

ANTHONY LEEDS: BEYOND BRAZIL¹

Anthony Leeds is best known for his work in and on Brazil. This is rightly so, as the field work for his doctorate at Columbia was conducted in Bahia in the early 1950s (Leeds, 1957), and much of his best-known published work is centered on his observations of Brazilian careers (Leeds, 1964a), class (Leeds, 1967), localities and supra-localities (Leeds, 1973), and the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, where he did field work and taught between 1965 and 1969 (cf. Leeds & Leeds, 1970). His early observations of the interconnectedness of lives, careers, and production in Bahia and in Rio were to shape his later insightful analyses of the complexities and importance of rural-urban linkages. In fact, his experience in Brazil informed his understanding of the need to break away from the community-centered analytical approach so prevalent in American anthropology in the 1950s. An energetic fieldworker and profoundly prolific scholar who, as Tim Sieber (1994) said, found “unity in diversity,” Leeds also conducted field work in Venezuela with the Yaruro (Leeds, 1960, 1961c, 1964b, 1969a); in the *barriadas* of Lima, Peru (Leeds, 1969b; 1971b; Leeds & Leeds, 1970); and on labor migration in Portugal (Leeds, 1979a, c, 1980b, 1987). Acknowledging the influence of Karl Polanyi, he wrote about the port-of-trade in pre-European India (Leeds, 1961b), about the functions of war (Leeds, 1963, 1975, Vayda & Leeds, 1961), the Chukchi reindeer herders in Siberia (Leeds, 1965a), pigs in Melanesia (see Vayda, Leeds, & Smith, 1961), tools and technology (1961a, 1965b, 1976c), the culture of poverty (Leeds, 1971a), and general systems theory (see Leeds,

1994: 193-200, 1976d, and below for a description of his use of systems theory). His use of general systems theory enabled him to think in complex ways about the urban and the rural, moving beyond urban anthropology to principles of urban analysis (1968, 1980b, 1984a). In the 1970s he took on E.O. Wilson's concept of sociobiology, becoming part of the Boston-based Sociobiology Study Group (SSG) (Leeds, 1977, 2012 [1984]; Leeds & Dusek, 1981a, b; SSG, 1976a, b). He used poetry and photography as a way to connect with and understand a place and people. He loved music and the sweeping views across the hayfields from his house in rural Vermont.

WHAT IS TO FOLLOW: "ORGANIZED COMPLEXITY"

In what follows I will describe Anthony Leeds's contributions to anthropological literature, theory, and thought beyond his work in Brazil. Some of this work, and details of his life, have already been well described by R. Timothy Sieber (1994) and Roger Sanjek (1994). I should say here that I was one of his graduate students at Boston University. I arrived at the anthropology department as an official graduate student in the fall of 1973, at the same time that Tony came to the department from a Fulbright year in London and Oxford. Therefore, I do have some personal knowledge of Tony's earlier Boston University years, the coursework, his farm in Vermont, his students, colleagues, and friends, and causes that he worked on between 1973 and 1981, when I received my PhD.

For this project I contacted seven of Leeds's colleagues from his Texas and Boston University years, as well as scholars who knew of his work, and eleven of his former graduate students. I also visited the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives (NAA), which hold many of Leeds's papers, including field notes, correspondence, course notes, and autobiographical material. I have written here about his work more or less in chronological order, but many of the concepts Leeds wrestled with in his early academic career, such as general systems theory, human ecology, and urban analysis, cycled through his subsequent years of work in Texas, Latin America, the United States, and Portugal. One can see a commonality in his interest in human ecology and the horticultural and agricultural systems observed in his fieldwork in Bahia, his research with the Yaruro (Pumé) of Venezuela, his work with Andrew P. Vayda on Melanesian pigs and Chukchi reindeer, on the Texas hill country, his understanding of the complexities and interconnectedness of lives in his work in the favelas of Rio, his engagement with general systems theory with its attendant impact on his graduate students' theses, his working out of the theoretical underpinnings to urban analysis as part of the Sociobiology Study Group in Boston following the publication of Edward O. Wilson's *Sociobiology: the new synthesis*, and his subsequent research on migration and housing in Portugal and South Africa. It is not possible to capture and reflect on all of the intellectual contributions of this prolific and energetic man. I do introduce the reader to published

and unpublished material representing his thinking beyond his important engagement with Brazil. For details of his early urbane and European upbringing, I refer the reader to Tim Sieber's chapter in Leeds (1994), on "The Life of Anthony Leeds: Unity in Diversity." I therefore begin with a brief discussion of his early years on a working farm in Dutchess County, NY, and then trace his conceptual development through the physical and intellectual spaces he occupied, ending with a comment on the legacy of Anthony Leeds.

THE FARM YEARS: COWS, PIGS AND HENS, 1935-1952

Anthony Leeds often talked of the importance of his experience living on a farm during the depression and the early years of World War II. The farm was in Clinton Corners, New York. Leeds's mother Polly Leeds Weil bought the farm in 1935, and Leeds quickly learned the importance of neighbors and community in farm life. They produced eggs for buyers in the area and even sent them to New York City. They also raised cows and pigs, and grew vegetables. This background was essential to his eventual conviction that the rural is deeply connected to the urban, and vice-versa. His experience with pigs was vital to the work on Melanesian pigs he was to do later with Andrew P. Vayda (see Vayda, Leeds, & Smith, 1961). In fact, Leeds wrote in an unpublished 1984 autobiographical piece: "When Pete Vayda brought me a draft of a paper on pig-use in Melanesia in summer, 1959, it was my knowledge of pigs, their behavior and characteristics, which led to a major overhaul and joint publication. (The experience) (u)nscaled my eyes to citycentric social science." (1984b: 33). Leeds attended Pine Plains High School there, leaving the farm to attend Columbia University in September 1942. According to his unpublished autobiography, he left Columbia mid-semester in March of 1943, working on the farm until February of 1945 when his 4E conscientious objector status led to work planting trees at a labor camp and later as a patient care attendant during what he later described as a miserable time at Pennhurst State Training School for Mental Defectives in Spring City, Pennsylvania (Leeds, 1984b). His mother sold the farm in 1952. He later searched for a replacement for this important formative experience, buying the farm in Vermont where he was to die in 1989.

THE COLUMBIA YEARS, 1947-1957

Columbia University, and the training he received there, was clearly a vital part of Leeds's intellectual development. Some might argue that he was intent on training not only himself but also some of his faculty. He was a ferocious note-taker, a trait that continued through his later years at Boston University. He received his BA in anthropology in 1949, and his PhD in 1957. Faculty at the time included those who were to shape anthropology in the post-Franz Boas world: Conrad Arensberg, Morton Fried, Joseph Greenberg, Karl Polanyi, Elman Service, Charles Wagley and Julian Steward, who was at Columbia from 1946 to 1952.

Robert Manners wrote (1996: 329) that 120 graduate students arrived during the postwar period, many of them G.I. Bill recipients, creating a strain on a department that at the time had only six full-time and several adjunct faculty. Predecessors to Leeds were Robert A. Manners (I indicate here the years they received their doctorates: 1950), Eric Wolf (1951), Eleanor Burke Leacock (1952), and Daniel McCall (1955), who later, in 1970, created the anthropology department at Boston University. Leeds's cohort, though not all in the same year, included Marvin Harris (1953) (who worked in Brazil with Charles Wagley, as did Leeds), Sally Falk Moore (1957), Robert F. Murphy (1954), Marshall Sahlins (1954) (who came from a BA and MA at Michigan, where he had studied with Leslie White) and Andrew P. Vayda (1956). Some of these connections continued through and after the Columbia years. In the unpublished autobiographical piece written over time in 1982-1984, "Through selfethnography to human nature: continuous diversity as escape from categories to unity," Leeds reflected on the faculty and classmates who had influenced him intellectually.

Major influences in my upper undergraduate and graduate anthropology courses were, first, that wonderful man (my only case of hero worship!), A.L. Kroeber... Second was Morton H. Fried, a most dynamic teacher, whose Marxist approach strongly appealed to me. Third, Joseph Greenberg (Leeds, 1984b: 51).²

Continuing his review, he wrote that "Gene Weltfish made me aware [...] of material culture and its artisanry." He noted Elman Service's *Primitive Economics*, and said that "I had or sat in on courses with Julian Steward and William Duncan Strong (an archaeologist). Their influence was quite limited, though Strong was very supportive of my idea of studying the Russian influence on the Northwest Coast" (Leeds, 1984b: 51). In this piece he noted that Arensberg arrived at Columbia after his own course work was done, but was "most important in terms of his functional conceptions and his handling of culture history." Even more important was his and Polanyi's seminar on the origins of economic institutions, a course attended by Marshall Sahlins, Andrew Vayda, and others.

Leeds described the importance of a Marxist study group, of which Stanley Diamond, Sidney Mintz, Morton Fried, John Murra, Elman Service and Eric Wolf were part. He was critical of what he called the "structuralist-idealist confusions of Marxism from Althusser, Balibar, Rey, Meillassoux" (Leeds, 1984b: 52), a criticism of French Marxist thought that he continued into the years at Boston University. His fellow graduate students and later colleagues and friends were also given credit for his thinking. These included Marshall Sahlins, Andrew P. Vayda, Benjamin N. Nelson at Hofstra, Robert S. Cohen at Boston University, and Richard Levins at Harvard (Leeds, 1984b: 52).

Andrew Vayda has written of Leeds's energy and charisma, and described the "lively, intellectually stimulating discussion group" that met in Leeds's apartment in the Columbia neighborhood once a month. They continued a collaboration through the 1960s (pers. comm., April, 2018). They wrote about Mela-

nesian pigs (Vayda, Leeds, & Smith, 1961), and in 1961 Leeds and Vayda organized a session, described below, at an annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) that led to the edited volume *Man, culture, and animals* (Leeds and Vayda, 1965). Although Marvin Harris did not present a paper in that session, he did contribute “The myth of the sacred cow” to the book. Leeds and Harris remained friendly jousting partners, occasionally battling in the literature (cf. Leeds, 1979b), but Leeds would later invite him to visit Boston University to talk to his own students. Leeds and his first wife Jo Alice Lowrey named one of their daughters Madeleine after Harris’s wife (pers. comm., E. Leeds).

