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Local Knowledge, Global Stage

Regna Darnell

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Local Knowledge, Global Stage

Histories of Anthropology Annual

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Local Knowledge, Global Stage

Histories of Anthropology Annual, Volume 10

EDITED BY REGNA DARNELL AND
FREDERIC W. GLEACH

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This volume rounds off what would have been a decade of *Histories of Anthropology Annual* if we had met the ideal in producing an annual volume. In actuality it has taken a couple of extra years to reach this point. *HoAA* began in the book division at the University of Nebraska Press, then moved to the journals portfolio, and then returned to the book division with a renewed emphasis on the stand-alone character of each volume. Each volume now has a unique title, albeit still within the mandate of *HoAA* to provide an outlet for work in the history of anthropology broadly defined and directed to an audience of anthropologists.

Volume 10 is further distinguished as a watershed in the discipline in that we have recently lost two of our founding elders: George W. Stocking Jr. and Henrika Kuklick. The legacies of both live on in the work of their students and others they influenced. We particularly remember George as the founding father of a specialization in the history of anthropology combining disciplinary subject matter with historicist standards of archival research. Although trained in history, he became an honorary member of the anthropological tribe after his move to the University of Chicago Department of Anthropology in 1969. Stocking's own thematic series, *History of Anthropology*, from the University of Wisconsin Press produced eight volumes under his editorship (each containing a seminal essay of his own), three more edited by Richard Handler, and a final volume that was Stocking's own (remarkably ethnographic) autobiography (Darnell 2014; Stocking 2010).

HoAA was founded in self-conscious counterdistinction to *History of Anthropology* and intended to supplement its thematic interventions into the history, theory, and practice of anthropology with a more diffuse and incidental bringing together of work that crossed subject matter, subdiscipline, and national tradition, perhaps presaging where both the discipline and its historiography were heading. George will

remain a significant figure in having set the directions we seek to document. His legacy continues to evolve. Both editors owe much to his mentorship: he served on Regna Darnell's dissertation committee as a result of his single semester at the University of Pennsylvania; and although Fred Gleach never officially worked with George at Chicago, they met, and talked, and shared interests in where the discipline had been and where it might be going. Contributors to this volume include George's former Chicago student Sergei Kan, and several others have published in previous *HoAA* volumes.

Our title theme asserts the indivisibility of local knowledge and global context in anthropology. It is our particular preoccupation to understand the global stage in terms of the particularities of the many cultures and societies that constitute it at any given moment in time. A. Irving Hallowell noted in the inaugural issue of *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* in 1965 that historians of anthropology tend to treat the history of their discipline as an anthropological problem. That is, they/we define history itself in terms of an accustomed professional toolkit, but one that each practitioner applies in her/his specific locale with the goal of illuminating different parts of the global whole. It is precisely this stereoscopic vision that led us to title our open-ended annual forum with the plural "histories" of anthropology. We are delighted that we continue to attract a broad interdisciplinary range of historians, anthropologists, members of communities more often studied than speaking for themselves, and others interested in writing primarily for an audience of anthropologists.

Some of the issues that preoccupy anthropologists are part of the history of the post-Enlightenment West out of which the discipline emerged. Both Adam Kuper and Frederico D. Rosa apply the methods of anthropological historiography to the West's Christian and pre-Christian heritage: Adam Kuper's elegant paper explores the Bible as persistent grist for the anthropological mill, especially the Old Testament "folklore" so beloved of Victorian England. Frederico D. Rosa turns another folklore tradition amenable to anthropological reading, tracing the legend of Perseus in relation to concepts of animism and Christianity. In both cases, anthropological method unites the gaze on diverse texts and the contexts of their production and transmission to

contemporary anthropology. The motifs are in motion and the anthropologists in character.

The spatial or geographic past manifests in a contemporary global world in terms of diverse national traditions and institutions, and each of our first ten volumes has included papers on such national traditions. Here, Patrícia Ferraz de Matos focuses on the periphery versus the metropole, tying the nascent national tradition of the Portuguese Society of Anthropology and Ethnology in 1918 to a larger colonial context that frames this local within a larger global. Priscila Faulhaber turns to a quite different local version of Portuguese empire in her treatment of the Institute of Social Science in the Amazon. The local case she documents implicates larger global variations on the themes of the institute through the Rockefeller Foundation and other institutions for export. Europe and the Americas meet.

