



**HISTORY OF  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conversions, Dreams, Defining Aims? Following Boas and Malinowski, Physics and Anthropology, through Laboratory and Field <i>Richard Staley</i>	3
Learning from the Past: Recreating Victorian Anthropometrics <i>Efram Sera-Shriar</i>	10
Recent Bibliography	11
Recent Dissertations and Conference Reports	13

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## Conversions, Dreams, Defining Aims? Following Boas and Malinowski, Physics and Anthropology, through Laboratory and Field

Richard Staley, University of Wisconsin–Madison, [rastaley@wisc.edu](mailto:rastaley@wisc.edu)

### Founding Figures

Anthropology's founding figures were academic travelers, who brought skills that were honed in a variety of fields to their new enterprise. Two such figures were Franz Boas, born in Minden, Westphalia in 1858, and Bronislaw Malinowski, born in Kraków, Galicia, in 1884. Both were recognized for helping to establish anthropology in their respective adopted homes of the United States and Britain. Both are associated with the development of participant observation, the fieldwork method requiring anthropologists to immerse themselves in the everyday lives of the peoples of other cultures.<sup>1</sup> Both were initially trained in physics (amongst other subjects), and many historians stress that both traveled a considerable intellectual distance from the grounding their early work provided. Boas, in particular, is conventionally described as having journeyed from physics to ethnology (Stocking 1982). Unlike others, however, I judge that in some senses Boas and Malinowski did not have to turn away from physics; significant elements of its inheritance remained not only in their dreams, but also in their defining aims.<sup>2</sup> Appreciation of the relevance of their intellectual backgrounds enlarges our understanding of them, and also represents a new perspective on the history of physics.

Both Boas and Malinowski pursued several educational threads and undertook formative fieldwork. Boas heard lectures from Clausius, Kirchhoff and Bunsen in Heidelberg before going to Bonn and then to Kiel, where the physicist Gustav Karsten supervised his 1881 PhD thesis on the absorption of light by samples of water and he also worked closely with the geographer Theobald Fischer (Stocking, 1982; Bunzl, 1996; Cole, chapter 3; Stocking 1982). From 1883 to 1884, Boas lived with Inuit while surveying Baffinland, later observing that both his education and his first field experience entailed compromises. In his "Anthropologist's Credo" of 1938, Boas said that his *emotional* connection with the world's phenomena led him to geography, but that his *intellectual* interests inclined him to mathematics and physics; he also observed that he had a less direct means of exploring the relations between the *subjective* and *objective* worlds in Baffinland than he would have had if he had undertaken psychophysical research into mental and physical processes.<sup>3</sup> Such dualisms were important throughout Boas's career, although he represented them in subtly different ways in different periods. They affected his treatment of the differences between primitive and modern humans, and of the relations between sciences, as well as his self-understanding. Boas described two other formative experiences: shocks to his

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<sup>1</sup> For their disciplinary importance, see Darnell; Firth; Stocking, 1986. On fieldwork, for which Malinowski is especially important, see Kuklick's recent study, which contrasts the often deliberately personal style of field research and the affective neutrality normative in the laboratory.

<sup>2</sup> Many early anthropologists came from scientific backgrounds—the medically-trained psychologist W.H.R. Rivers and the biologist Baldwin Spencer are just two examples—and their training shaped their research as well as their understanding of their new discipline. Kuklick emphasizes the importance of the natural history sciences in the development of fieldwork and notes that later generations came to understand fieldwork in particular, and anthropology in general, rather differently, in part because fieldwork methods were regarded as un-teachable and therefore not scientific.

<sup>3</sup> Originally published in *The Nation* in 1938, Boas's "Credo" was published in revised form in 1939.

sense of independence from tradition and to his early materialism, which he received from a fellow student and his sister, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Recalling his early career (e.g., Boas, 1939), Boas emphasized how new perspectives had overshadowed old interests, and his students often interpreted his 1883 trip as watershed and conversion experiences—as early fieldwork should be. But Stocking's study of Boas's correspondence led him to conclude that Boas's intellectual reorientation predated his journey to Baffinland. Nevertheless, Stocking charted a gradual shift from physics to ethnology that culminated in Boas's commitment to historical methods; and Boas's later writings provide much support for Stocking's narrative, which was slightly qualified and elaborated by Douglas Cole.<sup>5</sup> Analyses of Boas's work have consistently stressed his importance in reshaping understandings of culture and of race, but assessments of his legacy have changed dramatically over time in the hands of such figures as Alfred Kroeber and Leslie White. There has been notable debate over the extent to which Boas was committed to science or historicism. This issue remains worth disputing.<sup>6</sup>

