

# Anthro



# Notes

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## GLOBAL CULTURE CHANGE: NEW VIEWS OF CIRCUMPOLAR LANDS AND PEOPLES

by William W. Fitzhugh

For many years anthropologists believed that Eskimos were the isolated descendants of Ice Age hunters, marginal refugees whose Paleolithic cultures had been preserved for thousands of years in a kind of cultural deep freeze.

In recent years, a quite different view of arctic cultures has emerged, challenging this "relic of the past" theory with a new view of circumpolar history as a unique and dynamic adaptation to a relatively "friendly" arctic---if you know how to live there. The cultural similarities among native peoples on either side of the Pacific Basin, from Siberia to Alaska and the Columbia River, and across the North American arctic to Canada and Greenland, demonstrate a long and complex history of culture contact, migrations, and exchange in arctic regions, and provide a new perspective on the question of the "independent" history of the Americas. Seen from a global, circumpolar perspective, arctic and subarctic regions and their adjacent coasts are increasingly perceived as longstanding "highways" rather than as barriers to the flow of plants and animals, peoples and cultures. Today we recognize Siberian influence in several early Alaskan cultures, and Bering Strait sources are known for many features of Eskimo cultures found across the Arctic.

### First Contact

Slightly more than one thousand years ago, Norsemen from Scandinavia crossed the North Atlantic and discovered Greenland and North

America. They found these new lands cold and bleak and were surprised to discover them inhabited by "skraelings," whom they described as semi-human creatures with one leg and screeching voices. Five hundred years later Englishman Martin Frobisher reached Greenland and Baffin Island (1576-78) while searching for the Northwest Passage. Frobisher too met native Inuit, but despite their skin clothes and animal-like sod house dwellings, he noted they were shrewd traders and crafty warriors, not afraid to die for their homes or their freedom. Frobisher managed to capture several Inuit, bringing them home to present to Queen Elizabeth I as "tokens of possession" of new lands claimed for England. Lacking resistance to European diseases, these people soon died, but their Asian features and metal tools suggested Frobisher had, indeed, discovered the threshold of the fabled Northwest Passage to Asia.

Early descriptions of arctic peoples also were recorded in the European arctic. According to an Old English text, Ohthere, an intrepid Norse chieftain of the late ninth century, described the Saami (Lapp) peoples of northern Scandinavia in fearsome terms. He and other travelers reported meeting Russian arctic peoples with powerful sled dogs and boats made from the skins of seals.

Today we know these northern peoples as Inuit (Eskimos) in North America and the western side of Bering Strait; Chukchi, Yukaghir, Dolgans, and Nenets inhabiting Siberia; and Saami (Lapps) living

in Scandinavia. Occupying similar arctic lands for thousands of years, these various peoples developed similar cultures, using skin and feather clothing, harpoons, dog and reindeer sleds, oil lamps, underground houses and skin boats. Many of these people shared shamanistic beliefs and nearly identical folktales of Raven and the aurora borealis.

Who were these arctic peoples who so fascinated European explorers and travelers? What was their origin and history? Did they come from a single people who spread eastward from northern Europe around the northern rim of the globe, or did they undergo convergent development following independent origins in different areas of the North?

Early anthropologists explored these questions in two ways. The first was by trying to connect the cultures of living arctic peoples to the early hunting cultures of Paleolithic Europe; the second was by exploring similarities and differences among living arctic peoples, in the hope of identifying living traces of the earliest "original" arctic people.

### **Eskimo Origins**

The search for Eskimo origins began with Martin Frobisher and Europe's introduction to Frobisher's Inuit. Northern lands were indeed hostile to inexperienced arctic navigators like Frobisher, and they were decidedly so for Sir John Franklin, who lost his life, his ships, and his crew exploring the Northwest Passage in Arctic Canada in the 1840s. Such events influenced how Euroamericans imagined arctic lands -- as hostile to human life -- and the history of its peoples as remote from the centers of developing civilizations. Generations of scholars came to view the Arctic as a refuge, where Ice Age peoples with their cultures had migrated and then survived down to the present, in a kind of cultural and biological deep freeze.

Encouragement for this view came from the mid-19th-century discovery of European Paleolithic sites containing harpoons for hunting sea mammals, throwing sticks for hurling spears, ivory figurines, pictographic art, and shaft-straighteners -- all nearly identical to tools known from historic Eskimo cultures and their Thule culture archeological

ancestors in Greenland, Canada, and Alaska. It seemed logical to archaeologists that the Eskimos, for whom these similarities were most striking, were the direct descendants of European Paleolithic reindeer hunters who had retreated north, following the melting ice and the northward movement of animals at the end of the Ice Age. The discovery of cave paintings depicting Ice Age hunters whose prey included reindeer and other arctic animals only confirmed this view. The Eskimos, it was believed, had preserved the remnants of an ancient Ice Age culture even to the modern day, hunting sea mammals, caribou, musk-ox, polar bears and other arctic game.

But not all arctic peoples lived this way.

The peoples of the Russian arctic in historical times were reindeer herders, not sea mammal hunters, and they practiced a northern variant of animal domestication. Even though their reindeer were not completely tame, and could easily be lost if a herder was not attentive, reindeer herding provided a margin of safety for Eurasian arctic peoples missing in the North American arctic. The implications of this new economy were enormous. A careful herding family did not need to worry where their next meal would come from and could devote energies to other activities, like trading furs for European or Chinese goods, metal-working, and exchanges with far-flung tribes. In time the reindeer herding culture expanded from central Eurasia west into Scandinavia and east to Bering Strait, transforming cultures in its path, exterminating wild reindeer (caribou), and imposing a near mono-culture economic system throughout much of the Eurasian arctic.

