



International Symposium
Science in the Field – Transregional Scientific Fields
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Abstracts

Barahona Echevarría, Ana (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

Mendelism in the Field. The Case of Genetics in Mexican Agriculture
Mendelismo en el campo. El caso de la genética en la agricultura mexicana

The emergence and development of Genetics in Mexico has traits similar to those of the development of this science in the United States, but it acquired specific features due to the Civil War of 1910. Agricultural research was an area that could significantly contribute towards an urgently needed agricultural recovery. Previous revolutionary governments had expressed interest in this recovery, but it was not until the late 1930s that plant breeders became aware of Mendelism, understood as a practical tool, and used it as a means to transform the art of plant breeding into a scientific enterprise, with the improvement of seeds like maize, sesame, potato, and wheat. Among the most important researchers were agronomist Edmundo Taboada and his collaborators, who focused on solving the technical and economical problems faced by small farmers: share-croppers, peasants, and indigenous communities. In the 1940s, conflicts in post-revolutionary governments resulted in two separate research programs, one led by Taboada, and the other by the Rockefeller Foundation of the United States. This last one led to the “green revolution” in Mexico.

Hoffmann, Katrin and Göbel, Barbara (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut Berlin)

Travelling Scientists and Objects: Scientific Practices at the End of the 19th Century and their Relevance for Research today
Científicos viajeros y sus objetos: Prácticas científicas al final del siglo XIX y su relevancia para la investigación actual

Using the case of the German anthropologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, this paper examines how scientific exchange took place between Germany and Argentina at the end of the 19th century. Paradigmatically, different paths are being traced on which scientists as well as the objects related to them travelled. The paper discusses the indexing and classification of the material impacts of fieldwork, emphasizing the re-contextualization of the objects once they have arrived in the centres of knowledge production.

Kraus, Michael (Berlin)

“...if we can manage without museums, then all the better” – Research Strategies and their Impacts as regards Anthropological Expeditions to the Amazon around 1900

“...si es posible hacerlo sin los museos, mucho mejor” – Estrategias de investigación y sus impactos. Expediciones alemanas a la Amazonía alrededor de 1900

This presentation will address the research expeditions to the Amazon region by German anthropologists during the Wilhelminian period. On the one hand, it will focus on the issue of how field research was structured around desires of the institutions that were financing the expeditions - in particular, the newly founded anthropology museums of the day. On the other hand, it will show how the meetings that were provoked by the researchers could influence the situation on the ground. In both cases, the circulation of objects plays a central role.

Malvestitti, Marisa (Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Santa Rosa)

Fieldwork Practices in Robert Lehmann-Nitsche’s linguistic Research: His Contribution to the Foundation of Ethnoliterary Documentation in Argentina

Prácticas de campo en las investigaciones lingüísticas de Roberto Lehmann-Nitsche: Sus contribuciones a la fundación de la documentación etnoliteraria en la Argentina

This paper deals with the linguistic research developed by Robert Lehmann-Nitsche during the first quarter of the 20th century in Argentina. Our aim is to systematize the diverse (and sometimes conflicting) modalities that his fieldwork practices with indigenous consultants from Pampa-Patagonia and Gran Chaco areas assumed, and contextualize them taking into account the inquiries about aboriginal languages developed by his contemporaries. We analyze in particular his documentation practice of mapudungun language in the period 1899-1926, as well as the fecund relationship that Lehmann-Nitsche established with the German philologist Rudolf Lenz, who was a pioneer in the documentation of Mapuche ethnoliterature..

Nieto, Mauricio (Universidad de los Andes)

Natural History and the Appropriation of the New World: Drawing, Assembling and Naming Species

Historia Natural y la apropiación del nuevo mundo: Ilustraciones botánicas y manufactura de especies

Eighteenth century Spanish naturalists and botanical illustrators were supposed to depict a faithful and direct copy of reality. However, the final result was a collection of illustrations where the selection of information represented by the botanist-artist was not only inevitable but also deliberate; and the "exactitude" of each illustration demanded a great deal of intervention.

In a single plate one can not only see "more" than looking at numerous living specimens, but there are also a number of different advantages. The plant once drawn, remains an ideal realization which does not change or deteriorates even during long overseas journeys.

Besides, on a flat piece of paper the botanical artist was able to gather time and space in a single ideal picture where one can see not only the whole plant in a convenient size but also all the essential features (flower, fruit, leaves, seeds, and so forth) for a proper Linnaean classification.

Most significantly, the icons could be, and were thought to be reproduced and published. In doing so the botanists and their patrons were able to multiply and present their data, discoveries and possessions in an identical form to people otherwise divided by cultural or geographical frontiers. Making use of a common language, not only visual but also employing Latin text and Linnaean terminology, the botanists ensured communication with a community of European naturalists.

Learning to draw a plant was, in a sense, learning to see it. Through the process of being drawn, a plant acquired an identity, a name and a family. The diagnosis, to know or distinguish one specimen from the other, and its consequent naming and classification was the procedure by means of which botanists and naturalists conquered the unknown objects of nature.

Podgorny, Irina (Universidad Nacional de La Plata)

Instructions for Travellers and the Organization of Fieldwork in Archaeology and Anthropology, 1870-1920

Instrucciones para viajeros y la organización del trabajo de campo en arqueología y antropología, 1870-1920

The production of anthropological knowledge is connected with three different spaces. Whereas the *collection* has a long history, the *database* and the *field* were incorporated as scientific spaces around 1900, when archaeologists and anthropologists started going into the field.

Archaeological practice combined the descriptive skills of the scholar with the protocols of surveying and legal medicine. Along with these techniques, anthropological data appear connected with the bureaucratic (colonial) system and the instructions on what and how to observe issued by European learned societies, missionaries associations and also the emerging industry of tourism.

Sagredo Baeza, Rafael (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile)

From Natural History to National History. The Scientific Work of Claude Gay in Chile, 1828-1871

De la Historia Natural a la Historia Nacional: La obra científica de Claude Gay en Chile 1827-1871

This lecture addresses the work in Chile of naturalist Claude Gay, who after twelve years of exploring a virtually unknown territory, was able to identify its species and natural resources, in addition of preparing the first political history of Chile ever written.

The explorations and studies of Gay, materialized in his 30 volumes of the *Historia física y política de Chile*, show how the scientist's field work, in site, not only was the basis for the identification of Chile as a geographical unit and a natural territory, but also as a sociocultural and historic reality: The Chilean nation.

Schäffner, Wolfgang (Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Time in the Field

Tiempo en el campo

The field means a real challenge for geographers and ethnographers: going into the field is a strange penetration into lost worlds, where a short trip in space is often a falling back in centuries and milleniums (Métraux). During the 19th and 20th Century in the immense landscapes of Latin American rain forests, savannas and deserts still existed enormous disconnected territories that resisted communication technologies, which began to create the homogeneous space time. The examples of Rondon, Hamilton Rice, Métraux and Lévi-Strauss show that fieldwork can be considered a travel through time: the scientist has to take with him the technologically produced time, whereas he travels, at the same time, by some sort of time machine to other milleniums.

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