18. Hunter-Gatheres' Metaphysics - does it exist?

16213 - Tlingit Cultural Harmonics: Principles and Practices Providing for Existential Maintenance and Optimization

Presentation tpye: Oral presentation

Author(s): Langdon, Steve J., Other / Andere

Harmony is a recurrent concept and trope that is both advanced by hunting and gathering peoples and utilized by anthropological interpreters to characterize relations among foraging people and other entities that occupy the same existence. The internal cultural perspective typically invokes both the presence of such arrangements and the necessity of their maintenance by certain human actions to the continuity of existence. This paper will explore the concept of cultural harmonics as the means through which Tlingit people think and act in various ways that rest upon a reflexive construction of what existential order is, how it is sustained and what humans must do to maintain and optimize that order.   Several principles are offered that demonstrate underlying mechanisms that align existential features into patterns in Tlingit thought that orient and prompt certain human actions. Tlingit cultural harmonics provide for both the recognition of certain patterned forms to existence and the prompt for certain types of human behaviors that provide types of convergence. Principles and practices that are identified and discussed include 1) correspondence and connection, 2) mapping and merging, 3) names and notations, 4) protection and nested linkages, 5) age and consumption, and 6) preferred states and optimization. One type of patterning concerns the perception of the life course and how human preferences for certain foods changes with age. The principle of this form of harmonic alignment is, for example, that older humans prefer the taste of older forms of food such as spawned out sockeye salmon and seagull eggs nearing hatching. Older people – older salmon – older seagull eggs. The cultural template which both organizes perceptions and generates human behavior is premised upon the necessity of critical types of action to maintain existential order and in some cases to optimize certain conditions within that order.

16171 - Relatives: Reflections on the Nayaka Cosmos - Metaphysics or Meta-Kinship?

Presentation tpye: Oral presentation

Author(s): Bird-David, nurit (University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel)

Since anthropology's early years, small-scale societies were taken to be kinship societies, their members real and classificatory kin, and the kinship register the key to understanding their institutions and lifeways. Kinship studies have had a spectacular comeback in recent decades, reclaiming the key position they had in anthropology's early days, not the least of their contribution being troubling the modern Euro-American sense of "being one" as "an individual" and exploring alternatives. In this presentation, I move on in this vein to trouble hunter-gatherers' sense of "being many", both "many" of the same kind (e.g., many humans) and "many" kinds (e.g., various human and other-than-human species). I do so with special focus on the South Indian forest Nayaka as platform for engaging with recent debates on indigenous ontologies. I argue that over and above the Western essentialist separation between humans and nonhumans that have been extensively debated today, the a-priori distinction between species as separate classes/categories/groups skews our understandings of the forager Nayaka cosmos. I suggest that the Nayaka idioms, practices and understandings of "being [many] relatives" can help us gauge their cosmos in alternative terms. The hunter-gatherers' cosmos, I suggest, may be best understood as kinship world.

16070 - Tjaka: Tradition in Anangu Thought Today

Presentation tpye: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Eickelkamp, Ute (University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia / Australien)*

For the Anangu in Australia's Western Desert, hunting and gathering have long ceased to be the primary mode of procuring food, and both their material culture and socioeconomic organization have changed radically since pastoralists and missionaries arrived in their homelands nearly a century ago. And yet people continue to identify existentially with the productivity of the bush and with their subsistence tools of old. Not only have these accrued new symbolic value (and capital) at the cross-cultural interface of contemporary living but Anangu men and women also feel morally obliged to adhere to tjaka, the customary laws of acting and interacting with the social and natural ecology. Based on my current ethnographic research with Anangu Christians, I explore some of the practices, feelings and thoughts associated with tjaka today.

16066 - SEEING, BEING AND KNOWING: THE RELATIONALITY OF SPECIES IN CHEWONG ANIMISTIC METAPHYSIS

Presentation tpye: Oral presentation

Author(s): Howell, Singe Lise (University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway / Norwegen)

Drawing on ethnographic material from Chewong, a hunting, gathering and shifting cultivating group of people in the Malaysian rain forest, I shall discuss how Chewong ontology and cosmology conflate with a comprehensive understanding of causal processes in 'nature' in which every object is a potential subject. Identity is a question of the particular physicality–interiority relationship in each case which is species-specific and which is manifested by the eye through which each perceives reality. I suggest that Chewong do not divide the world into human versus the rest of nature, but that they make a distinction between those species who have consciousness (ruwai) and those who do not. My discussion will be linked to a trend in contemporary anthropology that dissolves the division between humanity and nature; a trend that leads one to ask if the "anthropos" that has given the discipline its name, is destined to become an anachronism (cf. Ingold) . The ethnographic study of animistic ontologies raises important questions of the wider ramifications of our studies. Despite the fact that Chewong subjectivity cuts across species, this does mean that they are not Chewong-centric. I am going to argue against the current post-humanist vogue and for human exceptionalism.

15851 - In pursuit of the firefly: The poetics and politics of "lightscape" in the Jarawa forests.

Presentation tpye: Oral presentation

Author(s): Pandya, Vishvajit (DA-IICT, Gandhinagar, India / Indien)

Based on ethnographic work among the Jarawas (Angs of Andaman Islands) for over two decades, has pushed me towards exploring 'shifts' in Jarawa engagements with their lived space in the context of the cessation of their hostilities with the outside world and their increasing contact with the settler villages on the fringes of the Jarawa Reserve Territory. This paper addresses the problem of space and spatiality in historical and anthropological studies, from a larger and more sustained engagement with questions of state-indigene relations in the Andaman Islands. It seeks to draw attention to the ways in which concepts of space and spatiality are deeply embedded in contemporary debates on indigenous futures in the Andaman Islands as it is elsewhere. However debates around the community of the Jarawas of the Andaman Islands are often framed within polarized positions on their futures in the forest and futures in the settlement. Proponents of both positions seem to assume that the Jarawas have a clear 'either/or' position on their preferences for a life in a forest insulated from the settlements or for a life in the settlement outside the confines of the forest.

Jarawas however argue that the political/academic interventions on indigenous futures must engage with the problematic of indigeneity and spatiality not just in terms of land, territory, settlement and related rights and opportunities within it but also as part of a larger ontology of 'dwelling' that defines indigenous engagements with their lived spaces created around the idea of luminosity and darkness. For Jarawas there future is based on a nuanced notion of lightscape derived from idea of cosmology and environment.