

Below: A Vodou Ceremony in Haiti 1989





Hunter-Gatherer Resilience Project

Hunting and gathering have been the major occupations of humans since homo sapiens emerged (200,000 years ago). Although it has been the longest and most diverse bio-cultural adaptation in humanity's existence, we know very little about the ways in which hunter-gatherers have adapted to pressures and maintained their resilience. While the number of hunter-gatherers that have disappeared is unknown, the consequences of their extinction are evident in humanity's current low genetic diversity, and in the uneven distribution of languages, where 95% of the world's languages are spoken by only 6% of the world's population. Diminishing genetic and linguistic diversity is matched by diminishing biodiversity. Since the remaining

hunter-gatherers live in some of the world's most important biodiversity hotspots this project will explore the relationships between these key areas of diversity for humanity's general resilience in a period of rapid natural, social and technological change.

The Resilience Project studies hunter-gatherers in Congo (Mbendjele), Malaysia (Batek), Thailand (Maniq) and the Philippines (Agta), using behavioural ecology, life history theory, theories of cooperation, cultural transmission and genetics to explore how variation in life history traits, kin selection, mating systems, and cooperative behaviour differentially contribute to hunter-gatherer resilience in the past and present.

The project is a 5-year research programme funded by the Leverhulme Trust, led by Dr Andrea Migliano in collaboration with Dr Jerome Lewis, Prof. Ruth Mace (UCL, Anthropology) and Prof. Mark Thomas (UCL, Department of Genetics, Ecology and Evolution). We are a team of 20 researchers, including postdoctoral researchers and PhD students, interested in understanding the current pressures and points of resilience of these populations, and the important adaptations for hunter-gatherers' survival.



