Landscapes of Violence: Conflict and Trauma through Time

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Inaugural Journal Abstracts

Mechanisms of Inequality: Decoding Structural Violence through Ideological Connections between the Material World and Discourse

The Women and Maidens You Take; The Men and Old Women You May Kill: Gender, Purity and Prophetic Violence in the American Southwest

James F. Brooks (President & CEO of the School for Advanced Research on the Human Experience in Santa Fe, New Mexico)

Abstract

This paper explores the gendered aspects of one of the most horrific cases of intra-Indian violence in the colonial southwest - the massacre of the inhabitants of Awat'ovi Pueblo by neighboring Hopi villagers in the autumn of 1700. Long understood through Spanish colonial documents as an act of retribution for Awat'ovi's willingness to allow Franciscan missionaries to re-establish the Catholic church at the pueblo, it seems that deeply gendered cycles of ritual "transgressions" and extreme acts of purification may also have underlain the event. Women found themselves at the center of intra- and inter-village tensions between innovation and tradition and experienced the violence simultaneously as victims of and agents in cultural revitalization -- the massacre survivors were integrated as "captives" and "kin" within their host communities. Drawing upon published Hopi oral histories, archival documents, ethnological literature, and archaeological evidence, Brooks argues a larger case, that we must open a space for consideration of gendered violence and acts of healing in the pre-Columbian southwest, which may help us to understand not only social tensions and catastrophes in Hopi history, but shifting dynamics of power and exploitation among Ancestral Pueblos across the whole of the Colorado Plateau.

The Biological Effects of Forced Captivity and Slavery in Precolonial Populations

Debra Martin (Department of Anthropology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

Abstract

This project focuses on the biological effects of captivity and slavery in pre-state societies. Emerging studies of pre-state societies demonstrate that different forms of slaving practices existed throughout the world, but these have been archaeologically invisible and therefore understudied. The Greater Southwest (AD 900-1400) is used as a case study, fueled by recent research by Brooks (2002) that documents the extensive network of slaving practices in the borderland region during the colonial period. New evidence suggests that endemic warfare, witchcraft, raiding, abduction, captivity, and slavery of women and children were in place long before the Spanish arrived. Data derived from skeletal analyses document the deleterious effects of forced captivity. The biological signatures of forced captivity and slavery include serious but non-lethal conditions such as head trauma, rib and arm fractures, recurrent health problems, occupational stress, and repeated beatings. These data are placed within a broad biocultural framework to examine the political-economic factors that maintain and perpetuate these forms of violence.

Harvesting Outcasts: Aleš Hrdlička and the Anthropology of the Unwanted

J. Andrew Darling (Coordinator for the Cultural Resource
Management Program, Gila River Indian Community, Arizona)

Abstract

From 1898-1905, the American Museum of Natural History's Hyde Expedition to Northern Mexico initiated a long career that established Ales Hrdlicka as a key figure in American Physical Anthropology. Hrdlicka's pioneering approach, inspired by his medical training (focusing on the bio-psychological basis of insanity), French anthropometry, and nineteenth century criminology, contributed significantly to establishing physical anthropology divisions in Natural History museums based on the model of the 19th century clinic.

Over the course of his career, Hrdlicka would amass skeletal collections numbering in the tens of thousands of individuals. However, unbeknownst to him, his earliest attempts in the field resonated with Mexican Tribal leaders, military men, and consultants who directed him to the skeletal remains of the socially unwanted, including executed witches, dangerous enemies, unsavory women, and, in the case of the Mexican government, the victims of genocide.

As the predatory anthropologist, Hrdlicka provided a solution for ridding society of the remains of unwanted outcasts and dangerous individuals in a final act of social and physical excommunication. As "medico," Hrdlicka's role also fit with the spiritual and political cleansing that was sought by those he encountered. In so doing, the discourse of science was superseded by a greater discourse between political actors who used anthropologists to do their dirty work. Today the same persecuted peoples seek the return of even the least of their society. In a profound statement of forgiveness and redemption, repatriation in this case completes a century-long cycle of violence, death, ostracism, and return.

From the Singing Tree to the Hanging Tree:
Structural Violence and Death within the Yaqui Landscape

Ventura R. Pérez (Assistant Professor of Bioarchaeology, Department of Anthropology and
Director of the Violence and Trauma Studies Certificate Program, University of Massachusetts Amherst)

Abstract

The study of violence has often been conducted with little or no consideration for the specific and often unique cultural meanings with which it is associated. Warfare and violence are not merely reactions to a set of external variables but rather are encoded with intricate cultural meaning. The military events in Sonora, Mexico involving Yaquis during the last quarter of the nineteenth century seemed to most Mexicans at the time as necessary forcible measures for civilizing a recalcitrant, semi-savage people. The recorded history of the Yaqui people consists of their struggle for land throughout their contact with colonists eager to exploit the rich fertile valley that bordered the Yaqui River, their homeland. This struggle was marked by several bloody conflicts with the military of Spain and later the regional authorities of Sonora and the federal authority of the Republic of Mexico. On the morning of June 8, 1902, more than 124 men, women, and children were massacred by troops under the command of General Luis Torres in the Ubalam Valley of the Sierra Mazatan mountain range in Sonora, Mexico.

Deciphering the physical alterations left on the human corpse along with the death space and place it occupies offers unique challenges. The presence of offerings and type of preparation of the body can be related to politics, gender, power, and ritual. In addition, the removal of human remains and artifacts from such sites also speaks to the cultural and structural power wielded by nation states and academics over ingenious peoples throughout the world. Three weeks after the massacre of the Yaqui at Sierra Mazatan, Aleš Hrdlička, the father of Physical Anthropology and the founder of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, traveled to the Yaqui massacre site and collected the heads of twelve individuals along with some miscellaneous human bones and artifacts and brought them back to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City where they are today.

The Yaqui have a story that connects the concepts of being human with the enduring Yaqui rituals, key events in Yaqui history, and the ongoing attachment of the Yaquis to their traditional landscape. The story is sometimes called the myth of Jomu'muli, but, more often, the myth of the Singing Tree. It predates the Spanish colonial period and predicts the conflicts and chaos central to their ensuing history. The Yaqui "problem" came to symbolize federal interests and policies that clashed directly with important local interests in Sonora, Mexico. In April 1902, Governor Izábel proclaimed a new policy to deal with these rebels. The structural violence inherent in that and many other Mexican policies can help us understand how the heads of twelve men came to sit on the shelves of the American Museum of Natural History.

Interpretation of Human Sacrifice of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid of Teotihuacan as Seen from the Cosmology of the Gran Nayar

Peter Jiménez (Instituto Nacional de Anthropología e Historia, Mexico)

Abstract

In recent years, excavations in Teotihuacan´s widely known pyramid has provoked an increase in ideas pertaining to a militaristic character of the site and its world-view. The most recent conclusion is that the human sacrificial contexts found within the Moon and Feathered Serpent pyramids are evidence of the military factions that governed Teotihuacan. Contrarily, this paper will review the contexts of human sacrificial remains through the Chaánaka "cosmovision" of the Gran Nayar with a correlation to a Venus centered cosmic battle ritual. This paper will show how cosmology in both ritual landscape studies and ritual contexts may offer a more coherent interpretational framework for Mesoamerican highland ceremonial centers.