After leaving Columbia, Leeds taught at Hofstra University from 1956 to 1959. While at Hofstra he led an interdisciplinary social science seminar that had been developed by Benjamin Nelson, a sociologist and historian with wide-ranging interests in the history of ideas who went on to become president of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. Nelson died in 1977, and Leeds (2012 [1984]) published an article on “Sociobiology and human nature,” in a volume titled *Methodology, metaphysics and the history of science: in memory of Benjamin Nelson*, published by Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science. Leeds credited Nelson with opening him to the broad range of interdisciplinary concepts that Leeds later incorporated in his theoretical work. The history and philosophy of science, the importance of understanding past intellectual frameworks, ranging from the Greeks to the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and later, all came into play in Leeds’s later work and lectures.

FIELDWORK WITH THE YARURO: UNDERSTANDING MICROADAPTATIONS

After his dissertation fieldwork in Bahia, Leeds went to Venezuela in 1958, the year after receiving his PhD, to work with a group of hunter-gatherer/horticulturalists who lived in the Cinaruco and Cunaviche-Arauca Rivers region of southwestern Venezuela. The term Yaruro, used by Leeds, was a name applied to them by others, but more recently their own term, Pumé, has been more commonly used. More specifically referred to in English as the River Pumé, the group relied not only on hunting and gathering but also fishing, horticulture and wage labor. Leeds published several articles on their horticultural practices, political organization and ideology (Leeds 1960, 1961c, 1964b, 1969a). He used his research there to bring concrete examples of a mixed-resource-dependent group to his 1970s-era Field Methods course at Boston University. Leeds’s work on Yaruro horticulture as an example of an incipient phase of development of horticulture was published as part of an edited volume, *The evolution of horticultural systems in native South America: causes and consequences* (Wilbert, 1961), resulting from a group of papers given at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in 1959. Other contributors included Rob-

ert Carneiro, William C. Sturtevant, Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff and Donald Collier. In his chapter Leeds categorized Tropical Forest horticulture types into “incipient (Yaruro) and intermediate (Carneiro’s Kuikuru, central Brazil”). A subsequent review by Michael J. Harner took Leeds to task for attempting “to study evolution while ignoring history,” particularly the cultural environment created by white encroachment on their territory (Harner, 1963: 720). Yaruro religion and philosophy, Leeds argued in his article on Yaruro ideology, can be found in seven realms of thought, or axioms, that relate “to the cosmic structure of the universe, the good, the not-good, the good society, the determinants of action in the good society, the nature of precepts and principles of action, and freedom or restriction of will” (Leeds, 1960). Leeds’s later thinking about meaning systems incorporated some of this work on Yaruro ideology. The edited volume, *The evolution of horticultural systems in native South America: causes and consequences* and Leeds’s work on Yaruro ideology continue to be reprinted (see, for instance, Leeds, 2004 [1960]).

MEANING SYSTEMS, TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

Leeds was at City College in New York City from 1961 to 1962, during which time he organized, among other projects, a session on “Structural approaches to the study of meaning systems” joined by Benjamin Nelson, and gave a paper on the “Structure of meaning systems” at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Philadelphia in December 1962. This work on meaning systems, including that from his research on the Yaruro, was still in evidence in the course “Comparative meaning systems” he taught at Boston University in the 1970s. During his time at City College he also developed a long-held interest in conceptualizing the importance of tools and technology in human subsistence systems. This interest may have begun with a book review for the *American Anthropologist* on *A Diderot Pictorial Encyclopedia of Trade and Industry* (Leeds, 1961a). Diderot’s work made an impression, as Leeds continued to discuss the encyclopedia, with attendant illustrations, in the 1970s. He also later published analyses of tools and technology in “Some preliminary considerations regarding the analysis of technologies” (Leeds, 1965b), and pieces on technology, and technology and subsistence in the *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (Leeds, 1976c).

PIGS AND REINDEER: HUMAN ECOLOGY

“All environments we know have been affected directly or indirectly by humans.”

Leeds’s interest in human/natural environment interactions continued to be worked out in examples drawn from Melanesia, Siberia and the United States. Some of this work on environment and ecology was undertaken with Andrew P. Vayda, such as on Melanesian pigs and Chukchi reindeer herders. Vayda

started at Columbia as a graduate student in 1952, when Leeds was well on his way through his doctorate. Vayda wrote

I myself had returned to New York to begin teaching at Columbia in the fall of 1960 after two years of teaching in British Columbia, where I had, *inter alia*, been applying to analysis of the potlatch some ideas I had had about interrelations of prestige and subsistence economics. Tony's interest in developing the ideas further in relation to other societies resulted in a rewarding collaboration between us, leading first to our study of "The place of pigs in Melanesian subsistence" (to which Tony contributed not only valuable conceptual analysis but also substantially greater practical knowledge of pigs than I had had) and then to the "Man, culture, and animals" symposium and volume (Vayda, pers. comm. 21 April, 2018).

Both Vayda and Leeds had been skeptical of the approaches of Julian Steward and Leslie White. Steward had left Columbia for the University of Illinois shortly before Vayda arrived. In a 1973 letter to William Cooter at the University of Oklahoma Leeds wrote that "White has no ecological theory at all and further has no means of relating what he calls theory (I would call it 19th c metaphysics) to data." He said later of White's claims "social organization is not directly dependent on the amount or kind of energy" in a system. "You don't find structure from the energy. The only way you can determine anything re social organization is through observation" (pers. comm., 10 July, 1974).

