

## Panel 3: Historicizing Anachronistic Motives

Monday, 4 December 2023 – Stream 2

[Session I: 17:00-18:45 pm CET // Session II: 19:30-21:15 pm CET]

This panel is dedicated to studies focused on rediscovering the work of anthropologists whose place in disciplinary history is obscured by their ideas or praxis being connoted with surpassed paradigms, while surviving in new environments. From evolutionism and diffusionism at the height of structural-functionalism to “New Boasian” anthropology in anti-culturalist times, there is a vast anthropological literature revealing unexpected intellectual rhizomes grown from trees ‘cut down’ in earlier periods. The panel welcomes papers exploring the heuristic import of understudied cases of ‘anachronistic’ scholarship both within major traditions and world anthropologies, as well as case studies dedicated to institutions and contexts congenial to older, alternative views in face of hegemonic trends in national and/or international anthropology. By encapsulating anticanonical motives, these apparently defeated anthropologies challenge our understanding of historical contextualization, periodization, and time. The panel invites participants to reflect on this theme and the ways in which it may unsettle both the perception of anthropology’s past and the historiography of anthropology from a methodological and theoretical point of view.

Convenors: **David Shankland** (Royal Anthropological Institute; University College London), **Christine Laurière** (CNRS, UMR9022 Héritages), **Frederico Delgado Rosa** (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, CRIA Centre for Research in Anthropology)

Session I [17:00-18:45 pm CET]

Ciarán Walsh (Independent curator and writer)

### **Who's afraid of History: Why Haddon's long fight with the academy makes sense today**

The disciplinary traditions of anthropology manifest a history of conflict between humanitarian action and scientific theory that continues unabated in the stand-off between ‘traditional’ and ‘practical’ anthropologies. This is not new. Anthropology’ has always had difficulty reconciling its social science ambitions in an academic setting (originally articulated by Galton) with its humanitarian, ethnological other in a faraway field (first articulated by Haddon in the 1890s). I have argued elsewhere that this is the essential difference between Haddon and his apprentice Radcliffe-Brown. That is novel and, in the context of disciplinary

historiography, I explore what I think this means in terms of the nature of anthropology today. I propose that the erasure of past anthropologies – and the end of tradition as a consequence – is not about progress, but is an anti-progressive instrument of constricted knowledge production in a precarious neoliberal academy that is terrified by the ghost of anthropology past. I compare a class war fought between post-evolutionist ‘culturals’ (led by Haddon) and academic ‘physicals’ (led by Galton) with the current stand-off between ‘emancipatory’ traditionals and ‘practical’ academics. In this context, Haddon becomes the ultimate anachronism; the evolutionist bogeyman whose ideas spread – rhizome is a good analogy – beneath the field in the modern era, even as historians weeded him out of the story of the ‘modernisation’ of anthropology. Yet, the disruptive humanitarian and humanist tradition he represents is tenacious, even as it is treated as anachronistic in the constrained epistemologies that flourish in a hostile environment. History has never mattered more.

Anne Gustavsson (Umeå University, Sweden // Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina)

### **Field work at the banks of the Pilcomayo River. The place of Erland Nordenskiöld in pre-Malinowski traditions of ethnography**

The Swedish ethnologist and americanist Erland Nordenskiöld became acquainted with the South American Chaco for the first time in 1902 when the Chaco-Cordillera expedition (1901-1902) made an incursion into the northern area of the Pilcomayo River where various indigenous societies partially maintained their traditional ways of life. This encounter marked him profoundly. It not only reoriented his research interests from zoology, discipline in which he was trained, towards ethnography, archaeology and ethnology but also made him dedicate the rest of his life and work to the study of the “South American Indian”. Although a peripheral and somewhat anticanonical figure in the European histories of anthropologies, a few sporadic attempts have been made to rediscover and save Nordenskiöld from oblivion. In this paper I will discuss the type of field work Nordenskiöld undertook at the banks of the Pilcomayo River in the border region between Bolivia and Argentina, in terms of *préterrain* and ethnographic occasion reflecting upon the place of these practices in pre-Malinowski traditions of ethnography. This is done by analyzing and discussing in depth the Hernmarck expedition to Bolivia and Argentina (1908-1909), focusing on the social, cultural and economical factors which conditioned this research endeavor as well as the way Nordenskiöld engaged in the field with the Ashluslay, today known as the Nivaclé. The analysis is based on Nordenskiöld’s publications as well as archival material (correspondence, field notes,

newspaper articles) consulted at the Museum of World Culture and at the Royal Library of Sweden.