Boas's most important early confidant was his uncle Abraham Jacobi, an erstwhile revolutionary who in exile became professor of pediatrics at Columbia University (Viner). Over the course of several years, Boas wrote to him about earlier conversations, contemplated his future, and insisted that the diverse elements of his life fulfilled a plan. In the very letter in which Boas described his shifting attitude towards physics, mathematics, and geography, and noted that he had abandoned the materialism natural for a physicist, he also stated that physics had determined the direction of his work, and that his life's underlying question was: "How far may we consider the phenomena of organic life, and especially those of the psychic life, from a materialistic point of view, and what conclusions can be drawn from such a consideration?"<sup>7</sup> In other letters he described his aim as investigation of the mechanism of the life of organisms, and especially of peoples, which led him to focus on the relations between the organic and inorganic, and above all on those between the life of a people and their physical environment.<sup>8</sup> His Baffinland work convinced him that such effects were real but relatively trivial, and that attention to historical circumstances was

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<sup>4</sup> The intellectual legacy of the first shock is clearly reflected in much of Boas's work; in contrast, even early on he described his investigations of materialism as a goal that had to be kept distant both because of immediate career needs and the methods it would require. See Franz Boas to Abraham Jacobi, 2 January 1882, Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society (APS).

<sup>5</sup> Stocking, 1982, discusses Boas's students' views and argues that Boas had subordinated his physical interests to historical cosmological concerns by 1887; Cole dates Boas's repudiation of the scientific approach earlier, in 1885, when he made "his new field of geography an entirely 'historical' discipline possessing a legitimacy equal to the sciences"; chapter 7, quote on 122.

<sup>6</sup> See Lewis, 2001, including the responses to his paper and his response to them. Interpretations of Boas's views are still used to endorse particular directions in current anthropology. See, for example, the papers in Bashkow et al.

<sup>7</sup> "In wie weit dürfen wir die Erscheinungen des organischen Lebens und zumal die des psychischen Lebens vom mechanistischen Standpunkt aus betrachten und welchen Schlüsse können aus dieser Betrachtungsweise gezogen werden." Franz Boas to Abraham Jacobi (draft), 10 April 1882, Boas Papers, APS.

<sup>8</sup> Boas's discussion of his goals recurs throughout letters sent from 1880 to 1885; on mechanism see especially Boas to Jacobi, 2 January 1882 and 2 May 1883, Boas Papers, APS.

necessary to understand more subtle questions, which he sought to pursue in research on Vancouver Island. In 1887, he famously described geography by outlining contrasts between different scientific approaches: those dominated by law (like physics) or by description (like geography), and those determining general elements (like physics) or investigating particular wholes (like history). It is revealing that physics recurs as a contrastive pole; but it is also significant that he thought a full science of geography required all of these approaches, a judgment often thought also revealing of his conception of anthropology.<sup>9</sup>

So what place did physics have in his later work and views, and did he remain true to his early objectives? I cannot yet venture a full answer, but want to note two points. The first is that as Stocking (1982) and Schaffer have shown, his early psycho-physical work on perceptual differences gave Boas a reflexive understanding that allowed him to critique the character of earlier ethnologists' linguistic evidence, and to read it as reflecting the cultural perspective of the researcher rather than the linguistic paucity of the subject. Specific techniques he learned as a student became irrelevant to much of his later research, though he trained his students in statistics throughout his career. But Boas's conceptual understanding of physics may have been integrated into the particular vision he developed of the relativity of culture, and this is my second point. Boas is famous for arguing that our understanding of truth goes as far as our civilization. But he described general differences between primitive and modern cultures in terms that I will relate to his self-understanding.

In his 1911 classic *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Boas stated that reasoning becomes more logical with advancing civilization. This is not because the capacity of individuals has changed, "but because the traditional material which is handed down to each individual has been thought out and worked out more thoroughly and more carefully." (206) He thought the subjective impressions associated with phenomena by primitive peoples—concepts related to emotional states—were gradually replaced by causal conceptualization, which produced scientific method. Linking resistance to change to emotional values, Boas argued that moderns—whose actions often served rational ends—were much more ready to change than primitives. This was not true, however, in the case of "the fundamental lines of thought and action which are determined by our early education, and which form the subconscious basis of all our activities." (Boas, 1911: 239-40; quote on 240) Boas thought that an utterly logical future was unattainable, and stated that one needed to respect the sacred ideal of the dreamer living in a world of musical tone. (Boas, 2008 [1932], 116) He might well have added an injunction to respect the emotional wellsprings of youth. That is, Boas explained the continuing significance of elements from his early days in his own thought; and physics remained his exemplar of causal science, retaining a place in the arc of his anthropological understanding of primitives and moderns.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Boas, 1887, reprinted in Stocking, 1996. Arguing that Boas remained committed to geography until he found employment as a docent in anthropology at Clark University in 1889, Koelsch has criticised the teleological narrative found in many analyses of Boas's early career, which feature his Baffinland conversion to anthropology.