Some of the papers resulting from the collaboration between Leeds and Vayda were published in 1965 in a volume titled *Man, culture, and animals: the role of animals in human ecological adjustment*. Published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), it was the result of a session titled "The role of animals in human ecological adjustment" presented at the AAAS annual meeting in Denver in 1961. This was a time of ferment, with evolution, environment, and human ecology all considered to be part of the purview of anthropology. Contributors to the text included Mervyn Meggitt on the relationship between Australian aborigines and dingoes; James F. Downs and Robert B. Ekvall on yaks and other ungulates and Tibetans, and Marvin Harris, who was working out the relationship between Asian Indians and cows, later expanded in a *Current Anthropology* article (Harris, 1966) as "The cultural ecology of India's sacred cattle" and later still in *The sacred cow and the abominable pig* (Harris, 1985). Andrew Vayda introduced the volume, explaining the importance of the relationship between social anthropology and ecology. Population dynamics, diet, micro-environments, control of reproduction were common themes in these articles. Published in 1965, Kent Flannery (1966: 1260) reviewed the book, citing the "Columbia-Michigan" connections in the articles' foci on cultural ecology and evolution, and the "complex feedback systems between nature and culture". Leeds's work on the Chukchi, drawing on the fieldwork of Vladimir Bogoraz (Waldemar Bogoras) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was accomplished during a period when Americans were not able to do fieldwork in Siberia, yet it has continued to be cited as a useful piece of analysis of Chukchi-reindeer popula-

tion dynamics (see Krupnik, 1993 and Leeds, 1976a on subsistence; Krupnik, pers. comm., May 2018). Leeds kept up an interest in pigs, taking on the work of Marvin Harris in a response in *Current Anthropology* protesting against “racism about pigs and other bestial confrères of the human condition” (Leeds, 1979b: 847).

THE PAN-AMERICAN UNION, 1961-1963

Leeds served as chief of the Program of Urban Development at the Pan-American Union in Washington, D.C., for two years, from 1961 to 1963. His work there allowed him to return to Brazil at the same time that he traveled to other Latin American countries to learn more about the urban areas of Uruguay and Chile. Those years led to an interest in relationships among class and economics and urban housing patterns that he would develop more fully after leaving the Pan-American Union. Partly because of these trips, Leeds and his second wife, Elizabeth, later spent the summer months of 1967, 1968 and 1969 in Lima, followed by five months of full-time field work by Elizabeth and part-time field-work by himself, aided by a Fulbright grant for the field season in June to August, 1970 in Lima. Leeds and Elizabeth, working over the differences they found between urban housing patterns in Rio and in Lima published *inter alia* “Brazil and the myth of urban rurality: urban experience, work, and values in ‘squatters’ of Rio de Janeiro and Lima” (Leeds & Leeds, 1970), and “Accounting for behavioral differences: three political systems and the responses of squatters in Brazil, Peru, and Chile” (Leeds & Leeds, 1976).

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, 1963-1972

These were years of intensive work in Latin America. His research took him to Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bogotá, Lima, and Santiago de Chile. In Rio from 1965 to 1966, he employed the type of study group he had initiated while at Columbia that was to become a hallmark of his, for he invited a range of participants that included academics, community works, residents, and Peace Corps volunteers to study Rio’s favelas. Leeds was at Texas for nine years, Elizabeth Leeds there for five. These were years of protest against the Vietnam War. Douglas Uzzell, who later wrote an obituary for Leeds (Uzzell, 1989) was a student there, receiving his PhD in 1972. A sample of student papers written for Leeds during that period bear out Leeds’s continuing interest in connecting theory with the data, including at the local level. He taught courses on Texas Ethnology and the Anthropology of Texas, and the students responded with papers such as “Clarks-ville: leadership in a threatened ghetto, preliminary survey” and “An approach to ethnography in a complex society: theoretical considerations arising from a survey of Hempstead, Texas,” (by Douglas Uzzell, 1969) and “The Influence of Land on Nationalism and National Character in Texas” (by Leland Master, 1971).³ Leeds (1980a) also did his own ethnographic field work in the Texas hill country, working out a systems level analysis of Texas hill country ecosystem.

GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY: HIERARCHIES AND NODES AND FLOWS

“You must have theory to understand the data.”

In 1974 Leeds said in a class on Anthropological Theory that “Systems are a series of interactions. We cannot understand the parts without understanding the interactions.” Anthony Leeds found general systems theory early in his post-graduate years. Or rather, systems theory found him. His interdisciplinary experience at Hofstra, as well his broad interests in history, philosophy, economics and Marxist analysis, all contributed to his understanding of the usefulness of thinking about the systems of life he was observing in Brazil, Peru and the United States. In 1973 he commented to William Cooter at Oklahoma that anthropologists were already using systems theory in 1958 and 1959. He cited the Leeds and Vayda symposium and the subsequent volume on the relationships among and between humans, culture and animals as examples of the use of a systems approach, as well as the work of Marvin Harris, Kent Flannery, and Roy Rappaport that Leeds said “grew out of the systems notion stuff Vayda and I were doing” (letter to Cooter, September 6, 1973). In 1964 Leeds was awarded a grant by the Wenner-Gren Foundation to study general systems theory while working with students on material on squatter settlements in complex societies. Leeds’s articles on “Locality power in relation to supralocal power institutions” (1973), “Mythos and pathos: some unpleasanties on peasantries” (1994 [1977]), “Towns and villages in society: hierarchies of order and cause” (1980b), and “Cities and countryside in anthropology” (1984a) show the development of his thinking about linkages among sites and nodes at various organizational levels.