Interestingly, reindeer herding reached Bering Strait about 1000 years ago but never entered Alaska. Some Eskimo peoples on the Siberian side adopted reindeer breeding, while others continued to live as sea mammal hunters. In this instance, Bering Strait was both a geographic as well as an ethnic barrier, for none of the American Eskimos adopted reindeer breeding. The rich maritime economy of Bering Strait offered a hearty subsistence for Eskimo peoples who lived there, and when reindeer fur was needed for clothing it could be obtained from the

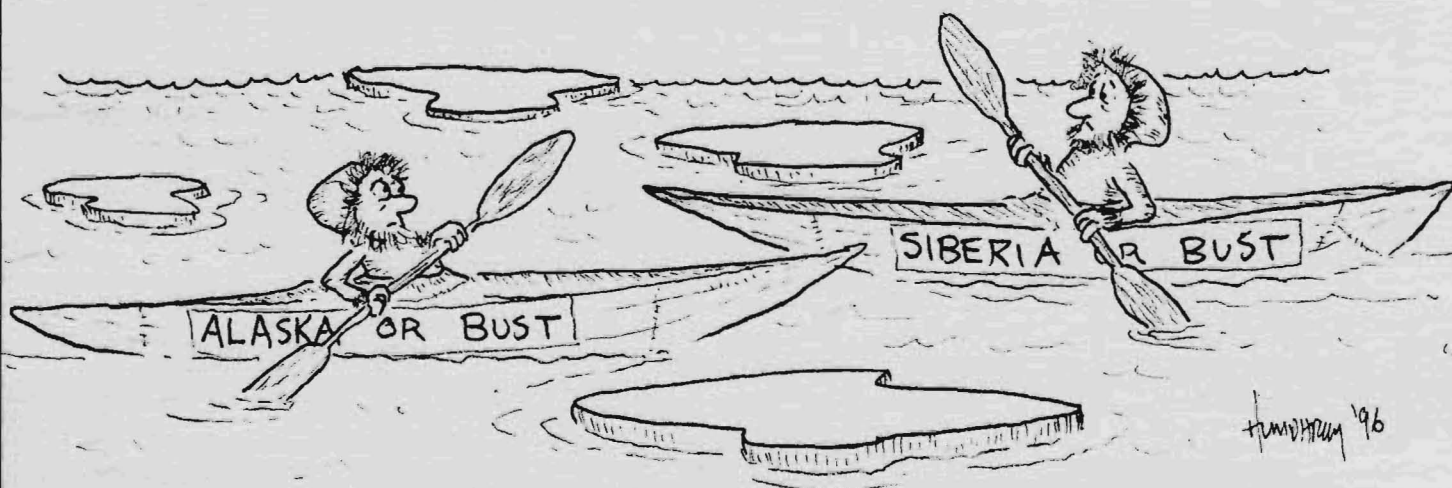
Siberian Chukchi. The spread of reindeer herding peoples and the revolution of reindeer herding that spread through the Eurasian arctic never entered the New World, and the Eskimo and northern Indian peoples there continued to hunt wild animals as they had for thousands of years. It is only in this sense that North American arctic peoples can be said to have preserved an ancient hunting tradition and religious beliefs whose roots can indeed be traced to Ice Age times.

Today, archaeological methods have replaced ethnographic parallels in determining the history of arctic peoples, including Eskimos. At the same time, archaeological interpretations of the evidence of extinct cultures are influenced by the description and analyses of ethnographic (both historical and modern) cultures around the world, as knowledge of known cultural systems help fill in the inevitable gaps in archaeological evidence. After nearly one hundred years, archaeologists are confident that the Bering Sea region was the birthplace of Eskimo culture. But beyond this, there is disagreement as to exactly where this culture first developed; eastern Siberia, Kodiak Island, the Alaska Peninsula and Western Alaska are all still in the running. Resolving this question will not be easy because post-glacial submergence, tidal waves, and earthquakes have destroyed much of the coastal zones inhabited by these early cultures, making archaeological investigation of many key areas impossible.

### North Pacific Rim Peoples

The distinction across the North Atlantic between the herding Eurasian and the hunting North American arctic peoples stands in marked contrast to the cultural and economic similarities among the peoples living along both shores of the North Pacific Rim. The North Pacific Rim peoples, furthermore, provide a fascinating case study of culture contact and change through time. Ironically, it was along the Pacific Rim, where Native peoples had been in contact for millennia before Europeans arrived, that the recent 20th-Century history of political antagonisms masked the very real and very long continuities of cultures. Due to 19th-century Russian exploring expeditions to Russian America (Alaska), early ethnographic collections from Alaska ended up in museums in St. Petersburg, Russia, while eastern Siberian collections made by Franz Boas' Jesup Expedition of 1897-1902 ended up in New York, at the American Museum of Natural History. Fortunately, now there are few physical or political barriers to the exchange of information, peoples, and materials across the Bering Strait, and joint exhibition projects like the Smithsonian's 1988 "Crossroads of Continents" could reassemble these collections from their places of origins.

The Smithsonian's "Crossroads" exhibition combined cultural materials from northeastern Siberia and northwestern North America into a single joint traveling exhibition seen by peoples on



both sides of the Bering Strait. A smaller version of the "Crossroads" exhibit, with strong local education components and many miniature artifacts made originally as toys and models, toured villages throughout Alaska in 1993-95, and a Russian language version now is traveling in the Russian Far East.

