Front Pages

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Introduction

We hardly need to emphasize the diversity of interests represented here, both for the specialist and for the lay reader. These papers trace who we are—our appetites, our origins, our ways of creating community. From burial customs to secret initiation rituals, from great aboriginal feasts of a century ago, to a quiet evening's celebration with wine, there is much to discover in the pages that follow.

Frank Ridsdale has put together a meticulous comparison of the Potlach ceremony of the Northwest Kwakiutl and the Great Feast of the Dead of the Bering Sea Eskimos. In a carefully considered analysis, rich in detail, he shows how these ceremonies reflect the social structure of each group.

David Cavers offers a very personal and persuasive look at recent attitudes towards Africa in the Anthropological community. He discusses some of the reasons why anthropologists in the Western world seem to be abandoning Africa as an area of study. He worries that the lack of an anthropological perspective on Africa will doom it to a Western-centred view of its troubles.

Rick Budhwa offers a fascinating peek into the world of a Canadian fraternity—its ethos, its contradictions, and the functions performed by its initiation ceremonies. Particularly valuable is an explanation of the role that the practice of hazing plays in breaking down an initiate's defences and building a sense of community, helping us to understand, if not condone, the practice.

Becky Godkin examines what light genetic data can shed on the controversy as to whether modern humans evolved as a large group over a fairly wide area (the so-called Multiregional hypothesis), or whether they evolved in a fairly small area in Africa, and gradually replaced their pre-homo sapiens cousins in the rest of the Old World (the Replacement theory, or ‘Eve’ hypothesis). She hopes that her article and observations will illustrate the need for geneticists and paleontologists to communicate.

Robert Rost provides a bioarchaelogical approach for reconstructing paleodemography and biological affinity for prehistoric and historic Iroquoian populations, mindful of the methodological and theoretical limitations of physical anthropology and archaeology, while optimizing the unique character of ossuary assemblages.

Kim Ferns presents us with a Labovian analysis of a charming tale of an immigrant’s cultural discovery. She shows how Labovian terms of analysis are limited in that they fail to take into account the possibility that a speaker’s narrative may not be spoken in his or her native tongue.

To round out the issue, Prof. Dan Jorgensen has provided us with a very helpful short-list of links to Anthropological resources available on the Internet.

It is our hope that the material found in these pages will provide the reader with rich food for thought.