

TEC 154 2014S, Class 31: Biopiracy (1)

Overview

- Preliminaries.
 - Admin.
 - Questions.

Preliminaries

Admin

- Today's note takers: PG and EG.
- Reminder: You should be meeting with a library lab person asap.
- Today's guest lecturer is the legendary Monty Roper.

Upcoming EC

- Convo Wednesday: Philip Deloria, Professor of History and Native American Studies, University of Michigan.
- <http://www.pioneerweekend.com>

Topics

- DB, CO, and LY: In-car technology
- CC and PG: Digital vs. analog recording
- EG and MK: Film/video
- TD, EL, and DS: Voting machines
- SA, DP, and JV: Representations of technology in comics
- FC and AF: Anti-immigration technology

Key Points from EG

- So far we've looked at different kinds of knowledge/ownership of knowledge.
- Cultural anthropology is the study of culture through a social science lens. -i.e. observing traditions and social interactions
- Beliefs and behaviors that characterize a human group. Culture = beliefs and behaviors that characterize a group of people, anthropology is interested in the whole of humanity.

- Political Ecology and by extension cultural ecology is everything that has to do with feeding yourself and interacting with the land.
- Political economy of natural resource management, but power relations outside the state are happening everywhere all the time and need to be interrogated.
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge [TEK]:
 - knowledge that comes from working in a certain geographical area
 - Shaman- broad term = part time religious specialists (vs full time priest) religious specialists in small scale societies. one of few specialized statuses that exist.

PURPOSE of TEK - how do we see it manifested in societies and culture? (purpose/function/practice)

- enables manipulation or understanding or response to natural environment.
- hunting (subsistence)
- rice/field [raised field] agriculture as long as 700 years ago = advanced chiefdom cultures required to achieve this.
- medicine
- interaction with the spirit world = living a good life/being a moral person.
- all these knowledges are intertwined, there's no separating spiritual from technical.

Background

Why did Sam invite Roper?

- Different sense of "applied knowledge".
- Relates back to our models of intellectual property; one of the current challenges.
- Reflect back on where the genes for genetic engineering sometimes come from.
- "TEK" as Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Monty has taught across from Sam's office so much that Sam wanted to see him teach at least once.

Introduction

- Roper is a cultural anthropologist.
 - Very few of us have taken anthro.
 - So it's important to know a bit about what he does.
- Cultural anthro: Study of human cultures through a social scientific lens.
 - There are also socio-biologists
- What is culture, though?
 - Traditions
 - Social interactions between people (within a group?)
 - *Beliefs and behaviors that characterize a group*
 - Includes rituals - Things we've done, even if we don't know why we do them.
 - Traditions.
 - E.g., We have cultural knowledge about how our classroom works.

- "You can't have a culture of one" - it's groups
- Anthropologists study everything, just from a different lens
 - Even science
 - Interested in the whole of humanity.
- Within Cultural Anthropology, Roper studies Political Ecology and perhaps Cultural Ecology
 - How do human groups make use of their natural environment?
 - Subsistence
 - How do they manage their needs?
 - How does that affect their social interactions?
 - How does that affect their political interactions?
 - "Feeding yourself and interacting with your land."
 - Political ecology: Political economy of resource management
 - Looking at environmental degradation / degradation of natural resources
 - Why would a group decide to do more foresting than they need?
 - Or choose a behavior that pollutes their land.
 - Effects of globalization and capitalism and ...
 - Political, cultural, and economic issues of ecological degradation
 - Why cut down that tree or hunt that endangered species? Why?
 - Understand within nested scales: Within the group, within the region, within the country, globally, etc.
- This week, political ecological approach to biopiracy.
- We start with indigenous knowledge - how people take advantage of their knowledge.
- Day two: What are the broader forces.
- Day three: Come back to reflect on this stuff.
- Where does economics fit into all of this?
 - Some sense of markets.
 - But not just the narrow sense of "rationality".
 - Classic economics with an understanding of individuality and status that fits in other cultural contexts.
- Where does politics fit into all of this?
 - Notions of power that are at the root of polisci.
 - But the government is not the only sphere of power (political scientists understand this, but they do focus on "the state")

Be ready to interact!

Feel free to ask questions.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- Knowledge that comes from working in a certain geographic area.
- Passed down through tradition. (oral tradition?)
- Can be very specialized
- Based on empirical observation

- (Can it be replicated by western technology?)
- Connected knowledge (on integrated)
- And yes, we have some knowledge ourselves
- So, when we say "specialized", what do we mean by that?
 - Perhaps unique to the region or group
 - E.g., the Plotkin article - Different groups in the same region had different knowledge set.
 - Can also be specialized within the group.
 - A status issue.
 - Culture is shared.
 - That culture is not necessarily shared by everyone - There is differential sharing.
 - E.g., Industrial farming in US. Most of us don't know where to get seeds or how to get them in the ground or So, even though it's shared NA culture, many of us lack detailed knowledge.
 - There are specialists.
 - Different status - a Shaman
 - a wise person
 - often with knowledge of medical remedies
 - connection to spirit world
 - anthropologically broad term
 - non-full-time religious specialists (distinguish from priests, who are full time)
 - In most societies, everyone does what everyone does - no "just a carpenter" or "just a farmer" or Everyone does all of these things.
 - But Shamans are specialized; they are intermediaries between our world and the spiritual world and have deeper knowledge of certain things.
 - So, when a Shaman goes into a trance state and encourages the spirits to stop harming you, why might it make a difference?
 - Some is the placebo effect, which is a real effect.
 - Some is the additional knowledge of traditional medicines.

How is TEK Manifested? What is its Purpose/Function/Practice?

- Enables manipulation/understanding/responses to env.
 - Manipulation can mean physical alteration of environment
 - Can also lead us to adapt to the environment, responding to aspects of the natural environment.
- Let's narrow (or talk about other broad categories)
- Hunting/subsistence - Getting your food.
- Kalahari desert - Six months without rain / 3 months without standing water. How do we survive?
 - The San (sp?) do fine, they recognize all sorts of signs, such as roots that will have liquid.
 - Not treated as anything particularly special.
- [Side note: Be culturally sensitive: Don't use the word "Eskimo", use "Inuit".]
- Medicines.
 - Ethnobotanists see medicinal properties or bioreactivity and see if there are other applications.

- AZT.
- Some drugs for keeping the body in a state appropriate for surgery.
- Agricultural practice
- Detour: Story about one of his peers who wanted to do research on more complex societies in Amazonia. Dismissed. But there's a bunch of raised field agriculture, road networks, and more. That knowledge had been lost. Archaeology shows deeper knowledge pre European times and that it was possible to sustain higher populations.
 - We think the populations and knowledge were lost to disease.
 - Early European reports suggest thousands of people coming out to greet; dismissed because other parts of the reports (12 foot tall women) were clearly exaggerated.
 - 10-12 million down to 1 million.
 - We thought that the area could only support 1 million.
- Interaction with spiritual world
 - Slashing the eyes is tied to other things

Where does this come from?

- Oral traditions from generation to generation.
- Oral traditions can be lost - E.g., raised field agriculture in the Amazon.
- If the Shaman or apprentice die, we lose thousands of years of knowledge.
- But it's more than oral tradition; it's also science. What does it mean that Inuit are scientists? They are forming hypotheses and seeing whether or not they are correct. And that knowledge is passed on from generation to generation.

Wednesday: We'll wrap up today and then move on to biopiracy and bioprospecting and other related stuff.

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