### Peopling the New World

Archaeologists investigating the history of cultures around Bering Strait have found clear evidence of the movement of Asian peoples into northeastern Siberia and their subsequent migration into Alaska and the Americas. Dates from stratified cave sites along the Aldan River, a tributary of the Lena, in the Sakha Republic (formerly Yakutia) begin as early as 35,000 years ago. Comparable dates are known from sites in northern Japan. Confirmation of the northeastern movement of peoples and acquisition of arctic adaptation is seen in the trend of archaeological dates upward toward 12,000 BP as one approaches Bering Strait. At about this time, settled riverside fishing villages also appear on the lower Amur River and in Kamchatka. In both cases data indicate seasonally settled villages, and sites on the Amur contain some of the earliest ceramics in the world--fired clay animal figurines and grit-tempered pottery have been recovered.

At about this time, ca. 12,000 years ago, the first well-dated stratified sites appear in Alaska on the Nenana River and in a number of other locations, both on the interior and on the coast. Almost instantaneously, sites of this age also appear at many sites in North and South America, indicating a very rapid southward movement of peoples from Alaska. Although pottery and pithouse villages have not been found in the earliest Alaskan sites, the presence of sites at both coastal and interior locations document adaptation to a wide range of environments.

The cultures of these earliest Siberian and Alaskan peoples were very similar. Although the early fluted (Clovis-like) points known from northwestern Alaska have not been found in Siberia, these early Siberian-American Paleoarctic peoples employed similar bifacial and microblade (core and blade)

technologies and clearly shared a common cultural tradition. Unlike the earliest Siberian ancestors, who followed a more nomadic hunting way of life, post-12,000 BP coastal peoples had already begun to turn their attention to the more abundant and stable resources of the sea.

By 10,000 years ago this maritime-focused economy was present along both the Siberian and American sides of the North Pacific from Japan to Alaska, and to British Columbia and Washington State, in a giant arc connecting the two continents. The northernmost section of this North Pacific culture area was occupied by the ancestors of present-day Yupik Eskimos and Aleuts in Western Alaska and of several Native nations in northeastern Siberia: Koryak, Itelmen, Chukchi, Nivkh, and Asiatic or Siberian Eskimos. Ancestral cultures leading to these ethnographic peoples have been documented throughout this region. Although details of this development are best known from North American sites, a comparable sequence is emerging as archaeological work expands in Siberia. Throughout the region, the trend in coastal regions was toward increasing sedentism and intensive exploitation of marine resources, and reached its peak in the early historical period.

These North Pacific developments also appear to have stimulated adaptation of peoples to the icy coasts and arctic interior regions north of Bering Strait. One prominent theory holds that early Eskimo-like cultures, originating as maritime-based cultures in Kodiak and the Aleutian Islands, spread north along the Alaskan coast as the land bridge was inundated after 11,000 years ago, and became adapted to arctic regions. About 4500 years ago the North Alaska hunting peoples received impulses from Siberian Neolithic cultures, resulting in the Alaskan Denbigh and Arctic Small tool tradition cultures. These groups, in turn, expanded eastward into the recently ice-free Canadian Arctic, reaching Greenland and Labrador by 4000 years ago, making this the last major area of the New World to be colonized permanently by humans.

As Igor Krupnik has described in his essay "Native Peoples of the Russian Far East," in the catalog *Crossroads Alaska*, the historic Siberian Eskimo

and Chukchi inhabitants of the Bering Strait region shared a number of cultural adaptations growing out of an economy based on hunting for sea mammals, either from boats or on ice, hunting for land mammals and birds, and fishing. They mastered the art of dog-sled driving and built sophisticated boats of skin and wood propelled by paddles and sails. When they settled on the coast they gathered in permanent villages, consisting of sod houses or dugouts in winter, skin or birch-bark tents and wooden plank houses in summer. Evidence of ancient origins for their elaborate rituals and community festivals, which included decorated fur and gutskin clothing, skin drums, wooden masks, and ivory carvings, have been found in the Old Bering Sea cultures of this region as early as 2000 years ago.

In Siberia, about 2000 years ago, those peoples who did not move to the coast preserved their original nomadic lifestyle of hunting and fishing, and developed a distinct cultural pattern focusing on the domesticated reindeer. "Mastering reindeer herding was the second most important economic revolution for Siberian Native people, after mastering the resources of the sea" (Krupnik, p. 23). As should be clear by now, cultural similarities abound on either side of the Pacific Basin. Sites from both Siberia and Alaska contain early forms of microblade technology. Sites from later times show similarities in Neolithic microblades, ceramics, and architecture. Many of these similarities, like whalebone-semi-subterranean housing, can be traced eastward into Canada and Greenland. Others, like the distinctive Old Bering Sea, Okvik, and Ipiutak art styles, remain rooted in the Bering Strait region. What is less clear is whether these similarities developed from deep cultural strata accumulated from the cultural residues of shared history before the peopling of the New World, or are they, instead, the result of more recent contact and exchange?

Detailed archaeological comparisons and dating have revealed that many of these similarities resulted from historical contacts. As noted above, we can trace the eastward spread of Paleolithic core and blade technology into Alaska from Siberia about 12,000 years ago. Similarly there appears to have

been a dispersal of Siberian Neolithic blade industry into Western Alaska, Canada, and Greenland at 4500 BP, and of Asian ceramics into Alaska ca. 2000 years ago. But, are the advent of intensive maritime adaptation and the use of seasonal pithouse villages local adaptations or introduced phenomena? And what can be said of Old Bering Sea burial ritual and art? While many of these developments reflect local adaptations and trends, external impulses often had dramatic effects, as seen by dramatic Siberian shamanistic influences in Ipiutak burial ritual at Point Hope, Alaska, ca. A.D. 500.

