

Spring 2004

# AnthropoLog

News from the University of Washington's Department of Anthropology

**In this issue:**

**Front Cover**

Note from the Chair

Ground-breaking Study of Behavioral Change and Female Genital Cutting in Africa

Alum Curtis Wienker Establishes Annual Undergraduate Awards

**Inside**

Archaeological Expedition to Sinai: The Unofficial Report by Professor Angela Close

Graduate Student Studies HIV Risk and Behavior in Kenya

Of Course: Anthropology 469 "Surfacing the Body Interior"

**Back Cover**

Staff Profile: Stephanie Cohn — Academic Counselor, Rhetoric Expert, Gardener Extraordinaire

Entrepreneurial Spirit Makes Department Holiday Bazaar a Success

Have You Visited the Anthropology Department Website Recently?



Bettina Shell-Duncan

## Ground-breaking Study of Behavioral Change and Female Genital Cutting in Africa

Anthropological research can play an instrumental role in helping us to understand how and why social change happens, as well as why it sometimes does not happen when circumstances seem to indicate that it should. When it comes to the highly-charged and controversial subject of female genital cutting in Africa, anthropology's contribution can be truly vital.

Female genital cutting (FGC), also known as female genital mutilation (FGM) or female "circumcision," refers to a set of practices involving the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia. People throughout much of Africa (as well as parts of the Middle East and Asia) have practiced FGC in a wide variety of contexts, and in many places, for a very long time. Although early-twentieth century colonial governments and Christian missionaries have long opposed this practice, campaigns to eradicate FGC did not achieve international scope until the 1970s, when a series of conferences began to frame the practice as an assault on women's health and well-being.

Despite decades of work, these global eradication campaigns have been generally unsuccessful. Recently, however, an organization in Senegal known as Tostan has initiated an intervention program which has resulted in the abandonment of FGC in over 1,000 villages. The Tostan intervention, a movement of education and empowerment in which entire communities publicly take collective anti-FGC pledges, is arguably the most successful anti-FGC program thus far. Efforts to replicate these results in Mali and Sudan, however, have failed. There is also no indication that the Tostan phenomenon has spread across Senegal's border into the Gambia—where an overwhelming majority continues to practice FGC—even though Gambians share many ethnic, cultural and religious characteristics with their Senegalese neighbors.

Why has a program that has met with such success in Senegal failed to motivate behavior change in other regions? This is the question that Bettina Shell-Duncan, Associate Professor of biocultural anthropology, will study in a new research project entitled, "Contingency and Change in the Practice of Female Genital Cutting: Dynamics of Decision-Making in Senegambia." Jointly funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), this three-year project represents the first time that the Cultural Anthropology Division of NSF and WHO have ever collaborated on funding. The grant includes a three-year postdoctoral fellowship for recent UW PhD Ylva Hernlund. The collaboration of Shell-Duncan and Hernlund has already yielded a co-edited volume, *Female Circumcision in Africa: Culture, Controversy and Change*, published in 2000.

Their research is a ground-breaking effort to study behavior change with respect to FGC. Drawing on multidisciplinary approaches to the study of behavior change, they will attempt to answer such key questions as: What is required to "set the stage" for change? Why are some individuals and families prepared to abandon or modify FGC, whereas others are not? What factors influence and motivate readiness for change?

"This type of research initiative is new for the World Health Organization," states Shell-Duncan, explaining that the organization primarily took an advocacy role in the past. "It is exciting to be involved at the outset as WHO lends their funding and reputation to research that has both theoretical and practical importance." ■

## Note from the Chair



Miriam Kahn

This spring newsletter is brimming with interesting things for you to read, including a fun story about Angela Close's archaeological adventures, the latest news about faculty and graduate student research, and a new feature that we think you'll enjoy. We're starting a regular column

called "Of Course," which will feature one of the courses currently being taught. In this way we hope to keep you abreast of the latest twists and turns in the teaching of anthropology. Depending on when you were part of the department, you may very well wonder whether this is still the same discipline you once knew and loved.

With all the news to share, I don't want to take up too much space here with a standard note from the chair, singing the praises of our current activities. But I do want to let you know a few things. We're currently interviewing some excellent candidates for two new hires, one in archaeology and one in sociocultural anthropology; we've just admitted next year's crop of graduate students, some of whom are so spectacular that we proclaimed we'd "lie down and die" for them; and, as all this occurs on the home front, faculty members continue to traverse the globe to present their work at national and international conferences.