THE CULTURE OF POVERTY

In 1966 Eleanor Burke Leacock organized and chaired a session at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) annual meeting in Pittsburgh critiquing Oscar Lewis’s concept of the culture of poverty. Lewis had received his degree at Columbia University in 1940. In 1966 he published *La vida; a Puerto Rican family in the culture of poverty – San Juan and New York*, and Leacock’s session critiqued the suggestion that a culture of poverty existed across, among other things, national boundaries. Leeds was not in attendance at the meeting, but he contributed a chapter to Leacock’s volume. In his chapter, “The concept of the ‘culture of poverty’: conceptual, logical, and empirical problems, with perspectives for Brazil and Peru,” Leeds argued that

the behavioral characteristics, residential conditions, etc., that stimulated Oscar Lewis to posit a culture of poverty are largely interpretable as direct consequences of the operation of some specific aspect of capitalist society systems (see Leeds, 1969b), especially the labor market and its control by capitalist elites, the capital flow and control system, and the structure of profit management (cf. also Engels, 1872) (Leeds, 1971a: 277-278).

In other words, poverty was not maintained by and the result of a particular culture but was the outcome of labor markets controlled by capitalism.

URBAN ANALYSIS AND URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Roger Sanjek (1990: 154) has said: “One of the strongest theoretical messages of urban anthropology was argued from the mid-60s on by Leeds. ‘No Towne is an Islande of Itself;’ cities are nodes within societies, or social formations.” More recently, Felix Aquino, one of Leeds’s graduate students at Boston University, said of Leeds: “Tony singlehandedly transformed urban anthropology from a study of communities into the larger context of how these communities interacted in a national and supra-national urban system” (Felix Aquino, pers. comm., 16 April, 2018). From the 1960s through the 1980s, Leeds worked out theoretical approaches to understanding the relations between and among the urban and the rural in connection with labor migration and settlement patterns (see Leeds 1972, 1976b). Leeds’s article “Towns and villages in Society: hierarchies of order and cause” (1980b) was important in laying out these relationships.

The journal *Urban Anthropology* was established in 1972, as was the *Urban Anthropology Newsletter*. According to Rollwagen (1991: 363), Leeds “challenged the very idea of an ‘urban anthropology’ at the inception of the journal.” In what was referred to as Leeds’s broadside, Leeds wrote

I consider such a field a spurious and retrograde one in that it tends to make an excuse for maintaining a subject matter within a discipline which cannot and should not handle it. [...] such a journal, and newsletter would perpetuate through fossilization a thought approach which has already proved itself stagnant and unproductive (Rollwagen, 1991: 370).

And, he asked, “why not create, instead, a journal entitled ‘Urban Society’ [...] open to the entire range of social science approaches, specifically emphasizing inter-disciplinary work and insights” (see Rollwagen, 1991: 370). However, Leeds did serve in several positions with the journal and the association. The editorial board for volume 4/1 included Richard G. Fox, John Gulick, Ulf Hannerz, Anthony Leeds, Kenneth Little, Leonard Plotnicov, Aidan Southall, among others. Leeds was an early member of the Society for Urban Anthropology, created in 1979, whose stated aim was to assess “the state of the art of urban anthropology, particularly in the areas of methodology, theory, and applied work.” (*Anthropology Newsletter*, 21/2: 4). Leeds became president of the society in 1981 and in 1987 he became a member of the Advisory Board of *City & Society*, the journal for what is now called the Society for Urban, National, and Transnational/Global Anthropology (SUNTA).

THE FULBRIGHT YEAR: LONDON AND OXFORD, 1972-1973

Leeds left the University of Texas because of conflict in the department and the university. He received a Fulbright to teach at the Latin American Center

at St. Antony's, Oxford, and at the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of London. St. Antony's is a postgraduate college that specializes in area studies, including Latin America and the Middle East. Leeds taught a course on American anthropology at the Oxford Institute for Social Anthropology and lectured at universities throughout the UK. Brazil was controlled by a dictatorship from 1964 to 1985, making it difficult to return there. The Leedses made several trips (described below) to Portugal during that period to assess how they might continue their work together in a Lusophone country.

THE BOSTON UNIVERSITY YEARS, 1973-1989

Daniel F. McCall, a Columbia graduate, came to Boston University in 1954 as the first faculty member of the newly-created African Studies Center. Harold C. Fleming, also an Africanist, joined him in 1965. Eva Hunt, whose fieldwork had been done in Mexico, was to join them from Chicago in 1969. They all held positions in a combined anthropology-sociology department. McCall and Fleming were instrumental in co-founding the anthropology department that officially separated from sociology in 1970. These were years of growth for Boston University. John Silber arrived as president of the university in 1972. A scholar of Kant, he had come from the University of Texas. Controversial but energetic, he set to work to make Boston University a major research university, hiring new faculty and creating centers, some of which still are vital to the university's mission.