### Global Aspects of Culture Contact and Exchange

Exploration of culture contact and exchange in arctic regions provides a new and different perspective on the question of the "independent" history of the Americas. As new data begin to emerge from these relatively unknown northern lands (especially from Northeast Asia), evidence for a continuing history of Beringian exchange is mounting.



The circumpolar region can be seen as a natural pathway for the movement of peoples and ideas between Asia and the Americas. Before A.D. 1000-1500, it was the only conduit we can document through which Asian and American populations interacted. Whether such interaction was initiated by historical and cultural forces of evolution, technological development, population growth, or from the indirect influence of climatic change or animal movements, the circumpolar region with its Bering Sea zone has been the sole point of contact and transmission between the New and Old Worlds. In this sense northern regions have played a unique role as buffer and transmitter of trans-continental historical forces. Most of these seem to have flowed from the centers of more complex cultural development in Asia into the New World. Few, if any, traces of American cultures seem to have influenced Siberian or East Asian culture history.

### The Latitudinal/Longitudinal Perspective

The circumpolar distribution of clothing styles, blubber lamps, harpoons, skin boats, shamanism, bear ceremonialism, and mythology are striking reminders of common elements in the ethnographic cultures of northern peoples. A comparable suite of common features has been identified in archaeological cultures of this region: persistence of early core and blade industries; ground slate technology; wrench-like shaft straighteners; hunting art employing skeletal and joint-mark art, and others. Mechanisms of culture contact and exchange are visibly recognizable; migration and diffusion in the sparsely-populated expanses of northern regions are well documented in historical literature, in ethnographic and linguistic continuities, and in

archaeological evidence. The Eskimo peoples and cultures rapidly expanded into the Canadian Arctic, first about 4000 years ago, and later with the whale-hunting Thule migration at A.D. 1000. Reindeer breeding and herding occurred throughout the Eurasian arctic and boreal regions during the last 1500 years. Cultural features---including art styles, iron technology, glass beads, and tobacco---moved rapidly from Siberia into North America. All of these exemplify the existence of latitudinal global conduits and channels for forces of culture contact and change.

Contrasting the circumpolar latitudinal homogeneity is the longitudinal, environmental, and cultural diversity that occurs in both Eurasia and North America on the north-south axis. Throughout history we have seen the increasing divergence in levels of cultural development and complexity between the tropical and temperate regions on the one hand and boreal and arctic regions on the other. State development processes and formation of civilizations have been at work in southern Eurasia and Central America for thousands of years, always expanding northwards, transforming northern peoples. In the North, environmental conditions and the persistence of a "big game hunting" tradition encouraged the persistence of Paleolithic and Mesolithic hunting traditions and technology into the 20th century.

One of the more remarkable features of this persistence is the recent discovery that dwarf mammoths existed in some regions of the Eurasian arctic nearly 5000 years longer than elsewhere in the world. Paleontological remains of a miniature type of mammoth on Wrangel Island, one hundred miles



north of the Chukotka coast, demonstrate a Pleistocene "refugium" until 4500 years ago or even later. The discovery by Russians of archaeological sites at Chertov Ovrag (Devil's Gorge) on Wrangel dating to 4000 years ago raises questions of possible human intervention in the ultimate demise of this great Ice Age mammal.

### **Impact of the Modern World**

Several dramatic changes have taken place in recent years in the Arctic. Indigenous populations have expanded, but while growing rapidly, they are now a minority in their homelands in all but a few locations. Native subsistence economies have changed under the pressure of modernization, commercial exploitation and governmental policies. A number of ethnic groups described by 19th century anthropologists, including the Sadlermiut of Hudson Bay, the Eyak of southeast Alaska, and the Aliutor of Kamchatka have become extinct. Of the eight North American Eskimo languages known historically, only three---Greenlandic, Inuktitut, and Yupik--- will survive into the mid-21st century. The cultural diversity and integrity of much of the region is equally threatened.

As the world approaches the end of the 20th century and faces a new millennium, scholars and the public alike are concerned with the dramatic outcomes of the past century and the legacy it will leave to future generations. Environmental degradation, pollution, and loss of species and ecosystem integrity are issues of major concern. A similar set of concerns is expressed by both the general public and social scientists regarding human cultural diversity and the rights of indigenous people. Paternalistic governmental policies, industrialization and the spread of consumerist values have damaged indigenous subsistence and languages and distorted their cultural continuity and ethnic diversity.

During this century thousands of Siberian, Alaskan and Northwest Coast Natives abandoned their traditional lifestyles and joined the modern workforce in increasingly industrialized urban settings. Huge numbers of outsiders immigrated into their territories, bringing demographic, social and political change. Entrepreneurism, business

interests and military policies have made major impacts on both human and natural environments. While many groups continue to live in their homelands, most have lost their Native languages, adopted imported religious beliefs, and rely on modern technology.

In Siberia equally dramatic changes have taken place. State-controlled hierarchies have dictated policy; floods of recruited and imprisoned outsiders have arrived; and some Native groups have been deprived of traditional livelihoods, while others involved in state-owned reindeer herding, peltfarming and fishing have been artificially subsidized. Official policies of "russification" and relocation have reduced the viability of Native life and economy. State-controlled industrial development has had a devastating impact on land and resources over which Native people have had little control.

Despite differences in political systems, in many respects the results of 20th century developments in Siberia and northwest North America have produced surprisingly similar results. In both areas Native people have lost much of their ability to direct their own futures; languages have been weakened or lost; poverty has increased; subsistence economies have been weakened; and alcoholism and social disorders have become serious problems. In both areas cultural and language survival, Native rights, education policy, and economic and political issues loom as major problems for the future.

