



A · M · E · R · I · C · A · N  
A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L  
A S S O C I A T I O N

WILEY

---

Some Alternative Viewpoints of the Negative Results of Euro-American Contact with Non-Western Group

Author(s): Arthur E. Hippler

Source: *American Anthropologist*, Jun., 1974, New Series, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Jun., 1974), pp. 334-337

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/674193>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*American Anthropological Association* and *Wiley* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Anthropologist*

ceremonies gave court life considerable flavor. Such aristocratic associations stretch back to the earliest medieval centuries. Among the Germanic peoples in the early Middle Ages, there were the confraternities of young warriors who practiced a cult of heroes (Höfler 1934); in Anglo-Saxon England, freemen were members of peace-keeping and other associations (Westlake 1919:1-2). In later centuries, aristocrats formed knightly societies, peacekeeping brotherhoods, and military orders.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the records of cities in medieval Europe testify to the strength and variety of voluntary associations within their walls: not only artisan and merchant guilds, but social clubs, religious groups, and professional organizations. The men, both peasants and aristocrats, who moved into Europe's developing cities, were familiar enough with such voluntary associations to greet nascent, urban associations sympathetically and even to strengthen and refine their organization. The structural similarities between village associations and urban guilds, between ceremonies on the village green and festivities on the city square give some indication of the ways in which urban society depended on the countryside for its forms. And we should not overlook the nature of the commune itself, essentially in its origins a voluntary association whose roots are imbedded in the customs of the surrounding countryside (Grand 1942).

Medievalists have come to realize that the apparent calm of village life in the Middle Ages is usually the product of an absence of sources. By recent attention to difficult local sources, they have begun to appreciate the vitality of rural society, a society which formed and drew strength from voluntary associations of all kinds, as did its urban counterpart.

#### *References Cited*

Amsbury, Clifton

1972 Reply to Anderson's "Voluntary Associations in History." *American Anthropologist* 74:770.

Anderson, Robert T.

1971 Voluntary Associations in History. *American Anthropologist* 73:209-222.

1973 More on Voluntary Associations in

History. *American Anthropologist* 75:904.

Boyer, Marjorie Nice

1964 The Bridgebuilding Brotherhoods. *Speculum* 39:635-650.

Duparc, Pierre

1958 Confréries du Saint-Esprit et communautés d'habitants au moyen âge. *Revue historique de droit française et étranger* 4th ser. 36:349-367.

Grand, Roger

1942 La genèse du mouvement communal en France. *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 4th ser. 21:149-173.

Höfler, O.

1934 Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen. Frankfurt.

Le Bras, Gabriel

1940-1941 Les confréries chrétiennes. Problèmes et propositions. *Revue Historique de droit français et étranger* 4th ser. 18/19:310-363.

Monti, G. M.

1927 La confraternite medievale dell'Alta e Media Italia. Vols. 1-2. Venice.

Reicke, S.

1932 Das deutsche Spital und sein Recht im Mittelalter. 2 vols. Stuttgart.

Westlake, H. F.

1919 The Parish Guilds of Mediaeval England. London.

### Some Alternative Viewpoints of the Negative Results of Euro-American Contact with Non-Western Group

ARTHUR E. HIPPLER  
*University of Alaska*

Anthropologists, especially in recent years, have tended (and I have been no exception: Hippler 1969, 1970) to characterize the results of culture contact between Euro-American civilization and various aboriginal, non-Western, and/or primitive communities not only to be catastrophic for those communities (which it has been in many cases) but moreover to imply that continuing overt or latent prejudice on the part of Euro-Americans is the fundamental cause of the depressed condition of many such communities.

Accepted for publication October 19, 1973.

Some writers have suggested that many ethnographers share a pan-Euroamerican racist bias and that because of this their work contributes to the continuing impoverishment and subjugation of many such groups. Robbins (1973) and Peterson (1972) are two such writers who are suggesting that it is either the structural situation which results from culture contact (i.e., Euro-Americans as socially and/or economically dominant), or the fact of prejudice on the part of Euro-Americans, or both, that accounts for poverty and inadequate achievement within an acculturating group. Many works go beyond this, in fact, and seem to suggest that it is the impact of contemporary civilization itself that tends to destroy otherwise securely stable, or at least non-pathologic, non-Western culture groups. I would like to suggest a rethinking of this perspective.