Leeds was hired while at the University of Texas, and arrived at Boston University in the fall of 1973. The department grew exponentially after its separation from sociology. An October 1974 article in the American Anthropological Association's *Anthropology Newsletter* announced that the Boston University Anthropology Department had initiated a Master's degree in Applied Anthropology and that:

Faculty added to the department over the past 2 years include Assistant Professors Susan E Brown (Michigan 1972), Gloria Edynak (Harvard 1974), Frederick Gorman (Arizona 1974), John Lombardi (Harvard 1967) and Carol Stack (Illinois 1972), Associate Professors Allan Hoben (UCB 1963) and Dennis Tedlock (Tulane 1968), Professors Anthony Leeds (Columbia 1957) and Norman Scotch (Northwestern 1957) (*Anthropology Newsletter*, 1974: 3).

Leeds was quick to initiate study and discussion groups. Andrew Vayda has commented (above) on the group that met at Leeds's apartment during the Columbia years. Leeds wrote about the Marxist study group at Columbia. There was a study group that met in Rio. Now, at Boston University, he organized several study groups. There was an informal group reading Marx, particularly *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. Eleanor Leacock and Marvin Harris were invited to speak at the Anthropology Colloquium, and there were many other invitees at the Colloquium, including Leeds himself. The best known

group connected to Leeds, and described by Tim Sieber (1994: 3, 26), was the Thursday night group of students, colleagues and visiting scholars that met at his house in Dedham, Massachusetts. Lou Carreras, Kathleen Sheehan, Kathy Kerwin Fuda, Andrew Maxwell, Felix Aquino, Sandy Faiman Silva and I were among the students, Barbara J. Price, Bette Denich and Tim Sieber attended as well. Leeds also participated in a roundtable discussion with other faculty and graduate students from Boston University, Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He encouraged his students to attend, and many did. Urban historians (Joseph Boskin, Sam Bass Warner), geographers (Michael Conzen), sociologists (Albert P. Cardarelli, University of Massachusetts-Boston; Roz Feldberg, Boston University) and anthropologists (Robert Ciski, UMass-Amherst) attended, discussing their work and soliciting ideas from others.

The 1970s were a productive time for urban studies, and Boston was a hub for this enterprise. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., author of *Street car suburbs*, came to Boston University in 1973 as William Edwards Huntington Professor of History. Joseph Boskin, an American social historian of ethnicity, conflict and violence came to BU in 1969. Joseph Boskin and Sam Bass Warner designed and co-chaired an urban studies undergraduate program at Boston University. In 1976, Leeds was asked to serve on the Urban Studies Program and Major Committee for that program. Boskin took over after Warner moved to Brandeis in 1991 (Boskin, pers. comm., April, 2018).

Thomas Glick also shared interests with Leeds. The two had known each other at the University of Texas. Glick came to Boston University in 1972, a year before Leeds, as a professor of history and geography.

Glick (pers. comm. 23 April, 2018) described his work with Leeds:

I would send Tony drafts of my more self-consciously 'theoretical' stuff for his comments, which were voluminous and tremendously insightful – you couldn't have paid someone to critique at this level! But here's the deal: he *hated* most social theory because it led to the trivialization of important phenomena. His approach was commonsensical.

SOCIOBIOLOGY STUDY GROUP

In 1975, Edward O. Wilson of Harvard published *Sociobiology: the new synthesis*. Taking issue with Wilson's biological determinism, colleagues of Wilson at Harvard and others in the Boston area formed the Sociobiology Study Group (SSG). The group included Richard Lewontin, Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Levins, as well as other faculty and students in the Boston area. Leeds threw himself into this fray with characteristic vigor. A 1976 article by the SSG (1976b) that Leeds co-authored was published in the journal *BioScience*. In the article, "Sociobiology: another biological determinism," the SSG stated that Wilson's *Sociobiology: the new synthesis*, "is the manifesto of a new, more complex, version of biological determinism..." adding that the book was "intended to establish sociology as a

branch of evolutionary biology, encompassing all human societies, past and present” (SSG, 1976b: 182). Wilson (1976: 187) responded in the same issue of *BioScience*, calling the attack “academic vigilantism” and that the group had “utterly misrepresented the spirit and content of the portions of *Sociobiology* devoted to human beings”. Also in 1976 the SSG’s (1976a) “Against sociobiology” was published in the *New York Review of Books*. Then Marshall Sahlins, an anthropologist at the University of Chicago, weighed in, publishing in 1976 *The use and abuse of biology: an anthropological critique of sociobiology*. Nicholas Wade, in his 1976 article “Sociobiology: troubled birth for new discipline,” argued in *Science* that the attack on Wilson was personal. E.O. Wilson did say he was concerned about going to lectures, and had pulled out of one public lecture (Wade, 1976).

Leeds took on other causes in his years at Boston University, including organizing faculty in a dispute with president John Silber and the administration. In the late 1970s the American Association of University Professors worked with many of the faculty on organizing a strike in April 1979. This later had pay and other repercussions for those faculty who supported the strike, including Leeds. According to Susan Eckstein (pers. comm., 20 April, 2018) and others (Glenn, 1997), some faculty were denied tenure and departments such as sociology that appeared to have supported the strike were unable to hire new faculty.

PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Leeds often remarked on the importance of the discipline of the history of science at Boston University and thought that BU was a leader in this field. He participated in the Boston Colloquium for Philosophy of Science and spoke there on ontology and time on October 22, 1974. Friendships at BU included Robert S. Cohen, who led the university in developing the history of science there. Cohen was a professor of philosophy and physics who in 1960 co-founded with Marx Wartofsky the Boston University Center for Philosophy and History of Science. Leeds became a research associate at the center, and he published several articles: “‘Subjective’ and ‘objective’ in social anthropological epistemology” (Leeds, 1974) and “Sociobiology and human nature” (Leeds, 2012 [1984]) in the series *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*.

PORTUGAL: LABOR MIGRATION AND MIGRANT STRATEGIES

The Leedses made brief survey visits to Portugal in 1972 and 1973, during the year they spent in England. They then went separately to Portugal, she to work on pre-dissertation research on Portuguese emigration policy, spending six weeks there in the summer of 1976. The two spent the academic year of 1977-1978 in Portugal working on migrant strategies. This was a turbulent time in Portugal. There had been a left-wing military coup in 1974 that overthrew the Salazar dictatorship, and political unrest continued through 1975. A new constitution was adopted in 1976. The number of political parties in power shifted

throughout these years. Elizabeth Leeds has said (pers. comm., April, 2018) and Leeds commented frequently that compared to Brazilians, in Portugal it was difficult to get people to open up. Because of the dictatorship in Portugal, people were closed and understandably suspicious. He was not easily able to make connections with people, as he had done in Brazil. So instead he used poetry and photography and music as a means of understanding Portuguese life.

Leeds described, in a 1979 research report in *Current Anthropology*, his use of a general systems theory approach to the work. Focusing on ‘actors,’ which could be individuals or large-scale corporations, the idea was to map out their acquisition of resources through understanding the various goals, policies and strategies for such acquisition and redistribution (Leeds, 1979c: 402). The areas of analysis included agrarian structure and factory production, internal and external migration, coupled with ethnographic work in low income communities (‘shacktowns’) in Lisbon and areas of origin of migrants, as well as interviews with bankers, government officials and economists. Leeds emphasized the complexity of analysis of migration in this report. In fact, he wrote that their broad conclusion was that migration was not a homogeneous ‘thing’ but that translocations of actors are the result of complex and diverse strategies (Leeds, 1979c: 402). Drawing on her years of fieldwork, in 1984 Elizabeth Leeds received her PhD in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT) on *Labor export, development and the State: the political economy of Portuguese emigration*. Anthony Leeds was to give a series of talks based on his work in Portugal, illustrating them with slides of his photographs and poetry written there. It was the aesthetic experience he had in Portugal that led to his commitment to using such means of representing Portuguese life. For some of those poems and photographs, see Leeds, 1994.

ANTHONY LEEDS’S LEGACY

Leeds’s use of poetry and photography in Portuguese fieldwork settings was not new. He had done so in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America and the United States. He remarked that “Film and photography in anthropology” was one of his favorite courses to teach. He was ahead of his time in understanding that these formats for expression were useful in ethnographic description. Ethnographic methods of recording patterns of life were changing in anthropology. What had been considered ancillary methods of data gathering, such as poetry and photography, as well as solitary narratives of life history, would become acceptable in the 1980s. Leeds was to find himself ahead of his anthropological colleagues in this regard, and this method of presentation was not always welcomed by some of his colleagues. It was not until 1986 that James Clifford and George E. Marcus wrote about different ways of writing culture in *The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Their project, derived from an advanced seminar in 1984 at the School for American Research, Santa Fe, drew together

a wide range of anthropologists and other scholars who were questioning the more traditional ways of representing ethnographic data. But Leeds had already been using poetry and photography from his early days in Brazil, in the 1950s and 1960s, to represent the experiences of people he was observing.

Many of Leeds's students incorporated the conceptual frameworks discussed in the classes and Thursday night gatherings into their subsequent work. Students, including Felix Aquino and Kathy Kerwin Fuda, and colleagues of his such as Tim Sieber, have commented on the importance of these gatherings to their own intellectual development. Fuda (pers. comm., 30 April, 2018) said the Thursday gatherings were a critical part of her training. There, she said, "I learned to think critically, and to dig into the basis of assumptions." Personally speaking, I also highly valued the reading groups, the interdisciplinary lunchtime discussion sessions, and the Thursday night sessions. The classes with Leeds were also full of intellectual ferment. I remember having, in class, an experience that approximated a religious one: somehow all the meaning systems were conjoined into a universal One.