### **Conclusion**

After five centuries of a dominant "Atlantic" perspective on world history and politics, we are entering an era in which Pacific resources and relations are assuming an ever more important role in world affairs. Viewing the globe from a circumpolar perspective becomes ever more important, while understanding the lands, peoples and cultures of the North Pacific Rim can provide immense benefits to northern peoples, and to public and scientific understanding of a little known but increasingly important part of the world. As our understanding increases through scientific research and public dissemination, new perspectives on the

Circumpolar Arctic in general, and the North Pacific Rim specifically, should help prepare younger generations to live in an increasingly global world. Arctic regions and peoples are part of that world. In fact, they may be the most "global" of all!

#### For Further Reading:

Chaussonnet, Valerie. *Crossroads Alaska. Native Cultures of Alaska and Siberia*. Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Fitzhugh, William W., and Valerie Chaussonnet (eds.). *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

Fitzhugh, William W., and Aron Crowell (eds.). *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.

Fitzhugh, William W., and Susan Kaplan. *Inua: Spirit World of the Bering Sea Eskimo*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982.

Krupnik, Igor. *Arctic Adaptations: Native Whalers and Reindeer Hunters of Northern Eurasia*. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1993.

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## EXPLORING THE ANCIENT WORLD

This new series, edited by Jeremy A. Sabloff and published by Smithsonian Books, is an excellent addition to any school library or classroom. The eight books (176 pages each) in the series include:

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*Search for the First Americans* by David J. Meltzer addresses the question when did the first peopling of the New World occur, and describes the archaeological evidence and the development of Native American cultures.

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*The Ancient Astronomers* by Anthony F. Aveni explains the astronomical significance of such features as the Maya calendar, Polynesian navigation, Nasca lines in Peru, and Stonehenge.

*Ancient Pueblo Peoples* by Linda S. Cordell demonstrates the links between the early Pueblo cultures--Mesa Verde to Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon to the Mimbres Region---with the Pueblo peoples of today.

Order from Smithsonian Institution Press: 800-782-4612 or 703-661-1599; Fax: 703-551-1501.



## A NEW BOOK ON TEACHING ANTHROPOLOGY

*The Teaching of Anthropology: Problems, Issues, and Decisions.* Conrad P. Kottak, Jane J. White, Richard H. Furlow, and Patricia C. Rice, eds. Published by Mayfield Publishing Company in association with the American Anthropological Association. Mountain View, CA. 1997.

"This volume brings together the knowledge and insights of a group of scholars and teachers who share certain beliefs: that anthropology is valuable, that it has commitments, that teaching is a central part of our field, that anthropology has something to say to the public, and that we should be saying it to a wider audience."

--Conrad P. Kottak, Introduction, p. 1

*AnthroNotes* editors are pleased to recommend this new volume, a compendium of articles written by 40 leading anthropologists who are also teachers, which grew out of symposia on teaching held at the American Anthropological Association from 1990 -- 1992. Based on three sessions organized by the American Anthropological Association's Task Force on Teaching ("Central Themes in the Teaching of Anthropology," "The Incorporation of New Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Anthropology," and "How Exemplary Teachers Overcome Problems in the Teaching of Anthropology"), the twenty-five or so participants in the symposia provided the core for the articles in the book; the editors solicited an additional fifteen contributions.

The result is the first comprehensive volume on teaching anthropology since the publication of the landmark volume, *The Teaching of Anthropology*, edited by David Mandelbaum, Gerald Lasker, and Ethel Albert (1963), published by the University of California Press. The 1997 collection of short, insightful papers demonstrates the relevance and importance of anthropology in today's world, and the critical role that teaching plays in the transmission of the discipline.

The 1963 and 1997 volumes focus on teaching, but the recent volume extends the focus beyond the college classroom, arguing for the need to reach beyond academia, museums, and agencies to high schools, grade schools, and the wider community, to reach as large a public as possible. Although the statement "the main sphere for the transmission of anthropological culture is in the college classroom" (Mandelbaum 1963:2) is as true as it was 33 years

ago, anthropology today is a part of the precollege curriculum, incorporated into such courses as geography, world cultures, history, and biology.

Several contributors contrast the situation they face with that of the 1960s, pointing to the greater diversity of today's students, the implications of modern technology, and the very different employment outlook for graduate students in the 1990s. The 1963 volume reflected real concern that the supply of graduate students would not keep pace with the growing demand for anthropology courses in the nation's colleges. Contrast that to today's situation where advertisements for positions routinely generate hundreds of applications, and over thirty percent of Ph.D. anthropologists work in applied settings.

A fairly traditional subfield structure in part provides the organization for the book with sections on cultural, linguistic, paleo (physical and archaeology) and applied anthropology. Part I: Teaching the Introductory Course includes seven contributors, most of them authors of widely used introductory textbooks and readers: Conrad Kottak ("Teaching the Central Themes of Anthropology"); Marvin Harris ("Anthropology Needs Holism: Holism Needs Anthropology"); Melvin and Carol Ember ("Science in Anthropology"); William Haviland ("Cleansing Young Minds or What Should We Be Doing in Introductory Anthropology"); Larry Breitborde ("Anthropology's Challenge: Disquieting Ideas for Diverse Students"); Robert Borofsky ("Empowering Students at the Introductory Level"); Aaron Podolsfsky ("Teaching and Learning Anthropology in the 21st

Century"); and David McCurdy ("The Ethnographic Approach to Teaching Cultural Anthropology").

