



KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Anthropological and Other Ancestors

Notes on Setting up a Visual Archive of the Discipline

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Strangely, anthropologists have devoted a lot of energy investigating and recording other people's communities, yet very little time doing the same for their own. In 1982, Cambridge University anthropologist Jack Goody changed this when he recorded for posterity Meyer Fortes' lecture, "Divination"; Audrey Richards' talk, "On Fieldwork"; and M N Srinivas' talk, "On Looking Back." Discussion of each of their talks was also recorded in the same studio.

This effort continued when Goody's colleague, Alan Macfarlane, conducted an informal three-hour interview with Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf about his life and work on a low-band Umatic video camera in June 1983.

Some 20 years after these efforts the department of social anthropology at Cambridge became home to over 45 interviews and lectures recorded in a range of different video formats. We recognized then that it was clearly time to post Goody's experiment to the Internet. As a result, there is now an online visual archive of 57 video interviews and lectures spanning several generations of anthropologists and covering a range of important movements and topics in the field for anyone to download. The archive, *Anthropological Ancestors*, continues to grow as we interview more of our colleagues. The project, we hope, will enable our disciplinary descendants to catch a glimpse of the rich heritage of anthropological research and bring the frank insights of the authors behind the books we read, our "ancestors," alive.

Generational Voices

The generation of structural-functionalists who were pupils of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown are well represented in our archive by John Beattie, Raymond and Rosemary Firth, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Meyer Fortes, Edmund Leach, Lucy Mair, Audrey Richards and M N Srinivas. Together they offer many insights into the teaching methods, paradigms and context of British social anthropology between the World Wars.

US anthropology is represented through interviews and lectures by George Appell, Clifford Geertz, Terry Turner and Asen Balikci, who

remember their teachers Margaret Mead, Clyde Kluckhohn, G C Homans and others.

The next generation of "ancestors" in our archive include such anthropologists as Evans-Pritchard, Fortes, Gluckman, Michael Banton, John Barnes, Andre Beteille, Ronald Frankenberg, Jack Goody, Jean La Fontaine, Peter Rivière, S J Tambiah, Peter Worsley and Nur Yalman.

Scarlett Epstein, a distinguished development anthropologist, talks mainly about her experiences of growing up in Vienna as a Jew just before the Second World War. Polly Hill describes the

world of those poised on the intersection of economics and anthropology. Raymond Apthorpe discusses some of the contributions he made to anthropological theory before he became a development economist. Peter Gathercole illuminates the connections between archaeology and the museum world.

Many of the accounts address the colonial context of anthropology and the last days of the British Empire. Akbar Ahmed reflects on Pakistan; Fürer-Haimendorf on Assam; and G I Jones, Lucy Mair, Audrey Richards and Philip Mayer on Africa.

Some of the most important ethnographers of the 20th century talk about their fieldwork. They worked in Africa (Mair, La Fontaine, Goody, Barnes, Gulliver, Hill, Geertz, Banton, Pat Caplan, Iona and Philip Mayer, Ruel), the Middle East (Marx), Europe (Loizos, Boissevain, Paine, Frankenberg, Herzfeld), South America (Rivière, Turner), North America (Balikci), South and South East Asia (Allen, Ahmed, Tambiah, the Caplans, Epstein, Leach, Adrian Mayer, Herzfeld,

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INTERVIEWS WITH "ANCESTORS"

[home](#)

The film clips are in QuickTime format. We recommend that you only view them over a high speed internet connection. If you do not have QuickTime, [click here](#) to download it free from the Apple website.

Here are some very brief extracts from archival films. Names in *underlined italics* indicate that the full interview is now available on Cambridge University DSpace. At present DSpace is still under construction. Ignore all warnings about safety etc. at the beginning and press on!

As the list of subjects had got so much longer, this page has been revised to give their surnames in alphabetical order. Press the first letter of the subject's surname to take you to the correct part of the page.

NEW

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|  |  |  | | |
| <u>LES HIATT</u> | <u>MICHAEL MAN</u> | <u>FREDRICK BARTH</u> | | |
| A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| <u>AKBAR AHMED</u> | <u>NICHOLAS ALLEN</u> | <u>GEORGE APPELL</u> | <u>LAURA APPELL</u> | <u>RAYMOND APTHORPE</u> |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| <u>ASEN BALIKCI</u> | <u>MICHAEL BANTON</u> | <u>JOHN BARNES</u> | <u>JOHN BEATTIE</u> | <u>ANDRE BETEILLE</u> |

A partial screen-shot of the index page showing some of the anthropological ancestors whose videos are available. Photo courtesy Mark Turin, Digital Himalaya Project, University of Cambridge, 2005

Ancestors

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Snellgrove, Srinivas, Yalman), the Pacific (the Appells, the Firths, Geertz, Salmond, Worsley, Gathercole) and East Asia (Dore, Picken).

A number of the interviewees reflect on the ethics of anthropology and on issues of human rights (George Appell, Turner) or the problems of anthropological advocacy (Paine).

The Marxist strand runs right through an interview of Peter Gathercole. Similarly Peter Worsley provides a rich account of the development of the Marxist movement in Britain.

Jack Goody, Anne Salmond, Peter Burke and others reflect on anthropology and history throughout their interviews, while Pat Caplan and Rosemary Firth are among those who discuss the role of women in anthropology. Other notable sections are by Akbar Ahmed on Islam and anthropology and Geertz on reflexivity and writing.

Preserving the Voices

Enormous changes in audio-visual recording technology over the last half century have led to great improvements in the quality of recordings, along with backwards compatibility problems for archives. We realized in 2003, for example, that many of the early interviews would be lost if we didn't digitize or convert them to newer media since they were recorded on vanishing magnetic formats of deteriorating quality.

Furthermore, unless converted into a web-compatible format, the value and reach of this historical archive would remain restricted. With some modest support from the British Academy, the tapes were converted to digital format from VHS, Umatic, Video 8, Hi8 and other formats. The footage was then edited for various kinds of defects, and, very occasionally, for potentially libellous or damaging comments.

Sarah Harrison and Mark Turin then undertook the time-consuming task of preparing summaries of the interviews in order to make them more useful, ranging from full transcripts

(Haimendorf), very full summaries (Worsley, Lattimore, Barnes, Lambert) to shorter synopses.

Until 2004 it would have been extremely expensive to host even heavily compressed video files on a server for academic use, since each hour of MPEG 4 video occupies about 400 MB. Fortunately, the Universities of Cambridge and MIT had just launched Dspace, a digital archiving project (www.dspace.cam.ac.uk), and the *Anthropological Ancestors* collection was selected as the first visual data set from Cambridge.

The present system allows a user to watch a short extract of any interview, view the full interview in real time or download and save the whole interview for later use, perhaps of most interest to faculty teaching the history of anthropology who may want to burn the video file to CD or DVD. To the side of the film is a scrolling text field with a time-coded synopsis of the interview.

The Anthropological Ancestors collection is accessible at www.alanmacfarlane.com/ancestors/index.html

2006

January

Jan 5-8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, 107th annual meeting, Montréal, Quebec, Palais des Congres convention center. For information, see www.archaeological.org/

February

Feb 5-7 IMAGI-NATION: THE CULTURAL PRAXIS OF ZIONISM, Arizona State University. Contact: Shai Ginsburg or Arieh Saposnik, Department of Languages and Literatures, Arizona State University, PO Box 870202, Tempe, AZ 85287; shaig@asu.edu. For information, see www.asu.edu/class/jewishstudies/conference.html

Feb 16-20 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, St Louis, MO. Theme: "Grand Challenges, Great Opportunities." For information, see www.aaas.org/

Feb 18-20 SYMPOSIUM ON MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF HAWAII AND THE PACIFIC, Kona Coast, Big Island, Hawai'i. Theme: "Our Voyaging Ancestors." Contact: froning@mahhi.org. For information, see www.mahhi.org

