

Winter 2003

AnthropoLog

News from the University of Washington's Department of Anthropology

In this issue

Front Cover

Letter from the Chair

A New Look

Shedding Light On Mormon Scripture

Inside

New Faculty

Green Receives Distinguished Teaching Award

Graduate Student News

Faculty News

Undergraduate Student News

New Staff

Back Cover

Fur Seal, Fur Seal, What Do You See? I See Mike Etnier Looking at Me!

Speaking to "Culture" Beyond the Academy

2002 Donors to Anthropology

Thomas Murphy



Shedding Light On Mormon Scripture

It's not every anthropologist whose publications inspire supporters to turn out for candlelight vigils. Then again, not every anthropologist uses genetic data to challenge central theological tenets of the church to which he belongs.

Thomas Murphy, a doctoral candidate in anthropology at UW, caused a furor within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) by publishing research that used genetic data to challenge the Book of Mormon's claim that Native Americans are descendants of a heathen tribe of ancient Israel. Murphy's goal was not to discredit the Book of Mormon, but rather to argue that it should be regarded as scripture rather than history. Local leaders of the LDS Church, however, considered Murphy's conclusions evidence of apostasy, and scheduled a disciplinary council in December 2002 to consider his excommunication. Supporters from both within and outside the Mormon community rallied to his support, planning candlelight vigils in Lynnwood, WA; Salt Lake City, UT; Logan, UT; Portland, OR; Los Angeles, CA; Washington, DC; and Mesa, AZ. The case garnered national media attention, in the wake of which disciplinary was indefinitely postponed. Supporters then cancelled all but the vigils in Salt Lake and Logan while Murphy invited local supporters to his home in Edmonds for a reception. Late in February 2003, Matthew Latimer, president of the Lynnwood, WA stake, permanently halted the disciplinary action.

Murphy, a direct descendant of one of the early Mormon families, chairs the anthropology department at Edmonds Community College, where he's also an instructor and advises the Native American students. "To be Mormon and an anthropologist," says Murphy, "is a self-contradiction, an oxymoron." Skepticism and an appreciation of the cultural construction of truth drive anthropological inquiry, while missionary zeal and an exclusive claim to truth fuel Mormon growth.

Mormonism's distinctive claims rest in the Book of Mormon, a text Joseph Smith claimed to translate from a set of golden plates he found in a New York hillside in the 1820s. The text claims that the Americas were settled by lost Hebrews, and that the ancestors of Native Americans had destroyed an ancient white race of mound builders. Mormon apologists have long searched for archaeological evidence to support this claim, but with little success; many hoped that new DNA evidence on the ancestry of Native Americans might settle the issue in their favor. Interest intensified in April 1998 when an announcement at the meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in Utah revealed a Native American mtDNA lineage (X) that was also found in Europe and the Middle East. In March 2000, Brigham Young University launched a multimillion-dollar study to compile a database of DNA and genealogical records that could help unravel human population history.

Later that spring, Brent Metcalfe, editor of the electronic-journal Mormon Scripture Studies <http://mormonscripturestudies.com>, approached Murphy with an offer. A Mormon philanthropist was willing to provide a small stipend to a researcher who would conduct a literature review of the genetic research to date and reflect on its implications for Native American origins. Upon completion and peer review, the journal would publish the essay. Murphy accepted the offer and by August 2001 his essay appeared online. In May 2002, an updated version appeared in the anthology American Apocrypha. Contrary to Mormon expectations, the genetic research pointed to a Northeast Asian origin of indigenous North, Central, and South Americans. Even the X lineage had been discovered in Siberia in an intermediate form between that of Middle Eastern peoples and Native Americans.



Miriam Kahn

Letter from the Chair

Humans inhabit a world full of difference. As anthropologists, our job is to help one another better understand that world. Our professional mandate has become more pronounced since September 11th – we now think more deeply about the relevance of our research, teaching, and service. I'd like to share with you what some of my colleagues have been doing that not only tries to understand, but also makes, "a world of difference."