Parts II to VI follow: Teaching About Cultural Diversity; Teaching Linguistic Anthropology; Teaching Paleoanthropology; Teaching Applied Anthropology; and Teaching Anthropology to Precollegiate Teachers and Students.

Since 1963 the discipline has changed but so too have the students. To accommodate that major shift, there are two sections in the book that were scarcely envisioned in 1963: teaching cultural diversity (including articles on confronting multi-culturalism and putting it to good use in the classroom) and K-12 anthropology. Promoting the teaching of anthropology to pre-collegiate students is one of the AAA's current interests, as expressed by AAA President, Yolanda Moses (who has written a chapter in the new book). Articles in the K-12 section focus on what anthropology has to offer to teachers and students as well as writing anthropology books for young readers, curricular issues in the teaching of precollege anthropology, and various specific approaches for the classroom.

Together the book's papers demonstrate the relevance of anthropology to today's students and the profound changes that have taken place since the 1963 Mandelbaum volume was published. Contemporary students, as Kottak points out in his introduction, have grown up in a high-tech, mass-media world. These students are more diverse in age and ethnic background, and in many instances have experienced intense cultural diversity in their everyday lives---all the more reason for anthropology's relevance to them. As Kottak concludes in his illuminating and well-written introduction to the book:

Anthropology has a crucial role to play in promoting a more humanistic vision of social change, one that respects the value of cultural diversity. As we continue the transmission of anthropological culture, it can be as exciting today as it was for our intellectual ancestors and their students to discover in our field a better way of understanding self through the study of others....Compared with prior

generations, the young men and women of today are far more likely to travel beyond their own society and to encounter representatives of other cultures abroad or "at home." Anthropology's continuing legacy remains the exploration, understanding, and appreciation of human diversity.

The editors and publisher of *The Teaching of Anthropology* clearly hope the book will serve the purpose to which it is dedicated--to create better teachers of anthropology for new generations. The editors believe it is time to think seriously about anthropology's problems and uses as well as the decisions about what to teach, whom to teach, and, perhaps most importantly, how to teach. The book's proceeds will go toward endowing an AAA/Mayfield Outstanding Teaching Award.

\* To order *Teaching Anthropology*, a book that will assist anyone interested in learning about anthropology and about teaching anthropology in today's world, send \$38 to: Marketing Product Manager, Mayfield Publishing Company, 1280 Villa Street, Mountain View, CA 94041-1176; or call 1-800-433-1279.



**WANTED: CULTURE--DEAD OR ALIVE?  
The Smithsonian's Festival on the Mall**

by Richard Kurin

If you visit Washington, D.C. around July 4th, you can't miss the Festival of American Folklife. Held in cooperation with the National Park Service, spread out in a sea of large white tents across the National Mall, the Festival is an annual living exhibition of cultural heritage from around the United States and the world.

Visitors going in and out of the Smithsonian's museums can enjoy the exhibits dealing with natural history, anthropology, American history, air and space history, and art, but the festival's nearby tents offer a different kind of exhibition--craftspeople making and displaying their wares; native peoples preparing indigenous foods to buy and enjoy; and cultural specialists presenting their traditions alongside folklife specialists offering further commentary.

Each festival program is akin to a museum exhibition, with its own boundaries and space (about two football fields), labels and signs, stages and performances, and food and craft sales. A program usually consists of about 100 musicians, craftspeople, cooks, and story tellers and about 10 lay and academic presenters who provide background information, introductions, translations, and answers to visitors' questions.

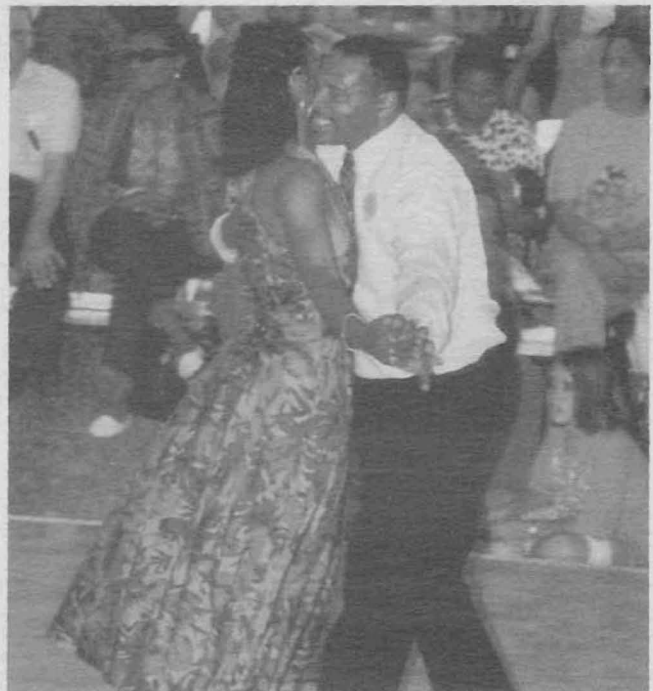
In past years the Festival has featured particular nations such as India, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico; regions, such as the Caribbean or the Andes; American ethnic cultures such as Lao Americans, Russian Americans, or various American Indian tribal groups; occupational programs such as cowboys, taxi drivers, Senators (as in baseball players) and senators (as in members of congress), trial lawyers, even scientists at the Smithsonian.

If you came to the festival during the summer of 1996, you would have visited with folks from *The American South*, *Iowa*, and *The Smithsonian Institution*; if you come the summer of 1997, you will find programs on the *Mississippi Delta*, *African*

*Immigrants to the U.S.*, and *Sacred Sounds from Around the World*.

The festival attempts to create a physical context for the traditions represented. In the past, the Festival has included, among other things, a race course from Kentucky, an oil rig from Oklahoma, a New Mexican adobe plaza, a Japanese rice paddy, a Senegalese home compound, and an Indian festival village. Animals, from working horses to llamas, from steers to sheared sheep, have been part of Festival presentations. A buffalo calf was even born on the Mall one Festival morning, and an escaped steer finally was roped to the ground in the Kennedy Center parking lot after a chase down Constitution Avenue.

Since its inception, the Festival of American Folklife has featured more than sixteen thousand musicians, artists, performers, craftspeople, workers, cooks, story tellers, ritual specialists, and other exemplars from numerous ethnic, tribal, regional, and occupational cultures. The Festival has had strong impacts on policies, scholarship and folks "back home." Many U.S. states and several nations have remounted a Festival program and used it to generate laws, institutions, educational programs,



documentary films, recordings, museum and traveling exhibits, monographs, and cultural activities. In many cases, the Festival has energized local and regional tradition bearers and their communities, and thus helped conserve and create cultural resources.

### **The Festival as a Museum Display**

The Folklife Festival is one way in which the Smithsonian has attempted to turn museology outward, to connect with the public and its constituencies, and to include the voices of the represented. The strongest feature of the Festival is its attempt to foreground the voices of tradition bearers as they demonstrate, discuss and present their cultures. For the Smithsonian, the Festival constitutes the people's museum, wherein the celebrated national treasures are the people themselves, and their traditional wisdom, knowledge, skills, and artistry.

The Festival encourages visitors to participate--to learn to sing, dance, eat the foods and speak to the folks represented in the Festival program. The Festival, while celebrating American and worldwide diversity, encourages the bridging of differences in a larger celebration of freedom and human creativity.

Beloved by visitors and the general public, well-received by the press and politicians, heartily endorsed by tradition-bearers, the Festival of American Folklife nonetheless has its problems. In combining and crossing such categories as education and entertainment, scholarship and service, the authentic and the artificial, and celebration and examination, the festival is an unfamiliar genre and can be misconstrued.

Despite the fact that more than one thousand cultural scholars have participated in the Festival's research and presentation, a few find the Festival a throwback to the 19th century's world's fairs and other discredited forms of cultural display and voyeurism. And while the Festival receives kudos for placing ordinary people's culture on the National Mall, others have expressed resentment at the festival's placement on the Mall, its implied denigration of traditional museum functions, and its alleged effect on the natural landscape.

### **Living Culture on the Nation's Front Lawn**

The Festival tells the story of the diverse peoples who populate the nation, but whose cultural achievements are not well represented in the Smithsonian's exhibitions or collections. As method,





the Festival pioneered the research-based use of living performances and demonstrations. This was consistent with a larger trend in the museum world at the time--the use of "living history" as a presentational or interpretive technique. Whereas living history performances were acted, the Festival emphasized authenticity--the presence and participation of the living people who were active and exemplary practitioners of the represented communities and traditions.

### **In Search of a Genre**

Why call this phenomenon a festival? In the Washingtonian scheme of things, the Festival of American Folklife does operate like a festival. It creates its own space on the Mall, a sometimes jarring presence in the midst of official, neat space. It creates a face-to-face community in the shadows of inanimate official buildings and the institutions of state. The Festival is messy, its boundaries of participation, time and event unclear. The Festival creates an experience and event that are intense, but short-lived, in which representations are magnified, pushed together, and then, just as quickly, dispersed. And it brings people together---tradition-bearers, the public, scholars, officials, administrators, builders, designers, volunteers, and

others who would not normally interact. As Margaret Mead once wrote, the Festival is "a people-to-people celebration in which all of us are participants---now as organizers, now as celebrators, now as audience, as hosts and as guests, as friends and neighbors or as strangers finding that we can speak the same language of mutual enjoyment" (*Redbook*, July 1975).

The Festival has always navigated between the various axes of art (as entertainment), cultural rights (as advocacy), education (as public service), and knowledge (as scholarship and experience). It has from the beginning sought to broaden knowledge, deepen appreciation, and increase support for art forms and practitioners overlooked in a society whose sense of beauty and value is generally driven by the exercise of power and the influence of the marketplace. At times during its history, and even within the same year among its programs, presentations and framing have gravitated toward one or another axis. But by and large, the Festival's form, contexts, purposes, and place have remained the same.

### **Cultural Representation**

While the Festival, in some literal way, may recall 19th century forms of cultural exhibitionism, it has benefited from decades of cultural research and discussions about representation to evolve into something quite different. Shifts in authoritative voice, collaboration in self-representation, treatment of contemporary contexts, as well as the forms of discourse, have significantly changed, thanks in large part to the efforts of people like Ralph Rinzler, Bess Lomax Hawes, Bernice Reagon, and a generation of cultural workers who have labored at the intersection of scholarship, cultural community advocacy, and public education. Large-scale cultural displays are situated in a public world in which various parties have a stake. Politicians, advocacy groups, rebels, and scholars may use these forms to forward their own agendas, and have become very sophisticated in doing so, as readily apparent in various case studies of Festival programs.

As a representational genre, living cultural exhibitions like the Festival share features with the zoo, the local fair, a town meeting, an object-based museum exhibit, an ethnographic monograph, a talk show, and a documentary film. The Festival differs from a book, film, exhibit and concert in that it lacks linearity.

