

living was increasing, by buying real estate they couldn't afford or borrowing off of the inflated values in their homes. Lenders, real estate brokers, developers and appraisers were making a great deal of money. There was a boom of construction jobs and jobs in other housing-related sectors—furniture and appliance sales, hardware stores, interior design, landscaping. But this economic growth wasn't built upon productive capital. In the summer of 2007, the first massive wave of mortgage defaults hit the market. Foreign investors quickly stopped buying securities, the country's line of credit went dry, and century-old multinational banks began falling into bankruptcy or had to be bailed out by government.

The film nicely portrays several families who lost their homes, or continue to struggle under high subprime mortgage payments. By 2008, two million homes had fallen into foreclosure, and neighborhoods in already economically depressed regions began to look like war zones. Empty houses were picked clean for their copper piping and other valuables. "My great-grandkids will be paying taxes to pay back the bad loans written today," one analyst commented. Finding a path toward a sustainable economy, another noted, will be the country's only chance of recovery.

Send SAW column contribution ideas to Angela Jancius, [jancius3022@comcast.net](mailto:jancius3022@comcast.net)

## Society for Cultural Anthropology

JEAN M LANGFORD, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### Cultural Horizons Prize Awarded to Omri Elisha

The seventh annual Cultural Horizons Prize was awarded to Omri Elisha (Queen's C, CUNY) for his article entitled "Moral Ambitions of Grace: The Paradox of Compassion and Accountability in Faith-Based Evangelical Activism" (*Cultural Anthropology* 23[1]). The Cultural Horizons Prize is awarded annually by a jury of doctoral students for the best article appearing in *Cultural Anthropology* over the previous year. Recognizing that doctoral students are among the most experimentally minded—and often among the best read—of ethnographic writers, the Cultural Horizons Prize asks SCA's graduate student members, "Who is on your reading horizon?" The Horizons Prize carries an honorarium of \$500. This year's jurors, Hannah Appel (Stanford U), Mareike Winchell (UC Berkeley), and Emily Yates-Doerr (New York U), write the following of this study of evangelicals in Knoxville, TN.

### On "Moral Ambitions of Grace"

By Hannah Appel, Mareike Winchell and Emily Yates-Doerr

"Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great," begins Omri Elisha's article, quoting the book of Luke. Elisha traces the mutually-constitutive and at times irrec-

oncilable ethical demands of compassion and accountability as they shape the work of evangelical activists in Knoxville, TN. He uses rich and convincing ethnographic material to show that evangelicals themselves "explicitly recognize the paradox" between compassion and accountability, seeing the relation as dialectical rather than contradictory. Elisha's attention to this paradox and his informants' awareness of it not only illuminates the everyday practices of the evangelical activists, but also informs much larger projects of care and compassion—be they humanitarian, governmental, religious or even anthropological. As Elisha notes, the "unsettling indeterminacy" introduced by these competing and dialectical demands relies on and in turn creates specific objects of intervention—"obstacles and hardships"—that "reinforce narratives of embattlement." That such languages of embattled gifting create vertical relations of accountability rather than empowerment raises provocative questions about the daily intimacies not only of evangelical activism but also of international humanitarian work, philanthropy and democracy-serving military action.

The strength of Elisha's analysis is his nuanced understanding of evangelicals as ethically-situated actors—an approach that diverges from too facile critiques of informants in antinomic relation to the interests anthropologists have historically held. Moving beyond a repetitive ethnographic trope in which intended altruism in fact only deepens class and race divides—where analysis then rests in the disjunction of intention and action—Elisha pushes for an understanding of the unreconciled ethical ground from which these evangelicals act, and of which they are themselves aware. His analysis forces readers to think through what it means that evangelicals know that vertical accountability "is unilateral and paternalistic," but are still unable to find an alternative (mutual, horizontal) way to act. By showing us an ethnographic situation in which people act meaningfully from within existing structures of power and inequality and an explicit concern with the challenges they pose, Elisha shows us that critique is not enough. His article asks us to think past critique with our interlocutors.

In the interview with George Marcus that inaugurated the 2008 volume of *CA*, Marcus said that anthropology should not just study up, but instead engage seriously with informants who are also interlocutors. "This inevitably means," Marcus argued, "realizing scenes and terrains of fieldwork by engagements with those from whom we would have distanced ourselves previously, in sympathy with the subaltern, as 'elites.'" With his emphasis on the way that white evangelical activists in Tennessee themselves grapple with their positioning vis-à-vis the impoverished and overwhelmingly African American neighborhoods they serve, Elisha has heeded Marcus' call. Elisha's article also turns to what Ann Stoler calls the "dissociated and dislocated histories of the present," and especially to the "actual imperial residues and remnants that may elude our chartings." Elisha's detailed ethnographic work not only charts the entailments of such residual forms—"the material and social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and

things"—but also attends to the emotional and relational fields in which they unfold.