The Leverhulme Trust



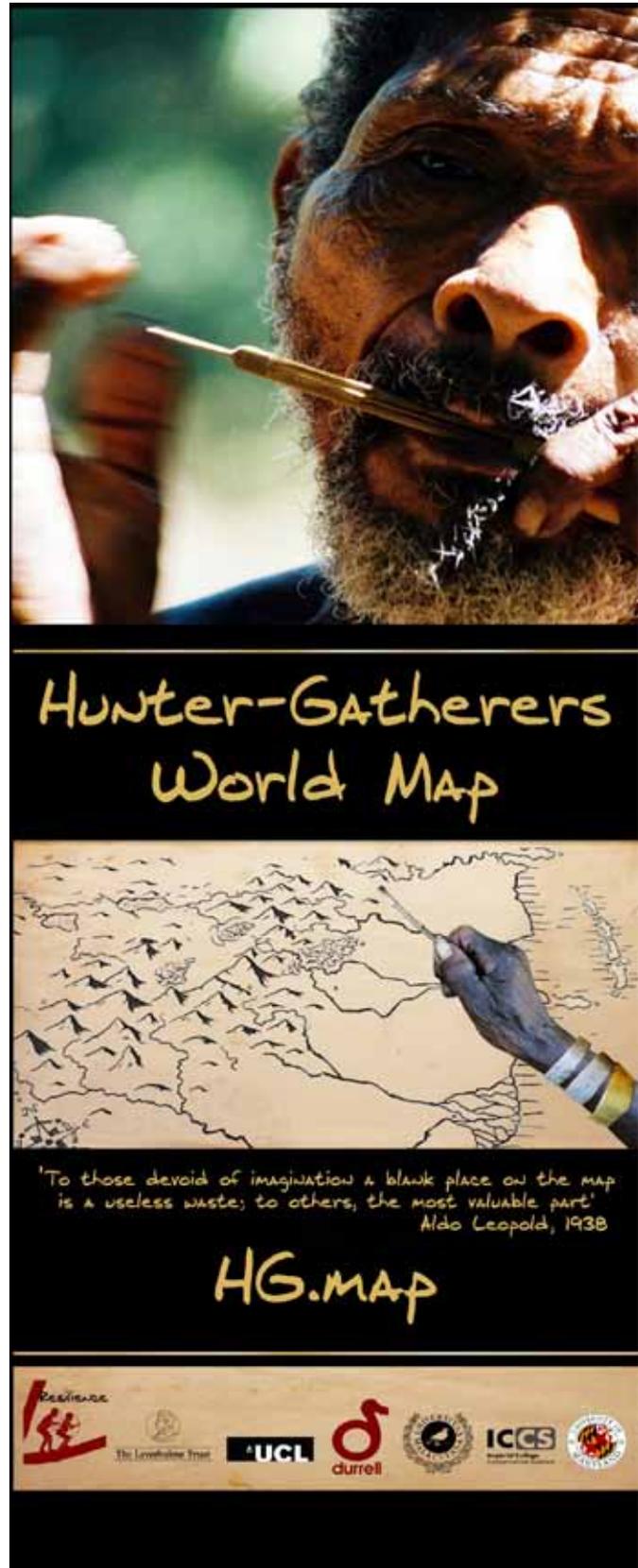
Mapping Hunter-Gatherers

Human cultural diversity is concentrated in the remaining areas of global biodiversity. The Hunter-Gatherer World Map seeks to catalogue this remarkable overlap.

Substantial progress has been achieved in hunter-gatherer and biodiversity research over the past century. However, our understanding of the global variability, resilience and dynamic connections between hunter-gatherer societies and their environment remains fragmented. The goal of our project is to address this gap through spatial and temporal analyses of hunter-gatherer cultures across the world.

The *Hunter-Gatherer World Map Project (HG.map)* consists of an international team of scholars with expertise in anthropology, ethnography, geography, physical and social modelling and environmental analysis. Together, we aim to catalogue hunter-gatherer distribution and status across the globe, and understand their present and future environmental context. We employ a suite of methods (including anthropological studies, geospatial analyses and distribution modelling) to understand the factors that impact the long-term survival of hunter-gatherer societies. The ultimate question is not only why areas of high biodiversity also tend to be culturally diverse, but also how these areas of high biological diversity, which are of great importance to hunter-gatherers, can be maintained. Our project will:

- Generate a global map of the locations of hunter-gatherer societies.
- Better understand the environmental, political and social factors that correlate with current favourable areas for hunter-gatherer societies.
- Assess future trajectories and potential pressures on the cultural, biological, and ecological settings that hunter-gatherer societies may face (including climate change).





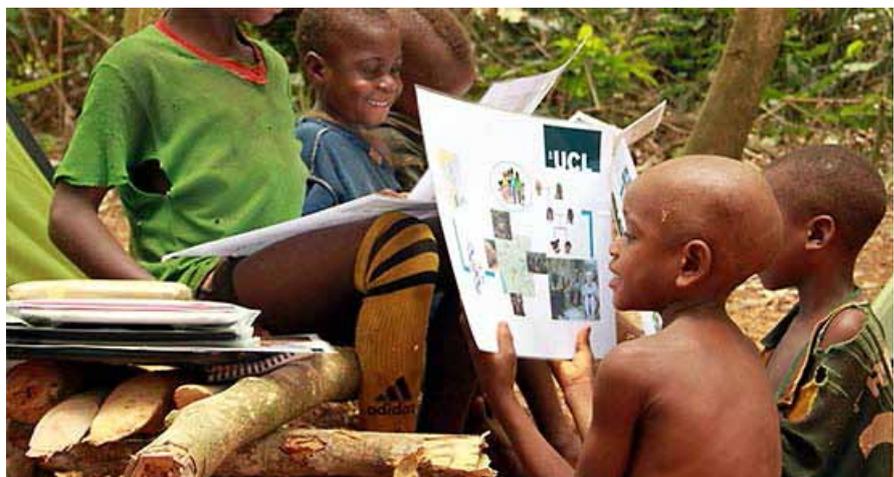
Research Topics

Food sharing and cooperation are at the centre of hunter-gatherers' lifestyle. No other apes share food or cooperate to the extent that humans do. A complex network of sharing and cooperation exist within camps and between camps in different hunter-gatherer groups, regulated by social rules, friendship ties, food taboos, kinship and supernatural beliefs. Sharing is a crucial adaptation and one that is believed to be central for the evolution of mankind.