Carlotta Santini (CNRS, École normale supérieure, France)

### **Regresses in science: the question of race**

In this talk I will focus on an exemplary case of scientific regress at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries: that of the race debate. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the anthropologists of the School of Berlin, Adolf Bastian and Rudolf Virchow among the first, could entrust to the pages of their works and their journal, the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, accurate and passionate critiques of the scientific inconsistency of the concept of race, of the factual impossibility of concepts such as those of "autochthony," or ethnic purity. As early as 1911, and up to the 1940s, Franz Boas, as if he himself were not a pupil of that Bastian who had put an end to the use of the term race in anthropology, feels the duty in the incipit to several of his works to make distinctions, to proceed again to a critique of the concept of race, which, however, never goes so far as to reject it. This loss of rigor, of which there is evidence even in scientific language, took place in the space of less than fifty years, over the course of a couple of generations of scholars. The influence in Germany of French anthropological theories on race, despised by scholars but penetrated into all strata of society, is one – not the only – cause of this deterioration of fin-de-siècle scientific lucidity. In this talk, I would like to reconstruct the context of the critique of the concept of race by the German anthropologists of the Berlin School, highlighting its extraordinary modernity, scientific rigor, and potential toward an ecumenical and globalized conception of humanity.

Richard Kuba (Frobenius Institute, Germany)

### **Frobenius' Culture History in Australia: Dead Ends and New Insights**

This paper especially looks into the scientific and political contexts of the very last of over a dozen ethnographic expeditions the German Leo Frobenius lead or initiated since 1904. In the years 1938-39 he was sending five members of his institute to the northwest Australian Kimberley. The expedition was among the very first ethnographic researches carried out in the region. The specific theoretical and practical orientation of this venture was crucial for the kind of documentation resulting from the expedition be it visual, written, phonographic or in the choice of acquired objects. 85 years later, the extensive expedition materials are rediscovered, reassessed and returned to the source communities. This paper explores in how far the different ontologies – the one from the archive and the local living one – can be reconciled in a collaborative process and be

used productively to reach a more nuanced understanding of the research process as well as of the history of country and culture.

Axel Lazzari (National University of General San Martín / CONICET-EIDAES, Argentina) – Sergio Rodolfo Carrizo (National University of Tucuman, Argentina)

### **José Imbelloni and The Kulturhistorische Schule in Argentina: a Dyschronic Approach to Anachronistic Arguments**

We address the question of anachronism in the history of anthropology in two dimensions: as a discourse of the actors/analysts, and as a category of analysis whose implications must be spelled out. We focus on the case of the Kulturhistorische Schule in Argentina, exploring the works and trajectory of its main representative: the Italian-Argentine anthropologist José Imbelloni (1885-1967). Firstly, we single out the period 1920-1955 and analyze the use of the argument of anachronism in Imbelloni's critique of prior Americanismo and Evolutionism, specifically in relation to the theories of the peopling of the American continent, the taxonomy of "Indian races", and the worldviews of pre-Columbian "high civilizations"; likewise, Indigenismo as cultural renaissance and political argument is deemed outdated by the author. In this critical context Imbelloni presents his version of the theory of cultural cycles (Ur-centers, ecumenical diffusionism and racialist idealism) as an "overcoming" of the aforementioned trends. He also maintains (Argentine) nationalization as the only possible destiny for the Indians. Secondly, we approach the criticisms directed at Imbelloni and his disciples in Argentina and elsewhere, from the sixties onwards. These various critiques (socio-cultural, neoevolutionary, Marxist, Indigenist, etc.) often resort to the idea of anachronism or some cognate mingled with theoretical, methodological and ideological dismissive arguments. Finally, we map out some "traces" of the tenets and methods – let alone institutions and "occult lineages" – of Imbelloni's legacy in the spaces of central (Buenos Aires) and peripheral (Tucumán) academic anthropology, as well as in non-academic milieux. Are these traces to be understood as themselves anachronistic, that is, as survivals? Many possibilities open. One, is to "recover" or "restore" what was once rendered anachronistic (then-Now); another is to "locate" these traces in a contemporary dispute between concurrent positions (now-Then). We purport to define a dyschronic approach, one that, assuming the rhizomatic heterogeneity of time (then...now...), may "play" with possible combinations and interruptions of "time-traces", and by the same token warn against the reification implied in any periodization, be it "cyclical" or "progressive".