Mapping Mythic and Ritual Violence in a Sixteenth-Century Mexican Codex: The Case of the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2

Scott Sessions (Research Associate and Managing Editor of the
African-American Religion Documentary History Project, Amherst College)
and
Davíd Carrasco (Neil L. Rudenstine Professor of the
Study of Latin America, Harvard Divinity School)

Abstract

This joint presentation will examine violence and sacrifice in the content and context of the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2 (MC2), drawing upon work from our recent volume entitled Cave, City, and Eagle's Nest (2007). Painted on bark paper barely two decades after the fall of the Aztecs, this extraordinary document

contains over seven hundred images and symbols reflecting the social and ritual memory of an indigenous Mesoamerican community struggling to hold its own in the turbulent atmosphere of early colonial Mexico. Violence and trauma are manifested in various scenes in the form of the emergence and migration of warrior ancestors led by a powerful female protagonist; confrontations and interventions of supernatural beings; the sacrifice of men, women, and animals; dissension and conflict between competing lineages, ethnic groups, and factions; and the rituals and symbols associated with the conquest, settlement, and defense of a contested sacred landscape. After an introduction to the physical characteristics and content of the document and its recent "rediscovery," restoration, and photographic reproduction, several relevant scenes of mythic and ritual violence will be interpreted in light of comparative Mesoamerican data as well as theoretical insights from the history of religions. Various implications concerning contemporary violence will also be addressed.

A Great Divide, Revisited

Brian Ferguson (Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
State University of New Jersey, Rutgers)

Abstract

One of the longest running debates in the anthropology of war is the contrast between materialist explanations that see wars as practical efforts to maintain or improve resources, safety, and power, versus symbolic interpretations, which attribute war to culturally specific understandings and values. There is plenty of evidence to support both views. But most exponents on either side largely disregard the other. Too little effort has been made to integrate the two perspectives in a theoretically consistent way. This paper is an effort to bring material interests and symbolic values together, to better understand how war is constructed within societies to serve practical ends in meaningful ways.

Intergroup Contact as a Means of Reducing Intergroup Prejudice

Linda R. Tropp (Associate Professor and Director of the
Psychology of Peace and Violence Concentration, University of Massachusetts Amherst)

Abstract

This presentation will summarize findings from a recent meta-analytic review (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; in press; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), which examines the effectiveness of intergroup contact as a means of reducing intergroup prejudice. Incorporating data from 515 studies, including over 250,000 participants in 38 countries, the meta-analysis finds that contact between groups typically reduces intergroup prejudice. Multiple tests reveal that the more rigorous research studies yield stronger contact effects, and these effects appear not to be due to participant selection or publication biases. The positive effects of contact appear to generalize beyond the individual outgroup members with whom the contact occurs, to promote positive changes in attitudes toward the entire outgroup. Further analyses show that contact's effects on prejudice are typically achieved through reducing anxiety and increasing empathy and perspective-taking, whereas enhancing knowledge about the outgroup does little to predict contact's effects on intergroup prejudice. Similar patterns of findings also emerge for samples involving contact between racial and ethnic groups and other target groups, as well as in a variety of contact settings. Moreover, stronger effects are observed when the contact situation is structured to maximize positive intergroup outcomes, such as when groups interact cooperatively under conditions of equal status and with institutional support. At the same time, the beneficial effects of contact appear to be weaker for

subordinate, lower status groups relative to the effects observed for dominant, higher status groups, and even when the contact situation is structured to maximize positive intergroup outcomes. Thus, while many positive outcomes can be achieved through intergroup contact, persisting negative factors in intergroup relationships may inhibit its potentially positive effects.

Alternatives to Violence: Online Arguments
Between Israelis and Palestinians

Donald G. Ellis (A&S School of Communication,
University of Hartford, Connecticut)

Abstract

My presentation will report on research pertaining to argument between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians (Ellis & Moaz, 2002; Maoz & Ellis, 2001), and extends this work by investigating the effects of communication technologies on argument interactions between these two groups. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has improved collaboration efforts in work groups (cf. Warkentin, Sayeed, & Hightower, 1997), and as significant social and relational effects (Lea & Spears, 1991; Lemus, et al.; Walther, 1992). Organizations and government institutions continue to learn how online interactions and computerized support technology improve the efficiency and effectiveness of users (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994; Walther, 1997). CMC amplifies, transforms, and alters psychological and communication phenomena in systematic ways (Walther, 1997), and it is important to understand how to design interactive circumstances, so they increase the likelihood of desired results. The research reported focuses on argument during contact between groups in political conflict, because these are the interpersonal processes that are important to understand cultural contact. Moreover, argument is central to communicative influence and highly characteristic of the communication between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians (Hubbard, 1997; Maoz & Ellis, 2001). Research with face-to-face (FtF) groups (Ellis & Maoz, 2002) found that majority-minority theory was a better predictor of argument patterns between Israelis and Palestinians than cultural codes theory. But because of the difficulties of organizing FtF contacts between Israelis and Palestinians (e.g., security, transportation, check points), CMC has taken on increased significance. This study examines online argument patterns between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, compares results to FtF contexts, and discusses the implications.