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Gray continues his meticulous examination of the development of anthropological institutions in Australia and their resonances across other anthropologies, primarily British social anthropology, foregrounding both Australian anthropology's deep ties to the metropole whence it originated and the unique constraints of geography and politics ostensibly isolated from outside influences but in practice weaving in and out of familiar stories elsewhere. The institutional machinations of the first anthropology chair in Sydney, standing alone until 1950, play out in familiar local/global manifestations, as the colonial system that developed within the British Empire entailed the circulation of personnel and the intersection of growing global ethnological databases.

Sergei Kan and Dmitry Arzyutov probe another kind of transnational intersection, one in which American Marxist Bernhard Stern aspired to publish the entire archive of Lewis Henry Morgan, transforming an American bourgeoisie entrepreneur into a communist prophet foretelling the universalism touted by Marx and Engels. It is a strange story of strange bedfellows with eerily distorted blinders about each other and the foibles of mutual foreignness misunderstood, and yet it became fundamental to the direction taken by ethnology and ethnography in the former Soviet Union. The coauthors span the traditions they examine in juxtaposition.

Another recurring theme through our first ten volumes has been the importance of the fieldwork process and the relationships of anthropologists to those whom they study, or the standpoint of the observer and its ethical consequences. Rainer Hatoum links a later stage of American anthropology to the German background of Franz Boas's early ethnography, foregrounding the fieldwork process and the relationships of anthropologists to those they study as another approach that has been featured through our run to date. In deciphering Boas's idiosyncratic form of shorthand—developed in some combination of protecting his work from curious eyes and efficiency in responding to fast-moving events—Hatoum renders possible a detailed textual comparison of Boas's field notes and their published versions. The comparison yields highly motivated changes that allowed Boas to generalize from the personal position and family relationships of his collaborator George Hunt to a cultural pattern attributable to all Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl in Boas's terminology). Paradoxically, Hunt emerges as the impresario par excellence, the manager of local performance on a global anthropological stage, while the single event recorded came to stand as "the" Kwakiutl potlatch, thereby also implicitly downplaying the agency and choreography of the events by Hunt.

Denise Green situates her contemporary fieldwork with the Nuuchah Nulth (whom Boas and Sapir called Nootka) in the Alberni Valley in British Columbia, Canada, alongside an anthropological genealogy of research with this group. From the archives of the late Susan Golla, Green reconstructs a saga of building relationships of trust that facilitate revitalization agendas arising from communities and drawing on the support of anthropologists, again framed as learners, and thereby revealing the insider-outsider permutations of Golla's long-term engagement in the valley and Green's own position within that ongoing genealogy of researchers. Generations of elders' oral traditions have produced a plurality of valid and textured histories of the Nuuchah Nulth parallel to the multiplicities of anthropological histories of anthropology.

Finally, Cheyanne Desnomie talks about how she came to know her own Indigenous genealogy better by exploring archival documentation of a failed social experiment among the Plains Cree of Saskatch-

ewan, Canada, and supplementing this through oral tradition from her own family and others. Her historical scholarship, comfortably framed within an anthropology curriculum, again contributes to the revitalization program produced by honing “the native point of view” based on what has been lost to contemporary communities but remains accessible to be reconstituted in new forms. The ethics of the relationship between anthropologists and those they study emerge from historicist research, as well as from contemporary practice.

A decade of *HoAA* seems a good time to take stock. We thank our readers and our contributors for confirming our own conviction that these historicist issues are good to think with. To generalize from local knowledges of particular events and contexts to larger global trends requires a methodology for the history of anthropology that is both historicist and presentist. It may further require us to redefine history itself, calling for a dynamic process transcending the customary distinction of past, present, and future and replacing the static repetition of events, dates, and feats of great men (*sic*) representing the story from the standpoint of the victors with a more nuanced collation of histories in the plural. We look forward to seeing many more years of such scholarship.