Feb 22-27 THE SOCIETY FOR CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH (SCCR) AND THE SOCIETY FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCIENCES JOINT MEETING, Mulberry Inn, Savannah, GA. Contact: Bob Manlove at efosfor@silcon.com. For information, see <http://sccr.org>

Feb 24-25 ETHNOGRAPHY IN EDUCATION RESEARCH FORUM, University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, Philadelphia, PA. Theme: "Educators and Ethnographers Filling

MEETING CALENDAR

Notice of meetings with specific interest to anthropologists may be included in this column on a space-available basis and will be carried until the meeting takes place. Submit information via email to swalker@aaanet.org. As a service to attendees, please submit announcements at least three months prior to the deadline for proposals.

Ideological and Implementational Spaces." Contact: David Cassels Johnson at cue@gse.upenn.edu. For information, see www.gse.upenn.edu/cue/

March

Mar 3 ROADS AND WALLS: CONCRETE HISTORIES, Graduate Student Conference, UC-Santa Cruz. Contact: roadsandwalls@gmail.com

Mar 5-12 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS, 75th annual meeting, Anchorage, AK. For information, see www.physanth.org/annmeet/

Mar 6-7 GIS TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS, Palmer House Hilton Hotel, Chicago, IL. Theme: "Innovation in Digital Forensics." For information, see www.tfilearning.com/tf/c/portal_public/layout?p_id=27.38 or www.tfilearning.com

Mar 16-19, 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARKS, Százhalombatta, Hungary. Contact: gk239@cam.ac.uk or vice@mail.battanet.hu

Mar 27-28 ISLAM AND BIOETHICS: CONCERNS, CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES, Nittany Lion Inn, Penn State University. For information, see http://rocketics.psu.edu/islam_bioethics/

Mar 27-29 THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EARLY WARNING (EWC III), Bonn, Germany. Theme: "From Concept to Action." Contact: ewc3@un.org. For information, see

www.ewc3.org/UK/contact/registration.asp?h=3

Mar 26-Apr 2 DISCCRS II SYMPOSIUM, Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA. For information, see <http://asllo.org/phd.html>

Mar 28-Apr 2 SOCIETY FOR APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY, Vancouver, BC, Hyatt Regency Hotel. Theme: "World on the Edge." For information, see www.sfaa.net or contact sfaa2006@sfaa.net

April

Apr 1-2 UNITE FOR SIGHT'S 3RD ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CONFERENCE, Yale, New Haven, CT. Theme: "Empowering Communities to Bridge Health Divides." For information, see www.uniteforsight.org/2006_annual_conference.php

Apr 8 33RD ANNUAL WESTERN ANTHROPOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA. For information, see www.scu.edu/cas/anthrosoc

Apr 6-9 CENTRAL STATES ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Creighton University, Omaha, NE. Theme: "Anthropology Making a Difference." For information contact csas@iupui.edu or see www.iupui.edu/~csas/Annual_Meeting.htm

Apr 10-13 ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS, University of Keele, UK. Theme: "Cosmopolitanism

and Anthropology." For information, see www.theasa.org/conferences.htm

Apr 12-16 SOCIETY FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CONSCIOUSNESS SPRING MEETING, Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, CA. Theme: "So What? Now What?—Anthropology of Consciousness Responds to a World In Crisis." Contact: johnbaker@vcccd.net. For information, see www.sacaa.org

Apr 13-16 SOCIETY FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF NORTH AMERICA ANNUAL MEETING, New York, NY. Theme: "Anthropology in an Uncertain Age."

May

May 5-6 SOCIETY FOR CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY SPRING MEETING, Milwaukee, WI, Pfister Hotel. Theme: "Translations of Value." For information, see www.aaanet.org/sca/meetings/meetingsindex.htm

May 9-14 CANADIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Montreal, Canada, Concordia University. Theme: "Human Nature/ Human Identity: Anthropological Revisions." For information, see www.cascaanthropologica.ca/an_casca2006cfp.htm

November 15-19, 2006

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

105th Annual Meeting
San Jose, California