Contributions to this column should be sent to Jean M Langford, Department of Anthropology, HHH 395, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455; fax 612/625-3095; [langf001@umn.edu](mailto:langf001@umn.edu). The SCA website is found at [www.aaanet.org/sca/index.htm](http://www.aaanet.org/sca/index.htm). For a direct link to the website for Cultural Anthropology go to [www.culanth.org](http://www.culanth.org).

## Society for East Asian Anthropology

JENNIFER HUBBERT AND GORDON MATHEWS, CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### Between Japan and the US: An Interview with Harumi Befu

Harumi Befu was born in Los Angeles, but spent 11 years from age six in Japan, returning to the United States only after World War II.



Harumi Befu

He received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin, and taught at Stanford from 1965 until 1994. Thereafter he taught at Kyoto Bunkyo University. His current research interests are globalization, diaspora and foreigners in Japan. This interview was conducted by email, with questions from Gordon Mathews.

**Gordon Mathews:** *You have been an anthropologist of Japan for almost 50 years. How has the anthropology of Japan changed over this period?*

**Harumi Befu:** One obvious change is the burgeoning of the number of Japan anthropologists not just in the United States but in Asia and Europe. With this increase came a diversification of interests. Obviously this change is a good thing. We know far more about Japan anthropologically than we did 40 years ago.

Also, in the 1950s, it was expected that you went to a rural community for a year of fieldwork, where you really got to know the people intimately. This is a second difference. Now much "fieldwork" consists of interviews, where outside the interview setting, you almost never see the informant.

Another obvious change is in theoretical orientation. The structural-functionalist approach (here I include the "national character" or the "culture and personality" approach) of bygone days is over. Since then, many new approaches have come and gone: symbolic, structural, feminist... Each approach started with a new question, which then became subdivided into more and more minute questions. As the philosopher Susan Langer said of the development of philosophical problems, people try to answer these questions with more questions; and in the end, without anyone answering the big question, the field moves on to the next question. Anthropology is the same.

**GM:** *You have been an anthropologist working at an American university for decades, and also,*

*more recently, in a Japanese university. How does the anthropology of Japan differ between Japan and the United States?*

**HB:** In recent years many American anthropologists are much more value-laden than Japanese anthropologists. In their interest in minorities and immigrants in Japan and in women's issues, ultimately many American anthropologists want to show how bad Japan is—after writing an 80,000-word book, this is the conclusion most of them reach. This is a reflection of American anthropology in general: racism, human rights, etc are the stuff of American anthropology, of which Japan anthropology is a mere part. Some Japanese anthropologists have this tendency too, but not as much, which is again a reflection of Japanese anthropology in general.

As for institutional difference between the two countries, American universities are very traditional. To be legit, they all want to have a conventional department of anthropology. And if you are not a member of such a department, you feel small: when you are talking to your colleagues, you may feel that you have to explain your affiliation. In Japan, there are many anthropologists, but most of them have diverse affiliations. There are only a handful of schools with a department of anthropology, but Japanese universities are creative in establishing new and interdisciplinary programs in which anthropologists are appointed. I think new ideas can come from interdisciplinary approaches. We in the United States hail it, and pretend to do interdisciplinary work, but mostly it is a charade.

**GM:** *How does the practice of anthropology at-large differ between Japan and the United States?*

**HB:** I have alluded to one aspect above with respect to values. Another difference is that American anthropology is still highly imperialistic and hegemonic. It thinks (pardon the anthropomorphism) that it controls the theoretical capital of the discipline. I don't think that its capital is any better than that of Japanese anthropology. But it conflates its numerical and financial superiority with an assumed intellectual excellence that it does not necessarily have.

*Please send contributions to this column to Jennifer Hubbert (hubbert@lclark.edu) or Gordon Mathews (cmgordon@cuhk.edu.hk).*

## Society for Humanistic Anthropology

FREDERIC W GLEACH AND VILMA SANTIAGO-IRIZARRY, CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Around the time of the deadline for this column we lost two giants of the field, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Dell Hymes. Both were and remain important for their contributions in many areas of anthropology; they generated ideas and texts that are "good to think with." But for us in SHA, there are specific points that are of particular importance.