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Local Knowledge, Global Stage

Anthropologists and the Bible

The Marett Lecture, April 2012

I

A young philosophy don, a Jerseyman at Oxford, Robert Ranulph Marett was intrigued by the subject set for the 1893 Green Prize in Moral Philosophy: “The ethics of savage races.” He immersed himself in the literature on primitive religion, won the prize, and was befriended by the only anthropologist at Oxford University, E. B. Tylor.

Tylor was the father figure of the new anthropology that had emerged in the 1860s. It was a baggy, ambitious discipline, and Tylor himself wrote about race and technology and language and marriage, but especially about religion, and this became Marett’s main interest too. The first objective of the anthropology of religion was to characterize the earliest creeds and rites. The anthropologists then explained the advance of humanity from the long dark age of magic and superstition to the sunny uplands of a more spiritual religion; or they showed how metaphysical error gave way to rationality and science.

In any case, they took it for granted that religion, technology, and the social order advanced in lockstep through a determined series of stages. At each stage, the beliefs and customs of societies at a similar level of development were essentially the same. So contemporary primitive societies could be treated as stand-ins for past societies at an equivalent stage of development. The notions of the American Indians, perhaps, or, at a higher level, the Tahitians provided living instances of conceptions and beliefs that had once been very widespread. To know one was to know all. Captain Cook had introduced the word *taboo* from Tahiti. Soon taboos were being discovered all over the place. Other exotic terms were soon taken up—*mana*, another Polynesian word,

totem from the Ojibwa, *potlatch* from the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, *voodoo* from West Africa. All were elements of a universal primal religion. So Victorian anthropologists could write about Australian totems and American Indian taboos. They could even identify totem and taboo in ancient Israel.

Such beliefs and practices may once have been universal, but they were surely irrational. How could so many people have believed so many impossible things for so long? Some missionaries saw the hand of the Devil here, but the anthropologists argued that there was something about the ways of thinking of primitive people that led them to make mistakes of perception and logic. After all, Darwin had shown that human evolution was paced by the development of the brain. It was widely assumed that the brains of the various races developed at different rates. The smaller-brained savages, and indeed the early Israelites, were simply not capable of thinking very clearly.

So how *did* they think? Tylor argued that primitive peoples relied on “analogy or reasoning by resemblance” (1881:338). For Frazer, such “reasoning by resemblance” accounted for the belief in magic. Robertson Smith agreed that for the savage mind there was “no sharp line between the metaphorical and the literal,” and he blamed the “unbounded use of analogy characteristic of pre-scientific thought” for producing a “confusion between the several orders of natural and supernatural beings” (1894:274). Prescientific thinkers were particularly likely to get into a muddle when it came to causality. Robertson Smith found that primal religion was characterized by “*insouciance*, a power of casting off the past and living in the impression of the moment” that “can exist only along with a childish unconsciousness of the inexorable laws that connect the present and the future with the past” (1894:57).

Tylor supposed that the very earliest religion arose from a misapprehension. People everywhere have dreams and visions, but primitive people confuse dreams with real experiences. When they dream of the dead they imagine that the dead exist somewhere else, in another state, the state that living people experience in dreams, trances, and fevers. And so “the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom” (Tylor 1871, 2:12). They then

generalized this conclusion to embrace the rest of the natural world. Even trees and plants, even the planets, had souls. This was what Tylor termed “animism.”

Rituals soon developed, notably sacrifices. In primitive animism, offerings were made to the spirits of the dead after they had appeared in dreams. In what might be called the higher animism, sacrifices were also made to “other spiritual beings, genii, fairies, gods.” These sacrifices were gifts: “As prayer is a request made to a deity as if he were a man, so sacrifice is a gift made to the deity as if he were a man” (Tylor 1871, 2:375). Sacrifices took the form of burnt offerings, because spirits demanded spiritual food, the souls of animals or plants (Tylor 1866:77). Vestiges of the primitive cult, which Tylor called “survivals,” recurred in the ceremonies of the most advanced religions.

In 1899 the young Marett achieved a certain notoriety by challenging Tylor’s thesis that animism was the primeval religion. Marett identified a preanimistic religion based on the Polynesian belief in *mana*, which he took to mean a sort of psychic energy and power. Mana was inseparable from taboo. “Altogether, in mana we have what is *par excellence* the primitive religious idea in its positive aspect, taboo representing its negative side, since whatever has mana is taboo, and whatever is taboo has mana” (Marett 1911). His theory made some converts in Germany and France, most notably Marcel Mauss, who made mana the dynamic force behind both the gift and the sacrifice.