Some faculty members are involved in furthering international collaboration. Peter Lape set up an agreement with the new East Timor government whereby foreign researchers share their data with the East Timor scientific community, cultural resource managers, and the public. This past summer, Charles Keyes accompanied the now former UW president to Thailand and Vietnam; designed to build on existing relations between the UW and institutions in these two countries, the visit help expand research collaboration and exchanges among faculty and students.

Other colleagues have been inspiring teenagers. Ben Fitzhugh helps train Alaskan village high school students as archaeology crew members while they learn about their village's heritage and hone their archaeological skills. Peter Lape works with young people in urban South Seattle as they find out how archaeology lets them uncover the unwritten past of their neighborhood.

Some faculty members have been called on for their expertise. Janelle Taylor's phone has been ringing as a result of an article she wrote regarding the "culture" concept in Anne Fadiman's popular book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. (The book is widely used to teach about difference and culture in the US.) Taylor has been invited to the annual conference of Washington State appellate court judges to lead a discussion of the book, the publication judges selected as their required reading for this year.

Jim Nason has been asked to help with creating the Comanche Nation Museum, while he's also assisting with policies and exhibition guidelines for the new Squaxin Island Tribal Museum, library, and archives. The World Health Organization (WHO) has not only funded Bettina Shell-Duncan's research on decision-making in female genital cutting in The Gambia, Africa, but now wants to make her research a centerpiece for WHO as they extend her ideas to other countries.

Some colleagues' work reaches an audience of millions. Donna Leonetti's research on grandmothers, which brings attention to their important role in the health and survival of their grandchildren, was featured in an article on the front page of the New York Times (Science Times – Nov. 5, 2002). It turned out to be the most popular article readers e-mailed to others for over a week.

And still other colleagues make a lasting impact on a handful of UW students. Lorna Rhodes invited prison employees to talk in her "Medicine in America" course and, as a result, the students were invited to visit the prison, including the maximum-security unit (normally not open to the public). The students found the visit eye opening beyond anything they could have imagined.

Our AnthroLog newsletter will bring you up-to-date on what still others, including students and alumni, are doing. We hope you enjoy it!

Miriam Kahn, Chair

A New Look

With this issue, AnthroLog takes on a new – and we hope improved – look. This past autumn, the department worked with Jim Montgomery, a recent graduate of the School of Art's Visual Communication Design program, to create a new visual identity for the department's newsletter. We are pleased and hope you will enjoy the results. Our thanks go to Jim for an excellent job!

What's more, you will be seeing a bit more of us as the newsletter will be published three times each year: Autumn, Winter and Spring quarters. Look for us again late Spring.

New Faculty

We welcome Arzoo Osanloo, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Law, Societies, and Justice Program. Osanloo arrived at the University of Washington in September 2002, having just completed her PhD from Stanford University's Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology.

Her dissertation (entitled "At the juncture of Islam and republic: Socio-legal constructions of women's rights in Iran") focuses on women's everyday discourses and perceptions of rights in Iran's Islamic Republic, a unique and innovative blend of theocracy and a republican state. Between 1999 and 2000 Osanloo spent a year in Tehran collecting data for her research project. She examined the social, political, and legal relations that mediate conceptions and articulations of rights among urban, middle-class women in post-revolutionary Iran.

In addition, Osanloo has conducted fieldwork in Pakistan and France. Her interests also have a broader scope; that is, international, human rights movements.

Before, and while, attending graduate school in anthropology, Osanloo practiced asylum and refugee law as well as immigration law in Washington, DC and San Francisco. For her, US asylum law is one of the domestic applications of international human rights law.

Osanloo received her law degree at The American University, Washington College of Law, Washington, DC in 1993. Her studies focused on international human rights law and she participated in the International Human Rights Law clinic; these circumstances provided opportunities with many interesting projects, such as lobbying Congress to ratify the ICCPR (International Convention on Civil and Political Rights), which it did in 1992.

Osanloo's legal training and professional experiences sparked an interest in the interplay between international and national legal systems and their effects on "cultural" practices at the state and local levels. These interests ultimately led her to enter the field of anthropology. "Broadly interested in theorizing rights through the idea of 'rights-talk' (a term I borrow from Law Professor, Mary Ann Glendon), I focus on how rights-talk prescribes a particular kind of subjectivity, the rational, self-possessed individual endowed with free will and choice," states Osanloo. She is interested in how the idea of universal human rights creates, and requires, this sort of subjectivity, and what it means in different societies.

Osanloo will teach courses that relate to her interests in human rights and people's lived experiences of "rights." This year her courses are:

- The Law and Politics of International Human Rights (an introductory course on human rights)
- Women's Rights and Politics in Muslim Societies (women's experiences of rights in Muslim societies)
- Seeking Refuge: Perspectives on US Asylum Law (the effects and implications of US asylum laws)

Next year she will also teach a graduate seminar that examines gender, theories of the state, and nationalism. Osanloo's scholarship will, indeed, enhance the offerings of the Anthropology Department and the Law, Societies, and Justice Program.

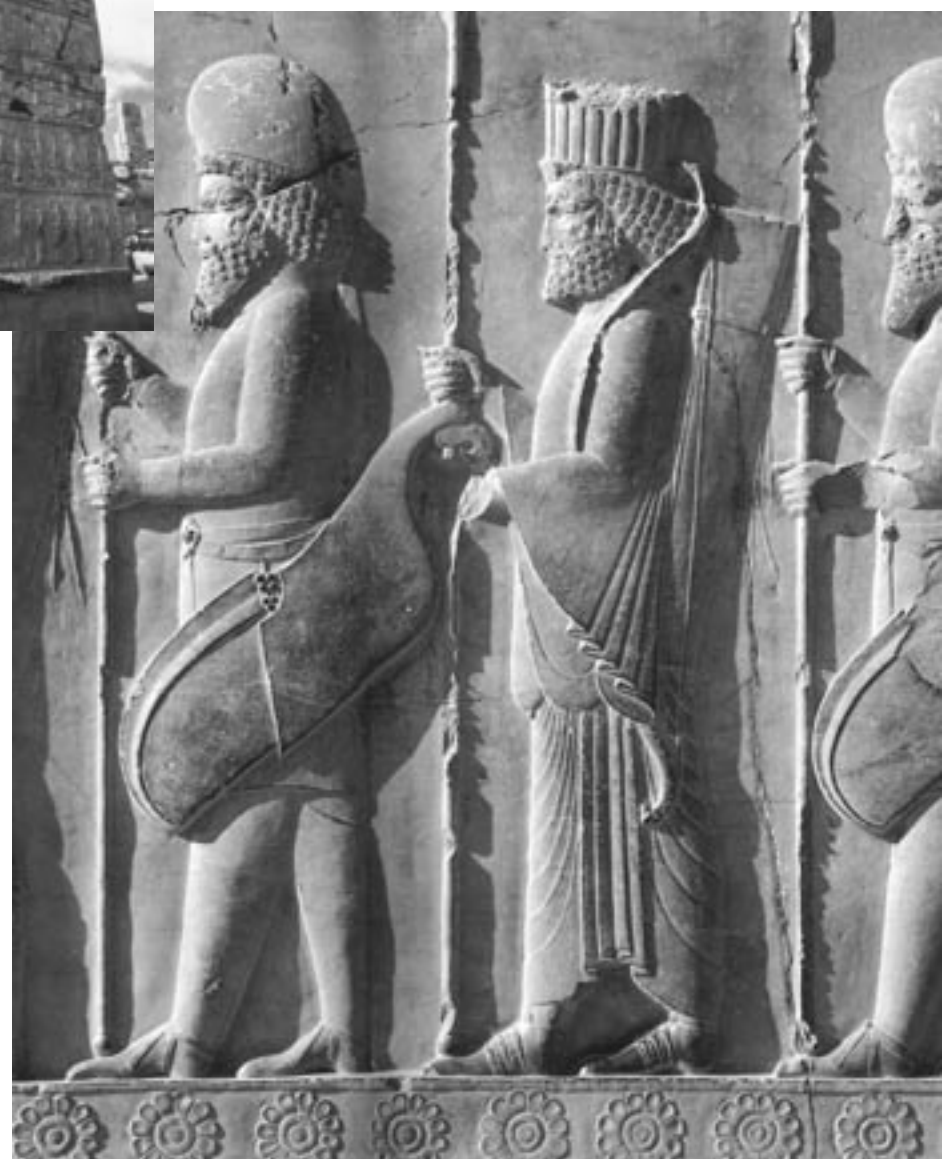


Arzoo Osanloo, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Law, Societies, and Justice Program

Southern Doorway to the Hall of a Hundred Columns, Persepolis, Persia



Below, also cover background image, detail of Persian and Median Guards, Doorway to the Hall of a Hundred Columns, Persepolis, Persia. Photography by A. Alizadeh



Green Receives Distinguished Teaching Award



James Green

Bringing "death" to life may be difficult – unless you are Dr. James W. Green, Senior Lecturer in anthropology and recipient of one of the University's Distinguished Teaching Awards last spring. Green is best known for two of his large courses: "Introduction to Anthropology," drawing nearly 400 students, and "Comparative Study of Death," enrolling about 125 students.

Green says the death course is his favorite because it combines so much of anthropology – bones, burials, rituals, music, afterlife beliefs, cultural variations, and challenging ethical issues such as physician-assisted suicide or the rapidly expanding market in body parts. Green keeps the course upbeat, beginning each lecture with a cartoon. Culled from many sources, the cartoons are sometimes supplied by students.

The introductory course uses a nontraditional teaching model. Rather than the usual survey or "gateway" to the field, it emphasizes topics that would be of interest to students from a variety of backgrounds and who may know nothing about anthropology. The course emphasizes anthropological "hot topics" including:

- what makes us distinctive among the primates
- why races exist and why people often confuse race and ethnicity
- gender variations and why, in some cultures, people assume there are more than just two
- why so-called "traditional family values" no longer seem to apply
- why people have such a range of religious beliefs and practices

According to Green, the award was possible because of the tremendous support from the department over a number of years as well as the high quality of students attracted to the UW and to anthropology. Kudos to Green and his exceptional efforts!

Graduate Student News

January to July 2003 finds **Emily Jones** in Bordeaux, France. With the support of a Chateaubriand Fellowship, she's conducting her dissertation research.

Having just completed her MA in anthropology, **Carrie Kuehn** is working on her MPH in epidemiology and plans to finish June 2003.

Mike Etnier fulfilled all requirements for his PhD with a dissertation titled "The effects of human hunting on northern fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) migration and breeding distributions in the Late Holocene."

Spending two months in Taipei for pilot research during the summer of 2002, **Tzu-i Chuang** interviewed many students and professionals about their experience of, and motives for, learning English and traveling or studying abroad. Her data collection revealed how English fluency has become an indicator of perceived intelligence and success as well as a prerequisite for social advancement. Conducting this pilot research provided insights into the construction of cosmopolitan identity in Taiwan and, as a result, she developed a much clearer, and more comprehensive plan, for her dissertation research.

With awarded pre-dissertation funds, **Amber Earley** traveled to Chihuahua, Mexico to collect ceramic samples for thermoluminescence dating which will tell her when the ceramics were made. She also used the funds to purchase lab supplies and machine time in the lab.

M. Aksel Casson used his pre-dissertation funding to arrange travel to and from Istanbul, Turkey. While there he commuted between two universities where he worked with faculty to secure data for his dissertation. Eventually he formed a partnership with Dr. Emel Geckinli, an archaeometrist at Istanbul Technical University, with whom he will pursue issues surrounding early metallurgical technology in Anatolia.

With support from a department pre-dissertation pilot research grant, **Jennie Deo** traveled to the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education in Washington, DC for three weeks. There she studied with Dr. Harry Alden (who she described as "a fantastic optical microscopist!"), to learn archaeological wood and charcoal identification under high magnification light microscopes and a scanning electron microscope. These analytical skills are imperative to her proposed research. This trip enabled her to analyze a small set of Alaskan archaeological plant remains before beginning her own work.

The anthropology department pre-dissertation research funds supported **Melissa Poe's** pilot study in Oaxaca, Mexico during the summer of 2002. This study initiated an exploration of the linkages of land tenure, political participation, and identity as they intersect with environmental conservation and "sustainable development" projects in rural communities. The experience helped her solidify dissertation research objectives as well as establish connections with pertinent people for future return trips.

As a PhD Candidate in archaeology, **Tom Minichillo** is in Cape Town, South Africa conducting dissertation research on a Wenner-Gren grant studying Middle Stone Age lithic technology and modern human origins. Along with his wife and two sons, he is enjoying the southern hemisphere. In March they'll move to Mossel Bay to work on a NSF-funded joint American-South African excavation.

Rebeca Rivera used her pre-dissertation research funds to locate a field site and conduct preliminary interviews in the state of San Luis Potosi, Mexico. She visited the ejidos of La Tinaja and Ranchito de Cornonados. In those communities she conducted research on agroecology, common property resource management, and the development of cooperatives in the context of neo-liberal reform.

In December 2002 **Dawn Neill** conducted pilot dissertation research with the tribal Khasi of Meghalaya state and the Bengali of Assam state in NE India. The research consisted of several qualitative interviews that provided valuable information on eating practices and household dynamics within each population. Data collected during the department-funded pilot research will facilitate the design of culturally-appropriate survey instruments for investigating nutrition and parental investment in these populations.

Sam Yum was in Seoul, Korea for the summer to research constructions of national and cultural identity at an official level. Limited access to Korea's National Museum system, his intended focus, led to another project in the form of the Republic of Korea's Bid Committee for the 2010 World Expo. The bid has since faltered, but he gained valuable field experience, new contacts, and a dose of World Cup fever.

Faculty News

As an invited scholar, **Donna Leonetti** attended an international conference on the role of grandmothers in evolutionary perspective held in Delmenhorst, Germany, September 2002. She contributed an analysis showing grandmothers' positive effects on the number, survival, and growth of their grandchildren in two ethnically distinct groups with differing kinship systems in NE India, the matrilineal Khasi and patrilineal Bengali.

Anthropology professor **Donald Grayson** has been elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He is the only UW faculty member among 291 people elected for 2002. Fellows are chosen for "their efforts toward advancing science or fostering applications that are deemed scientifically or socially distinguished." Grayson, who has taught at the UW since 1975, was honored for his methodological and theoretical contributions to North American and European prehistory, paleoecology and zooarchaeology.

Undergraduate Student News

Angelita Chavez keeps active with the legislative campaign for a new Washington State law. The legislation would establish in-state higher education tuition rates for children of undocumented immigrants who have life-long residency in the state.

Working with the Burke Museum Archaeology Department, **James Taylor** helps improve the storage conditions and accessibility of ancient basketry recovered from wet archaeological sites. University of Washington archaeologists retrieved hundreds of basketry fragments from a site in the Skagit Valley in the 1960s. To preserve the fragments, archaeologists soaked the pieces in polyethylene glycol (commonly referred to as PEG), and stored them on flat paperboard. This method, however, restricts research access since the objects can't be handled without incurring damage. In order to provide better access, Taylor is attaching the fragments to a see-through crepe cloth that will be suspended in a clearview box, allowing researchers to see the basketry from all sides. Taylor's project was initiated by the work of UW archaeology graduate student **Bob Kopperl** who researched new storage techniques at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology last year.

New Staff

Abraham Cherian joined our department as Program Assistant in September 2002. This was a reunion, of sorts. As Cherian received his degree from the University of Washington (BA, 1999; anthropology major), he reunited with faculty and staff as well as became reacquainted with the curriculum. In addition, his background and experiences provide a good match for our program's needs.

Wanting to apply his recent knowledge, Cherian decided to go to London, England following graduation. Though he worked at a university as a Course Administrator for five months, his primary motivation for "going across the pond" was to observe, and participate in, the diasporic South Asian (British Asian) community.