My own fieldwork among arctic and subarctic Athabascans, Tlingit-Haida, and Eskimo populations, and a careful review of the contact and early postcontact period literature suggests to me that in some cases not only is this perspective not completely true but that in fact a quite different phenomenon is observable. The coming of Euro-American civilization, and especially of law, to these Alaska Native groups tended to be on the whole more a blessing than a curse. Among Eskimos, for example, the coming of U.S. law in Alaska provided effective social control and a near elimination of murder for the very first time. It seems clear from informants' statements and early records that interpersonal violence was more prevalent in pre-U.S. contact times than in those immediately following. This is so even though contact was not initiated by force of U.S. armed might. There were, among Eskimos, no effective sanctions against murder (Hippler and Conn 1973). Old Athabascans, some of whom can remember the early stages of U.S. contact in this area, are unanimous in their opinion that it eliminated intergroup violence (endemic prior to that), and reduced the terror of starvation to a memory.

It was only after two generations of contact, when large numbers of children began to survive due to improved medical care, that serious problems such as murder

and aggravated assault began to reemerge. There were more children than could easily be cared for. This apparently resulted in their being poorly socialized, since in many cases their caretakers were only slightly older children, and may have been an important factor in increased delinquency. But at least more children lived. Their mothers do not believe, not do I, that it would have been better had they died in infancy.

Social control, effectively handled locally by Eskimos only after white contact, and then only when supported by unquestioned U.S. authority, collapsed not when white law came, but when its impact was weakened in recent years by the creation of Eskimo magistrates whose individual power was resented by Eskimos, and by the effect of the population explosion noted above. The very inadequacies of social control that had characterized precontact Eskimo life, and which had been dramatically reduced through the presence of unchallengeable outside authority, once again emerged when Eskimos were faced with the problem of dealing directly with problems of interpersonal violence. Under the council system of justice no Eskimo had to take responsibility for decisions, and hence the Eskimo tendency to react violently to authority could not be focused. With individual magistrates it can.

The coming of U.S. law (after the period of violent contact with Russians) to the Tlingit-Haida area was instrumental in eliminating slavery. I do not find it deplorable that this quaint custom was thereby eliminated, nor apparently do those people who were descended from the slaves of the Tlingit. Without question warfare between south-east Alaskan groups was stopped by United States intervention. Such a capsule description is, of course, not adequate to a thorough discussion of Alaska Native groups—one which we carry out at length elsewhere (Hippler 1973; Hippler and Conn 1972, 1973; Hippler, Boyer and Boyer 1973). And there is no question that Russian-Aleut contact was marked by dramatically destructive and murderous behavior by Russians. But I do feel it would be useful if similar investigations were to be conducted among other non-Western cultures in contact with Europeans as well.

It occurs to us that the introduction of modern medicine, freedom from the dangers and uncertainties of the hunt, reduction in interpersonal violence and the like are positively accepted changes. The only Indians and Eskimos we know of who wholly extol the past are those too young to have experienced that untouched aboriginal culture. Mothers *do* prefer to have most of their children live; only fools wish to have unrestricted interpersonal violence. It is also, we believe, very possible that much complaint about the "loss of one's culture" now expressed by young Eskimos and Indians is hyperbolic cant derived in part from a misreading or, unfortunately, a correct reading of some anthropological writings and the comments of local political ideologues.

Bemoaning the "loss of culture" of these groups is a nearly meaningless exercise. It is not clear either that what was lost was uniformly good, or that what replaced it was uniformly bad. Supportive institutions do change; attitudes and capacities may prove adaptable or not. But in the absence of true physical destruction and "concentration camp" policies (neither of which occurred in Alaska as a result of U.S. activity), culture change becomes a more complex issue than the presence or absence of racism or "imperialism." In effect we can realistically discuss only adaptation, or lack of it, of various groups to new circumstances based not only on the access permitted them to new systems, but on their own capacity for response.

Finally, our own work and that of many others (see De Vos and Hippler 1969 for an overview of some of these works), suggests that the adaptations of members of various groups to culture contact seem to have quite a bit to do with their own individual adequacies and the "cultural personalities" of the group as well as with institutional and structural factors, or the attitudes of members of the dominant group. It is our impression that Japanese-Americans, subjected to what could be said to be very difficult pressures, have achieved at far higher rates than, for example some Euro-American groups, who have not experienced the same kinds of oppression (see Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Oppression does not seem to be the whole answer to the present

admittedly unhappy condition of many minority groups in the U.S. Unfortunately, however, Banfield was roundly excoriated for arguing a similar position (see Lieber 1963, and others in the *American Anthropologist*).

Naturally such a discussion of the effects of culture change cannot, nor should it, obscure the other realities of warfare and subjugation. But not all groups who have been subjugated and/or defeated have responded similarly. The capacity to respond realistically and adequately has characterized some persons and groups and not others. Part of the reason, we believe, lies within the individuals and groups undergoing stress.