Rituals, Music and oral traditions are at the centre of hunter-gatherers' cultural resilience. Great similarities in vocal polyphonic singing styles among African Pygmies and similar taboos around reproduction and food suggest ancient relationships between these cultural traits. Our project is studying the importance of these traditions for the cultural and biological resilience of different hunter-gatherer groups.

Genetics is used to investigate hunter-gatherer demographic history, key phenotypic traits and adaptation history. We are investigating changes in hunter-gatherer population size through time (before/after the spread of agriculture started); levels of admixture with neighbouring populations ; and population-specific genetic adaptations, such as adaptations associated with diet, climate, and pathogens.



Field Work



The Agta of the Northern Luzon, Philippines, live as mobile or semi mobile hunter-gatherers in the mountain and coast of Northern Sierra Madre, Isabela. Like many Hunter-gatherers in the Philippines, deforestation associated with the expansion of Agriculture and growing Philippine population has had a significant impact on the distribution and demography of the Agta population. Currently there are between 1,500 and 2,000 Agta living in this area of Northern Sierra Madre, where they continue to live in small semi-mobile groups, depending on forest hunting and gathering as well as marine resources for their subsistence.

The Agta speak Austronesian languages that are thought to have been acquired after contact with agriculturalists over the last few thousand years, and they are related to other hunter-gatherers in the Philippines such as the Aeta and the Batak. In spite of the language shift, many of the Agta groups display remarkable resilience in their way of life; while others are slowly shifting towards more integrated markets.

The Mbendjele or BaYaka live in the western Congo basin, in the northernmost regions of the Republic of Congo. Some fifteen to twenty thousand Mbendjele are estimated to live as hunter-gatherers in the rainforest bordering Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Like other Pygmy groups of central Africa, they have long-term relations with sedentary farming communities, and speak a Bantu language.

Also in common with other Pygmies, they have sophisticated traditions of choral music, myth and ritual, and a deep knowledge of the forest and its inhabitants. Although increasingly under pressure from logging and conservation interests to abandon their hunting and gathering lifestyle, they maintain great pride in their way of life.





Students Perspectives: Africa

Bala bala bala / Konga konga konga / Eliki konga!... So sing the kids, clapping their hands joyfully and inviting us to join them. Every day kids are around us, dancing, shouting, climbing trees and making toy dolls, mimicking hunters and forest spirits. At nights, women sit on the plain ground screaming the songs their ancestors have been singing for thousands of years. They are calling for the forest spirits. Soon the spirits come: the men covered in forest leaves, dancing in trance. I look at the sky; the stars blink at me, I'm in another

universe. A universe which, along with the joyful forest people and beautiful animals, has hundreds of stingless bees that land on your head and lick your sweat during the day; and angry storms that make you stay awake all night worrying which of the trees above your head will fall first. As the pile of my dirty clothes gets bigger, I wonder what time of day will be the best to go to the river for washing while avoiding the



infected flies. This is a parallel universe that I am in – a universe which is full of tough beauties. *Deniz Salali*



When we arrived in Longa, the first Mbendjele camp we visited, the children ran after our truck to greet us. Seeing hunter-gatherer camps and people right in front of me, rather than on a documentary, was definitely one of the most exhilarating moments of my life.

It is difficult to encapsulate all the laughs, bonding and difficulties we experienced over our 10 weeks in the rainforest.

The best part of fieldwork is the children: Before arriving there is always apprehension about how you will be received, but the children are just as excited to see, play with and learn about you, as you are with them – they are what I miss the most. The other highlights were getting to see the unimaginable talents these people

possess - they are magnificent singers and clappers, making music completely different to anything you've heard; and they climb trees 40m high to collect honey.

One of the hardest things about forest life is not having the food you want -- after a few days I was already fantasizing about Domino's pizza. But I quickly became accustomed to bathing in the lake, pissing in the forest, and sleeping in a tent. It's definitely the most memorable thing I've done.