<sup>10</sup> This particular strand of Boas's thought as well as full treatment of his changing views are usually omitted from discussions of Boas that judge him from the standpoint of later anthropologists. In exploring this aspect of Boas's work I am not attempting to revive Kroeber's argument that Boas made little use of history, attributing characteristic features of Boas's approach to the heritage of the exact laboratory

Cole suggests that Boas's intellectual maturation was a relatively straightforward task: he had to recognize that there was no future in psychophysics, and to repudiate the backwater physics he got from Karsten, who was as interested in meteorology and the local marina as in matter.<sup>11</sup> But the few physicists who taught through the 1860s and 1880s often sought to satisfy immediate organizational needs, as Karsten did; moreover, a nexus between surveying, studies of perception, and geography both had Humboldtian roots and significant pragmatic value. By the turn of the century, however, meteorology and geophysics had started to find separate institutional homes, and laboratory physics was settling on subatomic matter as its proper subject.<sup>12</sup> Yet the tradition of psychophysics had played an important role in the work of the Austrian physicist Ernst Mach, who studied the perception of sound and light, and offered widely influential critical historical perspectives on heat and mechanics in which he attacked absolutes in favor of relative measures, and even commented on the anthropology of Tylor.<sup>13</sup> This was the physics that Malinowski found in Krakow, writing his doctoral dissertation in 1906 on the positivism of Avenarius and Mach, favoring Mach's understanding of science as simply the most economic description of nature that we have.<sup>14</sup>

Malinowski's concerns were philosophical. He focused on the mathematical concept of function, noted that ideas of economy had no place in fully deterministic systems, and critically examined the consistency of Mach's position. Malinowski worked hard in the laboratory, but it was the intellectual continuum he saw between Mach's thought and theoretical issues in anthropology that proved significant for him.<sup>15</sup> Mach had insisted that the manual work of primitive man was pragmatically adaptive and instinctively

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sciences. In response to Kroeber, Boas stated that in his 1887 discussion he had aligned himself "with those who are motivated by the affective appeal of a phenomenon that impresses us as a unit, although its elements may be irreducible to a common cause. In other words the problem that attracted me primarily was the intelligent understanding of a complex phenomenon. When from geography my interest was directed to ethnology, the same interest prevailed. To understand a phenomenon we have to know not only what it is, but also how it came into being. Our problem is historical." (Kroeber, 1935; Boas, 1936, quote on 137) Nevertheless, Boas's emphasis on history should not prevent us from recognizing the ground common to each side of the contrasts invoked (his sentiments might well have been shared by the physicist Ernst Mach, for example).

<sup>11</sup> Cole, 54-55; note especially footnotes 46-47. For an excellent study of pioneers in psychophysics, see Heidelberger. On Karsten and Kiel see Jungnickel and McCormack, vol. 1, 218, and Schmidt-Schönbeck.

<sup>12</sup> We have excellent studies of critical theoretical developments in fields like meteorology and geophysics, but despite Jungnickel and McCormack's valuable overview and Morus's cultural perspective we lack a clear understanding of the full range of work in physics in the last quarter of the century. Note that Theobald Fischer, Boas's mentor in geography, complained that Karsten sat in too many saddles and refused to give up teaching physical geography, a clear indication of the broad conception of physics that Karsten held. And see Theobald Fischer to Hermann Wagner, 16 January 1880, cited in Cole, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Mach argued Tylor was right to think there were traces of fetishism in current scientific conceptions of "force"; Mach, 435. On Mach see Banks; Blackmore, 1972; and Blackmore, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Although he took lecture courses in mathematics and physics (outlined by Sredniawa), his thesis is best described as philosophy of science; see also Malinowski, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Young (82-5) describes Mach's work as having a durable effect on Malinowski's theorizing. See also Thornton and Skalnik, esp. 26-38. It is worth noting that Mach offered an energetic understanding that Malinowski would later also find in Rivers; see Kuklick, esp. 27-28.

rational—only needing to be lifted into consciousness to become scientific. While he thought science incompatible with religious preconceptions, he understood the scientific method to be shared across disciplines, argued against privileging any particular approach to phenomena, and focused on the need to understand the assumptions underlying our own theoretical perspectives.<sup>16</sup> After completing his dissertation, Malinowski went to Leipzig to study economics with Karl Büchner and psychology with Wilhelm Wundt. He also developed an interest in anthropology, provoked, he claimed, by his reading of J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (which would lead him to study at the London School of Economics). He read Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen's accounts of Australian aboriginal customs. He examined the theoretical views of J. G. Frazer and Émile Durkheim—both of whom (in different ways) drew on Spencer and Gillen's work and represented the Aborigines as the most primitive of humans—and judged that Aborigines' totemic practices were not so much primitive as means to satisfy needs found in all societies.<sup>17</sup>

Malinowski's approach thus illustrated a critical theoretical reflexivity that is akin to Boas's ability to recognize cultural preconceptions underlying perceptions. While doing several bouts of fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands at the time of World War I, he was able to make of the field a kind of laboratory. That is, he translated the investigations of psychophysics into reflections on his own experience:

Now I often have the feeling of being “at the bottom of consciousness”—the feeling of the physical foundation of mental life, the latter's dependence on the body so that every thought that flows effortlessly in some psychic medium has been laboriously formed inside the organism.<sup>18</sup>

And when he reached an understanding of the ring of exchanges that was the Kula, finding the constant and essential in the mix of what had seemed incoherent, he said: “the Ethnographer has to *construct* the picture of the big institution, very much as the physicist constructs his theory from the experimental data, which always have been within reach of everybody, but needed a consistent interpretation.” (Malinowski, 1961 [1922], 84)

It is notable that after Malinowski's death, Radcliffe-Brown strongly critiqued his functionalism for what he regarded as its biological reductionism. Recently, Matti Bunzl (2004) has responded to the currently widespread perception that Malinowski's image of the ethnographer's scientific role inscribed a problematic othering strategy, arguing that anthropologists should modulate Malinowskian fieldwork with a neo-Boasian interest in a rigorously historical understanding of culture, coupled with critical recognition of the secondary rationalizations of traditions accepted in our own and other cultures. These observations highlight two important points. First, even when controversial, the legacy of both of these founding fathers has been immensely important in shaping the development of their discipline; and second, a more nuanced understanding of the historical context within which each worked is surely required to generate a clear

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<sup>16</sup> Malinowski drew in particular on Mach, 1896 and Mach 1896 [1882].

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion in Thornton and Skalnik.

<sup>18</sup> Malinowski, 1967, 294, entry of 28 June 1918.



understanding of the consequent relationships at issue across the sciences and the humanities. I hope that exploring the relations between physics and anthropology will contribute to that goal, but it can only do so by striving for critically comprehensive perspectives. In contrast, most treatments of Boas are concerned with showing what new elements his body of work contributed to anthropological practice—and might contribute to current practice; and treatments of Malinowski are often similarly selective and presentist. Here I have begun to integrate some of the better-known strands of their thought into broader approaches to their intellectual lives, showing, for example, that Boas's self understanding was developed in the same register as his understanding of peoples. To use a metaphor of lines and lives, I ask whether this historical work operates like a fishing line, hooking what will soon be an object on a plate? Or does it describe the movement of the fish itself? (See Ingold 2007 and 2011) I think to fish with Boas we need to understand better how ready he was to live with compromise in pursuing a life's task, while to cross the oceans with Malinowski we should examine his interest in the physical foundations of the inner life. And to fish with a discipline or two will take working with the rigor of diverse lives. This essay can only be described as a beginning.

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### **Learning from the Past: Recreating Victorian Anthropometrics**

Efram Sera-Shriar writes:

What lessons can we learn from nineteenth-century naturalists interested in human diversity? I am attempting to recreate a Victorian research practice, asking for responses to a questionnaire patterned after mid-nineteenth-century questionnaires. My aim is to see what we as historians can learn from the experience, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of nineteenth-century research techniques. For the questionnaire and further information about the project, visit the following website: <http://dissertationreviews.org/archives/2022>. Send responses to: [esshriar@yorku.ca](mailto:esshriar@yorku.ca)

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### RECENT DISSERTATIONS

Daniels, Brian I. 2012. *A History of Antiquities Ownership in the United States, 1870-1934*. University of Pennsylvania. With this thesis, Daniels earned two PhDs—in History and Anthropology.

Jardine, Boris. 2012. *Scientific Moderns*. University of Cambridge, Department of History and Philosophy of Science. This study joins the histories of Mass Observation and Constructivism in interwar Britain.

Rood, Daniel. 2010. *Plantation Technocrats: A Social History of Knowledge in the Slaveholding Atlantic World, 1830-1865*. University of California, Irvine, History Department.

Sheppard, Kathleen. 2010. *The Lady and the Looking Glass: Margaret Murray's Life in Archaeology*, University of Oklahoma, History of Science Department.

### CONFERENCE REPORTS

**“Cultural Narratives of Race in the German Empire 1871-1945,”** held at the University of Edinburgh, September 13, 2012, co-organized by Lara Day Benjamin and Oliver Haag, both of the University of Edinburgh. Report submitted by Lara Day Benjamin, l.day.benjamin@ed.ac.uk

Supported by the German History Society, the Visual Arts Research Institute Edinburgh, the Centre for the Study of Modern Conflict and the Innovation Initiative Grants Scheme both of the University of Edinburgh, this conference invited scholars working in the disciplines of history, art history, German studies, theology and anthropology to discuss the dis/continuities in cultural narratives of race and their correspondence to events in political history (1871, 1917, 1933). Papers investigated the construction and use of cultural conceptions of narratives of race in crime reports, ephemeral media, popular fiction, photography, linguistics and philosophy. The truly interdisciplinary discussion allowed the examination of origins, perpetuation and affirmation of these narratives and acknowledged both the complexity of the term and concept, and its critical role in shaping cultural and political ideologies. The keynote lecture was delivered by Tina Campt, Professor of Africana and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University, and examined the different narratives of race in Black German family photography. Papers included topics as diverse as German narratives of Indigenous North American people, the gendered constructions of racial narratives, as well as the origin and functioning of racial/racist thought. The program included papers by Johanna Gehmacher, University of Vienna; Lukas Bormann, University of Erlangen; David Moshfegh, University of California, Berkeley; Volker Zimmermann, Collegium Carolinum Munich/Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf; Markus End, Technical University, Berlin; Sarah Panzer, University of Chicago; Ulrich Charpa, Leo Baeck

Institute London/Ruhr University Bochum; Arndt Kremer, University of Malta; Nicole Perry, University of Vienna.

