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ANTHROPOLOGY NEWSLETTER
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Spring Semester 1992: With this issue, the Anthropology Newsletter greets the spring semester of 1992. Now in its 16th year of publication, the Newsletter is circulated to interested students, faculty, administrators, staff and alumni. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact Dr. Dave Minderhout in G07 Old Science or at X4859.

Guest Speaker in February: On February 7 At 3 PM Dr. David Gilmore will make a presentation on domestic power in the Forum in McCormick. Dr. Gilmore is a professor of anthropology at the State University of New York in Stony Brook. His talk is based on his study of male-female relationships in the region of Andalusia in southern Spain. In an article in the December 1990 issue of AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, Dr. Gilmore describes the descrepancy between the traditional view that males make the important decisions in rural Spanish domestic relationships and Gilmore's discovery in Andalusia that working class women, often united with their mothers, are often able to prevail in domestic decision making despite opposition from their husbands. Dr. Gilmore has also recently published a book, MANHOOD IN THE MAKING, which takes a look at what it means to be a man in different cultures around the world.

Dr. Gilmore's talk is sponsored jointly by the Departments of Anthropology and Sociology and by the Scholars/Honors program. For more information or for copies of Dr. Gilmore's work, please contact either Dr. Armstrong in Sociology or Dr. Minderhout in Anthropology. There will be an informal reception for Dr. Gilmore in the Forum following his talk at which refreshments will be served.

Conservation and Native Peoples: Most Americans have become aware of efforts to conserve the natural environment - especially tropical rain forests - in the Third World. What is less apparent to Americans is that most of the areas under contention are not only habitats for endangered species of plants and animals, but are also homes for hundreds of

thousands of native peoples. As has been reported in earlier issues of the NEWSLETTER (see the October 1991 issue), these native cultures are also endangered as their homelands are destroyed for development, agriculture, mining or any one of many other reasons. Therefore, one might expect that environmentalists and native peoples would be allies, united in a common effort to preserve the environment. However, this is often not the case. In fact, native groups are frequently deeply suspicious of conservation groups. To native cultures, developers and environmentalists represent two sides of the same coin.

There are several reasons why native groups are wary of environmentalists. First, there are a number of examples in the past in which conservation has meant that native cultures were ousted from their homelands. In some cases, the native cultures have been relocated to other areas by governments; more often, they have simply been told to leave the area. Both governments and conservation groups felt that preservation of the environment meant having no humans on the scene, including the native groups which had managed to coexist with the local flora and fauna for millenia. The most notorious example of this occurred in Uganda in the late 60's when a population called the Ik was ousted from a prospective game park. The subsequent degradation of Ik culture was well documented by anthropologist Colin Turnbull in a popular book, THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE in 1972. The Ik were widely discussed in the media at the time because their society had disintegrated to the point where children and the elderly were being abandoned and individuals thought only of their own survival. Lost in the commentary was the fact that the Ik had been driven from their native lands and familiar way of life by a government in the name of wildlife conservation.

Second - and more commonly today - native peoples object to conservation efforts because they are not consulted. Decisions about creating parks or preserving a particular environment are made by government officials or legislators; they are lobbied from both sides by developers and conservation groups. Typically, no one bothers to contact the people who live in the contested region and find out what they would like. When a park is created, native groups are told what they may or may not do; again, their opinion is seen as irrelevant. What employment opportunities the creation of a preserve might bring seldom go to natives, but rather to outside "experts." If employment does become available to natives, it is at the lowest levels, as for example as garbage collectors or

cleaning people, with little opportunity for advancement.

Third, many native peoples themselves are not environmentalists. This is ironic, since in the struggle to achieve self-determination rights or independence, native groups often claim a special relationship with nature as grounds for granting them cultural autonomy. This statement from the 1981 International Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the Land sums up the political message: "In the world of today there are two systems, two different irreconcilable 'ways of life.' The Indian world - collective, communal, human, respectful of nature, and wise - and the Western world - greedy, destructive, individualistic, and enemy of Mother Nature." Native groups claim that their historic special attitude towards nature makes them more fit to govern their own resources. Yet, with the coming of Western technology, many individual native peoples are destroying the environment at a record pace (for them). Inuit (Eskimo) whale hunters now favor using explosive harpoons and other contemporary technology. Modern slash-and-burn agriculturalists are using chain saws. Maoris are using explosives to stun or kill fish in traditional hunting And fishing areas in New Zealand. And everywhere, people have guns. Not surprisingly, these people are not interested in giving up these marvels of technology to return to an old way of life in the name of conservation. Thus, preserving the environment comes to mean for many natives a conflict with what they perceive as an improving lifestyle.

