

Short Curriculum Vitae
ALETTA BIRSACK

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

New Guinea, historical anthropology, political ecology, reproductive/nature regimes

RESEARCH

Melanesia

Doctoral research among the Paiela of the Papua New Guinea highlands, investigating gender, cosmology, social organization, and politics, 1974-78; three months of fieldwork in fall 1993, two months of fieldwork in February and March 1995, seven months of fieldwork and archival research overall from July 1995 to February 1996 among Ipiili speakers, including the people of Porgera valley, 10 weeks of fieldwork in Porgera and Paiela in fall 1999, 8 weeks of fieldwork in fall 2000; continuing fieldwork summer 2003 and summer 2004.

Polynesia

Fourteen months overall (1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992) investigating Tongan history and culture in Tonga and in several libraries and archives around the world (Nuku'alofa [Tonga], Sydney, London, Canberra, Wellington, and Auckland).

EDUCATION

Ph.D., cultural anthropology, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980

Ph.D. dissertation: "The Hidden God: Communication, Cosmology, and Cybernetics among a Melanesian People"

Ph.D. candidacy thesis: "Matrilaterality in Patrilineal Systems: The Tongan Case" (awarded the Curl Bequest Prize by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1974)

M.A., anthropology, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1972.

M.A., history, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969.

B.A., history, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1965.

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

Acting Head, Department of Anthropology, intermittently, 9/05-6/06

Associate Head and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Anthropology, 9/05-6/06

Acting Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 7/1/00-9/15/00.

Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 7/99-6/00.

Acting Head, Department of Religious Studies, University of Oregon, 1997-1998.
 Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 1994-
 Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 1988-1994.
 Affiliated Faculty, Department of Religious Studies, University of Oregon, 1987-1999.
 Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 1982-1988.
 Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University, 1983-1984.
 Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, 1981-1982.
 Visiting Instructor, Department of Anthropology, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, summer 1979.

PUBLICATIONS

Books and anthologies

- 2006 *Reimagining Political Ecology* (edited with J. Greenberg). Durham: Duke University Press.
- 1999 "Ecologies for Tomorrow: Reading Rappaport Today," ed. A. Biersack. A "contemporary issue" forum. *American Anthropologist* 101(1): 5-112.
- 1995 *Papuan Borderlands: Huli, Duna, and Ipili Perspectives on the Papua New Guinea Highlands*, ed. A. Biersack. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- 1991 *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology*, ed. A. Biersack. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Articles and book chapters

- Under review "Epilogue." In *Changing Contexts--Shifting Meanings: Transformations of Cultural Traditions in Oceania*, ed. Elfriede Hermann. Submitted to University of Hawai'i Press.
- Under review (with J. Hoskins) Translation of "Marriage, Rank and Politics in Hawaii." Expanded version of "*Le fonctionnement du système des rangs à Hawaii*," by Valerio Valeri (originally published in *L'Homme*, 1972). In *Hierarchy Revisited*, ed. K. Rio and O. Smedal. Submitted to Berghahn Books.
- 2006 "Reimagining Political Ecology: Culture/Power/History/Nature." Introduction to *Reimagining Political Ecology*, ed. A. Biersack and J. Greenberg, pp. 3-42; Duke University Press.
- 2006 "Red River, Green War: Porgera's Politics of Place." *Reimagining Political Ecology*, ed. A. Biersack and J. Greenberg, pp. 233-280. Durham: Duke University Press.
- 2005 "On the Life and Times of the Ipili Imagination." In *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Cultural Change*, ed. J. Robbins and H. Wardlow, pp. 135-162. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

- 2004 "The Bachelors and Their Spirit Wife: Porgera and Paiela Perspectives on New Guinea Male Rituals." In *The Unseen Characters: Women in Male Rituals of Papua New Guinea*, ed. by P. Bonnemère, pp. 98-119. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 2004 "Reflections on AES Invited Sessions: Political Ecology and the Politics of Place." *Anthropology News*, February 2004, p. 33.
- 2004 Biographical summary, Roy A. Rappaport, in *Biographical Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. V. Amit, pp. 421-422. London: Routledge.
- 2001 "The Dynamics of Porgera Gold Mining: Culture, Capital, and the State." In *Mining in Papua New Guinea: Analysis & Policy Implications*, eds. B. Imbun and P. McGavin, pp. 25-44. Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press.
- 2001 "Reproducing Inequality: The Gender Politics of Male Cults in Melanesia and Amazonia." In *Gender in Amazonia and Melanesia: An Exploration of the Comparative Method*, eds. T. Gregor and D. Tuzin, pp. 69-90. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2000 Obituary for Wallace M. Ruff, *Anthropology News* (newsletter of the American Anthropological Association), September 2000.
- 1999 "Porgera--Whence and Whither?" In *Dilemmas of Development: The Social and Economic Impact of the Porgera Mine, 1989-1994*, ed. C. Filer, pp. 260-270. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: National Research Institute, and Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University.
- 1999 "The Mount Kare Python and His Gold: Totemism and Ecology in the Papua New Guinea Highlands." In "Ecologies for Tomorrow: Reading Rappaport Today," ed. A. Biersack; a "contemporary issue forum," *American Anthropologist* 101:68-87.
- 1999 "From 'The New Ecology' to the New Ecologies." Introduction to "Ecologies for Tomorrow: Reading Rappaport Today," ed. A. Biersack. *American Anthropologist* 101:5-18. Reprinted in *Badanie Kultury* t. 1, 2 (*The Study of Culture*, vols. 1, 2), edited by Marian Kempny and Ewa Nowicka. Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers PWN. Published 10/04.
- 1998 "Sacrifice and Regeneration among Ipilis: The View from Tipinini." In *Fluid Ontologies: Myth, Ritual, and Philosophy in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, eds. L. Goldman and C. Ballard, pp. 43-66. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- 1998 "Horticulture and Hierarchy: The Youthful Beautification of the Body in the Paiela and Porgera Valleys." In *Adolescence in the Pacific Island Societies*, eds. G. Herdt and S. Leavitt, pp. 71-91. ASAO monograph series. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- 1996 "Word Made Flesh: Religion, the Economy, and the Body in the Papua New Guinea Highlands." *History of Religions* 36:85-111.

- 1996 "Rivals and Wives: Affinal Politics and the Tongan Ramage." In *Origins, Ancestry, and Alliance*, eds. J. Fox and C. Sather, pp. 237-279. Canberra: Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- 1996 "'Making Kinship': Warfare, Migration, and Marriage among Paielas." In *Works in Progress: Essays in Highlands Ethnography in Honour of Paula Brown Glick*, eds. H. Levine and A. Ploeg, pp. 19-42. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang.
- 1995 "The Huli, Duna, and Ipili Peoples Yesterday and Today." Introduction to *Papuan Borderlands*, ed. A. Biersack, pp. 1-54. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- 1995 "Heterosexual Meanings: Society, Economy, and Gender among Ipilis." In *Papuan Borderlands*, ed. A. Biersack, pp. 229-261. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- 1995 (Together with John Vail) "Glossary of Company Names and Acronyms." In *Papuan Borderlands*, ed. A. Biersack, pp. 373-375. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- 1991 "History and Theory in Anthropology," introduction to *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology*, ed. A. Biersack, pp. 1-36. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 1991 "Prisoners of Time: Millenarian Praxis in a Melanesian Valley." In *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology*, ed. A. Biersack, pp. 231-296. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian University Press.
- 1991 "Thinking Difference: Marilyn Strathern's *The Gender of the Gift*." *Oceania* 61: 147-154 (a review article).
- 1991 "Kava'onau and the Tongan Chiefs," *Journal of Polynesian Society* 100:231-268.
- 1990 "Histories in the Making: Paiela and Historical Anthropology." *History and Anthropology* 5:63-85.
- 1990 "Under the *Toa* Tree: The Genealogy of the Tongan Chiefs." In *Culture and History in the Pacific*, ed. J. Siikala, pp. 80-105. Helsinki: Transactions of the Finnish Anthropological Society.
- 1990 "Blood and Garland: Duality in Tongan History." In *Tongan Culture and History: Papers from the First Tongan History Conference Held at Canberra*, eds. P. Herda, J. Terrell, and N. Gunson, pp. 46-58. Canberra: Department of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific Studies.
- 1989 "Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz and Beyond." In *The New Cultural History*, ed. L. Hunt, pp. 72-96. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 72-96.

(Translated into Japanese and Portuguese.)

- 1987 "Moonlight: Negative Images of Transcendence in Paiela Pollution." *Oceania* 57: 178-94.
- 1984 "Paiela 'Women-Men': The Reflexive Foundations of Gender Ideology." *American Ethnologist* 11:118-38.
- 1983 "Bound Blood: Paiela 'Conception' Theory Interpreted." *Mankind* 14:85-100.
- 1982 "The Logic of Misplaced Concreteness." *American Anthropologist* 84:811-29.
- 1982 "Ginger Gardens for the Ginger Woman: Rites and Passages in a Melanesian Society." *Man* 17:239-58.
- 1982 "Tongan Exchange Structures: Beyond Descent and Alliance." *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 91:181-212 (revision of "Matrilaterality in Patrilineal Systems: The Tongan Case," winner of the Curl Bequest Prize, The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1974).
- 1981 "'To Die Laughing': Paiela Games and the Organization of Behavior as Communication." In *Paradoxes of Play*, ed. J. Loy. West Point, New York: Leisure Press, pp. 180-187.