**“World Heritage Now: Evaluating the Past, Present, and Future of UNESCO’S Cultural Policy Program,”** held at the University of Pennsylvania, September 28-9, report submitted by Brian Daniels, University of Pennsylvania, danielsb@sas.upenn.edu

Over forty years ago, the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) evaluated cultural policies among its member countries in order to determine what issues should be addressed by the international community. Two key international conventions, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Cultural Property and the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, emerged from this process. Both have been instrumental in a variety of ways: shaping contemporary discourse about culture; generating new national laws and policies; encouraging new entitlements and rights to culture; providing a market for global tourism and economic development; and reframing how the field of anthropology relates to the idea of culture itself. Although the two Conventions fundamentally affected the management of cultural sites and the protection of cultural property generally, their interrelationship rarely been considered. We also know little about their historical impact. Were their original goals met? Have they been turned to unanticipated purposes? What have been their unforeseen consequences?

The fortieth anniversary of the 1972 UNESCO Convention presented an ideal opportunity to address these questions. To this end, twelve scholars gathered for a conference convened at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, supported through funding from the University of Pennsylvania’s Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Global Engagement Fund, and University Research Foundation; the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; and the Pogo Family Foundation.

Conference discussions reflected the global and idiosyncratic reach of UNESCO’s cultural policy. J. P. Singh (George Mason University) framed the conference with a thesis that UNESCO’s most durable influence in cultural heritage work was in the mobilization of global cultural networks. Aiming to create a culture of peace in the wake of World War II through science, education, cultural programming, and communication, UNESCO worked to connect the high ideal of universal cultural value with viable in-country institutions and networks. Noel Salazar (University of Leuven) observed that while the 1972 Convention did not formally address tourism, world heritage sites garner attention because they can be presented as tourist destinations and revenue-generating opportunities for local economies. While economic benefits are never assured, increasing heritage tourism has prompted reassessment of what constitutes sustainable tourism. Brian I. Daniels (University of Pennsylvania) argued that the 1970 and 1972 Conventions were part of a broad effort to make museums places that realized UNESCO’s mandate for mutual, intercultural understanding. Under the UNESCO rubric, museums transformed into diplomatic actors, working toward the goal of providing universal access to cultural heritage and becoming the forums where national populations learned about their own identities and those of other countries. Jane Levine (Sotheby’s and Columbia University) noted that impact of the 1970 Convention on the art market; a significant shift in thinking occurred among sellers, dealers, and collectors,

who became increasingly sensitized to the need for secure legal title and reliable histories of their purchases. Undesirable market behavior has not disappeared entirely, but there has been considerable reduction in illicit trade in cultural materials. Taking the view of a historic preservation practitioner, Randall Mason (University of Pennsylvania), examined key moments of envisioning heritage geographies prior to UNESCO's effort, arguing that there has been a gradual expansion in imagining what constitutes a heritage landscape over the past two centuries.

Two presentations focused on specific legal ramifications of the 1970 and 1972 Conventions. Patty Gerstenblith (De Paul University) argued that states have implemented the 1970 Conventions in four different ways: through across the board import restrictions on commonly looted cultural property; through country-to-country bilateral agreements restricting the import of certain kinds of cultural property; through a hybrid legal regime influenced by the 1995 Unidroit Convention (an expansion of the 1970 Convention overseen by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, which aimed to facilitate the restitution of cultural property by shifting the burden of proof of legitimate ownership to the buyer and thus remains controversial); and through a minimalist approach that only restricts the importation of already inventoried cultural material. Sophie Vigneron (University of Kent) noted that the 1972 Convention did not necessarily add a new layer of protection to heritage sites, but rather required signatories to amend their laws in order to guarantee a measure of effective protection. In a discussion of laws in the United Kingdom and France, Vigneron noted that both implemented the 1972 Convention by marginally amending their existing regimes of protection of built heritage.

Several papers examined specific instances of the application and problems related to the idea of universal world heritage standards. Ian Hodder (Stanford University) discussed the inability of cultural heritage to translate into a viable form of rights activism in Turkey, noting that one difficulty of the rhetoric of universal heritage is that it threatens to establish false expectations. Christina Luke (Boston University) demonstrated the importance of boundary-making to the production of ideas about heritage, using the Gediz Valley in Turkey as an extended example. In this case, such activity has been a focus of U.S. cultural diplomacy over the 20th century. Based upon fieldwork in the Yucatan, Mexico, Richard M. Leventhal (University of Pennsylvania) challenged the idea of universal heritage, maintaining that contemporary Maya communities eschew the more obvious archaeological remains of the ancient Maya in favor of 19th century heritage sites that represent a more meaningful heritage to their communities.