Tylor was already a frail old man when Marett became his friend, and Marett took responsibility for the development of anthropology at the university. He was instrumental in instituting Oxford’s diploma in anthropology in 1908, and he succeeded Tylor as university reader in social anthropology, a position he held for a quarter of a century. When the university created a chair in anthropology in 1936, he held it for a year before the appointment of Radcliffe-Brown. From 1928 Marett was rector of Exeter College. He also served for many years as treasurer of the University Golf Club. A busy man, then, but, he recalled, “All this time . . . [a]nthropology was becoming . . . a passion with me. . . . Yet I was still attending to the subject with my left hand, while the right tackled the philosophy which after all I was paid to teach. In fact, I became a scandal to my friends, so that one of them wrote: ‘A man of your tal-

ents seems rather wasted on the habits of backward races.' As it was, I divided my attention impartially between the beliefs of the savage and those of the Oxford undergraduate" (Marett 1941:164).

II

Tylor's theory of animism was hardly original. It was in the direct line of Enlightenment accounts of the development of rationality. Indeed, it was remarkably similar to the theory that had been advanced by Charles de Brosses (1760) and Auguste Comte (1830–42). But Tylor was also responding to the scandal provoked by two books that challenged traditional understandings of the Bible. *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859, presented a scientific alternative to the book of Genesis. The following year *Essays and Reviews* appeared, seven essays by intellectuals in the Church of England, including Benjamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, and Frederick Temple (who was to become archbishop of Canterbury) (Parker 1860). They downplayed miracles, questioned the story of the Creation, denied the doctrine of eternal punishment, and endorsed German critical scholarship that demonstrated that the Bible was a compilation of sometimes contradictory texts dating from different periods.

The continental champions of the new biblical criticism, Julius Wellhausen and Abraham Kuenen, further insisted that the Jewish religion had pagan roots. The original religion of Israel was a family cult. In time, the family cult became a tribal and then a national religion. Only with the emergence of great empires in Mesopotamia and Persia, which subjugated Israel, had prophets begun to formulate a universal spiritual religion, foreshadowing Christianity. But pagan elements survived (Wellhausen [1883] 1885).

Perhaps the ordinary churchgoer could ignore these challenges. Owen Chadwick remarks that Victorian churches were full of "worshippers who had never heard of Tylor, were indifferent to Darwin, mildly regretted what they heard of Huxley" (1970, 2:35). But the educated public did debate these new ideas, passionately. Samuel Wilberforce, bishop of Oxford, son of William Wilberforce, provoked a famous public confrontation with Huxley over the descent of man: "Was it through his grandfather or his grandmother that he traced his descent from an

ape?” (Hesketh 2009:81). The bishop also moved to have *Essays and Reviews* condemned in the Convocation of Canterbury.

However, a new science of religion was emerging, with biblical and comparative wings, that engaged with the ideas of Darwin and Wellhausen. It brought together theologians, linguists, folklorists, archaeologists, and anthropologists (Wheeler-Barclay 2010). The particular project of Tylor and the anthropologists was to discover the origins of religion, origins that could never be completely outgrown, the vestiges of ancient cults haunting even the most advanced religions.

And they had fresh evidence at their disposal, for they were able to draw on a stream of reports on primitive religions from all over the world, many of them the work of missionaries. These sources were themselves shaped by the Bible and by biblical scholarship. Protestant missionaries especially made it a priority to translate the Bible into the local language. This obliged them to identify indigenous notions that were roughly equivalent to god, spirit, sin, sacrifice, and holiness. These concepts, and their ritual representations, were taken to be the essential constituents of a religion.

There is in fact no word for “religion” in the Hebrew Bible, but it seemed obvious that ancient Judaism was the prototype of authentic religion. The Bible also gave examples of false religions, which were those of Israel’s idolatrous neighbors. Similar beliefs and practices were abundantly represented in the societies to which the missionaries were called. They could now be identified as not only pagan but also primitive. The idols of false religions were totems. Their laws were barbarous taboos and had nothing to do with justice or morality. Their ceremonies, shocking exhibitions of greed and lust, featured ghastly acts of cruelty, including human sacrifice. Missionary ethnographers read the reports of their colleagues, which described surprisingly similar pagan religions in distant parts of the world, and they welcomed the guidance of Tylor and Frazer, who pointed out what they should be looking for and explained the hold of superstition.¹

So the anthropology of religion was from the first very largely an anthropology of the Bible, with comparative notes from all over the primitive world. Precisely because it had consequences for Christianity, the anthropology of religion seemed to be very important. Tylor

was raised as a Quaker, and he believed that rituals always depended on magical thinking. Frazer argued that the comparative method “proves that many religious doctrines and practices are based on primitive conceptions, which most civilized and educated men have long agreed on abandoning as mistakes. From this it is a natural and often a probable inference that doctrines so based are false, and that practices so based are foolish” (1927:282). Robertson Smith believed on the contrary that he was clearing away the debris of folklore and tribal custom so that the prophetic and historical truths in the Hebrew Bible could be properly appreciated. For their part, missionary ethnographers delighted in discovering in the most primitive communities some faint intimations of more advanced doctrines, crude versions of biblical stories, even traces in the language of the passage of one of the lost tribes of Israel. In the 1920s and 1930s this sort of thing became a specialty of the Vienna school, then a hothouse of Catholic missionary anthropology.

III

In parallel with these studies of the development of religion, another foundational research program of anthropology addressed the rise of marriage and the family. Was there some connection between religion, morality, and social organization? In 1869 J. F. McLennan provided Tylor’s animism with a social context. McLennan (1865) had himself proposed a model of the earliest societies. They were marauding nomadic bands, matrilineal and exogamous, practicing marriage by capture. He now argued that these bands had an appropriate religion. Each band believed that it was descended matrilineally from a particular natural species, its totem, which was worshiped as an ancestor god and placated with rituals. Totemism was at once a religion—rather like animism, as McLennan conceded—and a social system.

Long ago, totemism had been universal. McLennan identified traces of a totemic system in Siberia, Peru, Fiji, and even classical India. The Greeks had their natural spirits. Totemism was also the point of departure of later systems of thought. It planted the seeds not only of religion but also of science. When the names of animals were given to constellations of stars, this was a legacy of totemism but also the first inklings

of astronomy. Beliefs about the descent of human beings from animals gave a faint hint of what would become the theory of evolution.

McLennan suggested in passing that the serpent story in Genesis may have had a totemic significance, but his theory of totemism was first systematically applied to the Hebrew Bible by his friend William Robertson Smith, who had been appointed to the chair of Hebrew and Old Testament at the Free Church College at Aberdeen in 1870 (see Black and Chrystal 1912). Robertson Smith accepted Wellhausen's demonstration that the Bible was a compilation of sources of various dates and that it included both mythological and historical elements. Following Wellhausen again, Robertson Smith aimed to identify the religious beliefs of the most ancient Israelites and to trace their progressive enlightenment. He also adopted Wellhausen's view that rituals were often hangovers from more primitive times but given fresh justifications.

How were the primitive elements to be identified? An obvious first step was to consider the practices and beliefs of Israel's pagan neighbors. Robertson Smith wrote that some ancient Jewish laws were based on principles "still current among the Arabs of the desert" (1880:340). He himself traveled in the Arabian interior to collect firsthand materials. However, even the Bedouin had progressed beyond the totemic stage, and they had been Muslims for many centuries. The comparative method practiced by McLennan offered an alternative approach. Early Israel could be understood with reference to better-documented societies at the same level of development.

In 1880 Robertson Smith published an essay titled "Animal Worship and the Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament" in which he argued that ancient Semitic societies were totemic. The evidence was admittedly patchy. Robertson Smith pointed to the queen of Sheba as proof of early matriarchy. Some Arab marriage rituals might be interpreted as survivals of marriage by capture. Taken together with other hints scattered in the literature, Robertson Smith later pronounced, "These facts appear sufficient to prove that Arabia did pass through a stage in which family relations and the marriage law satisfied the conditions of the totem system" (1894:88).