Session II [19:30-21:15 pm CET]

Zsofia J Szoke (University of New Mexico, US)

### **Through the Speculum of the Psyche: Paul Radin at the Eranos “Tagungen”**

In 1949 the first-time lecturers at the Eranos Meetings in Ascona, Switzerland, were anthropologist Paul Radin, specialist on the Winnebago Tribe, Henry Corbin, expert on Shiite Islam, and Gershom Scholem, the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism. Other prominent contributors included Gerardus van der Leeuw, the famous phenomenologist of religion, Karl Kerényi, the pioneering scholar of Greek mythology, and Adolf E. Jensen, the influential German ethnologist amongst others. Research for my future monograph indicates that Paul Radin became a well-respected lecturer at the Eranos forums where scholars and lay participants came together to exchange ideas, unrestricted by academic boundaries and dogmatism. In contrast, his concepts have been ignored by the dominant social scientific theoretical and methodological approaches, and his oeuvre has been practically absent in standard works on anthropology. In fact, this maverick anthropologist has been systematically marginalized within his own discipline as his ideas and methods fell outside the academic canon. Consider one of his most enduring volumes entitled *The Trickster* (1956). It is a collaborative piece anchored in the spirit of the Eranos lectures. Yet, there has been no systematic historical treatment of Paul Radin's connection to this unique scholarly environment. In this paper I will explore the reasons why this might be the case and rediscover Paul Radin's work through the prism of the Eranos connection. I will also discuss the heuristic import, and the methodological and theoretical challenges of Radin's non-conformist scholarship to the historiography of anthropology.

Serge Reubi (Centre Alexandre-Koyré, Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, France)

### **Anthropology, photography, and painting. Jean Gabus and Hans Erni in Mauritania, 1950-1951**

In 1950 Swiss anthropologist Jean Gabus organizes an ethnographic expedition in Mauritania as a part of a broader extensive research project in a North-West Africa which he started in 1945 and will pursue until 1980. His work can be understood as a surviving practice of late 19th century ethnography, as he is examining his objects on a very large geographic scale, focuses on the study of material culture, and works in team. If the case is intriguing, his 1950 expedition adds questions about epistemic virtues, personae and visual scientific culture. For this expedition, he asks a renowned Swiss artist Hans Erni to join him to complete what he describes as an objective documentation (objects, photographs, recordings, films, ...) with a new way to catch the social life of the populations he studies. He argues that the subjective perception of the artist is able to grasp something that is not fixable by mechanical recording devices and that is “truly human” and universal. In the mid 20th century, he is hence both trusting the abilities of the “sage” (in Daston and Galison's terminology), and a

strong believer in the objectivity of the materiality. The Gabus-Erni collaboration helps us hence to rethink periodization in the history of anthropology but also to contextualize it in the larger frame of the history of sciences and knowledge, from which it has sometimes been separated, hence contributing to a canonical historiography that remained blind to such cases.

Sergei Alymov (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia)

### **How Moscow did not become the world center of Marxist thought. Historian Luidmila V. Danilova, Soviet ethnography and international science in the 1960s**