Presenters also considered the future role that the UNESCO Conventions might play in cultural policy. Morag Kersel (DePaul University) emphasized the value in conceiving of objects as internationally circulating "ambassadors." Noting that cultural exchange can be achieved through various means, Kersel emphasized a tradition of UNESCO frameworks that predated both Conventions to advocate for long-term loans and leases as ways to increase the international movement of cultural objects. Lynn Meskell (Stanford University) offered a sobering assessment of the politics surrounding the World Heritage Committee, which oversees implementation of the 1972 Convention. Meskell cautioned that increasing factional bloc politics between states, a dire economic situation following withdrawal of US funding from UNESCO, and the overt challenges



posed against expertise and shared decision-making threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the World Heritage Committee and its ability to act.

**“The Study of Jewish Biological Difference After 1945,”** October 15-16, hosted by The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG), report submitted by Jonathan Marks, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, [jmarks@uncc.edu](mailto:jmarks@uncc.edu)

The conference was organized by Veronika Lipphardt (MPIWG) and Amos Morris-Reich (Haifa), and sponsored by Minerva-Gentner, which aims to increase the contact between Israeli scholars and those of other nations (and which had not previously supported history of science). The organizers intended the conference to focus “on the history of scientific accounts of Jews in the life sciences after the end of World War Two,” and was especially timely, given the appearance of recent full length works by two geneticists (David Goldstein, *Jacob’s Legacy*; and Harry Ostrer, *Legacy*) and an anthropologist (Nadia Abu el-Haj, *The Genealogical Science*). Three themes emerged during the presentations: (1) trans-World War II narratives of Jews and genetics (Veronika Lipphardt, Anne Cottebrune, Alexander von Schwerin, Amir Teicher, Felix Weidemann), (2) the development of the field of human genetics in Israel (Raphael Falk, Nurit Kirsh, Snait Gissis, Amos Morris-Reich); and (3) contemporary issues of genomics and Jewish identity (Petter Hellström, Yulia Egorova). The discussants were Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Paul Weindling and Jonathan Marks. Discussions about publication are underway.

**“Colonial Governmentalities Workshop,”** held at the Institute of Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney, October 31<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, report submitted by Ben Dibley, University of Western Sydney, [B.Dibley@uws.edu.au](mailto:B.Dibley@uws.edu.au)

The literature on governmentality in colonial contexts is well developed. Less attention has been paid to the materialities through which particular forms of colonial rule are exercised—the focus of this workshop, which emphasized how collecting cultures were implicated in the rationalities of government in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century colonial situations. Participants examined the different kinds of knowledges—such as anthropology, archaeology, and folklore studies—associated with practices of collecting, and the roles these played in shaping forms of colonial rule, such as those of settler, conquest, or neo-conquest colonialism. Organized around paired papers, the workshop was led by Tony Bennett, Institute of Culture and Society (ICS), University of Western Sydney (UWS). It was part of an Australian Research Council Discovery Project, “Museum, Field, Metropolis, Colony: Practices of Social Governance.” (For an overview of this project, see [http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/research/projects/museum\\_field\\_metropolis\\_colony](http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/research/projects/museum_field_metropolis_colony).)

Henrika Kuklick (University of Pennsylvania) and Tony Bennett presented the first paired papers. Both focused on the practice of anthropology and its relations with colonial governance. Each offered distinctive accounts on the materialities of ethnographic fieldwork, advancing contrasting conceptualizations of anthropological practices and their folding into relations of government. Kuklick argued that, in contradistinction to laboratory science, anthropology was a form of work that shared in the methods of field sciences, which she characterized as more historical than experimental, with knowledge witnessed, rather than manufactured. Like other field scientists, anthropologists had to negotiate with administrative regimes, but their

negotiations were arguably more problematic given their subject matter. Because anthropology emerged in a period of secure colonial rule, its subjects were also colonial subjects; doing anthropology thus “meant dealing (somehow) with colonial authorities”; Kuklick reflected on these relations in canonical instances of fieldwork: A C Haddon in the Torres Straits; Franz Boas in Baffin Island; and Bronislaw Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands. Bennett was also concerned with the materialities of anthropological practices; he analyzed these as collecting practices with changing affiliations with the apparatuses of the field, the museum and the university, and examined anthropology’s place in relation to liberal governmentality. He advanced two concepts, governmental rationality and anthropological assemblage, to explore the work of Franz Boas, Baldwin Spencer, Paul Rivet and that of Mass Observation. The first term provided an optic on the different logics of colonial rule in which the practices of these anthropologists were located. The second concerned the particular materialities, from colonial infrastructure to ethnographic tools, in which such anthropological practices were enmeshed and through which the ethnographic data generated came to circulate. With these formulations Bennett traced the ways in which anthropology was implicated in liberal rule, particularly through its role in differentiating populations with respect to their varying capacities for freedom.