Nik Chaudhary



Students Perspectives: Asia



Batek: As an indigenous hunter-gatherer society in an increasingly urban world, the Batek's way of life is currently under threat from government pressure, deforestation, and tourism. I hope that through appreciation of their musical practices, more can be understood about what is at the root of their resilience in the face of these threats. Many cultures differentiate music and language as separate methods of communication, usually prioritising language as the most effective and direct means of communication. Often,

however, cultures that have not had the direct experience of literacy training are more likely to see music, language, gesture, and dance as part of the same process of message communication. Music - or rather the process of 'musicking' - can potentially tell us as much about the beliefs of such a community as language.

As the Batek hunt and gather for their subsistence, an intimate knowledge of and relationship to the forest is essential to their survival. Deep care for the forest means that the destruction of rainforests, for them, is equivalent to the destruction of the world. The Batek are therefore convinced of the urgent need to inform the world of the dangers of losing the forests, not only for them, but for all of us. They communicate their stories of warning through *surat* – oral letters passed down through generations. In looking at the ways the Batek 'music', and how they communicate more broadly, I hope to gain an understanding of these *surat*, and thus how the destruction of the forest is affecting their world. *Alice Rudge*

Agta: As many people learned in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan, the Philippines, an archipelago of some 7,000 islands, has thousands of small and isolated communities, accessible only by boat or light aircraft. Communities in north-eastern Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines and home to the urban sprawl of Manila, are, however, isolated not by ocean but by the Sierra Madre mountain range, which runs down the eastern spine of the island and cuts down steeply to the Pacific. This region is inaccessible by road and isolated to such an extent that its inhabitants refer to the rest of the island as the 'mainland'.



As well as a modest population of farmers, the region is home to the Agta, one of the few remaining populations of 'indigenous' Filipinos who still have a largely hunter-gatherer economy. For us, three PhD students who had never conducted anthropological fieldwork before, the boat journey to Palanan was very exciting. We were desperate to see Agta camped along the beach as we went past, individuals we had come so far to see. When we landed in Palanan we

finally met a group of Agta women and children, and suddenly the reality hit us that these were not some mystical, strange individuals but a groups of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters trying to get along in their environment and ecology. Even so, fieldwork remained exciting and challenging (if a bit hot and sweaty at times). We are looking forward to going back next year and learning more about the Agta's unique adaptations to life.

Abigail Page, Daniel Smith & Mark Dyble

Sniffing out a mate

Dr Nienke Alberts



What makes people fall in love? A good sense of humour? Similar interests? A physical attraction? When people say that ‘there just was a chemistry between us’ they may actually be on to something. According to evolutionary anthropologists, smell may be an important factor in human mate choice, which helps to increase individuals’ reproductive success. Experiments have shown that women are more attracted to the smell of men that differ in a set of genes that are important for the immune system, also known as the major histocompatibility complex (or MHC). The MHC helps the body to decide if an antigen it encounters belongs to the body, or is an invader. The combination of two peoples’ different,

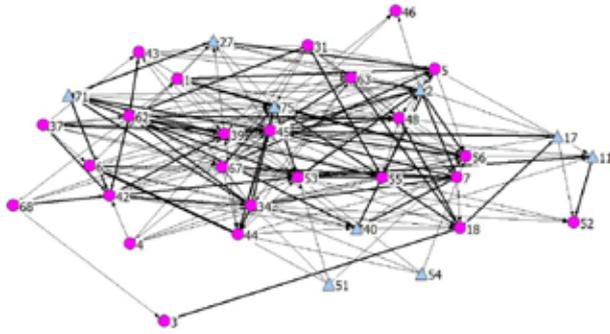
or complementary, MHCs gives their offspring immunity to a wider range of diseases, and therefore those offspring are at an advantage. Women are able to make very fine-grained choices as it has been shown that they are able to

“According to evolutionary anthropologists, smell may be an important factor in human mate choice, which helps to increase individuals’ reproductive success.”