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation:
A Social-Psychological Perspective on Ending Violent Conflict between Identity Groups

Herbert C. Kelman (Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics, Emeritus, Harvard University)

Abstracts

My work over more than three decades has focused on the development and application of interactive problem solving: an unofficial, scholar-practitioner approach to the resolution of protracted, deep-rooted, and often violent conflicts between identity groups, which is derived from the pioneering work of John Burton and anchored in social-psychological principles. My primary focus over the years has been on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but my students and associates have also applied the approach in a number of other arenas of ethnonational conflict, including Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and South Africa. A starting point of this work has been the assumption that the nonviolent termination of such conflicts must go beyond conflict settlement centered on interest-based bargaining, and aim for conflict resolution centered on joint

development of solutions that address the needs and allay the fears of both parties. We have viewed interactive problem solving as a form of conflict resolution that is conducive to ultimate reconciliation. Increasingly, however, we have come to see reconciliation as a distinct process of peacemaking, which must accompany conflict resolution in deep-rooted conflicts between identity groups. Whereas conflict resolution refers to the process of shaping a mutually satisfactory and hence durable agreement between the two societies, reconciliation refers to the process whereby they learn to live together in the post-conflict environment. Following this logic, the paper conceptualizes conflict settlement, conflict resolution, and reconciliation as three qualitatively distinct processes, operating at the level of interests, relationships, and identity respectively. These three processes may be related sequentially, but they may also operate independently and simultaneously. The paper addresses the special challenge of reconciliation, which requires some changes in each party's identity, without threatening the core of its identity; and concludes with a brief discussion of the conditions conducive to reconciliation.

Demon Landscapes, Sacrificial Architecture and Monumental Death

Neil Whitehead (Department of Anthropology,
University of Wisconsin, Madison)

Abstract

This paper will examine the way in which the memory and practice of violence becomes embedded in landscapes. The notion of "landscape" is used here to signify not just material geo-forms but also the way in which the cultural imagination occupies and signifies spatial and biological processes or relationships within discreet spaces. A particular kind of landscape in this meta-ecological sense may therefore come to be associated with specific acts of violence or be seen as conducive to such acts, the city street at night - the abandoned building or the trackless forest all can inspire both fear and aggression. At the same time it is clear we all actively engage in the construction of such landscapes through, in a public political sphere, acts of memorialization, as with war monuments and museums, but also forgetting, as with the physical erasure of sites of mass-killing or brutal murder. At the same time such processes are a part of individual and local group identity as is evinced by the burgeoning phenomenon of "trauma tourism," or the way in which funerary practice may create a space of haunted memory and contested use-rights. This paper will seek to draw out these varieties of 'violent landscapes" and also discuss how through time such landscapes become part of the historical construction of polity, ethnicity, and identity. In this way such landscapes feed conflict and memory, just as their re-signification can also induce forms of reconciliation and forgetting."

When the Shooting Ends:
Coping with Peace—The Northern Irish Experience

Ed Cairns (School of Psychology, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland)

Abstracts

Evidence is beginning to accumulate as to how the people of Northern Ireland, both young and old, are coping with the ending of nearly thirty years of continuous political violence. This paper will therefore review a series of studies that chart undiminished levels of sectarianism, increasing levels of suicide, especially among adolescents, plus undiminished levels of poor mental health including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among survivors and an accompanying call for increased mental health services. Explanations for these phenomena will be examined, including the possibility that this is evidence of untreated effects of the "troubles" and/or the outcome of the two communities struggling with intergroup forgiveness and guilt. Other explanations

include the advent of a counseling culture in Northern Ireland allied to a government led compensation culture or simply the fact that the peace process in Northern Ireland has not necessarily been accompanied by the ending of political conflict.