The subsequent sessions were largely case studies, with particular papers paired around an empirical or conceptual affinity. Ira Jacknis (University of California, Berkeley) and Julie Thorp (ICS, UWS) shared a concern with how collecting and display practices were implicated in Imperial imaginaries and processes of governing subjugated populations and territories. Jacknis argued that during the first half of the 20th century natural history museums in the United States adopted Enlightenment schemes of universal survey in ways parallel to art museums. He explored the emergence of anthropological regionalism at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) under the directorship of Boas and, subsequently, Clark Wissler, examined the processes by which the museum’s regional interests and emphases in anthropological collection, research, and display expanded beyond the Americas, including the Philippines as a colonial possession of the United States. Thorp also considered an imperial museological gaze, but one with a different political logic. Focusing on the Austrian Museum for Folk Culture (*Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde*), she examined a series of ethnographic exhibitions held in the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian empire, describing how the monarchy, museums and national elites sought to foster the empire’s supranational identity of “unity-in-diversity”; this identity was displayed with through images of ethnic diversity in both metropolitan and local public spaces.

Tim Rowse and Ben Dibley (both ICS, IWS) analyzed practices of collecting data on colonial populations. Rowse considered the “dying Native story” as it was variously articulated in Canada, the USA, New Zealand, and Australia from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth century, showing how putative trends were evaluated with census data on indigenous populations—represented either as people with particular cultural attributes or populations with distinct demographic profiles. Rowse identified three ways in which indigenous peoples might be said to be dying out: through catastrophic mortality, miscegenation, or rapid dissolution of native social order. Dibley explored the development of government anthropology in the Australian-administered territory of Papua during the interwar period, focusing on the collaborations and contestations of the government anthropologist, F E Williams, and the Lieutenant-Governor, Hubert

Murray. He argued for the emergence of a new kind of anthropological actor, framed in relation to new articulations of administrative, museum and academic networks associated with the emergence of functionalist anthropology, as well as implicated in the new forms of rule associated with the doctrine of humanitarian colonialism that was formally sanctioned by the League of Nations.

Paul Turnbull (University of Queensland) and Conal McCarthy (Victoria University of Wellington) considered indigenous agency and the shaping of conduct in two antipodean settler societies. Turnbull examined how Aboriginal bodily remains were collected, analyzed and interpreted in colonial Australia. He was concerned to consider the affective engagements of these activities, which, in their focus “on recovering a deep past shared by Indigenous people and settlers,” complicated recent historiographies and their assumption that once in the scientific domain these remains were voided of human qualities. Turnbull’s interest was with how the work of recovering the deep past might have come to shape the conduct of settler subjects. McCarthy traced the circulation of objects, people and ideas through a series of institutions central to the administration of New Zealand’s indigenous populations during the opening decades of the twentieth century. He was concerned with the Department of Native Affairs, the Dominion Museum, the Board of Māori Ethnological Research, and the Polynesian Society. Focusing particularly on the role of prominent Māori intellectuals and politicians, key among them Te Rangihiroa and Āpirana Ngata, McCarthy charted a simultaneous and paradoxical process of resistance and accommodation, collaboration and contestation between Māori leadership and the settler state.

Elizabeth Edwards (De Montfort University) and Nelía Dias (ISCTE—Instituto Universitário de Lisboa) addressed the complex ways that particular ethnographic technologies were folded into apparatuses of colonial rule. Edwards examined the photographic collecting practices of the Colonial Office over the 1860-70s, qualifying other scholars’ assumptions that there had been a ready fit between colonial photography and colonial rule. Edwards provided an account of a more fragile colonial project: photographs’ purpose, use, and evidential quality was uncertain, and their acquisition was far from systematic. Edwards argued that the photographic archive of the Colonial Office did not constitute information to be mobilized in colonial action, but rather served as a “form of reassurance” in the face of the radical contingencies of colonial rule. In the second presentation, Nelía Dias analyzed a research trip by Paul Rivet, director of the *Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro* (MET), to former French Indochina in the early 1930s, which was conducted under the auspices of the *Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient* (EFEO). Dias was concerned to investigate the affinities between administrative ethnographic practices and ethnographic research. This she advanced by examining the ethnographic surveys conducted by the EFEO and the relationships between local collectors in the field and the MET. In drawing out the geographical dimension of Rivet’s Indochina research and the role of colonial infrastructure in the submission of indigenous populations, Dias argued that administrative ethnographic practices were oriented towards the management of territory, while ethnographic research focused on listing and registering ways of controlling the territory.

The sixth session’s papers discussed the economies in which indigenous cultural objects circulated in the settler colony of New Zealand. One took as its example an