Our statements, we have no doubt, can give rise to sarcastic comments about the specific aspects of well-known cases where culture contact was dramatically destructive. Culture contact has and usually does involve suffering for the contacted peoples. But a great deal of the long-term suffering seems to be related, at least in part, to indigenous psychocultural factors. I hope, however, that among those who think seriously about this issue a dialogue can be stimulated, and that this may encourage other anthropologists who have pondered these circumstances, but who may have been hesitant to discuss the issue, to be more willing to propose a balanced perspective.

In short, it may well be that contact with civilization is often a great deal more beneficial for individuals from any "Native group" than is generally noted, and when detrimental, not so simply a function of "oppression." The death of a culture, an analogy applied to an abstraction, is perhaps less important in the scheme of individual human life than many anthropologists and others would make it seem. I reiterate that it may also be that in many, if not most, cases the poor response and heightened pathologies observed among many members of some groups is as much a function of their own emotional organization as of contact itself, however stressful and poorly responsive that contact might be.

I believe, therefore, that it is time for us to entertain a more balanced, less ideologically clouded, view of culture contact, and to examine some of the ways in which

individual psychodynamics may color "native" responses.

### References Cited

- DeVos, George A., and Arthur E. Hippler  
1969 Cultural Psychology: Comparative Studies of Human Behavior. In *Handbook of Social Psychology*. Gardner Lindzey and Elliott Aronson, Eds. Second Edition. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley. pp. 323-417.
- Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel P. Moynihan  
1963 *Beyond the Melting Pot*. Cambridge, MA.
- Hippler, Arthur E.  
1969 Barrow and Kotzebue: An Exploratory Comparison of Acculturation and Education in Two Large Northwestern Alaska Villages. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Training Center for Community Programs.  
1970 *From Village to Town: An Intermediate Step in the Acculturation of Alaskan Eskimos*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Training Center for Community Programs.  
1973 *The Athabascans of Interior Alaska: A Culture and Personality Perspective*. *American Anthropologist* 75:1529-1541.
- Hippler, Arthur E., L. Bryce Boyer, and Ruth M. Boyer  
1973 *The Psychocultural Significance of the Alaska Athabaskan Potlatch Ceremony*. In *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*. (In press.)
- Hippler, Arthur E., and Stephen Conn  
1972 *Athabaskan Law Ways and Their Relationship to Contemporary Problems of Bush Justice*. Occasional Paper No. 7 of the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, University of Alaska.  
1973 *Traditional Eskimo Law Ways and Their Relationship to Contemporary Problems of Bush Justice*. Occasional Paper of the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, University of Alaska. (In press.)
- Lieber, Michael  
1973 *Culture and Poverty Again: Comments on Danielson's Review of Banfield*. *American Anthropologist* 74:1595-1596.
- Peterson, John H., Jr.  
1972 *Assimilation, Separation and Out Migration in an American Indian*

*Group*. *American Anthropologist* 74:1286-1294.

Robbins, Richard H.

- 1973 *Alcohol and the Identity Struggle: Some Effects of Economic Change on Interpersonal Relations*. *American Anthropologist* 75:99-122.

### "Peking," Please, Not "Pekin"

ROBIN A. DREWS  
*Lewis & Clark College*

I have always had a somewhat proprietary attitude toward Peking Man. This is due to my having been in Peking in 1940-1941 as the full impact of the significance of the Choukuotien fossil materials was realized. It was my good fortune at that time to meet Dr. Weidenreich and to have the opportunity to examine a few of the specimens before they became a casualty of World War II. Although in those days I was a high school instructor teaching physical science and mathematics at the Peking American School, I had just finished five years in anthropology under Dr. Cressman at the University of Oregon. I might, thus, qualify as one of the last Americans with anthropological training to have seen the famous fossil remains.

Be that as it may, I have been disturbed by what seems to be a rather remarkable error concerning Peking Man that has shown up with considerable regularity in many current books in the field. Surprisingly, Peking has in some mysterious way commonly become Pekin. Since there is a Pekin, Illinois, and a big, white duck known as a Pekin variety, I suspect Americanism at work. But it is one thing for farmers to alter names in this fashion—Peru, Indiana thus becoming Pēru, and Milan, Michigan in turn becoming Mī lan and quite another for the scientific community to behave this way. Our lapses in accuracy usually come out in other ways than spelling.

There is no Pekin, China. It is a widely known fact that the name Peking comes from a combination of two characters the first of which means northern (pei) and the second means capital (ching alone or in first

Accepted for publication March 9, 1973.