But what I most want to communicate to you—without taking up any more room—is that I hope you enjoy the newsletter. And remember that we'd love to hear from you! ■

Curtis Wienker



## Alum Curtis Wienker Establishes Annual Undergraduate Awards

We have always suspected that Curtis Wienker was loyal to his alma mater. Each year, when he sent the department a donation, it appeared on a purple and gold Husky check—even today, several decades after he graduated from the UW. His accompanying notes entertain everyone in the office. Staff always want to know what the chair, Mimi Kahn, is chuckling about when she reads his letters. "He says we should use the money for beer for undergraduates," she once explained.

No wonder Wienker is a UW fan. His grandfather, who began his teaching career at the UW in 1911, was a professor of metallurgical engineering here for more than forty years. His grandmother graduated from the UW in 1914. Prior to the outbreak of World War II, his mother (who was, incidentally, president of the UW Women's Student Association) one day noticed an ad in *The Daily* for women's riflery turnouts and decided to go. A wise and fateful decision, because the riflery coach—a UW ROTC professor—would become Wienker's father!

An undergraduate at the UW in the 1960s, Wienker took a primate anatomy class from Professor Laura Newell. According to Wienker, the professor and class changed his life and inspired him to major in physical anthropology. He went on to graduate school, receiving his PhD from the University of Arizona in 1975. He then taught at the University of South Florida, where he also served as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and as the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. By the time he retired last year, he had published more than seventy articles and a book.

This year, thanks to Wienker's generosity, the department will permanently establish four annual "Wienker Awards" (\$250 each) for undergraduate distinction. Each June at our graduation festivities, awards will be given for the best undergraduate paper in the following categories: archaeology, biocultural anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, and senior honors thesis. Oh, and there will be enough left over for beer! ■



Angela E. Close

## Archaeological Expedition to Sinai: The Unofficial Report by Professor Angela Close

I had not wanted to do a field season in Sinai. I was, in the long dark of the night, convinced that it would all be a disaster. However, while such considerations might seem pressing and very real, the downside of receiving an NSF grant, as Professor Grayson wisely remarked, is that one then actually has to go and do the work.

And so, late one night in mid-June, 1995, I found myself on a flight, rapidly descending towards the Cairo airport. Bahay Issawi nobly met me at the airport and drove me into town, recounting happily how well arrangements were going for setting up the camp. We had long ago agreed that I needed two of his men, Daoud Mohamed, driver and mechanic without peer, and Ahmed Badawi, cook, back-up driver, and all-round surly soul. As we drove into Cairo, Bahay suggested that perhaps I needed a third helper and he had the very person in mind: his son, Yasser. The next day, I learned that, this being Sinai, I must also hire a guard. The University of Illinois expedition, after all, had their toilet-tents stolen, and few greater inconveniences can be imagined. And so there were four.

Cairo was bakingly hot, dusty, gritty, and, at \$16 a night, one can hardly expect air-conditioning. Nonetheless, it was pleasant. Tom Minichillo, UW graduate student, and I were the only guests in the Garden City House and had at our disposal all of the hotel's facilities, such as they are. I had never before been in Cairo in summer and I was entranced by the nights. The mornings were busy with getting things done before the heat of midday, the afternoons were long, soporific and uncomfortable, but the city reawoke in the evenings. At midnight, the shops were open, the streets were crowded, and all of the bridges were awash with people strolling, seeing and being seen, or simply watching the river. From a distance—from a riverside cafe with a glass of beer and a freshly grilled pigeon—Cairo strongly resembled Faerie.

6,000-year-old pastoralist village, map by Tom Minichillo



University of Washington graduate student mapping tomb



We were not, however, there only to enjoy the pleasures of warm Arabian nights, and, five days later, we dutifully headed out of town in a respectable Nissan pickup and a Land-Rover of such vintage that it would be protected under the antiquities laws of most countries.

El Qaa was a standard-issue, geological survey camp, centered upon the dining tent. Insofar as routine was possible, we settled rapidly into one. The kitchen staff awoke first, and I awoke when the effects of the previous night's *shisha* caught up with Ahmed Badawi's lungs. On mornings when he failed to cough on schedule, I simply overslept. Tom answered the call of his alarm clock at five and spread the pain to everyone else at quarter past; he normally received polite responses. The vehicles left camp at six in search of archaeology. There was an all-around feeling of failure if departure was as late as 6:10, and such tardiness was accordingly rare. As befits a survey season, most of our days were spent striding across the landscape, or scrambling up and down the gebels that make up so much of Sinai's surplus geology. The landscape is truly spectacular, but it is not kind to archaeologists. We soon learned that sites tend to exist on top of terraces, wadi-fans, or erosional remnants. Ascent, when possible, was always easier than descent, and one was not comforted by the thought, "I shall die on top of this gebel, because there is no way I can ever get down again."