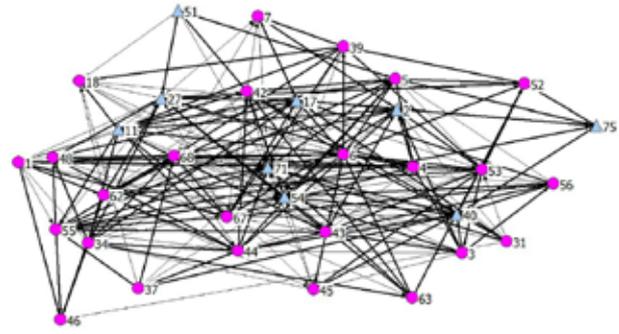
discriminate between the smells of men that just differ in a few genes.

The first-year students on the ‘Introduction to Methods and Techniques in Biological Anthropology’ set out to test if both men and women use their noses to find a mate. To this end, each student wore a plain white T-shirt for three nights in a row, and brought the T-shirts to class in a sealed plastic bag. Students then sniffed and ranked each T-shirt according to the pleasantness of its smell. These data were then analysed using Social Network Analysis. Two networks were created, a ‘like’ network, and a ‘dislike’ network, in which the relationships between individuals were given by how they rated each other’s smell. Within these networks, the percentage of reciprocal relationships

Group A - like network



Group A - dislike network



where calculated, in other words, the proportion of total relationships in which both individuals liked (or disliked) each other's smell. If smell is an important part of human mate choice, we would expect a high proportion of relationships to be reciprocal, as people with complementary MHCs should rate each other's odours highly.

These were however, not the results we found. In the like network, only 11-14% of relationships were reciprocal, and this was 8-13% in the dislike network. There were several explanations for this low proportion of

reciprocity. Firstly, it may be that the contraceptive pill influenced some of the results, as previous studies have shown that the hormones in the pill can interfere with the preference for odours in both males and females. Secondly, it may be that smells other than body odour were used in ranking the T-shirts. Some T-shirts had remnants of perfume or body wash on them, which made them very popular. Other T-shirts had last night's curry all down the front of it. And that never helps with finding a mate.

A stricter protocol on not wearing

perfumes, eating, or smoking whilst wearing the T-shirts for the experiment, would eliminate this possible interference of other smells. By collecting additional information on the use of the contraceptive pill, we would further be able to control for hormonal interference in odour preferences. Together, this would give a more robust test of whether humans follow their noses to find their perfect partner.



A beginning for LabUK

Carol Balthazar

PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology

LabUK is a research platform created by the UCL Anthropology Department to bring awareness to the strong body of anthropological research produced among those of us who are researching topics in the UK. At the beginning of the 2013/14 Academic year, LabUK officially started its activities with a one-day workshop.

At the workshop, Masters students, PhD's and lecturers had the opportunity to present their work and explore potential synergies. The eleven pre-circulated papers were presented in four different sessions: "Otherness



within Britain", "Play, Otherness and Anthropology", "LabUK, Why?" and "Ethnography of Britain and Applied Anthropology". They included talks on hospices and Facebook; UK gold-workers trade, climbing walls, climate change activist camps, fieldwork in places for which there are no maps (sic!) and several other subjects.

As the name of the platform suggests,

the discussions allowed the comparison between ethnographies of the UK but also encouraged the theoretical problematization of national or geographical boundaries in the discipline of Anthropology. In this sense, the workshop was a good opportunity for the discussion of categories such as "home" and "other" and other potentially problematic traditional anthropological dualities such as "us-other", "western-non western". Are we always some kind of "other", even in our own country? Is the ethnographer's task, to reinforce the existence of otherness or is it the exact opposite, to continually strive to become "one of them"? Can performance and play generate relevant tools for the understanding of contemporary social relations? And, what might be the contribution of ethnography of Britain – and other traditionally 'less-noble' ethnographic research objectives – to

an Anthropology that seeks alternatives for the future? Those were some of the questions raised and discussed during the event. Inevitably the day finished with thoughts on the potential of applied Anthropology, and how anthropology may contribute to mediation in different grounds such



as the medical system and law.

