

# SIMA

## 2012 Symposium

*Carolyn Rose Seminar Room, NMNH*

*Session One*  
*Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.*

### PRESENTERS

SARAH V. MELTON, EMORY UNIVERSITY  
*MATERIAL CULTURE AS METONYM: THE LIFE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN ACCESSION*

In 1891, the Smithsonian Institution received 24 South African objects in an exchange with the British Museum, tripling the size of the museum's South African collections. Ranging from gourds to necklaces to headdresses, these objects were originally classified alternately as "kaffir," "black South African," or occasionally "Zulu." Additionally, several were displayed in various public settings, including World's Fairs and the Smithsonian's Africa Hall. Drawing on archival sources and formal analysis, this project: 1) investigates how and why these objects became part of this accession, 2) traces shifting ethnonymic conventions in the museum, and 3) examines different display contexts for these objects during the twentieth century. I argue that the social life of this accession offers insight into how the Smithsonian has constructed notions of "South Africa" through the collection and display of objects.

DENENE DE QUINTAL, THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
*COLLECTING FOR COLLECTION'S SAKE: NATIVE SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND QUOTIDIAN OBJECTS*

The Smithsonian's Anthropology Collections include mortars and pestles, vases, pipes, axes, knives, and hatchets from Southern New England. I examined quotidian artifacts from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island in order to understand how these objects become part of the Smithsonian's collections. I ask how and why those objects that have been and continue to be used in homes such as baskets, mortar and pestles, and jewelry have been collected. I wanted to understand how the donors', collectors', and museum officials' decisions about what objects to collect from a culture impacted the composition of the collections and what statements these objects have made or can make about Southern New England Native American collective and culturally-specific identity. I focus particularly on how some objects from Connecticut made their way into the museum's collection and how these objects contribute to the production of knowledge about these different tribes and Native peoples. I contend that these processes support a metanarrative that Southern New England Natives have disappeared.

AUSTIN BELL, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

*FAMILY TIES: UNITING COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIONS THROUGH A GENEALOGY OF OBJECTS*

It is no great surprise that non-Native museums, in spite of their post-colonial guilt and reflexivity, often struggle to engage the indigenous communities from whom many of their collections are founded. Changes in government policy and museum practice, as well as the proliferation of community-owned museums and accessible online collections, have aided considerably in this respect, but evoking a palpable personal connection to material culture often long-removed from its original context is no small feat. Inspired by the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Department of Genealogy, this project explores the social lives of Seminole objects from a genealogical perspective, aiming to connect artifacts, photographs and documents across museum boundaries via relationships of the people behind them. This approach should not only give rise to an entirely new set of questions for both Native and non-Native researchers, but serve as a relational model for making museum collections more immediately accessible to indigenous communities.

BROOKE BAUER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

*CATAWBA IDENTITY AND CATAWBA BASKETS*

For my project at SIMA, I am concerned with material culture through the perspectives of Catawba Indians - how material culture was and is part of a Catawba identity. Scholars have often recognized pottery as the characteristic of Catawba identity; however, I am examining the baskets as one of many features of "Catawbaness." I am interested in the decline of and the recent revitalization in basket making by Catawba women and how this shift could be related to politics, economics, and ecology. In analyzing nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catawba Indian basketry, I am looking for similarities and variations in the style and type of baskets made by Catawbas and other Southeastern Indians in an attempt to discover if knowledge of basket making was transmitted through intermarriage.

#### DISCUSSANTS

MARY JO ARNOLDI

CURATOR, AFRICA

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

JENNIFER KRAMER

CURATOR, PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

*Session Two*  
*Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.*

PRESENTERS

JOSEPH FELDMAN, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

*"MISERABLE SAN DAMIAN—BUT WHAT TREASURES!": HRDLIČKA COLLECTS PERU*

This project examines the collection practices of Aleš Hrdlička during his expeditions to Peru in 1910 and 1913. A seminal figure in the development of American physical anthropology, Hrdlička traveled to the Andean nation to gather materials that could shed light on topics such as the peopling of the Americas, health and disease among pre-Colombian populations, and the purported racial "types" of the region. My research focuses on a less commonly examined aspect of Hrdlička's expeditions: the hundreds of cultural artifacts he collected. Ranging from textiles, ponchos, and slings (projectile weapons) unearthed at archaeological sites to a small number of ethnographic items Hrdlička obtained from local people, these objects came to represent a significant portion of the Smithsonian Institution's Peruvian anthropology collection. Asking questions about the context of these materials' acquisition as well as their subsequent lives as museum objects, the project offers a material culture-based analysis of anthropological representations of Peru and the Andean region.

KEVIN BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

*HOZHO: THE MATERIAL EXPRESSION OF NAVAJO IDEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY IN NAVAJO POTTERY*

Navajo pottery is ubiquitous and least understood of ceramic technology in the American Southwest. This presentation will examine the functional role of Navajo pottery within the universe of Navajo people. Navajo pottery distorts the boundary between utilitarian and ceremonial in two ways they can be used within the ecological system of the Navajo and the ritual, thus transforming it from utilitarian to sacred. The underlying mechanism at play here is the balance of Navajo philosophy and ideology juxtaposed against subsistence and economic system of the Navajo. Since ceramic technology is the empirical choices reflected in fired clay, Navajo pottery is a suitable object to investigate such underlying mechanisms at work.