After London, having initially consulted with "our" Prof. K. Sivaramakrishnan, Cherian went to India to work with two environmental non-governmental organizations. He first worked with the National Fishworker's Forum in Trivandrum, Kerala for three months; there he conducted a study of the fuel needs among fishing people in India using qualitative and statistical data and methods. This study was subsequently published and distributed to union and government officials. Later he went to Bangalore, Karnataka to work with the Environment Support Group (ESG) for three months where he conducted research on the environmental, historical, and legal aspects of iron-ore mining in Kudremukh National Park in order to support ESG's campaign to stop mining.

At UW Cherian orchestrates the coordination of course scheduling, curriculum changes, newsletter production, and book orders. Amid a myriad of other support services he provides for the students, staff, and faculty, Cherian manages to sit in on a graduate level seminar taught by Prof. Ann Anagnost. His perpetual interest in learning serves our department, and him, well.



Staff Photos Top to Bottom

- 1 Catalina Hilo
- 2 Catherine Zeigler
- 3 Stephanie Cohn
- 4 Diane Guerra
- 5 Michael Caputi
- 6 Abraham Cherian
- 7 Ric Doike-Foreman

Support Anthropology

Consider making a donation to the Friends of Anthropology Fund.

Fur Seal, Fur Seal, What Do You See? I See Mike Etnier Looking at Me!

What happens to northern fur seal populations when humans hunt them for hundreds of years? Not much unless the hunting is on a commercial scale, is the surprising answer that emerges from Mike Etnier's research on Northwest Coast northern fur seal populations.

Etnier, who is a recent UW anthropology PhD and now employed at the National Marine Mammal Laboratory of NOAA Fisheries in Seattle, has combined zooarchaeology with modern population studies to explain why the northern fur seal has expanded its breeding range over

2,000 miles in the past 35 years. Building on the work of other researchers (most notably R. Lee Lyman, another UW anthropology alumus), Etnier has demonstrated that for northern fur seals, this expansion represents the reestablishment of an old pattern of distribution – one that remained largely unaffected by human hunting practices until the commercial fur trade began in the late 18th century.

One lesson we may draw from this is that, for hundreds of years previously, the harvesting of fur seals had no appreciable effect on the health of fur seal populations. Does this prove that Native American hunters intentionally practiced resource conservation? Not necessarily. But, unlike the results of several other zooarchaeological studies from this department (by Jack Broughton, Lisa Nagaoka, and Mike

Cannon), Etnier's research does show that the subsistence harvest of fur seals on the Washington coast appears to have been sustainable for hundreds of years.

The research may also hold lessons for those engaged in fur seal conservation biology. The fur seal population is currently listed as “depleted” relative to estimates of “pristine” population levels. But, if fur seals were breeding on or near the Washington coast until the late 18th century, estimates of so-called “pristine” population levels based on data from the middle of the 19th century are likely to be inaccurate. If the archaeological data were taken into account, the goals of the fur seal management plan might change considerably.

Speaking to “Culture” Beyond the Academy

What do we mean when we say “culture?”

The question might seem purely academic. The concept of “culture,” however, carries on a very active life of its own, well beyond the confines of anthropology departments. How “culture” gets defined in these contexts carries very real consequences for ordinary people in their everyday lives.

Consider, for example, the ways that “culture” is invoked within international law. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly in 1989), legally binds ratifying states. One of the designated rights declares that a child belonging to recognized indigenous and minority groups must be able “to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”

A number of professional medical organizations want to articulate and promote “cultural competence.” That is, medical education would include “culture” among the various “competencies” it imparts to budding physicians.

In turn, the doctors would be better prepared to deal with differences they encounter in their medical practice.

What “culture” means in these contexts matters enormously. Medicine, law, and science are examples of the “human sciences;” they produce various kinds of expert *knowledge about* people, which becomes *power over* people insofar as it is used to organize and manage their actions. Who gets to speak for “culture,” and whose voices might be silenced? Is “culture” understood to be something innate, essential, and unchanging? Is this vision of “culture” divorced from history, politics, and economy? As anthropologists we have much to add to these conversations about “culture.” We face an opportunity – and arguably a serious responsibility – to make our own most careful, thoughtful, and nuanced reflections speak to these, and other, “apparitions of culture.”

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