### Lévi-Strauss, Bricoleur/Artist

Although for many younger people Lévi-Strauss is today perhaps better remembered through caricatures of structuralism and parlor game-level playing with binary oppositions, there was much more to him than that. To paraphrase a comment from Marshall Sahlins, he was one of those giants for whom even those who criticize him are standing on his shoulders. He is largely responsible for introducing the idea of bricolage into American anthropology—a kind of creative reconstruction of things, and ideas, from disparate parts and found elements that resonates well for many of us still.

Those seeking to understand Lévi-Strauss as a person may want to look at one of our favorite pieces of his writing: "New York in 1941," in *The View from Afar*. There he discusses his experience coming to New York, fleeing the oppression of Nazism then spreading across western Europe, and keeping company with artists and poets doing the same. Reading Lévi-Strauss reflecting on the Surrealists who were his friends, and prowling through the galleries and junk shops of Manhattan, one gets a much richer appreciation of his interactions with the world. Many tend to remember Lévi-Strauss as a product of the mid-twentieth century valorization of scientific approaches, but in this essay we see how the artist and the scientist were always deeply intertwined.

We—Fred and Vilma—didn't know Lévi-Strauss personally, although we did meet him briefly back when he would still cross the Atlantic to participate in our meetings in the US. But other members of the SHA knew him well, some even traveling to France to work with him.

### Dell Hymes, Poetics and the SHA

Dell Hymes was a giant of linguistic anthropology, in no small part responsible for the founding of that subfield (as distinct from sociolinguistics or anthropological linguistics). His contributions in the ethnography of communication were fundamental in that respect, as was his work in ethnopoetics. But we in the SHA knew Dell also as our poetry editor, a position in which he served the SHA and *Anthropology & Humanism* for many years. He had to step down a few years ago for health reasons, but remains an inspiration to anthropologists interested in poetics and creative expression.

We did know Dell personally, well enough to know and appreciate his occasional prickliness as well as the immense breadth and strength of his mind. Although his work on Native American poetics is beautiful, and highly recommended for those who would appreciate such, his most generally accessible work is probably the edited collection *Reinventing Anthropology*, still in print and still relevant over 30 years after its initial publication. But perhaps the best way to capture Dell is with his own auto-description, from his faculty webpage:

I never know what to say when someone asks what I have done and do. So much of it has depended and depends on circumstances. I have never done anything I would myself describe as theoretical or ethnographic (in a strict sense of either term), although I have often written about

ideas, and spent a fair amount of time hanging around Indians. I am interested in what is done in the study of the use of language, oral narrative and poetry, the history of anthropology and linguistics, Native Americans, theology... What's interesting is real work. I am always interested in combating elitism and narrowness and the playing of "Western mind games" (as one friend once put it) at the expense of the rest of the world. The justification for the existence of anthropology is to find out about the world, not produce third-rate philosophers... I still know something about the history of anthropology and of linguistics, and ethnography of speaking...



He certainly did, and we'll all miss him.

Contact either of us at Dept of Anthropology, McGraw Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; 607/255-6773; fax 607/255-3747. Email Fred at [fwg2@twcny.rr.com](mailto:fwg2@twcny.rr.com) or Vilma at [vs23@cornell.edu](mailto:vs23@cornell.edu).

## Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

ANNELOU YPEIJ, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### JLACA: An Editorial Update

By Andrew Canessa (U Essex)

The *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* (JLACA) is devoted to publishing anthropological work related to Latin America and the Caribbean and its diasporic populations. Anthropology is broadly defined here, and although we remain dedicated to the publication of excellent ethnography of the traditional sort, we are also keen to broaden the scope of both the regional and thematic focus of the journal's contributions.

The journal is growing and developing in many ways. Submissions have been on a consistently upward trend, and we are also increasing the number of scholarly articles we publish. Another area of growth is the number of submissions (and publications) from Latin America and also from Europe, as we increase our presence in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany in particular, as well as continuing growth in the number of submissions from the UK. In future years we would like to see more articles coming from other parts of Europe, especially eastern countries that have a small but growing number of anthropologists working in Latin America and the Caribbean. The journal continues to be committed to publishing in English, Spanish and Portuguese; 2010 will see at least one article in Spanish. In practice, though, many scholars, whatever their origin, prefer to publish in English in order to reach the international English-speaking audience.

The latest issue (November 2009) is a very good example of the range of articles we like to publish and how we, as a journal, like to explore the ways anthropology engages with its sub- and cognate disciplines. We have, for example, a fascinating article by Metter Berg on Cubans' notion of