Happily, native groups and environmentalists are beginning to work together more and more. Native groups have found that environmentalists can give them access to publicity outlets which they might not otherwise have, while environmentalists find that they can make a stronger case for conservation if they factor in the preservation of native cultures. As an example, the September/October 1991 issue of NATURE CONSERVANCY magazine describes an effort in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Colombia which hopes to preserve an area which combines a unique ecological zone, a major archaeological site, and the home area of the Kogi Indians. The archaeological site is the "Lost City of the Tairona", a mountain community destroyed by the Spanish in 1600; the Kogi are the surviving descendants of the Tairona culture. The ecological zone is important because the snowfields of the peaks of the Sierra Nevada provide fresh water for 1.2 million people in the lowlands. But a combination of interests, including peasant farmers seeking to grow marijuana on the Sierra Nevada slopes and leftist guerillas using the mountains as a refuge,

have led to the mountain forests being cut and the lives of the Kogi being disrupted. The Nature Conservancy has identified the area as one of 200 key sites in Latin America which urgently need protection and is providing financial and technical support to the Colombian government towards that goal. At the same time, the Colombian government has taken steps to prevent further colonization of the area by outsiders and to helpthe Kogi with their problems. A scheme is being developed whereby fees collected from the lowland water users will be funneled into conservation. In these ways, hopefully, both environmentalists and the native culture will get something of what they want.

NOTE: From NEWSWEEK, December 30, 1991, p. 53: "The problem is economic as well as cultural: indigenous people occupy nearly 25% of the world's land - and sit on some of its scarcest resources."

The Anthropologist's Cookbook: The following recipe for spiced aubergines is from Israel. Aubergine is what most of the world calls eggplant.

2 or 3 aubergines
2 red peppers} hot, not bell
2 green peppers} same
2 pickled cucumbers
ground black pepper
salt
vine leaves (if available)
wine or cider vinegar
water
oil, approx. 1/2 cup

Wash and slice aubergines 1 inch thick, sprinkle with salt, lay out on a chopping board and leave for 1 - 1 1/2 hours. Wipe dry.

Fry aubergines in deep oil until soft. Remove from oil and drain. Dice green and red peppers and pickled cucumber and fry lightly in the oil until soft. Remove and drain.

Prepare vinegar sauce by diluting 2 cups of vinegar with a little water, according to taste. Add black pepper and vine leaves and bring to a boil. Simmer 5 to 7 minutes.

Place a layer of aubergines in a deep dish and on top of each slice spoon the diced pepper and cucumber mixture, continuing to do this until all the pepper and cucumber mixture has been used. Pour vinegar over the aubergine slices, making sure that all the slices are covered. Place in a

refrigerator for a couple of days to allow aubergines and peppers to absorb the vinegar. This is often served as a first course followed by grilled or roast chicken served with potatoes, rice or macaroni.

Sweating: In the December issue of NATURAL HISTORY, Jared Diamond describes the underlying physiology of sweating, starting with the observation that some people seem to sweat more than others. "In summer you can see how people differ in their tolerance of heat. Among a group of your friends, some will be wilting, while others are comfortable; some will be drenched in sweat, while others are scarcely sweating at all." (p.2) This simple observation is cause for conversation, but for most of us, there has been little reason to pursue the topic: after all, people are different, aren't they?

However, as Diamond points out, this fact of sweating came to be of real concern to the Japanese in the first half of this century. Long isolated on their own islands with their modest range of climates, the Japanese are unusual among modern populations for their homogeneity. But starting in 1895, with the acquisition of tropical Taiwan, the Japanese became imperialistic, adding such contrasting climates as the tropical Marianas Islands and cold Manchuria to their empire. As individual Japanese were posted to these imperial outposts, they began to notice real differences in their ability to tolerate heat or cold as compared with the local inhabitants. With the onset of World War II, and the spread of millions of Japanese soldiers into the tropics of the Pacific, this concern became even more acute. Japanese soldiers doing heavy work in the tropics were sweating at rates of up to one gallon per hour, while local workers barely seemed to sweat at all.

Thus, Japanese researchers began to look into the physiology of sweating. They found in their studies that while all humans have approximately the same number of potential sweat glands, populations - and individuals - differ markedly in how many functional (or operating) sweat glands they possess. For instance, Japanese research found that the Ainu people of cold Hokkaido island in northern Japan possess 1.4 million functional sweat glands while the Japanese typically had 2.1 million. But the inhabitants of tropical Thailand, Taiwan and the Phillipines had 2.4 to 2.8 million. Remember that sweating cools the body through evaporation. Tropical natives have more functional sweat glands, so they cool down faster; their bodies do not need to work as hard to put out great volumes

of sweat, and thus they appear more comfortable.

On the face of it, this seems like a good example of natural selection. It is advantageous to have more functional sweat glands in the tropics, so the environment should select for that trait. But Japanese researchers noted something else. In the years between 1900 and 1945, many Japanese moved to the tropics and raised children there; these children in the first generation had significantly more functional sweat glands than their parents, an effect unexplained by natural selection. Japanese researchers explained this phenomenon through critical-period programming. In critical-period programming, a behavior is fixed irreversibly by conditions prevailing at a certain critical age, usually early in life. The most famous study of this was done by Konrad Lorenz with greylag geese. These geese are born programmed to follow the first large object they see within a short critical period after they hatch. If that object is a goose, all well and good, but if that object is a human (e.g., Lorenz), they will follow the human just as faithfully as if he or she were a mother goose. If goslings are kept from seeing any large object during the critical period, they lose their tendency to follow, a loss that is irreversible.

While critical-period programming is demonstrated in many animals, there are few examples of it seen in humans. A possible important example is language ability. As it turns out, sweating appears to be one example of human critical-period programming. A baby is born with a given number of sweat glands, none of which is functional at birth. Functioning depends on post-birth experiences in the first two or three years of life. If a child grows up in a hot climate, most of that child's glands will become activated, and for the rest of that child's life s/he will be relatively comfortable in hot weather. If the child grows up in a cold climate, the child's body decides that's what it will be like for life, and barely half the child's glands will become activated.

Critical-period programming offers an intermediate level of flexibility between learned and genetically fixed behavior; the critical period causes us to end up in a rut, but it's a rut that isn't selected for us until after birth. If we move later in life to a different environment, we'll be uncomfortable. But our children, born in the new environment, can be as suited to that environment as the children of people who have lived there for generations.

Color Symbolism: Colors vary from culture to culture in the symbolic meanings associated with them. Take, for example, the color white which in Western history has been associated with purity or virginity. But for the Japanese and other orientals, white is used at funerals as a symbolic representation of hope; therefore, in Japan, white chrysanthemums are the flowers associated with death and funerals. White is right for brides in the United States, but not in India. There they prefer red or yellow for wedding gowns. Even in Western history brides have not always worn white. Historians say that Roman brides insisted on yellow or on white trimmed with orange which symbolized passion. In the Middle Ages the more colorful the gown, the better. Medieval brides often wore red wedding dresses, and in the Victorian era, brides wore their brightest finery, no matter what the color. The Japanese often today have two wedding ceremonies. In one they wear a Western-style white gown, and in the other, brightly colored traditional Japanese clothing is worn. But one color to avoid at a Japanese wedding is purple. According to Japanese culture, purple fades faster than any other color and might signify the fading of marital happiness.

The French, Dutch and Swedes associate green with cosmetics and toiletries, but in Egypt, such packaging is insulting, since green is the national color. In the Orient, green symbolizes exuberance and youth. But in China, men should not casually wear a green hat - in some regions there, a man wearing a green hat advertises that his wife or sister is a prostitute.

In England and France, red is regarded as more masculine than blue. And in the Orient, at the time of the Chinese New Year, the most popular gift tradition is to present bright and distinctive red envelopes containing money.

In England, yellow connotes youth and humor. But in the Orient, yellow is considered the imperial color because it suggests grandeur and mystery.

In Brazil and Mexico, purple is the color of death. Brown as seen in withered leaves, is the funeral color in Iran, while blue (for heaven) is the color associated with death in Syria.

In England, black cats are considered lucky.

BU Anthropologist News:

Congratulations are in order to Dr. Tom Aleto, who was granted tenure by the university during the semester break. Dr. Aleto was in Mexico at the time, traveling in Mexico City and the region of Michoacan, while preparing to teach Mayas & Aztecs during the spring semester.

Dr. Wymer's work on the Ohio mastodon was featured in the January 1992 issue of DISCOVER magazine. The work by the research group with which Dr. Wymer is affiliated was described by the magazine as one of the top 50 discoveries in science in 1991, and Dr. Wymer is extensively quoted in the article.