Michigan Anthropology Winter 2010 Newsletter

Geladas
Simien Mountains National Park, Ethiopia 2006

Geladas
Simien Mountains National Park, Ethiopia 2006

Geladas
Simien Mountains National Park, Ethiopia 2006
A Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

So many transitions at Michigan! And the Department of Anthropology has its share: a new chair, new faculty, new research, and a new look to our newsletter among them.

On the new chair: I took over as head of the department just this year. My predecessor, Judy Irvine, is a tough act to follow, but I am delighted at the strong and diverse community of scholars and students that she left for me. In my own research in Nepal and North Dakota, I study changing relationships in family and friendship, the moral grounds for social life, and the cultural continuities that endure in the face of dramatic change. Much of what I do is to document how people live their lives in the face of uncertainty and risk.

You already know what Anthropology has to offer. No other discipline puts it all together the way Anthropology does. We emphasize a point of view that makes the world less strange and yet one that celebrates the variety of human experience. Our perspective grounds us in an understanding of the human past, the story of how we became who we are, the variety of ways we encounter the world given our common human characteristics. Our students are prepared to not only appreciate and understand that variety, but to engage it in whatever careers they choose. I always argue that no degree could be more practical. And I hope you feel the same.

This edition of the newsletter will get you up to date on the department. Conrad Kottak is off to new pastures. And younger faculty continue to join us. There’s Jacinta Beehner who studies the evolution of social behavior among geladas in Ethiopia. There’s Michael Lempert who studies face to face communication among Tibetan Buddhists in India and the uses of language in electoral politics in the United States. There’s Robin Beck who works on archaeology in the Appalachian foothills. Be sure to have a look at the updates featuring our “older” timers, too: Alaina Lemon, John O’Shea, Elisha Renne, and Andrew Shryock.

I invite you to explore the newsletter to find out more. Many thanks to Ayn Reineke & Mary Birkett for their special efforts in this new design! I also invite you to stop into the department whenever you’re in town. Busy times, but there’s always the pleasure that comes of greeting old friends when they visit!

With warm good wishes,

Tom Fricke
Conrad Kottak

After a 41-year long career at the University of Michigan, Professor Conrad Kottak has decided that it’s time to move on to bigger and better things - a life by the ocean in South Carolina with his wife, Betty. He will be leaving behind a menagerie of awards, textbooks, articles, and ideas that have contributed much to the worldwide anthropology community. Instead of listing his substantial accomplishments, let us share how Professor Kottak’s work and his presence at the University of Michigan has affected students, faculty, and colleagues around the world.

Professor Kottak has always been known for his interpersonal warmth. Tom Fricke, the current department chair, remarked on his staunch support of both faculty members and graduate students within and outside the university. Before and during his ten-year commitment as department chair, Kottak continuously supported faculty from all subfields and areas of interests. The same was true of his relationship with graduate students. For example, he often allowed them to use his office as their own so they could have a private space to work on their dissertations. Unbeknownst to him, he was apparently also generous enough to provide them with free housing – in the same office. Although the students moved out when security personnel arrived, as Professor Fricke aptly quipped, “Conrad always made you feel like family.”

This warmth also permeated Professor Kottak’s scholarship. He maintains close ties with communities in Arembepe, Brazil and other areas in which he conducted research. He was instrumental in facilitating the exchange of academics between Brazilian and American universities, and his scholarship continues to affect current anthropological research. A pioneer in the anthropology of television, his research on the relationship between TV content and kinship in Brazil was recently cited in community development journals. His studies on racial categorization in Brazil and his fieldwork in Madagascar focusing on cultural ecology and cultural change precipitated his election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005, as well as an Excellence in Research Award in 1996. In many ways, the ties forged by his research and his personality have made Professor Kottak one of the linking figures between contemporary anthropology and its historical foundations.

In order to celebrate this profound impact, the Anthropology Department recently organized a reception for Kottak and many of his close friends. Unsurprisingly, there was no shortage of students, faculty, or colleagues when the time came to say a few words of appreciation. The announcement of the Conrad Kottak Fund for Anthropology was also well-received. As a former chair, Professor Kottak was aware of the need for a fund that could be used at the chair’s discretion – for example, to provide assistance to faculty and students in unusual circumstances. The department looks forward to using the fund in the spirit of his generous and warm-hearted manner.
Robin Beck is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and assistant curator of North American Archaeology in the Museum of Anthropology. His research interests include the archaeology of complex societies in eastern North America and the Andes Mountains of Bolivia and Peru, early colonial encounters in what is now the southern United States, and the broader issues related to social organization and change. Since 2001, Rob has co-directed the Exploring Joara Project, which focuses on the archaeology and early colonial history of Native American societies in the North Carolina Piedmont. Rob and his colleagues have conducted NSF-supported research along the Catawba River at the Berry site, location of the native town of Joara and the Spanish garrison Fort San Juan, built by the Juan Pardo expedition in 1567. Manned by thirty soldiers for eighteen months, this fort is the earliest European settlement in the interior of what is now the United States. Its excavation is shedding new light on the process and practice of colonialism near the very beginning of the colonial era. Rob’s future research plans include an intensive archaeological study of the upper Catawba Valley to understand how small-scale, Late Mississippian chiefdoms like Joara developed in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Rob received his BA from UNC-Chapel Hill, his MA from the University of Alabama, and his PhD in Anthropology from Northwestern University (2004). Rob is the husband of Laoma Beck and father of Soledad, born on July 2, 2009.
Michael Lempert is joining the University of Michigan from Georgetown University, where he taught linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. He received his Ph.D. in Linguistic and Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania (2004) and specializes in the study of language use in face-to-face interaction.

Currently, he is completing a book that traces the career of the modern liberal subject in the Tibetan Buddhist diaspora in India. As for broader issues in the study of language use, Lempert has written on the pragmatic functions of “poetic” structure in discourse, stance and affect, addressivity, and the problem of “scale” in the study of discourse. His secondary research includes the commoditization of authenticity in U.S. electoral politics, including a 2009 essay on the twin preoccupations with “flip-flopping” and “conviction” in the televisual spectacles of election “debates.”


Under the auspices of the University of Michigan’s Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP), Lempert has begun new exploratory research on imagistic cospeech gesture in face-to-face interaction, using samples of political debate as a beginning data set. In the winter term he will teach a graduate seminar called “Discourse in Face-to-Face Interaction” and will offer a similar course for undergraduates.
Students enrolled in a class concerning maternal/child health, environment, and pollution in Africa went to Ghana in May 2009 for a mercury testing project. Students also did community outreach work in hospitals and schools.

Ariela Borkan researched the birth and pregnancy experiences of Somali refugees in Phoenix, Arizona after traveling to Mali to explore the health care experiences there. Her research was a continuation of past work done in Ohio, particularly focusing on Somali women’s efforts to prevent cesarean sections.

Shayna Liberman researched adult male chacma baboon behavior in Botswana. She examined whether testosterone levels correlate with certain behaviors and how these patterns compare with other species.

Megan Victor went on a historical archaeology dig at the Schoals Marine Laboratory. She focused on how the 17th century community at this location lived, and discovered evidence of a prehistoric community at the site.

Theresa VanderMeer started the Lotus Odyssey company - a social entrepreneurship export project. The company began as part of her research on women and microenterprise in India.

“This grant has opened incredible doors to aspects of my research and I believe they will allow me to continuously pursue the subject in a much more complete way ... It’s very exciting to think about the difference this could make in terms of the experiences Somali women may have in the future when seeking care with health care providers outside specialized refugee clinics.”

- Ariela Borkan
This past summer, Professor Elisha Renne and fourteen undergraduate students spent two weeks in Ghana learning about health issues and researching the effects of mining on health. The expedition was an extension of Professor Renne’s class (Cultural Anthropology 408), focused on issues concerning maternal and child health in Africa.

Students prepared for this trip throughout the winter semester by learning about mining issues and meeting regularly with Professor Renne outside of class. Some students also conducted independent research. One student, Caitlin Clarke, even organized an NGO, although she was unable to go on the trip.

Once in Ghana, students traveled throughout the country with Professor Renne. On the trip, students focused on issues surrounding malaria, Guinea Worm (a common parasite in Ghana), and gold mining. “We spent the first two weeks traveling around the country and studying various health issues. We went to malaria control centers, hospitals, industrial gold mines, and various villages to study the Ghanaian life,” said Elena Levin. She was one of six students who stayed past the scheduled two weeks to conduct research on gold miners. Their research project examined what kinds of work and how much contact with mercury (used in the gold mining process) lead an individual to develop dangerously high levels of mercury in their system.

Students said they found the trip extremely worthwhile. “As short as it was, this time with the class greatly helped me prepare for research in Ghana and for missions I did after the class left,” said Katherine Mitchell, an Honors Anthropology candidate.

Professor Renne also mentioned, “a couple [students] told me it was really important … they saw things they never would have seen [otherwise] in their life.” Professor Renne is teaching the course again this winter, and is planning on another trip to Ghana – this time, to present results from mercury samples taken by students, and to hopefully stage an intervention in the mining community.
Faculty Awards

Professor Webb Keane won a Faculty Recognition Award in March of 2009. This award recognizes faculty who have made substantial contributions to the Michigan community through their research, teaching, and service efforts.

Professor Kelly Askew was awarded the 2009 Harold R. Johnson Diversity Service Award in April of 2009. The award “recognizes University of Michigan faculty members on the Ann Arbor campus who have exhibited outstanding leadership in the area of cultural diversity.”

The American Journal of Human Biology (Vol 21, Issue 5) featured an introduction by Professor William Leonard (Northwestern) detailing Professor Roberto Frisancho’s contributions to human population biology. Leonard praised Professor Frisancho’s work for its focus on the impact of environmental, genetic, and developmental factors on human health and nutritional status, and for its relevance and impact on the worldwide community. The journal’s feature article was written by Professor Frisancho, titled, “Developmental Adaptation: Where We Go From Here.”
**Graduate Awards**

**Kimberly Clum** won the Rackham School’s Distinguished Dissertation Award when she attained her joint Anthropology and Social Work Ph.D. in 2009. Her dissertation, titled, “The Shadows of Immobility: Low Wage Work, Single Mothers’ Lives, and Workplace Culture,” challenged the assumption that steady employment on its own constitutes the key to occupational mobility. Kim also received a departmental Innovative Teaching Award for a class she taught in the summer of 2008.

University students in San Marcos, Guatemala painting anti-mining murals on the outside wall surrounding their campus. The mural reads, “Mining riches for few, death for many.”

* - Katherine Fultz

**Katherine Fultz**, a pre-doctoral candidate in anthropology, won the 2009 Kelly McKinnell Award. She will use funding from the award to go to Guatemala to document the impact of mining on the indigenous Mayan community.

**Kelly Kirby, Dana Begun, Andrew White, Vanessa Diaz, and Simon Keeling** were awarded Outstanding GSI Awards in the fall of 2008 for their commitment to undergraduate learning and their excellent teaching performance.
Andrew Shryock: Arabs in Detroit

I’ve done research among Arabs in Detroit since the 1980s, when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan. I used to consider this work secondary to my research in Jordan. Since the 9/11 attacks, more of my intellectual energy has been focused on how Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. are dealing with new political realities. I still publish work intended primarily for a scholarly readership, but I’m also finding ways to share my research with popular audiences in the U.S. and the Muslim world. In 2004, I helped establish an interdisciplinary team of scholars at the University of Michigan who would conduct long term research on the historical development of Detroit’s Muslim communities. The project, called “Building Islam in Detroit” (BIID), is sponsored by the Islamic Studies Initiative. So far, it has produced two dissertations, several publications, dozens of lectures and conference presentations, and a multimedia exhibit, “Building Islam in Detroit: Foundations.

My research in Russia began in 1988, during socialist times. My first project focused on Roma - people we call “Gypsies.” Roma are the largest minority in Eastern Europe (8-10% of the population in some places, and worldwide some estimates count them at 8-10 million). Most Roma have been settled for centuries, and local populations have been deeply dependent on their labor—nevertheless, they have been exiled to live outside town limits and denied basic access to resources such as clean water, not to mention formal education. Overwhelmingly, majorities blame their own exclusive practices on “Gypsy culture”—but that which we imagine as “Gypsy culture” is based in fantasy (e.g. Spanish opera quoting from Russian poetry). A documentary film, a book, and several articles illustrate various Romani perspectives on the ways non-Roma mis-recognize them.

That project began from a place where Romani intellectuals produced their own representations during Soviet times—the Moscow Romani Theater. Since 2000, I have broadened my research to include many other people who make theater, film, and television in Russia.

(Continued on page 11)
Jacinta Beehner: Squish

I have been studying wild primates in Africa for the past 12 years. Although my research interests are focused broadly around the evolution of social behavior, my specific questions examine how males size up rivals and how females choose mates. Although much of my research has been on wild baboons, I’ve recently switched to studying a close relative of the baboon – a mysterious primate that lives only in the highlands of Ethiopia – the gelada. Geladas are perfect subjects for my research because they live in enormous groups – their largest aggregations can number over 1000 animals. Indeed, geladas live in some of the largest naturally-occurring primate groups in the world. With over 1000 geladas to choose from, I’m given an ample sample size for testing various hypotheses. However, identifying individuals in such a large group can pose some problems. To solve this problem, I select individuals with clear identifying characteristics (such as the male pictured on the front cover – “Squish” – who has a deformed left chest patch. See how the left side of his chest is not triangular like the right side). In fact, I think that the geladas have the same problem that I do in recognizing individuals in such a large crowd of fur. For example, when males fight over mates, they generally don’t fight with males who are much stronger than them (since they are sure to lose) or males that are much weaker than them (since they are sure to win).

(Continued on page 11)
Detroit Mosques

(Continued from page 9)
The members of our team decided to visit, photograph, and collect historical data on as many of Detroit’s mosques as we could. During the first year of research we visited over forty mosques, and our current count is up to sixty. Detroit’s Muslim communities date back to the late 19th century, and the city’s first mosque was built in 1921. There are over 100,000 Muslims in greater Detroit today, and the number of mosques has doubled since 1990. The post-9/11 climate has actually accelerated this growth. Few people would have predicted that, as the War on Terror progressed, the number of mosques and Muslims in Detroit would increase and levels of political participation among Muslim Americans would rise. Wherever the BIID exhibit is shown, visitors are amazed by the diversity, historical depth, and cultural impact of Detroit’s Muslim communities. After five years of work, we’ve created an incredibly rich archive, and our collaboration with local Muslims has been intense. People now want us to produce a book. They want a documentary film. They even want a new exhibit. Expectations are high. In community-based research, this is the best sign of success.

To view the Building Islam in Detroit exhibit and learn more about the project, visit the website at http://www.umich.edu/~biid/.

Geladas

(Continued from page 10)
Most animals have mechanisms for assessing the size and strength of others – so that they don’t end up fighting a losing battle. Because most primates live in long-term cohesive groups, their mechanism for sizing up rivals is individual recognition. In other words, they know by past history and experience which males are strong and which males are weak. Geladas don’t have this luxury. They live in such large and fluid groups that they often don’t know their neighbors (much like humans in the suburbs). So, what do they use to assess their potential foes? I’ve hypothesized that they actually use the color of the chest patch to determine the physical health and condition of another male. Among males it appears that the chest patch changes in redness according to whether a male is high status or low status. When males are defeated, often their chest color changes in a matter of weeks from a brilliant red to a pale pink. If, indeed, chest color serves as a signal of quality to other males and if chest color affects a male’s reproductive success, then chest color can then be labeled a ‘sexually-selected signal’. Sexually-selected signals are common in the animal kingdom, one of the most famous being the tail-feathers of a peacock (indicating high quality to female pea-hens). I’m also examining the physiological underpinnings of this potential signal – such as the hormone testosterone. However, measuring actual reproductive success (i.e., how many offspring an animal sires) in a long-lived primate can take years and years. In the short term, I can use proxies for reproductive success such as social status and reproductive access to females – but in the long term, my goal is to determine the factors that affect actual reproductive success in geladas.
(Continued from page 9)
Rather than focusing on one group, I have been tracking paths of activity through which people create, frame, and interpret representations of social life. I spent 2002-3 at the Russian State Theatrical Academy, and have been following the 2003 cohort as they become professionals, visiting Moscow every year.

The research illustrates ways techniques for making representations also make categories such as “race” (which our Michigan colleagues in bioanth have shown to be fallacies) seem real. Several articles have resulted from this research. Since 2009, I have been exploring links among artistic techniques and scientific aesthetics. A forthcoming book and another documentary film will, among other things, explain how public performances of and rumors about testing “Psychic phenomena” produce social realities—during the Cold War, for instance, they contributed to producing the “Iron Curtain” itself.

To access publications and abstracts, please visit http://sitemaker.umich.edu/alainalemon/home

Romani Performance

Evidence for Prehistoric Settlements

(Continued from page 10)
“These results present evidence for early hunters on the Alpena-Amberley corridor, and raise the possibility that intact settlements and ancient landscapes are preserved beneath Lake Huron,” stated an article written by O’Shea and Meadows, featured online at the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences’ website. The two researchers plan to send a scuba-diving team and autonomous water vehicles to the sites to search for more detailed artifacts on the heavily sedimented lake floor.
## Calendar of Events

### January 23 - 24
**Michicogoan Conference**

A group of linguistic anthropologists from the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago convened in Ann Arbor to discuss a series of works-in-progress. Papers and presentations included an essay that examines the moral dimensions of indexing voice in social interaction (Webb Keane); a chapter draft that demonstrates how parallels in theatrical and paranormal methods helped cross and constitute Cold War barriers (Alaina Lemon); and a presentation of how people draw on variation in orthography and grammar to maintain diary-style blogs in the computer-mediated genre known as “dog blogging” (Robin Queen).

### February 1
**Anthropology Colloquium: The Re-embodied Voice, Mary Bucholtz**

Mary Bucholtz (UCSB) spoke on the topic of “The Re-Embodied Voice: Gender, Blackvoice, and White Bodies in Late-Modern Hollywood Film.”

### March 8
**Anthropology Colloquium: Fidelity to the Other, Miyako Inoue**

Miyako Inoue (Stanford) spoke on the topic of “Fidelity to the Other: The Invention of Stenography in Modernizing Japan.”

### March 12 - 13
**Semiotics Conference: If A Sunflower, in Turning Towards the Sun**

The conference, held in the Rackham building’s amphitheater, focused on sign activity/semiosis as constitutive and constructive of nature and culture. Among those who presented were Lenore Malen, Terrence Deacon, E. Valentine Daniel, and Paul Bouissac. See [http://sitemaker.umich.edu/peirciansemiotics.riw/home](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/peirciansemiotics.riw/home) for more information.

### March 27
**MAGA Conference: Is Boas Dead?! Four-field Anthropology in the 21st Century**

The purpose of this conference was to examine the vitality of four-field anthropology from our own place in time. Is it still viable and productive? Are conversations across the sub-disciplines still possible and desirable? What is the future of four-field anthropology as both a research methodology and pedagogy for classroom instruction? The conference aimed to generate substantive conversations about the place of four-field anthropology by approaching several topics using methodological and theoretical approaches from each of the sub-disciplines. Visit [http://sitemaker.umich.edu/maga/is_boas_dead__](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/maga/is_boas_dead__) for more information.

For more event information, visit our online calendar at [http://www.lsa.umich.edu/anthro/news_events/index.htm](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/anthro/news_events/index.htm)
On April 30th, we will continue our tradition of celebrating the achievements of our graduating concentrators and minors with a lunch in their honor at the Michigan Union. It is a great time for our seniors, their families, and our faculty to come together for a few hours of fun and recognition for the hard work our undergraduates have accomplished. On display will be posters designed by our Honors Anthropology seniors showcasing their thesis projects. The students will be excited to share their research with those who attend the reception.

April 30

Emily Martin (NYU) gave a lecture, entitled “‘Do not let yourself go at the table’ – Stabilizing the Subject in Experimental Psychology.”

March 29

Anthropology Colloquium: Do Not Let Yourself Go at the Table, Emily Martin

Caitlin Zaloom (NYU) will lecture on “God’s Money Managers: Living with Debt in Evangelical America” at 4:00pm in 210 West Hall.

April 5

Anthropology Colloquium: God’s Money Managers, Caitlin Zaloom

Undergraduate Reception and Honors Poster Session

The University of Michigan, as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, sex, color, religion, creed, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, or Vietnam-era veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions. Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to the Senior Director for Institutional Equity and Title IX/Section 504 Coordinator, Office of Institutional Equity, 2072 Administrative Services Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1432, 734-763-0235, TTY 734-647-1388. For other University of Michigan information call 734-764-1817.

Regents of the University Julia Donovan Darlow, Ann Arbor; Laurence B. Deitch, Bingham Farms; Olivia P. Maynard, Goodrich; Rebecca McGowan, Ann Arbor; Andrea Fischer Newman, Ann Arbor; Andrew C. Richner, Grosse Pointe Park; S. Martin Taylor, Grosse Pointe Farms; Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor; Mary Sue Coleman, ex officio
How You Can Help the Anthropology Department

Anthropology is committed to strengthening our program in many areas, such as:
- Graduate Fellowship and Field Work
- Research and Professional Scholarship for Faculty
- Undergraduate Program Enrichment

For more information about Anthropology priorities, see “The Vision” at http://lsa.umich.edu/alumni/vision&goals/depts

A new giving opportunity has been created to address all of the above, and more!

On the occasion of his retirement, and in honor of his 41 years of service to the University, we are pleased to announce the “Conrad Kottak Fund for Anthropology.”

As department chair for ten years, Conrad often dealt with compelling requests for financial assistance to support graduate and undergraduate students, interdisciplinary presentations, departmental colloquia, and numerous vital programmatic activities. A department chair needs the flexibility of having funds available to address the most urgent requests with a minimum of red tape. Thus, the “Conrad Kottak Fund for Anthropology” has been created to provide resources to be used at the chair’s discretion.

Donations to this fund will support all aspects of the department – undergraduate research and experiential learning, graduate student field research, colloquia featuring nationally and internationally known anthropologists, to name just a few.

Donations may be made by credit card or check payable to the University of Michigan. Please feel free to use the donation card provided at the end of the newsletter.
Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ $500  ☐ $250  ☐ $100  ☐ $50  ☐ $25  ☐ $

$ ______ Kottak Fund  (EID 315259  AG W LS01)
$ ______ Other  ____________________________
(please specify: undergraduates, graduates, field research, etc)

Name ____________________________________________
Address _________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
Phone ____________________________
E-mail ____________________________

☐ My check is made payable to the University of Michigan
- OR -

☐ Charge my gift to:
   ☐ MasterCard  ☐ Visa  ☐ AMEX  ☐ Discover

Account number _________________________________
Expiration date ___________________________
Signature ___________________________  Date signed: _________