Ernest Gellner's first publication on Soviet ethnography (1975) introduced Soviet ethnography to the world anthropology. He noticed that its practitioners are much closer to historians and, unlike in Anglophone anthropology, tackle the world history evolutionary issues. Gellner's article was based on the text by historian Luidmila Danilova (1923-2012), namely her preface to the collection "The Problems of the History of Pre-Capitalist Formations" (1968), which became the main manifesto of Soviet "creative" Marxism in the 1960s. This paper focuses on the fate of Marxist anthropology in the USSR in the late Soviet period (the 1960-1970s). It recovers the story of the "sector of the methodology of history" which became the center of interdisciplinary debates among historians, ethnographers, and philosophers, who were intent on modifying Marxist narrative and suggesting new approaches for thinking about the early states and creation of class societies, modes of exploitation under slavery and feudalism, and changing the Stalinist narrative of "social-economic formations". These debates had also been prompted by the French Marxists and their new publications about the "Asiatic mode of production". Based on extensive archival research, the paper claims that Danilova planned numerous innovative publications inviting foreign scholars like E. Gellner, M. Godelier, J. Suret-Canal, E. Hobsbaum Hobsbawm among others. These could have led to making Moscow a center of productive international discussions among left-wing and Marxist intellectuals. This did not happen because the Soviet dogmatic academic establishment banned the publication of the later volumes of "The Problems of the History of Pre-Capitalist Formations". Danilova could not realize her organizational and theoretical potential, her book on theoretical problems of feudalism remains unpublished. This story is an example of a decline of a paradigm (Marxism) which was, ironically, to a certain extent a result of the actions of the officially Marxist Soviet establishment.

Henri Wagner (Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France)

### **From Sahlins to Lévy-Bruhl: Mutuality and Participation**

Lévy-Bruhl is famous for having characterized the 'prelogical' mode of thought by means of the notion of participation. Despite the fruitful use of this notion in anthropological works such as those by Leenhardt and Bastide, the radical criticisms of Lévy-Bruhl's notion of prelogic formulated by Mauss, Evans-Pritchard and Lévi-Strauss seem to have relegated the metaphysical notion of participation to the prehistory of anthropology. However, in *What Kinship is – and is not* (2013), Marshall Sahlins has recently shown that the notion of participation could be rescued from these criticisms and used to account for the reality of kinship relationships. Sahlins intends to show that the central feature of kinship would consist essentially in the recognition of the mutuality of being, so that the kinfolk are « are persons who participate intrinsically in each other's existence; they are members of one another » (p. ix). In our talk, we would like to show that, first, Sahlins's uses of the concept of mutuality is in line with Lévy-Bruhl's concept of participation inasmuch as it runs counter the traditional logic of individuality ; secondly, the concepts of participation and mutuality are used to define a third way to the traditional alternative between culturalism and naturalism ; thirdly, Sahlins's use of the concept of participation should be read in light of his earlier book *How 'Natives' Think*, whose title explicitly referred to the English translation of *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*.

Jeremy Macclancy (Oxford Brookes University, UK)

### **Decolonisation: neither white nor black but hybrid, mixed-parentage. The case of Fernando Henriques, Jamaican anthropologist in UK academia**

Decolonisers wish to expose, then excise colonialist structures girding past and present anthropology (Mogstad & Tse 2018; Jobson 2020). But some leading decolonisers over-simplify history seeing anthropology as an uneven contest between colonialist academics and silenced local intellectuals; they do not differentiate between colonialisms, but paint them all with the same brush (see, e.g. <https://www.americananthropologist.org/commentaries> 2020). This increasingly popular vision is as seductive as it is reductive. These decolonisers' binary vision ignores both (1) White anthropologists who, from the very beginning of an institutional British anthropology in the late nineteenth century, campaigned in the field and the UK as activists for the cause of those they studied; and (2) non-White anthropologists who, while not revolutionaries, still acted as crucial intermediaries between White placeholders and Black radicals. Examining the work of anthropologists who fit either of these two groups helps to clarify histories of anthropology, and to query the overly stark positions of some decolonisers. Here I discuss one of the second group: a hitherto-ignored figure, Fernando Henriques, Jamaican anthropologist, who was President of the Oxford Union, first Black dean in UK academia, then director of a research centre in multi-racial studies. In the late 1950s and '60s, he acted as a public intellectual, sometimes to notorious effect. Critical discussion of his life and achievements helps us question decolonisers' portrayals of British anthropology. Too often these accounts rely too heavily on oversimplified, hegemonic versions of our

recent past. Instead, scrutiny of Henriques' career demonstrates more fully the rich range of positions within postwar UK departments. Can we characterise this approach as a path towards a hybrid history of anthropology, one which transcends conceptions of race, gesturing towards a history of anthropology of 'mixed-parentage'?