Water, meanwhile, was everyone's obsession, and was carried everywhere in lumpy canteens that were resented for their weight when full and for their emptiness when light. Lunch was the same every day and, as a routine of excessive physical exertion was established, became a very serious business: bread, a hard-boiled egg (one each, or riots ensued), a piece of cheese each and one or two extra, a small tin of tuna to be shared, tomatoes, cucumbers, and woe betide Ahmed Badawi if he should forget the onion.

By three or half past in the afternoon, archaeology had lost its allure; in El Qaa, archaeology was not so much unalluring as quite impossible by midday. The evenings were occupied with endless cups of tea, the writing of notes, futile attempts to bathe, and even more futile attempts to cool off. Whatever vegetables Ahmed Badawi produced for dinner (we were a meatless camp) were devoured within minutes. By nine o'clock everyone had retired to their tents to curse the temperature. Attempted solutions to the problem included sleeping outside, sleeping on a wet mattress, sleeping in a wet T-shirt, and sleeping in the embrace of a wet towel. None of these solutions, even when applied cumulatively, was entirely successful.

Recently abandoned village



Bifacial point



Excavation crew 1998 (University of Washington graduate students Tom Minichillo [rear left] and Tim Allen [rear right])

Mapping and excavating a p...



With the departure of Bahay and the arrival of the polymath Petrie Professor Fekri Hassan, we transferred our efforts to the western side of El Qaa, of which memories are shrouded principally in heat. An initial attempt to reach the coast was thwarted by the discovery that an oil company had not merely privatized the coastal road, but had also laid pipelines across all possible routes of access to it. Daunted neither by this nor by my refusal to drive the overland route, Fekri led a hike over the mountains to the idyllic coastal oasis of Ras Abu Suweira—surveying, of course, along the way. The three lost members of the Coast Guard defending Ras Abu Suweira were shocked and baffled by our incursion into their palm-trees and properly demanded to see our security permits. Our permits, they were told, were in the car, which mollified them for the ten minutes it took to realize there was no car. Claims that the cars were two hours away on the other side of the gebel were received with appropriate skepticism, but duty had by then been done and the matter was pursued no further. We were later to return there by car, and the coast guards were relieved to find that we had permits after all. It was the only occasion on which we ever showed them, which was good, because it was also the occasion of our discovering that some geographically challenged cleric in Cairo had granted us freedom not of the Plain of El Qaa, but of the Beqaa Valley.

Even the wildest of field seasons must, however, end. Fekri returned to Cairo in his usual blaze of glory. The rest of us crowded illegally into the fronts of the pickups and drove off while the men tore down the camp as if we had never been. Cairo was still dusty and gritty and incredibly noisy, but I now appreciated that it was not what you could really call "hot." And many things are tolerable, so long as they are accompanied by the miracle of hot and cold running water. ■

## Graduate Student Studies HIV Risk and Behavior in Kenya

We often read about it in the newspaper or hear about it on the radio: HIV/AIDS has devastated large parts of sub-Saharan Africa. In some cases, women at a low risk for HIV contract the deadly virus—along with other STDs—from their husbands or boyfriends, who have themselves been infected by high-risk women (sex-workers and casual partners).

Amidst these bleak reports, however, you may not have heard that Matt Steele, UW graduate student in biocultural anthropology, has conducted a study of HIV risk and protective behaviors among a sample of over 500 men living in economically depressed areas of Nairobi, Kenya. Beginning in 2002, Steele collaborated with research groups at the University of Nairobi to better understand sexual risk behaviors in the context of poverty and transience.

In the study, Steele found that men were knowledgeable about HIV and its impact on themselves and their families. Over half of the men in the study knew four or more people who were infected with, or who had died from, HIV. Unfortunately, risky behaviors persisted, as few men reported consistent (100%) condom use, and nearly one in five reported having multiple sex partners during the period of the study. This work has intensified Steele's interest in rubrics for decision-making about risky sexual behavior, given the level of uncertainty in these men's daily lives and the myriad causes of extreme poverty and mortality in Kenya today.