GRANTS AND HONORS

- Summer Research Award, University of Oregon, for the writing project "Grassroots Globalization: Joint-Venture Capitalism at Mt. Kare," summer 2006.
- Small Professional Grant, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, UO, for preparing the artwork for *Imagining Political Ecology*, 2004/05
- Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Program, "Marriage, Leadership, and Conflict in an Era of Gold Mining: Windows upon Papua New Guinea Modernities," 2003-2004
- CSWS, "Gender, Sexuality, and Marriage in a Changing Papua New Guinea Society," for research 2003.
- (With Judith Raiskin) Jeremiah lecture series "Postcolonial Inscriptions," award made through the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, for 2003-2004
- Small Professional Grant, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, UO, summer 2003 (declined)
- American Philosophical Society, small grant, "Mining and Conflict at Mt. Kare: Toward a History of Ipili Modernity," January 1999.
- CSWS, Faculty Research Grant, "Gender and Ecology in the New Guinea Highlands," 1998/99.
- Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Small Grant, "Culture and Political Economy in the Papua New Guinea Highlands: Stratification, Social Organization, and Ideology in an Era of Gold Mining among Ipili Speakers," 1998. (Award period goes to 12/02.)

PROFESSIONAL PAPERS

Panel and conference organization

- Co-organizer (with David Lipset), "Theorizing the Postcolonial State and Its Instabilities," Melanesian Interest Group panel, annual meeting, American Anthropological

- Association, November 2007.
- Organizer, "Power Topographies': Engagements, Assessments, Ethnographies." Panel for the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Jose, CA, November 15-19, 2006.
- Organizer, "Political Ecology and the Politics of Place," annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago, November 19-23, 2003 (participants: A. Biersack, J. P. Brosius, S. Hvalkof, D. Jorgensen, D. Rocheleau, J. Scott, P. Walker, P. West)
- Organizer, "Local Resources, Transnational Capital, and the State," annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., Nov. 28-Dec. 2, 2001.
- Organizer, "Property and the Gift," annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, November 16, 2000.
- Co-organizer (with J. Greenberg) of the panel "Culture/Power/History/Nature: Papers in Honor of Roy A. Rappaport" for the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., November 1997; invited session for the Anthropology and Environment Section, AAA. (Submitted for review as *Imagining Political Ecology*.)
- Organizer of the panel "Roy A. Rappaport Retrospective: Assessments and Appreciations," annual meetings of Society for Applied Anthropology/Political Ecology Society, Seattle, March 1997.
- Organizer, "New Perspectives on the Papua New Guinea Highlands: An Interdisciplinary Conference on the Duna, Huli, and Ipili Peoples," Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, August 1991. (Participants from England, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the United States.) Proceedings published as *Papuan Borderlands: Huli, Duna, and Ipili Perspectives on the Papua New Guinea Highlands*, ed. A. Biersack (1995).

Professional papers and other conference participation

- "Introduction." For "Theorizing the Postcolonial State and Its Instabilities," panel co-organized with David Lipset, annual meeting of the AAA, Washington, D.C., 11/28-12/02/07.
- "Anthropological Objects and Other Good Things to Think." Presentation, "The Not-So-Secret Lives of Things: A Faculty Symposium," sponsored by the UO Department of English, April 18, 2007.
- "Neotribalism in the Transnational Spaces of Papua New Guinea Gold Mining." Paper presented on the panel "'Power Topographies': Engagements, Assessments, Ethnographies," organized by A. Biersack, annual meeting of AAA, San Jose, CA, November 15, 2006.
- "Grassroots Globalization Mt. Kare Style: Transnational Capital in Practice." Paper given at the annual meeting of PESO, Vancouver, BC, March 28-April 2, 2006.
- Invited conference discussant, "Changing Contexts--Shifting Meanings: Transformations of Cultural Traditions in Oceania." Honolulu Academy of Arts, February 23-26, Honolulu, Hawaii.
- "Mine Closure and Other Endtime Scenarios in Porgera and Mt. Kare." Paper for the session "Mine Closure," organized by D. Jorgensen and G. Banks, to be held at the annual meeting of the association of Social Anthropologists of Oceania, San Diego, February 9, 2006.
- "Red River, Green War: The Politics of Place along the Porgera River," paper given at the Institute of Anthropology, Tsing Hua University, Taiwan, November 22, 2004.
- "On the Life and Times of the Ipili Imagination," paper given at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan, November 20, 2004.
- "Grassroots Globalization: Joint Venture Capitalism at Mt. Kare," annual meeting of the

- Association of Social Anthropologists of Oceania, February 27, 2004, Salem, Massachusetts
- “Introduction” for the panel “Political Ecology and the Politics of Place,” annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, November 22, 2003
- “Women in Mining,” Madang, Papua New Guinea, August 2-6, 2003, attendee and workshop participant
- “On the Life and Times of the Ipili Imagination,” paper given at the Institute for Ethnology, University of Göttingen, Germany, June 20, 2003
- “Mining Frontiers, Migration and Rapid Social Change,” organized by T. Grätz and K. Werthmann, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany, June 2003 (one of three conference discussants)

SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

- Member, Faculty Personnel Committee, Provost's Office, UO, 2007-2008
- Library representative, Dept. of Anthropology, UO, 2007-2008
- Acting Head, Department of Anthropology, 2005-2006, as needed
- Member, Executive Committee, Department of Anthropology, 2005-2006
- Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Anthropology, 2005-2006
- Chair, Student-Faculty Senate, Department of Anthropology, 2005-2006
- Chair, Graduate Committee, Department of Anthropology, 2005-2006
- Member, third-year review committee for Dr. Lamia Karim
- Member, CAS Curriculum Committee, College of Arts and Sciences, UO, 2005-2006
- Member, Inter-College General Education Requirements Committee, UO, 2005-2006
- Member, Academic Requirements Committee, Registrar's Office, UO, 2005-2006
- Member, Dr. Philip Scher's tenure review committee, 2004-2005
- Member, Graduate Committee, Department of Anthropology, UO, 2003-2005
- Member, Faculty-Student Senate, Department of Anthropology, UO, 2003-2005
- Member, Phil Scher third-year review committee, UO, 2003-2004
- Convener, cultural caucus to design the two core theory courses in the cultural master's degree program, 2003-2004
- Co-organizer, “Postcolonial Inscriptions,” a Jeremiah Lecture Series, sponsored by the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, UO, 2003-2004
- Member, Student-Faculty Senate, Department of Anthropology, UO, 2003-2005
- Member, Lynn Stephen sixth-year review committee, UO, 2003-2004
- Member, Asianist search committee, Department of Anthropology, 2002-2003
- Co-chair (with J. Erlandson), committee for review of Dr. L. Sugiyama for promotion with tenure, Department of Anthropology, UO, 2002-2003.
- Member, committee for review of Dr. D. Falk for promotion with tenure, Dept. of Religious Studies, UO, fall 2002.
- Collaborator with L. Sugiyama on a proposal for a 4-course load in the Dept. of Anthropology, UO, spring 2002 (proposal circulated April 2002).
- Member, Executive Committee, Asian Studies, University of Oregon, 2001-2002.
- Chair, committee for promotion with tenure for K. Kelsky, 2001-2002.
- Member, Steering Committee, sixteenth annual conference of the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies, Eugene, Oregon, April 20-21, 2001.
- Member, Asian Studies Search Committee (appointed by the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, UO), 2000-2001.

Other service and professional experience

Peer review: Review panel, NEH Fellowships for University Teachers, NEH Collaborative Awards; Altamira Press, Cambridge University Press, Duke University Press, Oxford University Press, Princeton University Press, University of Michigan Press, Blackwell,; *Anthropological Theory, Cultural Anthropology, Current Anthropology, The Contemporary Pacific, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Ethnohistory, Man, Oceania, NSW Journal, American Anthropologist, Archaeology in Oceania, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Journal of the Polynesian Society, Pacific Studies, Urban Anthropology, Anthropology and Education, Social Analysis, Canberra Anthropology, American Ethnologist, Mountain Development and Research, Society & Natural Resource*; Foundation for Social and Cultural Research (Netherlands), NSF Anthropology Program, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, NEH, Woodrow Wilson Foundation (for Rosenhaupt book award), Australian Research Council.

Promotion cases: University of Queensland 1995, 1996, 1997; Rennselaer Polytechnic University 1998-1999; University of Sydney 1999; New York University 2001; University of Chicago 2002, University of Minnesota 2002.