enduring set of relations into which tribal Māori and representatives of the state entered through the intermediary of the gift. The other turned to a formative moment in the history of anthropology in New Zealand as it was institutionalized as both disciplinary and administrative knowledge directed at the materialities of indigenous life. Paul Tapsell (University of Otago) and Ngati Whakaeu/Te Arawa, offered a tribal perspective on the colonial agent Captain Gilbert Mair (Tawa) and the relations of reciprocity into which he entered on receipt of taonga. Tapsell outlined the ontology in which taonga are inscribed, describing them as 'art-like memorials' enmeshed in the genealogical folding of descent, knowledge and belief or whakapapa. He narrated the history of the taonga, Pukaki, a carved gate way, which, as the result of Mair's diplomacy, was moved from Ohinemutu to the Auckland Museum in 1877, and, through negotiations, in which Tapsell was intimately involved, between the state, iwi and the museum, was returned in 1997. Tapsell closed with a discussion of how museums might more actively engage descendant communities to present 'the whakapapa of taonga from an ethical space of reciprocity.' In the second presentation Fiona Cameron (ICS, UWS) considered the anthropological apparatuses emerging under the auspices of the New Zealand state during the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She focused on H. Devenish Skinner and his work on Māori and Pacific artifacts at both the Otago Museum and the Otago University. Skinner was appointed ethnologist at the Museum in 1918 and established anthropology as a discipline and as a degree course at the University in 1920, the first such anthropological program outside the UK. Cameron traced the networks in which Skinner's collecting, teaching and research practices were located. She emphasised the importance of Wissler's 'culture areas' concept for these. Cameron also considered the how Skinner's research was linked with particular centres of calculation, especially though his association with the Board of Māori Ethnological Research.

Rodney Harrison (University College London) and Ben Dibley and Michelle Kelly (both ICS, UWS) focused on the work of Mass Observation. These papers were concerned to investigate that project's knowledge practices and the ends to which they were put as they came to be aligned with various aesthetic and administrative practices. Harrison reviewed the project of Mass Observation by investigating its epistemic procedures, collecting practices and its connection with surrealism. He contended that Mass Observation was a "museological" project, arguing that not only from its conception was Mass Observation an institution committed to the museal tasks of collecting, ordering, archiving and exhibiting; but that it also "conceptualized itself in museological terms." Harrison traced these formulations by which, in the words of one of the project instigators, Charles Madge, Mass Observation aimed to create a "collaborative museum." Dibley and Kelly focused in on Mass Observation's morale work commissioned by the British Government over the period 1939–41. They investigated how, through its research for the Ministry of Information, Mass Observation established civilian morale simultaneously, as an autonomous object of knowledge—that is, as a dynamic affective atmosphere associated with collective everyday life that could be calibrated through social scientific methods—and, as a particular field of intervention, which could be regulated through various policy instruments, from programs of propaganda to policies of compulsion. In this Dibley and Kelly were concerned to trace how the data generated by Mass Observation came to be put to administrative ends targeting the conduct of civilian subjects.

In the final session, Philip Batty, Melbourne Museum, gave two presentations. First, he discussed how an Aboriginal object, the secret/sacred churinga, figured in colonial and post-colonial programs. For early missionaries, churingas were impediments to Indigenous "salvation." For evolutionist anthropologists like Baldwin Spencer, they represented a stage in a standard narrative of the replacement of "primitive" beliefs by science. Recently, possession and knowledge of a churinga have served to establish legal rights to traditional land. Then, Batty described an Australian Research Council project in which he is participating, "Reconstructing the Spencer and Gillen Collection," which is digitizing everything that Spencer and Gillen collected, photographed, wrote about, recorded, and filmed. Material comes from over thirty institutions world-wide, including: Museum Victoria, Melbourne; American Museum of Natural History, New York; South Australian Museum, Adelaide; Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford; Manchester Museum, Manchester; Pigorini Museum of Ethnography, Rome; Mikluho-Maklay Institute of Ethnography, St Petersburg; and the British Museum, London. A website will be available shortly.

### **History of Anthropology Panels 2012 AAA Meetings**

**History of Berkeley's Anthropology: New Subjects, New Questions, New Perspectives** (Organizer: Sergei Kan). Presenters: Sergei Kan (Dartmouth); Ira Jacknis (Hearst Museum, Berkeley); Priscilla Faulhaber-Barbosa (Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences, Ministry of Science and Technology, Brazil); Robert V. Kemper (Southern Methodist University); Carolyn Smith (Berkeley); Samuel J. Redman (Berkeley). Discussant: Harold C Conklin (Yale)

**Ancestor Worship or Parricide? Anthropological Genealogies** (Organizer: Joshua Smith). Presenters: Robert G. Launay (Northwestern); Andrew Lass (Mount Holyoke); Margaret B. Bodemer (Cal Poly San Luis Obispo); Herbert Lewis (Wisconsin); Paul Shankman (Colorado); Joshua James Smith (Western Ontario). Discussant: Regna Darnell (Western Ontario).

**Crossings Past to Present: Stocking Symposium in the History of Anthropology in Anthropological Practice** (Organizer, David W. Dinwoodie) Presenters: Char Peery (New Mexico); Suzanne Oakdale (New Mexico); Kirk Dombrowski (CUNY John Jay College); Kristen Adler (Antioch College); David W. Dinwoodie (New Mexico); Michelle Lelievre (William and Mary); Olga Glinskii (New Mexico); Sebastian Braun (North Dakota); Susan Trencher (George Mason University). Discussant: Robert Brightman (Reed College).

Those with ideas for sessions for the 2013 AAA meeting should contact David Dinwoodie, Convener of the History of Anthropology interest group, [ddinwood@unm.edu](mailto:ddinwood@unm.edu). The theme for the meeting is "Future Publics, Current Engagements."

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