Steele also conducted a pilot study to explore the potential of using microbicides (a topically applied product) to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV and other STDs. In this study, men used three topical microbicide formulations for a total of eight weeks. Men were amenable to using the microbicides and had few negative dermatological side-effects during the trial. Data from the study were used to support a recently-initiated clinical trial with Kenyan couples, which will assess the effects of men's use of microbicides on STD recurrence in their primary sex partners.

A grant from the National Institute of Health and a Fogarty International Foundation Fellowship funded his research. In addition to finishing his dissertation, Steele works on HIV and STD prevention projects in the developing world under the auspices of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Seattle. ■

Matthew Steele

pastoralist village



Janelle S. Taylor

### Of Course: Anthropology 469 “Surfacing the Body Interior”

What do medical imaging in the United States, witchcraft accusations in South Africa, organ theft in Brazil, Ayurvedic medicine in India, and the Society for Mutual Autopsy in nineteenth-century France all have in common?

The students in Janelle Taylor's Fall 2003 seminar, “Surfacing the Body Interior,” spent ten weeks grappling with this very question. They explored ethnographic studies of some of the different ways—high-tech, low-tech, and no-tech—that what lies hidden within the body is made manifest and known. The title of the course is also the title of a major review article that Taylor is preparing for the prestigious journal *Annual Reviews in Anthropology*. Teaching a course on the subject was, in her view, a way of bringing students into her research process. “The students and I really were exploring this together,” says Taylor. “I didn't have this all figured out ahead of time.”

Thinking about how and why people peer inside bodies is not a new preoccupation for Taylor, a medical anthropologist who has been in the Department of Anthropology since 1999. Her previous research has explored social and cultural dimensions of obstetrical ultrasound, a medical imaging technology familiar to many as the source of those blurry black-and-white prenatal “baby pictures” that show up everywhere—from baby albums to product advertisements and abortion-debate polemics.

The concept of surfacing the body interior, however, is a new one. “I am trying to ask questions in new ways,” says Taylor. “I'd like to see anthropologists who study high-tech medicine approach it in ways that allow us to draw connections among things that might, on the surface level, seem to have nothing in common.” The concept of “surfacing the body interior,” she believes, might help people think comparatively about ways of knowing the body.

In addition to those mentioned above, specific topics students thought about comparatively included: changing definitions of brain-death; controversies surrounding the origins of a human cell line widely used in biological research; tensions between the surviving kin of organ donors and organ procurement agencies; rumors of blood-stealing in East Africa; the National Library of Medicine's “Virtual Human Project” (in which an executed convict was transformed into a “virtual cadaver” posted on the Internet—see [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible\\_human.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible_human.html)); PET scanning and changing understandings of personhood; ultrasound imaging and the American abortion debate; scientific efforts to locate bodily evidence of criminality and homosexuality; sex-change operations; grooming and dress among the Kayapo Indians of Amazonia; and connections between autopsy and film in turn-of-the-century Italy.

“This class was one of the most stimulating classes I've taken,” one student commented. “Working together through the quarter to tie these diverse readings together was a wonderful way to ‘stretch’ as a class.” ■



#### Faculty Photos Top to Bottom

- 1 Professor Eric Smith
- 2 Professor Stevan Harrell
- 3 Assistant Professor Kathleen O'Connor
- 4 Professor Donald Grayson
- 5 Associate Professor Gerald Eck and Assistant Professor Benjamin Fitzhugh in background
- 6 Research Associate Professor James Feathers



Stephanie Cohn

## Staff Profile: Stephanie Cohn—Academic Counselor, Rhetoric Expert, Gardener Extraordinaire

Stephanie Cohn is the anthropology department’s academic counselor for undergraduates. Stephanie brings to her role many layers of experience with the department. Not only did her oldest daughter Amanda major in anthropology at the UW, but Stephanie took—and greatly enjoyed—many anthropology courses while completing a BA in English here in 1989.

Stephanie went on to also earn an MA in speech communication at the UW, employing the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Paul Ricoer, and Gerard Genette, among others, for her master’s thesis: “A Narrative Analysis of Rush Limbaugh’s Radio Rhetoric.” She is still fascinated by the way conservative speech’s use of story (especially Edenic myth) so often overshadows liberal speech’s use of argument. While pursuing her MA, Stephanie taught “Introduction to Public Speaking,” tutored in the English department’s Writing Center, and helped fellow graduate students revise their theses.