The Ghosts of Montes de OCA: Naked Life and the Medically Disappeared

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley)

Abstract

Between 1976 and 1991, 1400 patients at Argentina's national mental asylum for the profoundly "mentally deficient" (Colonia Montes de Oca, BSAs Province) disappeared. Another 1350 died, many inexplicably. At judicial investigations in 1986 and 1992, the director, Florencio Sanchez, appointed by the military in 1976 under General Videla, argued that the patients were not "disappeared" but rather "lost," "missing," or "runaways," the casualties of his progressive policies based on European "therapeutic community" and the "open door." Meanwhile, the bodies of unidentified "no name" patients continued to turn up from time to time, as they still do, in the swamp, shallow graves, cistern, wells, and heating tunnels of the colonia. The only "disappearance" of any concern was that of a young psychiatrist, Cecilia Giubileo, who was kidnapped at the mental colony in 1986 and whose body was never found. Key informants allege that Giubileo was about to make public the record of institutional abuses (including blood, organ and tissue trafficking, medical experimentation, drug trials) related to the disappearances and deaths. Based on investigative research in 2000 and 2001, accompanied by an international expert in prison torture, I will discuss the recent history and current situation of mental patients at Montes de Oca. My talk will connect the dots linking the bio-politics of the "Dirty War" to an "invisible genocide" at Montes de Oca.

Hidden in Plain Sight: The Disappeared of Guatemala, 1977-86

Clyde Collins Snow (Forensic Research Consultant)

Abstract

This is a study of two groups of people, X.X.s and desaparecidos. The members of both groups have been dead for over twenty years. In addition to being dead, the X.X.s and the desaparecidos have some other things in common. First, they were citizens of Guatemala, where, from about 1960 onwards, thousands were killed in nearly four decades of brutal civil conflict. Second, they died sometime between 1977 and 1986 when the violence reached its peak. Finally, some mystery surrounds them all: for the X.X.s, the mystery lies in their identity –we don't know who they are; for the desaparecidos, the mystery is their ultimate fate –we don't know where they are. Some readers will also be mystified by the names of these groups. What is an X.X.? What is a desaparecido? In Guatemala, unidentified bodies are medicolegally designated by the initials X.X. and are hence the equivalent of the "John (or Jane) Does" of the English-speaking world. Such unfortunates are buried at public expense in municipal cemeteries. During the conflict, many thousands of Guatemalans were killed – some by left-wing guerillas but the majority by agencies of the government. The whereabouts of most are known –they lie in single or mass graves throughout the country and, to date, close to 4,000 of their skeletons have been exhumed and examined by forensic anthropologists. But hundreds of others were abducted by military or police "death squads" and never seen again –they became desaparecidos ("disappeared ones"). They differ from those killed outright in that, while it is virtually certain that they are dead, their final resting places are unknown. Over the years, the mystery surrounding them has given rise to many bizarre theories: their bodies were dropped into volcanoes or dumped in Lake Santiago Aitlan from which a secret tunnel carried them

to the sea or that they lie in vast mass graves beneath police or military compounds. In this study, we put forth a theory that the X.X.s and desaparecidos have one more thing in common: overlapping membership or, simply stated, that hundreds of desaparecidos lie buried as X.X.s in a single place. This place is La Verbena, a large municipal cemetery in Guatemala City. Statistical analysis of the cemetery's burial records demonstrates that the desaparecidos were buried as X.X.s in La Verbena and, in effect, for nearly three decades, have been hiding in plain sight.

Discussion Discussant

George Armelagos (Department of Anthropology, Emory University)