Students went on to incorporate some of Leeds's conceptual frameworks in their dissertations, and in their later professional work. Several examples of such dissertations are Graeme Hardie's (1980) *Tswana design of house and settlement: continuity and change in expressive space*, Andrew Maxwell's work on gentrification in Boston's South End (1981) *New federalism and the South End Project Area Committee: a general systems analysis of local social organization* and Felix Aquino's (1986) dissertation *Levels of societal structure and actors' migratory strategies over time: a Spanish case*. Kathy Kerwin Fuda said that she continued to use general systems theory in her own work at the BU Health Policy Institute, and Eric Almquist also found that his subsequent work in consulting was informed by Leeds's theoretical framework.

The Anthony Leeds Prize in Urban Anthropology is given every year at the annual meeting of the Society for Urban, National and Transnational/Global Anthropology (SUNTA). *City & Society*, the journal run by SUNTA, publishes a column in which recipients acknowledge the award and describe their work. In 2016 John Collins, author of *Revolt of the saints: memory and redemption in the twilight of Brazilian racial democracy* (Collins, 2015) said of his work in the Pelourinho neighborhood of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil: "It is therefore a guilty pleasure to follow in the footsteps of one of the most creative ethnographers (Anthony Leeds) of urban Brazil..." (Collins, 2016: 9). Douglas Uzzell (1989: 4), a student of Leeds at the University of Texas wrote in his obituary of Leeds: "In reality, his ethnographic sensors were always turned on wherever he was, as well as his awareness of human suffering and social injustice. Tony was always in the field, always a teacher, always a student."

Felix Aquino (BU, 1986) remembered visiting Leeds in Portugal and remarked on Leeds's ethnographic antennae, for he was constantly taking in information and

observations. Aquino (pers. comm., 4 May, 2018) told me “After my parents, Tony was the single greatest influence on my development. During my career in community college administration, not a day went by when I didn’t dip into the conceptual toolbox that Tony helped me create, to make better lives for our students and to make our communities better places.”

Graeme Hardie (pers. comm. 19 April, 2018), a graduate student at Boston University wrote of Leeds’s sojourn in South Africa, where he had planned to continue research:

Liz and Tony came to South Africa around 1986 [...] a coworker and I took them around [...] Tony I always remember documented everything he saw from the car. He detailed farming equipment, crops, livestock etc. in fact anything which took his interest. He never let up and might I say was always working. Amazing.

Anthony Leeds died suddenly on 20 February 1989 but it is clear to me, to many of his students, and to his friends and colleagues that his was a passionate and continuing engagement with the world. Urging his interlocutors to question assumptions, to move away from what he called the ‘Trinitarianism’ of Western thought (things do not always come in threes), to understand the linkages among systems, to look for interdisciplinary interpretations of social and environmental phenomena, he made sure that we would seldom look at the world in the same way again.⁴

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NOTES

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- 2 Leeds typed Greenberg's manuscript on African linguistic classifications and admired his work on the history and philosophy of anthropology as well as linguistics.
- 3 See Anthony Leeds Collection, 1931-1971, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. Available at <<https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/03879/cah-03879.html>>. Accessed on 8 Oct. 2018.
- 4 For more information on Anthony Leeds, please refer to the Guide to the Collections of the National Anthropological Archives (#L1) for the Anthony Leeds Collection at the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives (NAA) and Human Studies Film Archives, in Suitland, MD. Some of Leeds's correspondence with Marvin Harris can be found in Harris's own collection at the NAA. Field material on Leeds's work with the Yaruro (Pumé) is at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

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ANTHONY LEEDS: ALÉM DO BRASIL**Resumo**

Anthony Leeds é mais conhecido por seu trabalho no Brasil. Seu trabalho de campo para a tese de doutoramento foi feito na Bahia e é extensa sua produção sobre as favelas do Rio de Janeiro. Em vez disso, este artigo enfoca seu ainda pouco conhecido trabalho fora do Brasil. Ávido pesquisador de campo, percorremos seu trabalho na Venezuela, em Lima, na região de colinas do Texas, sobre os criadores de rena Chukchis, os porcos na Melanésia, a migração laboral portuguesa, e sua contribuição teórica para o entendimento dos vínculos entre o rural e o urbano. Assim, com base em relatos de ex-alunos e colegas de Leeds das universidades do Texas e de Boston e de consulta ao acervo sob a guarda do National Anthropological Archives, apresentamos as fases em que se pode dividir a trajetória profissional de Anthony Leeds e os principais estudos que ele realizou até sua morte, em 1989.

Palavras-chave

Anthony Leeds;
trajetória intelectual;
antropologia urbana;
ecologia humana;
favelas.

ANTHONY LEEDS: BEYOND BRAZIL**Abstract**

Anthony Leeds is best known for his work in Brazil. His doctoral fieldwork was conducted in Bahia, and he published extensively on his work in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. This article focuses instead on his work outside Brazil. An energetic fieldworker, the article follows his research in Venezuela, in Lima, in Texas hill villages, on Chukchi reindeer herders and pig breeding in Melanesia, and on Portuguese labour migration, as well as his theoretical contributions to understanding the linkages between the rural and the urban. Based on the accounts of Leeds's former students and colleagues at the universities of Texas and Boston and on the consultation of the collection kept at the National Anthropological Archives, we present the phases in which Anthony Leeds's professional career can be divided and the main studies that he worked on until his death in 1989.

Keywords

Anthony Leeds;
professional trajectory;
urban anthropology;
human ecology;
favelas.