She and her husband now divide their time between Capitol Hill and Mason County, where she volunteers with the Master Gardener program. Using her modest rhetorical skills, she designs and teaches curricula for summer school programs. She also speaks to various garden shows and organizations, where she never shies away from any topic (“Wild Edibles” is most often requested), so long as she can sneak in a message she is passionate about: most of nature’s “pests” are beneficial in some way. It is pesticides that are the problem, she says.

Stephanie enjoys kayaking, bird-watching, the Seattle Opera, and, of course, anthropology students. ■

Please direct all corrections, questions, and inquiries to

**AnthropoLog**  
University of Washington  
Department of Anthropology  
Campus Box 353100  
Seattle, WA 98195-3100

[anthnews@u.washington.edu](mailto:anthnews@u.washington.edu)  
206-543-5240

This newsletter can also  
be found online at  
[www.anthro.washington.edu](http://www.anthro.washington.edu)

## AnthropoLog

University of Washington  
Department of Anthropology  
Box 353100  
Seattle, Washington 98195-3100

Non-Profit Organization  
US Postage  
PAID  
Seattle, Washington  
Permit No 62

Sociocultural graduate students Robert Ingenito and Laura Zanotti



From left to right, biocultural graduate student Masako Fujita, and sociocultural graduate students Trang Ta and Cheryl Alipio



## Entrepreneurial Spirit Makes Department Holiday Bazaar a Success

Members of the anthropology department demonstrated entrepreneurial savvy as they embarked on a new fund-raising venture: the first-ever, pre-holiday “Books, Baubles, and Baked Goods Bazaar,” held December 5 and 8, 2003. The colorful event attracted students, faculty, and staff from all over campus in search of unique holiday gifts, new and used books, and delicious baked goods made by departmental volunteers-turned-pastry chefs.

All items were generously donated by faculty and graduate students. These included textiles, jewelry, silk scarves, clothing, baskets, carvings, pots, photographs, and other items from all over the world. All proceeds—which totaled slightly more than \$3,000—will go to support department colloquia, graduate student attendance at professional conferences, and department brown-bag lunches with invited speakers.

The success of this first sale has inspired department members to make next year’s sale an even bigger and better event. As faculty and graduate students conduct their research around the globe, they will no doubt be on the lookout for appropriate items to donate next time. In the midst of institutional budget cuts, developing an entrepreneurial eye has become one way to creatively sustain the resources that support the intellectual life of our graduate students. ■

## Have You Visited the Anthropology Department Website Recently?

Check out [www.anthro.washington.edu](http://www.anthro.washington.edu), where we have two new sections that might interest you.

The first is **News and Events**, where each week we list University of Washington events, exhibits and seminars that are of anthropological interest. We also occasionally list interesting news items about our faculty, students and alumni.

Visit weekly and stay in touch.

The second new section is called **Friends and Alumni**. It includes links to on-line giving and forms you can download to support the anthropology department. You can also read all about the undergraduate and graduate student projects funded in part by friends and alumni.

We value your feedback and hope to make the website useful for you. Please let us know if there are any ways in which we can improve it. Feel free to e-mail the web master, Kathy O’Connor ([oconnork@u.washington.edu](mailto:oconnork@u.washington.edu)), with your suggestions. ■

## AnthropoLog Credits

### Faculty

Ann S. Anagnost  
Laada Bilaniuk  
Angela E. Close  
Gerald G. Eck  
James K. Feathers  
J. Benjamin Fitzhugh  
Donald K. Grayson  
James W. Green  
Stevan Harrell  
Darryl Holman  
Eugene S. Hunn  
Carol Jolles  
Miriam Kahn  
Charles F. Keyes  
Patricia Kramer  
Peter Lape  
Donna L. Leonetti  
Celia Lowe  
George MacDonald  
James D. Nason  
Laura L. Newell  
Kathleen O’Connor  
Arzoo Osanloo  
Devon Peña  
Lorna Rhodes  
Bettina Shell-Duncan  
K. Sivaramakrishnan  
Eric A. Smith  
Julie K. Stein  
Janelle S. Taylor  
Robert J. Wenke

### Staff

Michael Caputi  
Abraham Cherian  
Stephanie Cohn  
Ric Doike-Foreman  
Diane Guerra  
Catalina Hilo  
Catherine Zeigler

### Production

Jane Brem  
Michael Caputi  
Abraham Cherian  
Miriam Kahn  
Margaret Wizenberg

### Design

Timothy Turner: spring 2004  
Jim Montgomery: original