All the workshop information, papers and recorded presentations will soon be available on the platform website. The intention is that all members of the department have access to this content and may profit and contribute to the platform. Future events will help to shape the platform's ambition; and UCL members are encouraged to join the group, suggest activities and help to define what is the LabUK.

For more information, please see the platform website <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/labuk> or contact LabUK coordinator Joanna Cook.



"Cheering for Britain", 2012

Piece of Mind: A Debate on the Path to Happiness

Jo Cook and Lucio Vinicius met for the first time at Anthro Soc's first event of the year

On Wednesday 23rd October, Anthro Soc held their first event of the year, a debate on brain, mind, and meditative therapies. Jo and Lucio both work on the mind, but approach it from very different perspectives. Lucio is an evolutionary anthropologist, whose research interest lies in discovering what makes the human mind and brain distinct from the brains and minds of other animals. Jo Cook is a medical anthropologist and has done fieldwork in Thailand in Buddhist monasteries, and now works on the implementation of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) as a treatment of depression in Exeter.

Asking the questions were Henry and Ali, members of Anthro Soc. The debate opened with a set of quick-fire questions, where we learnt that if Lucio were to be born again, he would like to be Aristotle, and that surprisingly, both our speakers knew to the day how long they have been in working in the department.

Then we got on to the serious matter of the debate. First up for discussion were the benefits and drawbacks of awareness of routine actions. Whilst awareness of one's own body and its movements is vital for Mindfulness training, in high pressure situations, such as a crucial tennis serve for match point, a heightened awareness of your well practiced serve is actually

counterproductive as your brain starts to function as if it were the first time you have ever made that movement, so your 'auto-pilot' function is momentarily lost. The intersections of Jo and Lucio's viewpoints were interesting because although they are part of traditionally contrasting disciplines, they had similar ideas about the interrelatedness of the mind and the body. Cartesian Dualism, the idea that the mind is the active subject presiding over the passive object of the body, has been pervasive throughout the history of medicine, but both our speakers want to move past that and explore the complexity of the mind-body system. The results of our poll were that the audience mostly thought that mental and physical illnesses should be treated differently - but is this reflective of a subscription to Cartesian Dualism? This led to issues of treatment of depression - how can meditative and chemical treatments be compared? Prescription medication can be used during depressive episodes, but can be very addictive, and cannot guarantee the prevention of recurrence of depressive episodes, whereas MBCT is very effective at preventing relapse, has no side effects but on the downside it cannot be used as a treatment during depressive episodes, and currently the treatment has limited availability in the UK.

Complementing the poll was an interactive poster which invited

PIECE OF MIND:
A DEBATE
ON THE
PATH TO HAPPINESS

TIME:
4PM WEDNESDAY 23RD OCTOBER
LOCATION:
ANTHROPOLOGY COMMON ROOM

Refreshments will be available and the event is expected to run until ~6pm



audience members to make a mark on an image of the human body indicating what they believed to be the location of the human mind. The majority of people circled the human brain. Others, who seemed to be students of Lucio's 'Human Brain, Cognition and Language' course, circled specifically the prefrontal cortex - an area at the anterior of the brain associated with high level cognition. Other suggestions were the whole body, the groin area, the radical 'it doesn't exist', and in language - a suggestion by a PhD student and seconded by a visiting speech sciences student.

It was a thought-provoking debate, which led to the inevitable conclusion that nobody can say where the mind is, as there will always be multiple answers that are equally legitimate. Jo and Lucio will have to keep asking themselves, and each other: Where is my mind?

Poppy Walter
3rd Year BSc Anthropology

New Appointments

Dr Nienke Alberts - Teaching Fellow in Biological Anthropology

Nienke Alberts' main interest is the dynamics of groups in human and non-human primates. She uses modelling techniques, such as social network analysis and agent-based modelling, to answer questions about the factors that influence social behaviours, social relationships, and the structure of social groups. She researched the grouping patterns of olive baboons in Nigeria for her PhD, and more recently has investigated the group structure of Cape Mountain Zebra in South Africa. She has also worked with free-ranging chimpanzees, and has done research on the spacing of Hanuman langur reproductive cycles.

