1-1-2011

Volume 38, Issue 1

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Henrika Kuklick — HAN
Department of History and Sociology of Science
University of Pennsylvania
Cohen Hall, 249 S. 36th St., Suite 303
Philadelphia, PA 19104 USA
Museum Anthropology and Imperial Networks as Cultural Status: 
The Colonial Ethnology Museum in Nineteenth Century Melbourne

Gareth Knapman, Monash University

The discovery of a datable prehistory was an epochal transformation in nineteenth-century thought. It validated the idea of progressive development, one of the long-held tenets of western thought. In a temporal and geographical disjuncture, key writers such as John Lubbock fused the evidence of a prehistoric Europe to the ethnographic present, thereby framing indigenous peoples as the primitives that time forgot. Colonial ethnographic museums operated within this worldview. Yet they had their own local idiosyncrasies within this metanarrative that reflected settler aspirations to transform the colonial periphery into a cultural centre within an imperial framework. The trustees for the ethnographic collection in the Melbourne Public Library (now housed in Museum Victoria) saw its purpose as “illustrating the historic development of art, commencing with a few of the most striking productions of Nineveh, Egypt and Etruria, to proceed through the Grecian Schools and through early medieval and late Italian eras to modern times”. Yet beyond a few tourist trinkets from Pompeii and plaster reproductions of Greek and Roman sculpture, its collections on the development of Western culture were scant. The attention soon moved to the haphazardly collected Aboriginal and Oceanic curios. These curios became the kernel of this museum and through exchanges a source of its expansion into European and global prehistory. The desire to create an ethnographic collection, however, reflects on the trustees’ desires to have Melbourne seen as a cultural centre within the British Empire. Consequently the desire for status emanating from a collection was more than a desire to understand the cultures they were collecting.

Chris Gosden has argued that ethnographic museums “emerge[d] through thousands of relationships”; these relationships were global networks of exchanges. Nineteenth-century museums were about knowing people through things, but relationships of acquisition were predominantly colonial in structure. Drawing on this fact, Mackenzie observes that museums “symbolised the networks, the support systems, and the skewing of administrative and legal provisions in the direction of the enthusiasms of the dominant people”. In addition to being the ideological legitimisation of empire, museums were tangible reflections of imperial networks. These networks speak to the role of the centre and periphery in the collecting relationships that constructed museum collections. Although well developed in the history of science, the role of networks as a system of organisation is an emerging area of research in the history of the British Empire. Sheets-Peterson has observed that colonial museums collected information

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1 Public Library Trustees Minutes July 1853-Feb 1870, State Library of Victoria, MS 12855: MSF vol13a, 24 May 1859, p. 42.
on the local environment, but the advocates of colonial museums (particularly in Melbourne) also aimed for global collections that included collections from the metropole.5

Despite its eager beginnings in 1859, the international ethnographic collection languished until 1884 when Stephen Thompson, the curator of the Art Museum, proposed a plan to develop the collection through exchanges with museums and prominent individuals in Britain.6 Thompson was interested in “ancient art” and argued that “art” was an “organic growth” and that all indo-European art movements were linked and not “separate isolated development[s]”.7 In this regard, he saw archaeology as a methodology for understanding the history and unity of ancient art and its links to the classical period. During the winter of 1883 Thompson presented a lecture series on ancient art, beginning with prehistoric Europe and concluding with the fall of the Roman Empire. From the reports of the lectures in the Argus, it appears that Thompson did not use indigenous Australian material to illustrate his arguments on prehistoric Europe. Nevertheless, his exchange proposal relied on connecting European prehistory to Aboriginal material culture.

In 1885, Thompson’s overtures paid off, with John Lubbock, one of the leading patrons of British archaeology and ethnology, writing to Thompson proposing an exchange of “modern savage implements for thirty three specimens of weapons of the pre-historic age”.8 This communication reflected a central part of Lubbock’s work. He believed that a “knowledge of modern savages and their modes of life enables us more accurately to picture, and more vividly to conceive, the manners and customs of our ancestors in bygone ages”.9

The collection that Lubbock sent was representative of global prehistory. The collection included implements and flakes from England, Belgium, Denmark, North America, the West Indies, Egypt, and India (although the locations are in present-day Pakistan). The “representative collection” related to Lubbock’s book Pre-historic Times, being samples of the types illustrated in his book. Although Lubbock proposed an exchange, the collection is registered as a donation, and I can find no reference to anything being sent to Lubbock in return.10 Presumably, Lubbock would have received Victorian stone tools in return. Thompson was dismissed from his post later that year after a long-running dispute with a colleague and accusations of impropriety; therefore, it is also possible that Lubbock never received an exchange. Nevertheless, the relationship continued. Edward Langton, a former treasurer for the colony, free trade politician, and vice-president of the Board of Trustees for the Public Library Museums and National

5 Susan Sheets-Pyenson, Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums During the Late Nineteenth Century (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), p. 93.
6 National Gallery of Victoria Minutes, MS 12855: MSF vol. 57, 22 May 1884, p. 41.
8 NGV Minutes, MS 12855: MSF vol. 57 19 Feb 1885, p. 71.
10 Thompson was dismissed after a long running dispute with the Director of the School of Drawing, Mr Folingsby. The dispute was over who was in charge of the NGV. see NGV Minutes, MS 12855: MSF vol. 57.
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Gallery, approached Lubbock in a personal letter in May 1891, commenting on the importance of Lubbock’s contribution and history of the collection in Melbourne:

The greater part of the objects we now have we are indebted to you. One or more have been presented by Dr Evans of the British Museum and a local donor has given a few more. But the collection is still very small, and the trustees are most anxious to make it fairly representative of the bronze as well as of the proceeding periods.11

At this stage, the collection of objects from prehistory consisted of, at best, 50 stone tools — 33 of which Lubbock donated in 1885. These objects however represented global prehistory and included North American stone tools, which were undated and may have been recent in their creation. What is interesting about Langton’s account is the fact that he did not confuse European prehistory with Australian Aboriginal material culture. His account of the institution’s collections does not suggest the use of Aboriginal material to represent ancient European culture. This was the opposite of Lubbock’s approach.

In his formal letter of request, Langton gave an indication of why the trustees wanted these objects, writing to Lubbock “you may not be unwilling in the interests of science to aid them in making the collection more worthy of this colony which has made such rapid progress since the year 1885”. Although Langton expresses the importance of these objects to science, he did not outline why the colony needed these objects for science. Instead the Trustees wanted them because they represented the latest science, therefore Langton’s real focus was the prestige of the colony of Victoria. He also recognised that there was a lack of experts able to interpret the tools within the colony, maintaining: “It will be of the greatest importance that any specimens, which you may obtain, shall be accurately and fully described in order that there may be no difficulty here in arranging or classifying them”.12 In this respect the scientific achievement of the discovery of the past is being overlaid with, and made able to represent, the stadial development of western society. Implicit in this overlaying is a statement about modernity, social development and the colony’s progress as a cultural centre.

Although Langton saw the acquisition of the prehistoric collection as a mark of the colony’s cultural maturity, this maturity only found form within the context of the British Empire and relied on personalised networks within it. Lubbock provides a great example, with Langton reminding Lubbock of their time together on the “committee of public accounts”. The Trustees offered the collection and an additional £300 to Lubbock, and requested his good graces to negotiate whatever deal he believed was fitting. The Trustees were acknowledging that they had few connections within the British anthropological and archaeological establishment, and therefore hoped Lubbock could use his personal connections to facilitate the deal.

11 Edward Langton to Sir John Lubbock, personal letter, 5 May 1891, British Museum, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas Archive, Christy Correspondence, File 826.
12 Edward Langton to Sir John Lubbock, official letter, 5 May 1891, British Museum, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas Archive, Christy Correspondence, File 826.
The collections also reveal layers of interwoven personal political connections. The objects sent to Lubbock present a snapshot of holdings from Australia, New Guinea and the Pacific. The Victorian material originally belonged to Robert Brough Smyth, the Secretary of the Aboriginal Protection Board. The nucleus of Smyth’s collection was inherited from William Thomas, the Protector of Aborigines. In addition, John Forrest, the Premier of Western Australia, gathered most of the other Australian material through the agency of the Western Australian Police. Smyth, Thomas, and Forrest all used their political positions to procure objects from indigenous people and other government officials. In each of these instances, the collections were formed partly with the belief that an ethnographic collection was an important cultural achievement and mark of cultural development. Nevertheless, they were also acquired through expressions of colonial power.

The New Guinea collections sent to Lubbock were equally a statement by the Trustees of colonial cultural advancement. Most of the New Guinea objects were collected from the Fly River region as part of Victorian support for the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia’s (RGSA) 1885 expedition to New Guinea. This expedition was established in competition to Henry Forbes’s Royal Geographical Society (RGS) expedition to the Owen Stanley Ranges. The RGSA’s expedition was part of claims by the Australian colonies to New Guinea. The interests behind these claims were different from British colonial interests, a point recognised by the RGS’s decision not to cooperate with the Australasian expedition.13 Once the expedition returned to Sydney, the RGSA displayed the collection of “curios” to “show the public that the expedition” had “done really good work”. Critics at the time pointed out that, besides for travelling up the Fly River, the goals of the expedition were very ambiguous.14 One critic sarcastically commented, “has no other formation been discovered by the expedition than the alluvial soil of the river banks?”.15 After the initial exhibition in Sydney, the collection was shared between the various contributing colonies.16 The objects therefore were part of the Australian colonies’ imperial designs. Although existing within the British imperial framework, the aims of Australian colonies reflected a desire for Australasian imperial glory. This was subtly different from British imperial glory.

There was also an assumption by the Trustees that similar expeditions would continue into the future, with Langton confidently proclaiming: “So far as Australasia and the South Sea Islands generally are concerned our Museum possesses a very complete collection of ethnological specimens and [can] render any assistance... in endeavouring to obtain South Sea Island specimens such as you may desire”.17 It is interesting to note that at this time, Langton’s confidence reflected the reality that it was easier to procure Melanesian objects from the Pacific than Australian objects from the outback interior.

14 “Editorial”, The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 June 1885, p. 11.
16 The Argus, 14 Dec 1885, p. 5.
17 Edward Langton to Sir John Lubbock, official letter, 5 May 1891, British Museum, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas Archive, Christy Correspondence, File 826.
Another important Trustee with good connections was George Verdon, who had also served as Treasurer in a number of colonial governments in the late 1850s and 1860s. In 1868, he became Victoria’s first Agent-General in London and was named as a Trustee of the Public Library, Museums, and Gallery on his return. By 1878, he was a powerful Trustee serving on a number of committees and actively involved in collection procurement. As Agent-General, Verdon worked the imperial networks and represented Victorian interests. He applied this same skill to negotiating the procurement of collections. Verdon had an active interest in ethnology, with the gallery committee often referring decisions to purchase ethnographic and curio collections according to his judgment. By the 1890s, Verdon had invested over twenty years in supporting a public ethnographic collection. It was during this period that Verdon negotiated the acquisition of two substantial ethnographic and prehistoric collections.

The first was a collection of indigenous material culture from South Africa. The decision to purchase the collection was made in November 1889 when the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch, was made Governor of South Africa. On his departure for South Africa, the Trustees asked him to “be so good as to obtain specimens of native implements, weapons, etc in South Africa”, with £250 being voted for the purpose of procurement. According to the original register, this collection was “obtained by Sir H. R. Loch through Sir George Verdon”. The collection consisted of 417 objects, of which most of the material was either clubs or spears. Loch used a network of regional officials to procure objects directly from the tribal groups in Southern Africa. Rev J. S. Moffat was one such collector. Moffat, who had negotiated a peace treaty with King Lobengula Khumalo of the Ndebele (Matabela) tribe in 1888, procured the Ndebele component of the collection. Moffat despatched the collection in July 1891, three years after the peace treaty and two years before the treaty broke-down and war ensued between the settlers and the Ndebele. The exchange of objects between Lobengula and Moffat is an example of the use of material culture as objects of diplomacy within the colonial encounter. Once acquired these particular objects were despatch to Melbourne and went on display a year before war broke out in Metabelaland. These objects came to symbolise the expanse of the British Empire and Melbourne’s cultural importance within that empire.

In 1890, Verdon went to Britain to negotiate gallery purchases, including a review of the deal established by Lubbock between the British Museum and the Colony of Victoria. Verdon aimed to replicate the British Museum holdings in Melbourne. Back in Melbourne, the Trustees for the Public Library, Museum and Gallery had refashioned the institution to replicate the British Museum of 1881. Verdon’s trip furthered this aim and was as much a fact-finding tour as a procurement mission, as he states: “I gave all the time I could spare to the British Museum” to gain information “useful to the Trustees

18 NGV Minutes, MS 12855: MSF vol. 55, 27 Nov 1889, p. 218.
19 Note on the original Register, see: Museum of Victoria, Ethnographic Stock Book 3, Indigenous Cultures Department, p. 189.
20 Clubs, 22; Spears, 92; Shields, 8; Female clothing, 92+
21 NGV Minutes, MS 12855: MSF vol. 58, 23 March 1881, p. 307-308
in building and furnishing the new galleries”.22 He engaged in extensive discussions on museology with Maunde Thompson, Director of the British Museum. As part of these discussions he got Thompson to agree to copy any new Egyptian reliefs received by the British Museum and forward them to Victoria. Verdon also met August Franks, keeper of Oriental and European Art, and the archaeologist Arthur Evans, who was a trustee. Franks sold 274 prehistoric European implements to Victoria, whilst Evans donated four stone tools from the Cave of St. Archeul, which was the excavation that established the existence of the Stone Age in Europe.23 In addition, Verdon also purchased “a fine specimen of African goldsmiths’ work which formed part of the ransom paid to the British Government by the King as Asante, and which was in his [Evans’] collection”.24 In each respect, Verdon aimed to gain an essence of the British Museum for Melbourne. He wanted to replicate a metropolitan centre on the periphery.

The nineteenth century ethnology collection now housed in Museum Victoria is a window into the cultural aspirations of the nineteenth century Trustees for the Public Library Museums and National Gallery. The collections came from across the British Empire and were acquired for their perceived “scientific value”. Nevertheless, their actual “scientific value” was never demonstrated. They were valued as statements of scientific intent rather than reflecting any genuine research occurring within the colony. In this respect, the collection reflected the cultural aspirations of leading patrons. These patrons were intrinsically connected to the political networks of the British Empire. These networks were tools of patronage and power built out of exploration and conquest. The collection therefore represented the aspirations of empire more than an attempt to understand the cultures whose objects were being collected or excavated.

23 British Museum, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas Archive, Christy correspondence, file 826.
24 George Verdon, Report, p. 4.
The Renewal of Gran Chaco Studies
Edgardo Krebs¹ and Jose Braunstein²

Interest in the Gran Chaco among social scientists during most of the 20th century has not been high. In comparison to the Amazon, or the Andes, this enormous territory, over 500,000 square miles, has inspired a modest output of scholarly studies, its very existence as a distinct and important ecological and ethnographic area seemingly lost in the shadows of the other two neighboring giants. Its vast dry plains—“a park land with patches of hardwoods intermingled with grasslands”³—is the second largest biome in South America, after the Amazon. It is shared by four countries, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina; and in all of them it represents pockets of wilderness coming under the increasing stress of demographic expansion and economic exploitation. In all of these countries the Chaco is also an ethnographic frontier, still open after centuries of contact, and still the refuge of last resort of a few elusive Indian groups.

The comparative neglect of the Gran Chaco as an area of interest for anthropologists is also remarkable considering that the Provincia Paraguaria of the Jesuit order yielded a number of Chaco ethnographies extraordinary in their narrative complexity and analytical edge, and that, closer in time to us, one of the pioneers of modern fieldwork, Guido Boggiani (1861–1902), died tragically in the Chaco, during the course of an expedition. His ethnographies on the Chamacoco and the Caduveo are classics of the discipline, comparable to those written by Baldwin Spencer and W.H.R. Rivers.⁴

During the last fifteen years, however, things have begun to change. A number of international meetings were organized, all dealing with different aspects of the anthropology, history and ethnohistory of the Gran Chaco. Among them, a seminar at the Smithsonian, in 1996, was perhaps the first convened to gather ethnographers from a number of countries working in several areas of the Gran Chaco. This was followed by a seminar at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland in 1999, where the theme was the relationship between Indians, missionaries and the nation-states. Starting in 2002, the International Congress of Regional History of the Gran Chaco, held at the city of Resistencia, Chaco Province, Argentina, has included a symposium on the anthropology of the area. Notable also was a meeting held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in 2005, to discuss “Ethnic definitions, social organization and political strategies in the Chiquitania and Chaco.” Some of these meetings resulted in publications, which contributed to a growing specialized literature on the subject. The purpose of this article is to review a number of these recent publications produced in the last ten years, emphasizing a few of them. The list is if course arbitrary. It includes only a selection of books and theses, and a couple of films, enough to give an idea of

¹ National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.
² Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Argentina.
⁴ Unlike his British colleagues, Boggiani did not come to anthropology from biology or medicine. He was originally a painter. Also unlike them, Boggiani has had very few studies dedicated to him and his work in English (or French or German), perhaps because his ethnographies are rare in Italian and have not been translated.
the scope of the research being done. Obviously a list of articles in scholarly journals could also be compiled, but that task, aside from making a similar point, would exceed our possibilities here.

The Gran Chaco is an area where a recurrent idea of ecological unity goes hand in hand with an astonishing ethnic diversity, a kaleidoscope of fifty-odd discrete social units, speaking around twenty different languages. Since the beginning of the 20th century the study of these indigenous groups has been beset by inescapable difficulties: military defeat, incorporation in a market economy, the emergence and influence of Pentecostal Christianity, the activities of conservation NGOs whose definitions of “nature” are frequently at odds with those held by the Indians themselves and, more recently, the potential or actual effects of a number of legislative changes at the national and provincial level. These changes reflect a tension between granting increasing autonomy to indigenous groups and the resistance to any advance in that direction, and also pose serious juridical challenges of interpretation regarding entire bodies of customary law, and how they may function within the larger framework of national legal systems.

Because of the relative obscurity of the Gran Chaco as a field of studies, the publication of old primary sources is an important endeavor, and any new scholarly edition of a forgotten classic is especially valuable. Two books in this category should be noted. First, Felix de Azara’s “Voyages dans l’Amerique meridionale, 1781-1801” (2009, see full citation below). Some readers will be familiar with Azara’s name through Darwin, who relied on his book for firsthand information on the birds and mammals of Paraguay and the River Plate. But as the editor of the volume, Nicolas Richard, reminds us in his long introductory essay, Azara was a functionary in the court of Charles III, the Bourbon King of Spain, and his appointment was highly political, tied to the overall project of reform of the administration in the colonies pursued by that sovereign. More precisely, the main two tasks assigned to Azara, a military officer and engineer, were first to survey the frontier between the Portuguese possessions in Southern Brazil, and those of the Viceroyalty of the River Plate in what is today Paraguayan and Argentine territory; and second to provide arguments that would justify one of the most daring and complicated political decisions of Charles III—the expulsion of the Jesuit Order from all his dominions. Richard is sympathetic towards Azara’s arguments, perhaps the single weak point in his otherwise very thoughtful and erudite essay. In his words, Azara’s work “marks the emergence, in colonial America, of a post-Jesuit anthropology” and his arguments against the Order “maintain intact, today, their power and relevance” (p. xxv). This is a bold statement. It is impossible to compare the sketchy information provided by Azara on the Indians of the Gran Chaco with the full ethnographies written by Dobrizzhofer on the Abipones, Paucke on the Mocovi, and Nicolas del Techo and Jose Manuel Peramas on the Paraguayan missions—to cite just the more prominent examples. Certainly these texts were unknown to Azara, as they would be written in exile by their Jesuit authors, but today the secondary literature on the catalog of Jesuit ethnographies is reviewed favorably by scholars. Moreover, according to Juan Francisco de Aguirre, who accompanied Azara on some of his travels, he derived his ethnographic information from Father Juan Francisco Amancio Gonzalez y Escobar, a Franciscan friar posted in the Paraguayan Chaco. The
Franciscans were put in charge of replacing the Jesuits in Paraguay, and their view of the empire the rival order had built there was inimical, to put it mildly. In any case, the merits of the introduction rest on how Richard places Azara’s book in historical context, reconstructing the hazardous trajectory that led to its publication. This happened in Paris, and in French, in 1808, mostly through the combined efforts of Charles A. Walckenaer, the editor, and Azara’s brother, then Spanish Ambassador to France. Walckenaer, as Richard notes, was a member of the Societe des Observateurs de l’Homme, “together with Cuvier, Lacepede, Gerando, Jussieu and Bouganville” (p. xiii), and the publisher of an ambitious collection of travel literature *Histoire generale des voyages* (21 vols., 1826-1831). Juan Nicolas de Azara was a central player in the complicated diplomatic efforts mounted to expel the Jesuits. A former Spanish ambassador to Rome, with close ties to the Vatican and Pope Pius VI, a collector of classical antiquities, Azara, once in Paris, also developed a good relationship with Napoleon.\(^5\) Considering the backdrop of political intrigue that surrounded the publication of Azara’s hard-won knowledge (he spent over 20 years in the Viceroyalty of the River Plate), and the complications of what Richard calls the “geometries” of the manuscript’s history,\(^6\) it is inevitable to see this text as part of an information and propaganda war that, at the end of the 18th century, also included the Chaco frontier.\(^7\) However, just a few years later, at the turn of the century, after the Spanish colonies became independent, Azara’s work was appropriated by the Criollo elite of Paraguay, and also by Bernardino Rivadavia, the first president of Argentina, who himself translated the French version into Spanish—an illustration of the several contexts of circulation of this book discussed by Richard.

There is a problem, though, in claiming Azara as an ancestor of “new knowledge” about the colonial Spanish world. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Richard L. Kagan\(^8\) have convincingly demonstrated that, prior to the Bourbons and the Enlightenment-

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\(^5\) The history of the Azara brothers immediately recalls that of another Spanish family of influence in the colonies and at home. Jose de Galvez (1720-1787) was Visitor General of New Spain (Mexico) from 1765 to 1772. As such he played a mayor role in the expulsion of the Jesuits form those territories, and in devising a military policy regarding Indian raids in the Sonoran frontier. His ideas were expanded to the rest of the Spanish colonies when he joined the Consejo de Indias. His brother Matias de Galvez and his nephew Bernardo de Galvez both served as Viceroyos of New Spain. Bernardo was also governor of Louisiana and Cuba and commanded the Spanish army that joined the 13 colonies in the War of Independence. The city of Galveston was named in his honor, and an equestrian statue, somewhat hidden behind the State Department, recalls his contributions to the defeat of the British.

\(^6\) What is problematic is the relationship between the manuscript, its French translation and publication, and the discovery of the (supposedly) Spanish original by a nephew of Azara, who published it in Spain, in 1847. There are significant differences between the two editions, which Richard exposes and disentangles.

\(^7\) The publication of Thomas Falkner’s “A Description of Patagonia” (1774) followed a sadder fate. Falkner was a Jesuit who had spent many years in Carmen de Patagones (Northern Patagonia). After the expulsion of the Order he settled in England. The manuscript of his “Description” (a very valuable ethnographic source) fell in the hands of William Combe, a writer/journalist, who edited it heavily for publication, to the chagrin of the author and his fellow Jesuits. The original manuscript is lost.

inspired programs of reforms and scientific research they launched, both Spanish thinkers and the Criollo elites in the colonies had in many ways pioneered the methods of gathering knowledge and narrating history later associated with the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. There is, therefore, yet another angle to the geometry proposed by Richard, one that ties Azara’s work to a larger dispute about how to write history, with firm roots in the Renaissance. This view is much more appreciative of the ethnographic works of Jesuit authors, for instance. Even if this larger dimension is missing in Richard’s essay, having brought forth a new edition of Azara’s classic will help to confront the important issues involved.

Johan Rudolf Rengger (1795-1832), a Swiss physician who traveled to Paraguay in 1818—where he spent seven years during the dictatorship of Jose Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia—, was, unlike Azara, an asiduous and direct observer of Indian life. In 1835 he published a book reflecting his experiences in the Chaco. Surprisingly, because of the quality of the information it contains about a number of topics, ranking from geology to natural history to sociology and ethnography, this book had not been translated until now. Rengger was in many ways an ethnographer avant la lettre, and provided accurate and perceptive information about the daily lives and customs of a number of Chaco tribes. He had read Azara, and took him as a reference, sometimes agreeing, sometimes pointedly disagreeing with him on a number of issues, mostly on his descriptions of the Indians of Paraguay. His book abounds in the kind of precise ethnographic detail regarding hunting practices, ritualized resolution of conflicts among rival groups and the institution of marriage among the Mbaya and the Guana, for instance, or among Indians and Criollos, that are hard to find in Azara. Rengger also records the legend of “The Last Jesuit,” a diehard who has remained behind after the expulsion of the order, living in hiding among the Indians. Old and frail, he is brought out every day, like a lizard, to be exposed to the sun.

Rengger’s fastidious elucidation of the maze of different names used to designate a single group of Indians contrasts with the fanciful invention of entire categories by contemporary ethnohistorians like James Schofield Saeger. In his book on the Chaco Mission Frontier, Saeger creates a phantom ethnic group, which he calls Guaycuru, by giving a common identity to a disparate number of people who have only one thing in common: they speak a language related to the Guaycuru family. What is most disturbing about this procedure is that it fuses into a fanciful ethnographic Golem a

9 Of the recent literature on the Jesuits in colonial Spanish America we would like to mention only two titles, as they include a variety of articles, subject matter and perspectives. Manfred Tietz, ed., Los jesuitas españoles expulsos. Su imagen y su contribución al saber sobre el mundo hispanico en la Europa del siglo XVII (Madrid: Verbuert-Iberoamericana, 2001). In this collection, the essay by Simona Binková on Florian Paucke is particularly thorough. Karl Kohut and Maria Cristina Torales Pacheco, eds., Desde los confines de los imperios ibericos. Los jesuitas de habla alemana en las misiones americanas (Madrid: Verbuert-Iberoamericana, 2007). In this collection there is a short piece by Hans-Jurgen Lusenbrink on Martin Dobrizhoffer’s “Historia de Abiponibus...” (Viena, 1784). The extraordinary ethnographies of both Paucke (Mocobi) and Dobrizhoffer (Abipones) are confined to obscure or difficult to get editions in German, Latin, or Spanish translations. Sara Coleridge, daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, translated “Historia de Abiponibus...” into English, in an abridged version. These are important texts that are still awaiting good annotated, modern editions, and a fuller incorporation into the history of anthropology.
number of distinct Indian groups, all of them carriers of different histories, norms, institutions and political systems. The resulting monograph, therefore, produces a paradoxical result: Under the guise of writing the history of a fictional Indian group, the Gyacuru, what is offered is the suppression of the real histories of a number of groups the author failed to identify, perhaps guided by a natural history model, alert to the value of broad taxa but at odds with local, traditional forms of ethnic classification.10

Pastor Arenas (2003) has carefully sifted ethnographic and travel literature on the Gran Chaco covering several centuries and languages in search for passages that would describe instances of indigenous use of the natural habitat. The result is a unique reference book, full of marvels and variety, of great practical use to a botanist or a zoologist, as well as an ethnographer. Even a casual reader willing to stray for pleasure into a forest of stories will also find something in it.

The topic of indigenous political systems and forms of leadership has acquired pressing relevance and urgency after the passing of new Indian legislation—national or provincial—in the region. Nation-states look for interlocutors they can recognize as representative of Indian societies, in some cases generating the appointment of leaders who would not be seen as such by their communities in other circumstances. To address these and other related issues, Braunstein and Meichtry (2008) compiled twenty essays written by ethnographers who work in the Gran Chaco. Political anthropology is a young discipline, absent from academic practice until the 1960s. Neither Plato or Cicero in their Republics, or Aristotle in his Politics, or the old historians, Thucydides and Tacitus, or the philosophers of the Enlightenment (Montaigne, Hobbes, Montesquieu, Rousseau) conceived of political models different from those of classical Greece. It was common in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th to negate the existence of institutional political forms among the peoples who were then called “primitive” or “savage.” The more serious attempts at analysis, those that recognized the existence of true political organizations in tribal societies, did so using surprisingly ethnocentric theoretical frameworks. Robert Lowie, in his classic book on “primitive sociology,” retains for his analyses the three standard categories of the modern Western state: executive, legislative and judicial, and Pierre Clastres bridges too quickly the distance between inequality and coercion.

The only answer to difficulties in delineating power structures and forms of leadership in the Gran Chaco comes from detailed ethnographies, because the subject, the political organization of the Indians of the region, is more original and sui generis than the most imaginative researcher could have dreamt of. Let’s take the case of the Mennonites as an illustration. Their establishment in the Argentine Chaco goes back several decades. After dissolving their missions in 1956 they continued working with Toba Indians as “fraternal laborers” up until they left in 2010. Their absence was felt as a political vacuum by the Toba because they had based their own political and religious organizations on the rituals of the Pentecostal church, using these foreign, white

10 We developed the critique of Saeger’s book in a longer piece, “La etnohistoria colonial en el Gran Chaco.”
structures as the main tool for preserving their identity and fighting back. A particularly effective combination of research and oral history coalesced around an enquiry made in the Province of Formosa, Argentina, following changes in the country's constitution that enunciated a number of Indian rights which subsequently had to be interpreted and properly codified. The consultation, implemented with the help of NGOs and anthropologists, lasted several months and involved communities dispersed throughout the Province of Toba, Wichi and Pilaga Indians. The results were published in three volumes in 2002 with the title Pensamientos de los Indígenas de Formosa (Thoughts of the Indians of Formosa). It is not an ethnography; it is an extraordinarily rich document that will be useful to the Indians themselves in the future, and remain a mine of information of all sorts, including modes of political organization, for anthropologists, biologists, lawyers and conscientious civil servants.

Isabelle Combès is a French historian who for many years has made her residence in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. She is responsible for a steady stream of solid books and articles dealing with the ethnohistory of the Bolivian Chaco—particularly the Isoso region—and also the current situation of the Chane and Chiriguano Indians living there. Her Etnohistorias del Isoso (2005) was, in her words, a long explication of a singular quote from the Swedish ethnographer Erland Nordenskiold, who visited the area in the early 20th century. The quote is from his book Indianerleben: El Gran Chaco (Life of the Indians) and comes from the chapter titled “the Indians as Historians.” Combès’ project was to tell the history of Isoso from the point of view of the Chiriguano and the Chane, relying on archival documents and fieldwork.

An important and tragic period in the history of the Indians of the Gran Chaco—because it brought about violent death, epidemics, created forced migrations and severe disruptions among groups living in Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina—was the Chaco War. It lasted from 1932 to 1935, and was fought by Bolivia and Paraguay. It was an “oil war” over a region in the northern Chaco, claimed by both countries, believed to be rich in this fuel. Bolivia was backed by Germany, and Paraguay by France. Before Guernica and the Spanish Civil War, the air forces of both European countries tried their new planes, weapons and strategies in the dry forests of the Chaco, bombing soldiers and Indians indiscriminately. It was “the first modern war of South America” and the “last war of colonization of free Indian territories.” In a number of books Combès and Nicolas Richard, together with Luc Capdevila and Pablo Barbosa, have recorded the memories of survivors of the conflict among the Indian populations of the three countries affected, and compiled essays on the war by a group of scholars analyzing its “Indian dimensions.”

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12 Leipzig: Albert Vonnier Verlag, 1912. The title in Spanish is La vida de los indios (Bolivia: La Paz, 2002).

Among the thesis produced recently on a Gran Chaco topic, John Palmer’s on the Wichis of Salta deserves special mention. Published as a book with the title *La buena voluntad wichi. Una espiritualidad indígena* (Buenos Aires, 2005), it is both a translation and an expansion of his D.Phil dissertation. It is also a superb example of the Oxford school of social anthropology, as organized by Evans-Pritchard after WWII: a combination of thorough field research, command of the Wichi language, protracted participation in the life of the community, and the interpretative elegance and depth of the French sociological school. Palmer turns his entire work of analysis on the explanation of a central Wichi concept, expressed by the word *husek*, meaning *will*. In this he also follows Evans-Pritchard, who ciphered the explanation of Nuer religion on the proper understanding of the term *kwoth*. According to Palmer the Wichi believe in the existence of a will (a word that he prefers to *soul*) that preexists the human body. A person is a combination of a body (*t’isan*) occupied by a will (*husek*). This is an asymmetric relationship, with the body playing the role of a mere vessel. When this central force of life encompasses the community it transforms in “good will,” a necessary cohesive element in the “metaphysics of the Wichi good will.” When *husek* is used by a shaman it becomes willpower. From this dense, central concept Palmer moves outward to explain the Wichi relationship with the environment, their sense of justice, the importance of naming places and not repeating names of people, their interpretation of the foreigner as a category integrated to the Wichi worldview, the relationship between genders, between vigil and dreams—nothing short of an entire taxonomy of great subtlety, sophistication and sturdiness, and one that is aimed at reproduction and permanence. *La buena voluntad wichi* is not only a great ethnography in the Oxford classical tradition, but probably the more challenging, literary and complete representation of an Argentine Indian community.

We would like to finish this short review with a reference to iconography. Starting with the watercolors of the Jesuit Florian Paucke, the Chaco has a rich archive of images to explore. It includes the extraordinary photographs taken by Guido Boggiani14 the first one, according to Alfred Metraux, to capture an image “of an Indian smiling,” Metraux’s own pictures from the 1920’s and 1930’s, and the drawings of the contemporary Chamacoco Indians that illustrate this article. Last year the following documentary on the Pilaga of Formosa, now accessible on Youtube, was broadcast on the Argentine TV: Part 1: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_uF1KLNjIU Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92JDzCgmLK8 This is a new phenomenon. Argentina is supposedly a country without Indians, an outpost of Europe. Nothing is more striking than these images, showing Pilaga Indians speaking for themselves, in their Chaco landscapes, filmed by a young filmmaker from

Buenos Aires, aided by the anthropologist Ani Dell'arciprete, who has worked with the Pilaga for over thirty years.

Chamacoco drawings from Transfiguraciones simbólicas, Ciclo ritual de los indios tomárxao del Chaco Boreal by Edgardo Cordeu.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

New Historiographical Approaches to Archaeological Research
Gisela Eberhardt, Free University of Berlin, and Fabian Link, University of Basel

Recent developments in the historiography of the sciences have led to a call for a revised history of archaeology and a move away from rational reconstructions of scientific progress. Historians of archaeology are beginning to use state-of-the-art historiographical concepts and tools to trace how archaeological knowledge has been produced and to reflect on the socio-historical conditions and spaces in which this knowledge has been generated. This workshop, funded by the Excellence Cluster TOPOI in Berlin, assembled scholars to discuss innovative approaches and new methods for writing histories of archaeology.

Marianne Sommer (Zürich) opened the workshop with a keynote lecture on controversies surrounding scientific evidence of the so-called eoliths in 19th and 20th-century archaeology. Eoliths were thought to be the earliest stone-artifacts created by prehistoric men. Sommer’s lecture demonstrated that debates about the eoliths mirrored the social structure of a time when archaeology was not yet established at universities. Utilizing frameworks from Fleck and Latour, Sommer exposed the transmission of knowledge concerning those alleged artifacts. She stressed the impact of popularized scientific knowledge, which could not be seen as a top-down phenomenon. However, classifying eoliths in series helped to incorporate these objects into the paradigm of progression.

The first section of the workshop dealt with research processes and social dynamics. Amara Thornton (London) presented an approach combining biography, prosopography, and network analysis, emphasizing the importance of the contexts of network production and the role of “fringe” players in this process. The case study of a network of British archaeologists working in Transjordan and Palestine in the early 20th century helped her to emphasize the importance of archival material for such a historical approach.
Pamela Jane Smith (Cambridge) examined a specific space of such research networks. According to Smith, the tearoom at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology was crucial as a place of knowledge generation for the archaeological agenda from the 1920s and the 1940s. In addition, the tearoom was a social platform for scientific exchange and a practical solution to social problems in archaeology, such as that of trust between researchers. Through the years the participants as well as the localities changed, yet the tearoom remained an essential institution.

Traditionally, the formation of a discipline or sub-discipline has often been presented as inevitable process. Taking the case of French numismatists, a social group that defined itself by specific research objects, namely medals and coins, Felicity Bodenstein (Paris) described how heterogeneous the scientific milieu within antiquarianism actually was, focusing on the principal promoter of Numismatics in France, Ernest Babelon. Bodenstein deconstructed Babelon’s biography, which had long been presented as a mere success story, and showed how the illusion biographique underlined by Pierre Bourdieu opens important questions on the role of biographical narratives in the historiography of archaeology.

The second session was dedicated to archaeological space in the making, assuming that places of archaeological research are not predetermined scientific environments, but outcomes of specific projects that researchers pursue. Marieke Bloembergen (Leiden) and Martijn Eickhoff (Amsterdam) focused on the emergence of archaeological space under colonial and postcolonial conditions, asking what role colonialism played and still plays in defining Indonesian heritage. They stressed the importance for such archaeo-historical research beyond eurocentric thought. Incorporating post-colonial theory, they underlined the meaning of local perspectives on or appropriations of specific sites and asked for the influence of such perspectives on the national and global appropriations of these types of sites in Indonesia.

Irina Podgorny (Berlin) compared how knowledge was generated of two very different issues in Mexico and Argentina in the 19th century by following the traces of the documents that made them famous: the circulation of manuscripts on the ancient ruins of Palenque and of manuscripts of the viceroyalty of La Plata. Podgorny showed that the handling of the manuscripts dominated knowledge production and led to a similar structure of knowledge within quite different categories of objects.

Felix Wiedemann (Berlin) spoke about the interrelation of geographical space, archaeological objects, and anthropological scientific methods and interpretation. Referring to late 19th century Near Eastern archaeology, he discussed the emergence of physical anthropology. This new and “exact” method revised the older hermeneutical methods of philology and created ethnic knowledge, which led to race theories. Whereas European prehistoric archaeologists focused on ancient peoples “without history,” racial theory was applied to Near Eastern “high cultures” that possessed a large number of historical sources. Connecting this application with racial theories created ideas such as the “Aryan” origin of Near Eastern cultures.

Fabian Link then focused on the connections between archaeology and political culture. Link discussed the epistemic changes in the scientific constructions of Gotthard
Neumann, a German archaeologist working in Thuringia from the late 1920s to the 1960s. He used semantic and conceptual history in the tradition of Reinhart Koselleck to study Neumann’s publications. Focusing on the impact of völkisch thoughts in Neumann’s publications and language, Link argued that the importance of these ideas in prehistory was strongly linked with the social interactions Neumann had with Nazi politics and the success he experienced in academia. The more Neumann profited from the Nazis, the more he used völkisch terms and concepts for the analysis of ancient cultures.

The last section of the workshop dealt with material dimensions of archaeological practice. Stefanie Klamm (Berlin) analyzed the role of media in the creation of knowledge in classical archaeology during the nineteenth century. Excavation sites, the most important places of knowledge production in archaeology, were (and still are) confronted with the problem of the transformation and representation of these three-dimensional places into two-dimensional images. Instruments such as the camera became means both for contesting a new scientific view of archaeological excavation and for creating representations of scientific objectivity.

The process of production of scientific objects in archaeological research was the topic of Ulrich Veit’s (Tübingen) contribution. Using the approach developed by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger on experimental systems, Veit focused on the case of Iron Age princely seats in Germany and showed how this epistemic object was constructed by several steps of knowledge transformation.

Géraldine Delley (Neuchâtel) analyzed the establishment of new scientific dating methods in archaeology during the second half of the twenties century. She focused on the radiocarbon method, which has been said to have revolutionized archaeological research. She explored research practices of Swiss lake-dwelling archaeology between 1950 and 1985 through the lens of actor-network theory. Delley demonstrated that the profound changes new scientific methods provoked in Swiss archaeological research in the 1960s were rooted not in general “modernization” but in the activities of agents such as Hans-Georg Bandi, who attracted financial resources from politicians by applying specific rhetorical strategies.

Gisela Eberhardt (Berlin) focused on the question of whether and how the history of excavation practices could be examined through historiographical approaches to material practices in sciences such as biology. Eberhardt came to the conclusion that a better understanding of the history of excavation practices is achieved by analyzing exactly how manual labor and ideas are interwoven in specific contexts. She showed that, since the processes are intrinsically tied to the particularities of field research, concepts of the field available from the history of biology are an important resource for the described purposes.

In the closing speech of the conference, Serge Reubi (Neuchâtel) stated the opinion that the fields of history of science on the one hand and history of the human sciences on the other were too different to create general standards in methodological approaches and theories. Reubi briefly summarized important items of the workshop contributions, pointing toward possibilities for future research. In quoting Ulrich Veit, he
finished the workshop reminding the participants that independent of the discipline at stake we all had one goal: “We want to understand scientific processes.”

**Scientific Instructions for Travelers**

October 8 and 9, 2010, National University of Ireland, Galway.

*Daniel Carey, National University of Ireland, Galway*

The purpose of this conference was to discuss the development of inquiries, questionnaires, and directions for scientific travelers, which began to proliferate in the early modern period, ranging from the work of chorographers in the sixteenth century, surveying particular places in Europe, to the Ramist organisation of knowledge, and the remarkably thorough surveys proposed in Spanish *interrogatorios*. The Royal Society’s queries for destinations around the world are among the best known in the seventeenth century. The growth in this practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and into the era of professional anthropology is remarkable. The subject has not been studied systematically in English, though there are valuable edited collections in Italian, French, and Spanish.15

Papers on British sources in the seventeenth century included a discussion of William Petty’s demographic questions by Ted McCormick (Concordia), an account of the widespread use of questionnaires by chorographers and antiquarians in the seventeenth century by Adam Fox (Edinburgh), Edward Lhuyd’s parochial enquiries distributed in Wales by Nancy Edwards (Bangor), and Locke’s unpublished questionnaire concerning religion, by Daniel Carey (NUI Galway). The German tradition was discussed by Matthew McLean (St. Andrews) with a paper on the network of map-making correspondents created by Sebastian Münster in the sixteenth century and Gudrun Bucher’s analysis of Gerhard Friedrich Müller’s elaborate instructions for the second Kamchatka Expedition (1733-43). The French tradition was considered by Frédéric Tinguely (Geneva) with a paper on the advice received by François Bernier for his journey in Mughal India in the seventeenth century, and Efrem Sera Schriar (Leeds) discussed De Gérando’s ‘Methods to Follow’ and the Baudin Expedition of 1799-1803. The emergence of geology as a field of study, with accompanying observational instructions for travelers, was described by Ezio Vaccari (Insubria), and two papers addressed the protocols established for collecting the natural world, by Dominik Collet (Göttingen) on German and English practices, and Marcelo Figueroa (National University of Tucumán) on Spanish directions for travelers to the New World. The conference featured two wide-ranging contributions on questions of method – Charles Withers (Edinburgh) on the Royal Geographical Society in the nineteenth century, and Henrika Kuklick (Pennsylvania) on anthropology and the disciplinary method of fieldwork.

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HAN
c/o Henrika Kuklick
Claudia Cohen Hall 303
249 S. 36th St
Philadelphia, PA 19104 USA