



History of Anthropology Newsletter

Volume 37
Issue 2 *December 2010*

Article 5

1-1-2010

History of Anthropology at the American Anthropological Association, November 17-21, 2010

Kevin A. Telvington

interpretation of Ainu remains in Japanese anthropology intersected with several other papers that looked at collections, the relationships between living and ancestral populations, and the roles of biological ideas about populations in nationalism and colonialism. Jenny Reardon, of University of California Santa Cruz, brought the story up to date with an exploration, co-written with Kimberly TallBear (who did not attend the symposium), of genomics, biological materials and Native American populations. Gisli Pálsson, of the University of Iceland, provided a critical perspective on the commercialization of DNA, in his discussion of personal genomics and deCode in Iceland. Also participating in the conference was University of Pennsylvania PhD candidate Joanna Radin, who played the traditional graduate student role of conference monitor, keeping track of the timing so that future historians (should they ever wish to listen to the recordings!) can find the points in the conference when the issues they care about came up for discussion. Radin's own research, fortuitously, focuses on the history of biological collecting and the many uses of stored and frozen blood.

The opportunity to spend time with a group of remarkable scientists and anthropologists was much appreciated by the historians. Some of the most important figures in biological anthropology were in attendance, including the President of the Wenner-Gren Foundation Leslie Aiello, who works on human evolution; Noel Cameron of Loughborough University in the UK, whose long-term studies of nutrition in post-apartheid South Africa proved to be central to our discussions; Clark Larsen of Ohio State, a past-editor of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*; the primatologist and key participant in ethical debates Trudy Turner of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Alan Morris of the University of Cape Town who taught us about categories of political, biological and social identity in South Africa; and Michael Little, of Binghamton University, a population biologist who developed a comprehensive historical account of his field for this meeting. Also participating were Rachel Watkins of American University, who presented her compelling work on how African-American skeletal remains have been studied by anthropologists; Ann Kakaliouras of Whittier College whose study of the impact of repatriation on practices in physical anthropology became a touchstone for many discussions; and the anthropologist Jean-François Vêran, of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, who provided critical, much-appreciated commentary as a cultural anthropologist with particular interests in conceptions of race. Laurie Obbink, of Wenner-Gren, was a source of crucial logistical and planning support, and consistent good cheer.

History of Anthropology at the American Anthropological Association, November 17-21, 2010. Kevin A. Yelvington, *University of South Florida*

The theme of the 109th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, held November 17-21, 2010 in New Orleans, was "Circulation." The framers of this theme invited attendees to think of shifting boundaries and zones of passage, networks of various kinds, to think of how movement is an organizing trope for anthropological sensibilities, and to (re)consider the increasingly circulating concept of culture. Participants were also asked to address how this theme articulated with temporal horizons. And just as there were plentiful references to "new ethnographies" of "mobilities," "circulation," and "border crossings," addressing the overall theme meant that there were a number of

panels on the history of anthropology as well. Some panels showed that the concerns of the early practitioners are relevant today. There was a panel on "Historical Perspectives in Anthropology" organized by Beatriz Morales of Morris Brown College that featured Morales's paper on Zora Neale Hurston's work and its applicability to the study of Afro-Cuban espiritismo in today's New Orleans (where the AAA met), and Melinda Kanner's paper "The Anthropology of the Show: Boas at the Fair, Gates on Television — Performing and Visualizing Identity." Also on the panel was Nehemia Stern's paper "Rabbi Edgar E. Siskin: Assimilation, Resistance, and the Locus of Culture in Early American Anthropology." Given Hurston's connections with New Orleans, there was the panel "She Wore Many Hats: Zora Neale Hurston and the Making of Black, Feminist, and Diasporic Anthropology," jointly sponsored by the Association of Black Anthropologists, Association for Feminist Anthropology, and the Society for Humanistic Anthropology, and organized by Andrea Abrams of Centre College and Riché Barnes of Smith College. This panel featured papers such as Manissa Maharawal's "Zora Neale Hurston: Writing Alternative Ethnographies," A. Lynn Bolles's "Pet Negroes, Class and Color Theorizing of Zora Neale Hurston," and Indigo Bethea's "Hurston, Dunham and the Future of Anthropology." Other Boasians came under focus in my own panel "The History of Anthropology in History of Science Perspective," sponsored by the American Ethnological Society, the General Anthropology Division, and the Society for Cultural Anthropology, and featuring papers by Gerald Sullivan on Margaret Mead, Reo Fortune, and Gregory Bateson, my own paper on Melville Herskovits, and John Gilkeson, Jr.'s paper on Alfred Kroeber's and Eric Wolfe's historiographies. The panel "Native Voices, Disciplined Practices, Self-Determination in Ethnographic Representation by American Indian Anthropologists Past and Present" was organized by Bernard Perley and Joalyn Archambault and featured papers by Archambault on Ella Deloria and Beatrice Medicine, by George Abrams entitled "Arthur Caswell Parker, Seneca Anthropologist," and by Garrick Bailey "Cultural Anthropology and the Vanishing Indian." The 2010 Stocking Symposium in the History of Anthropology was organized by Maria Lepowsky and Paul Shamkman and featured papers by Robert Carneiro on Herbert Spencer, Helen Gardner on "James Ngunaitponi's Kinship," Regna Darnell on "The Linguistic Rhizome in Americanist/Boasian Anthropology," Robert Adlam's paper on James A. Teit, Donald McVicker's on Frederick Starr and Roy Barton, Aaron Glass's on Boas, museum work, and archives, and Margaret Bodemer's paper on Vietnamese ethnology, among others. Darnell and Frederic Gleach organized the panel "Ethnographic Writing and its Discontents." There were a number of panels throughout the conference that honored influential anthropologists and teachers, living and dead. These included entire panels with papers devoted to the work of Norman Yoffee, Michael Kearney, Esther Newton, Conrad Kottak, Hans and Judith Maria Buechler, Karen McCarthy Brown, David Maybury-Lewis, Timothy Earle, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Robert Rhoades, William Kelly, and Susan D. Greenbaum. Readers interested in searching the entire program may go to <http://www.aaanet.org/meetings/program/>.