Before joining UCL, Nienke held posts at the University of Roehampton, and Manchester University, and was nominated as a council member of the Primate Society of Great Britain.

Recently Awarded PhDs

Ellie Reynolds – *Substance, embodiment and domination in an orgasmic community*

Razvan Nicolescu – *Boredom and social alignment in rural Romania*

Shu-Li Wang – *The politics of China's cultural heritage on display - Yinxu Archaeological Park in the making*

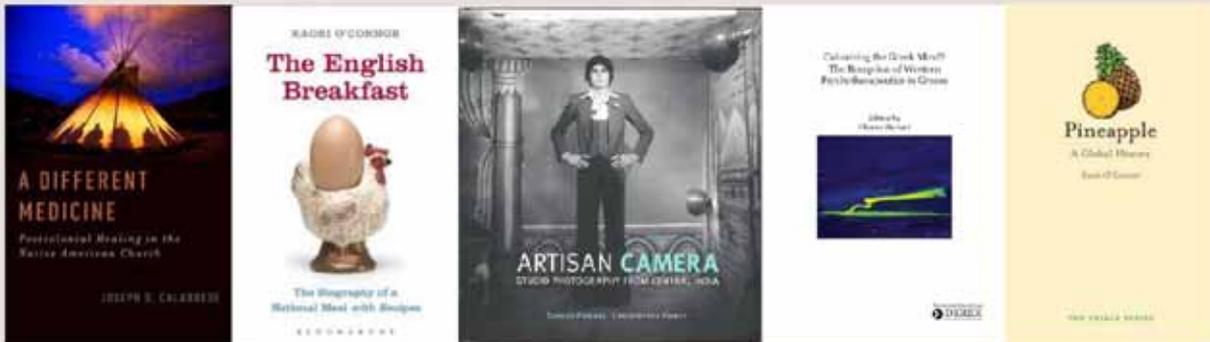
Peter Oakley – *The creation and destruction of gold jewellery*

Matan Shapiro – *Invisibility as ethics: affect, play and intimacy in Maranhão, Northeast Brazil*



In the field with Fadi, Kaiye, Ann & new infant

New Books by Staff

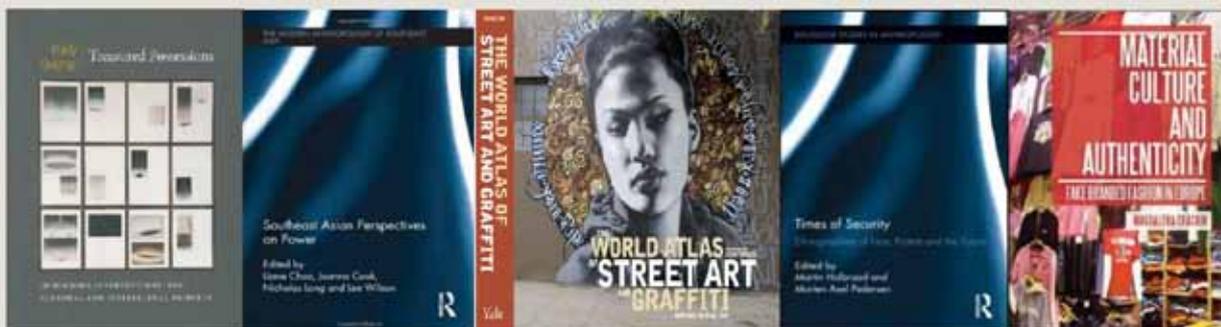


UCL ANTHROPOLOGY BOOK LAUNCH



Wednesday 4th December, 5pm

Department of Anthropology, 14 Taverton Street, London





Cover Photo Courtesy of Christopher Pinney

www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology