

“Anthropology, Glocalization, Sexual Science & Global Ideology”

Americans called in sick today, no worries, *foreign anthropologists to the rescue.*

Okay “hot shot!” Take the spot *light:*

Anthropology, Sexual Science, and Global Ideology

Historical Foundations and Intellectual Lineages

Union of Saints

Introduction

The academic discipline of anthropology did not develop in isolation from the political, cultural, and ideological forces of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Early anthropological research was deeply intertwined with imperial expansion, racial classification systems, and emerging theories about human behavior and social organization.

Anthropology also intersected with other controversial fields of study, including the cataloging of human sexuality and the documentation of colonized populations through what later scholars described as **ethnopornography**. These practices often blurred the boundary between scientific inquiry and voyeuristic representation, reflecting broader imperial power structures.

Modern anthropology, particularly in its study of globalization, has shifted toward examining the flows of people, ideas, capital, and culture across national boundaries. Yet understanding these contemporary frameworks requires examining the historical foundations of the discipline and the ideological environments in which early anthropological theories developed.

I. Nineteenth Century Anthropology and Ethnopornography

In the nineteenth century, some branches of anthropology intersected with erotic documentation and the study of sexuality across cultures. These practices were sometimes referred to as **ethnopornography**, a term used to describe the eroticized observation and recording of colonized populations under the appearance of scientific research.

European observers frequently portrayed non European societies as sexually exotic or morally primitive. These depictions were circulated through photographs, travel narratives,

and anthropological reports. The resulting body of material often reflected the colonial gaze rather than objective scientific documentation.

Scholars note that anthropological work in this period frequently blurred the line between ethnographic study and erotic representation. Sexual behavior became a tool through which imperial researchers attempted to map racial and cultural hierarchies.

The Cannibal Club

One of the most controversial groups associated with these practices was an inner circle within the **Anthropological Society of London** during the nineteenth century. Informally known as the **Cannibal Club**, members included explorers, scientists, and colonial administrators.

Figures such as **Richard Burton**, a British explorer and translator, were linked to the group. Members reportedly collected explicit artifacts, writings, and imagery as part of their broader ethnographic investigations. Their activities illustrate how sexuality was sometimes framed as a scientific subject within Victorian anthropology.

Sexual Science and the Study of Love

Italian anthropologist **Paolo Mantegazza** studied what he called the “ethnology of love.” His research attempted to catalogue sexual customs across cultures. Mantegazza argued that scientific study should not recognize obscenity, stating that in science the concept of obscenity does not exist.

This position allowed early anthropologists and sexologists to examine sexual behavior across societies while claiming protection under scientific inquiry.

Secret Museums and Erotic Archives

During the nineteenth century, explicit artifacts collected from archaeological sites and colonial territories were often stored in restricted archives. For example, the British Museum created a special “Secret Museum” in the 1830s to house erotic artifacts from Pompeii and other regions.

These collections reflected a broader Victorian fascination with sexuality, secrecy, and classification.

Erotic Print Culture and Academic Exchange

Researchers have also noted that early anthropologists sometimes relied on the same underground print networks that distributed erotic literature. These channels were occasionally used to circulate anthropological theories and descriptions of sexual customs across Europe and colonial territories.

As a result, scientific research and erotic publishing sometimes shared overlapping distribution systems.

II. Anthropology, Colonial Power, and Racial Classification

Anthropological work during the nineteenth century often supported colonial power structures by portraying colonized populations as culturally or morally inferior. Sexuality became one of the key mechanisms used to reinforce these narratives.

Descriptions of sexual practices were frequently framed as evidence of supposed cultural primitiveness. These portrayals helped justify imperial authority by contrasting European moral norms with those attributed to colonized societies.

Scholars have argued that these representations were not merely isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern linking imperial knowledge production with racial hierarchy.

III. Anthropology and Globalization Theory

Modern anthropology has largely moved away from the colonial frameworks that shaped earlier research. Contemporary anthropologists frequently focus on **globalization**, studying how cultural, economic, and political systems interact across national borders.

Globalization is often defined as the increasing interconnectedness of societies through the movement of people, goods, information, and ideas.

Anthropologists studying globalization emphasize that cultures do not exist as isolated units. Instead, they are shaped through constant interaction within global networks.

Key Anthropologists and Globalization Theory

Several scholars have contributed influential frameworks for understanding globalization.

Arjun Appadurai

Appadurai introduced the concept of global cultural “scapes,” describing five interacting dimensions:

- Ethnoscapes (movement of people)
- Technoscapes (technology flows)
- Financescapes (global capital)
- Mediascapes (media and communication)
- Ideoscapes (political ideas and ideologies)

These frameworks describe the complex flows that shape global society.

Anna Tsing

Tsing's research examines how global capitalism interacts with local communities and natural resources. Her work highlights the concept of **friction**, referring to the uneven and often unpredictable interactions between global systems and local realities.

Ulf Hannerz

Hannerz developed theories about transnational cultural networks and described the world as increasingly functioning as a "single place" through interconnected social systems.

Aihwa Ong

Ong studies global governance and the development of transnational elite networks, including how global economic institutions influence political and cultural systems.

Néstor García Canclini

Canclini's work explores cultural hybridity and the ways global consumer markets reshape local identities.

Hillary Kaell

Kaell's research examines how religious communities, particularly North American Christians, navigate global networks and reinterpret religious practices within international contexts.

IV. The Global Local Nexus

Contemporary anthropologists emphasize that globalization does not simply erase local cultures. Instead, global systems interact with local traditions to create hybrid cultural forms.

This process is sometimes called **glocalization**, reflecting the merging of global and local influences.

Key themes in globalization studies include:

- Transnational communities
- Cultural hybridity
- Global economic networks
- Media and information flows
- Migration and diaspora

These approaches reflect anthropology's shift from studying isolated cultures to analyzing interconnected global systems.

V. Ideology, Race Theory, and Academic Debates

Modern academic debates surrounding race, law, and social structure include the development of **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**, a legal and intellectual movement that examines how laws and institutions can reproduce racial inequalities.

CRT scholars argue that racism can operate structurally within legal and social systems rather than solely through individual prejudice.

Prominent figures associated with CRT include legal scholars **Richard Delgado** and **Jean Stefancic**, whose work explores the relationship between law, race, and institutional power.

These debates continue to shape discussions about social policy, law, and education.

VI. Twentieth Century Ideologies and Scientific Authority

The relationship between scientific authority and political ideology has appeared throughout modern history.

For example, the Nazi regime incorporated pseudoscientific racial theories into state policy. A statement attributed to **Rudolf Hess**, deputy to **Adolf Hitler**, described Nazism as “applied biology.” This phrase reflected the regime’s attempt to frame racial ideology as scientific truth.

Such examples illustrate how scientific language and authority can be used to legitimize political ideologies.

Conclusion

The history of anthropology reflects the broader intellectual and political currents of the societies in which it developed. Early anthropological research was shaped by imperial expansion, racial classification systems, and attempts to catalog human sexuality and cultural difference.

Over time, the discipline has shifted toward studying global interconnectedness and the complex interactions between local cultures and global systems.

Understanding the historical development of anthropology is essential for evaluating modern theories about globalization, culture, and social organization.

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