While the Festival has some highlighted special events, a daily schedule and structured forms of presentation, many events happen simultaneously. Not everyone experiences the same thing. The Festival offers the opportunity, indeed the desirability, for people---visitors, staff, participants ---to chart their own experiential routes through it. The density of the crowd, the symbolic weight of the location and the significance of the July Fourth holiday help make this experience memorable. Most distinctively, the Festival offers the immediacy and sentient presence of people possessed of knowledge, skill and wisdom, who can and do speak for themselves. At the Festival, many different people speak in a variety of voices and styles. For the most part, the authority to speak and the content of that speech is diffuse and shared among participant, scholar/curator, and visitor.

Despite the challenges to and questions about it, the Festival of American Folklife continues to represent our American and human cultural heritage, presenting it to a large audience in an educational way, connecting it to real people and communities in ways that enhance the national civic culture of our democratic society. In addition, the Festival on the Mall continues to provide a model for localities, states, and other nations to present grassroots cultural expressions to their own citizenry.

It is no surprise that many other events have drawn inspiration and lessons from the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival--from the Black Family Reunion to the L.A. Festival, from a Festival of Hawaiian Culture to an Indigenous Culture and Development Festival in Ecuador, from the America's Reunion on the Mall Festival for the Presidential Inaugural to Southern Crossroads, a Festival of the American South for Atlanta's Olympic Games. Indeed, even the venerable old Smithsonian drew upon the Festival as genre for the production of its own 150th

anniversary celebration in a mile-long Birthday Party held for some 600,000 people on the National Mall on August 10-11, 1996. Some of the Smithsonian ancestors might have been quite surprised, but I think ultimately heartened, to learn that the Festival genre, historically used to represent others, had become a successful means of representing ourselves.

### For Further Reading

Kurin, Richard, *Brokering Culture*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. (An expanded version of this article constitutes the chapter titled "The Festival on the Mall.")

*Festival of American Folklife Program Book*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution. Essays in the annual Program Book discuss complexities and dimensions of the Folklife Festival. See especially essays by Richard Kurin from 1990-1996.

*Richard Kurin is Director of the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Programs*



### ATTENTION TEACHERS!

The SI Center for Folklife has a large selection of multimedia educational kits, videos, and recordings on U.S. and world cultures, many based on the Festival. For a full listing, write or call Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order, 414 Hungerford Dr., Suite 444, Rockville, MD 20850; (301) 443-2314; Fax: (301) 443-1819; email: [www.si.edu/folkways](http://www.si.edu/folkways).

An earlier *AnthroNotes* 7:1 (winter 1985) article, "Studying Community Festivals," by Audrey Shalinsky, includes student activities and is available by writing to: Anthropology Outreach Office, NHB MRC 112, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560.

## NEW VOLUME ON AMERICAN INDIAN LANGUAGES

"By the end of the next century, 75% of all the world's languages will be extinct!" stated Ives Goddard, volume editor of the recently published *Languages*, Volume 17 of the *Handbook of North American Indians* (Gen. Ed. William Sturtevant). Many of these languages that will become extinct include those indigenous to North America.

*Languages* is partly a culmination of the work of Smithsonian scientists and collaborators from the founding of the Institution's Bureau of Ethnology in 1879 to the present day. The volume documents the extraordinary diversity of North American languages at the time of European contact. The folded color map that accompanies the volume highlights sixty-two language families, mapped in their locations at the approximate time of first European contact, when several hundred different languages were spoken.

Today, 209 languages are spoken, but only 46 are spoken by a significant number of children, most of them in Canada and northern Mexico. Several white spaces on the map indicate areas for which there is no surviving linguistic data on which to base classification, and 120 of the languages noted on the map are already extinct. Goddard said "this is a tremendous loss as there is still so much we don't know from a scientific point of view."

The volume and linguistic map make it clear that native languages of North America do not belong to a single family or conform to a single uniform type. The book further breaks down these language families into subgroups. For example, within the Algonquian language family are the Wiyot and Yurok languages and the Algonquian family, which has many subgroups, such as Arapahoan and Cheyenne. These subgroups, in some cases, are further broken down into discrete languages.

This important reference on Native languages of North America is unlike any other. Not only will scientific linguists find it a useful tool, but so will Native peoples, educators, and others interested in learning about Indian languages. The book

discusses the history of the Native languages of North America; general characteristics; Native writing systems, some of which go back as early as the 17th century; forms and styles of speech within a community; place and personal names; the borrowing from languages; nonspeech communication systems; classification; and sources of additional information for each language---grammar, dictionary, and texts.

More than half of the book is devoted to twelve grammatical sketches, all containing vocabularies, of Native languages representing different language groups: Central Alaskan Yupik, Hupa, Cree, Lakota, Zuni, Eastern Pomo, Seneca, Wichita, Thompson, Coahuilteco, Sahaptin, and Shoshone. The volume is illustrated with photographs and tables and includes an extensive bibliography and index.

The other volumes of the encyclopedic *Handbook of North American Indians* summarize knowledge about all Native peoples north of Mesoamerica, including human biology, prehistory, ethnology, linguistics, and history. In addition to Volume 17: *Languages*, the following volumes are available: Volume 15: *Northeast*; Volume 8: *California*; Volume 9: *Southwest* (Puebloan peoples and Southwest prehistory and history); Volume 6: *Subarctic*; Volume 10: *Southwest* (non-Puebloan peoples); Volume 5: *Arctic*; Volume 11: *Great Basin*; Volume 4: *History of Indian-White Relations*; and Volume 7: *Northwest Coast*. Forthcoming volumes are *Plateau* and *Plains*.

To order, call Smithsonian Institution Press 800-782-4612 or 703-661-1599; Fax: 703-689-0660. A free catalog is available upon request.



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