TYLER JOSEPH, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

*ETHNO-ORNITHOLOGICAL BELIEFS OF PLAINS INDIANS MANIFESTED IN MATERIAL CULTURE*

The Peyote religion spawned a unique use for many material objects in Plains Indian material culture. Feathers have played a large role in the belief system of many Plains tribes due to their symbolic ties to the birds they come from. These contexts have changed over time due to many factors including the availability of such feather types as well as the way in which the ethno-ornithological beliefs of tribes may have changed over time. In Peyote fans in particular we see feather usage that reflects these belief systems and ties these material objects to the symbolic part of the cultural belief systems of the groups. Much of this interpretation is aided through historical archives, as notes from ethnographers contain insight into the ethno-ornithological beliefs of the past peoples, which can be compared to the ethnographic objects in the collection.

JOSHUA SALYERS, THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

*COLLECTING FOR THE PAST: EUGENE BOUDREAU'S INFLUENCE ON THE SMITHSONIAN'S TARAHUMARA COLLECTION*

Individual donations have predominantly created the Smithsonian's ethnographic collections for Mexico in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This presentation explores the history of the Eugene Boudreau collection of Tarahumara artifacts illustrating the importance of collector preference in shaping the Smithsonian's ethnographic holdings for Mexican communities. Eugene Boudreau initially traveled to Northern Mexico as a mining consultant, but after becoming interested in the indigenous cultures in the area, he attempted to create an export business, purchasing or trading for ritual and common-use objects. One of the best modern Tarahumara collections in the United States took shape in this context. Combining archival documents, photographs and objects, I compare the collection to descriptions of Tarahumara material culture. Since many Smithsonian Mexican ethnographic holdings are obtained through donation, the Boudreau collection offers a case study on how collector bias influences museum artifacts' ability to represent a specific material culture.

DISCUSSANTS

*JOSHUA BELL*

*CURATOR, GLOBALIZATION*

*NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY*

*ADRIANA GRECI GREEN*

*RESEARCH COLLABORATOR*

*NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY*

*Session Three*  
*Friday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.*

PRESENTERS

JORDAN WILSON, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA/MUSQUEAM INDIAN BAND  
COAST SALISH SPINDLE WHORLS

Spindle whorls originating from the Coast Salish region have long been an item of interest for collectors and scholars of the Northwest Coast as they are distinct to the region for both their large size and their often-elaborate decoration. The latter aspect has made these items iconic for Coast Salish art, and contemporary artists draw on historic whorls' stylistic components in their work today. Through the close examination of the historic whorls in both the NMNH and NMAI collections, as well as archival research into the history of collecting in the region, my project seeks to answer questions that have yet to be fully explored in relation to these distinctive pieces in particular, and Coast Salish material culture in general. Were all of these spindle whorls made for their traditional use of spinning wool, or were any of them made for sale and trade with early explorers, sea captains, collectors, and anthropologists? Will a formalistic, in-depth analysis of these reveal any patterns, such as a connection to specific makers or communities of origin? What are the collection histories of these pieces; how and why did they enter museum collections?

JEHAN MULLIN, PURDUE UNIVERSITY

*LABEL, OBJECT, IDENTITY: THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF SMITHSONIAN ETHNOLOGICAL OBJECTS FROM ARAB ASIA*

My current research examines the multiple meanings of object-artifacts from Arab Asia. In particular, I explore how objects that relate to complex ethnic and religious communities from this region have been interpreted and coded by various collectors and curators. Drawing upon objects from the Smithsonian's ethnological collections from Arab Asia, I am interested in exploring the hierarchy of labels attributed to particular items, often to the detriment of other identifying factors, and what this may tell us about the way in which these items, and the cultures from which they originated, were understood by the museum through both collecting and cataloging practices. To do so, I hope to map out the shifting and often inconsistent ethnic terminology that comprises the Smithsonian's classificatory schemes for Southwest Asia over various periods throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Employing object analysis, I intend to disrupt this narrative by exploring items from these collections in a manner that could push beyond their original and potentially limiting markers to produce a deeper meaning of what the objects did and meant to those from their source communities and what this may tell us about the cultures from which they originated.

BRIDGET JOHNSON, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
*MOUNTAIN SHEEP HORN BOWLS AND THE COLUMBIA RIVER STYLE*

Contrary to its contemporary position as a territorial boundary, the Columbia River has functioned as an intercultural crux for over 10,000 years. In my presentation I will discuss the river's position as an anti-border and a center of cultural interaction that is not only evident in the shared use and respect for the river's resources by varying linguistic groups whose homelands cover vast distances, but also in the aesthetic qualities of the regional material culture. I specifically look to nineteenth century mountain sheep horn bowls in the Smithsonian Institution collections that depict what scholars have deemed a mid-Columbia aesthetic. As a foundation for detecting types of ritual or proprietary usage, I employ a functional, stylistic and structural analysis, in concert with the then-current ethnographies of the region, to ultimately aid in my future goals of tracing the aforementioned regional style across linguistic bounds and throughout a broader geographical and temporal span.

DISCUSSANTS

JAKE HOMIAK  
DIRECTOR, ANTHROPOLOGY COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES PROGRAM  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

ROBERT LEOPOLD  
DIRECTOR, CONSORTIUM FOR WORLD CULTURES  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION