

## PART THREE:

### Anthropologists and Indigenous Peoples: Conflicts and Collaborations

#### Session 9

“Reflecting on Patterns of Anthropological Relationships with Indigenous Peoples” Part Two

#### **Morphy, Howard. 2006. “The Practice of an Expert: Anthropology in Native Title.” *Anthropological Forum*, 16 (2): 135-151.**

This article provides us with some important background information on how the Australian courts define, and circumscribe, the role of the anthropological expert called to provide evidence and interpretation. In the process, Morphy provides us with an inside view of the work of anthropologists in the Australian legal system with respect to Aboriginal land claims (i.e., Native Title).

1. This article would seem to be showing us some of the ways that anthropological politics, and advocacy, are held at bay by the nature of the system. Do you agree?
2. What are the key features of the state’s definition of the “expert”?
3. Note where “continuity of tradition” appears in the article, and its relevance to court cases about Aboriginal land claims.
4. Note also the importance of the Native Title Act.
5. In Morphy’s view, what are the three main components of anthropological expertise?
6. How is there a continuum between “fact” and “opinion”?
7. What are “facts” that *cannot* be documented?
8. How do anthropologists establish the connection between certain given Aboriginals and a given land area?
9. In which sense are anthropologists set up to actually do the work of the court in any given case?

#### **Peace, Adrian. 2003. “Hindmarsh Island and the Politics of Anthropology.” *Anthropology Today*, 19 (5): 1-2.**

With this article, we now see that providing “expert” testimony is not necessarily free of even extreme political contention.

1. Make a note of the main actors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in the saga of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge affair.
2. Why was the Hindmarsh Bridge banned by the Federal government? Not the role of secret testimony.
3. How were anthropologists pitted against anthropologists in this legal conflict over Hindmarsh?
4. In which ways were the fates/fortunes of Aboriginals and anthropologists tied up with one another in this story?
5. Was anthropology being punished by dominant elements of the society, and if so, why?
6. Peace calls for greater anthropological advocacy on behalf of anthropology itself: what kind, and why?

#### **Weiner, James F. 1999. “Culture in a Sealed Envelope: The Concealment of Australian Aboriginal Heritage and Tradition in the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Affair.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 5: 193-210.**

When trying to understand this particular article’s central argument, it is best to start with its conclusions on page 206. The central dynamic at work in this piece is the contrast/conflict between the courts’ stress on the truth of tradition as being something practiced over time and widely recognized within a community, versus tradition as belief held by a few and used almost as a weapon in a process of cultural revitalization/resurgence. The anthropologist providing expert testimony is thus caught between two

different poles of what is “Aboriginal tradition,” that of the courts, and that of some of the people which the anthropologist defends. This can exacerbate tensions within a community, while propelling the anthropologist into a conflict between a section of that community and larger political and economic interests. In the larger scheme of things, Weiner argues that the legal system, and economic development, provided not just the arenas for Aboriginal knowledge to be deployed, they practically created the contours and redefinition of the content of that knowledge.

1. Who are the “proponent women” and the “dissident women” and how do they differ?
2. What is “secret women’s business”?
3. What does Weiner mean by “culture in a sealed envelope”?
4. Note in the early part of the article where “invention” and “cultural revitalization” appear to be coupled.
5. How do various Acts, and courts, use terms that are not reflected in anthropology (and yet call upon anthropological knowledge to validate them)?
6. Exposing knowledge in order to hide it? Does this make sense given what you read in the article?
7. What are the differing points of what, and when, something is of Aboriginal significance, and what makes it significant?

**Field, Les W. (with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe). 2003. “Unacknowledged Tribes, Dangerous Knowledge: The Muwekma Ohlone and How Indian Identities are 'Known'.” *Wicazo Sa Review*, Fall: 79-94.**

1. What are the reasons indicated, or suggested, by Field for his position as an advocate for the recognition of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe?
2. What power does anthropology have, and from where does it derive that power?
3. Field talks about the complicity between anthropology and bureaucratic systems of power – in this connection, see Question #9 for the Morphy article above.
4. Anthropology was advocacy from its inception in the U.S., just not on the side of indigenous people. How would you defend that statement given material in this article? (Also note, once again, the discussion of evolutionism.)
5. How does the U.S. Federal recognition process itself constitute one way that resurgent indigenous identities advance themselves? (Think of Weiner’s article above as well.)