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Publication date
2019

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
H-Diplo Roundtable Review

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Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Blaustein, G. (2019). [Review of: D.H. Price (2016) Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology]. *H-Diplo Roundtable Review*, *20*(25), 9-11. https://issforum.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XX-25.pdf

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2019

H-Diplo

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Roundtable Review
Volume XX, No. 25
18 February 2019

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii

Introduction by Julie McBrien

David H. Price. *Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6106-0 (cloth, $109.95); 978-0-8223-6125-1 (paperback, $29.95).

URL: http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XX-25

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Review by George Blaustein, University of Amsterdam

David H. Price's *Cold War Anthropology* is a sequel to his earlier *Anthropological Intelligence* (2008), which charted the weaponization of American anthropology during the Second World War.[1] It is a prequel of sorts to *Weaponizing Anthropology* (2011), which addressed the post-September-11 era.[2] The transformation chronicled in this most recent volume is dramatic: "In less than three decades the discipline shifted from a near-total alignment supporting global militarization efforts, to widespread radical or liberal opposition to American foreign policy and resistance to anthropological collaborations with military and intelligence agencies" (xxi). That history would find a parallel in the history of American Studies, among other American endeavors in the humanities. Anthropology is unique because of all humanities disciplines, it was fated to be in the wrong places at the wrong times, and because it was "dual use": weaponizable and esoteric in equal measure.

Cold War Anthropology is a righteous account of a poisoned discipline. It reconstructs the workings of CIA- and Pentagon-front groups, and catalogues the anthropologists, projects, and institutions that worked directly for those groups, or that received roundabout money. Money (or the Cold War political economy) is the real protagonist here, ever inflecting that fragile distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' science. A comprehensive account would be impossible, but Price follows the available crumbs, drawing on recently declassified material, other scholarly accounts, memoirs, disciplinary histories, and FOIA requests. "Anthropology, perhaps more than other disciplines," Price notes, "is used to dealing with such traces of the phenomena we study," and the book must make do with "questions, shadows, and other residuals" of overt and covert relationships (163). The structure and narrative are at some points frustratingly convoluted, and at other points suggestive and anecdotal in the best sense.

Different kinds of culprits emerge. The economist and political theorist Walt Rostow, a hawkish voice in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, is a familiar figure in the intellectual history of the Cold War, and in this book he knowingly orchestrates "a mixture of CIA, Ford Foundation, and Rockefeller Foundation funds" (119). Others culprits are opportunists, ambivalent or unambivalent, and the book tests their accounts against harder truths. Later come the unwitting, the "half-unwitting" (98), the shamefully naive, and finally the resisters.

Among the opportunists is the anthropologist Frank Bessac, who had worked for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in China during the war and for the CIA in 1947. He would later claim that he resigned in October 1947. But in 1949 he was on a Fulbright in China, during the Communist revolution of 1949, and just happened to cross paths in Tihwa with Douglas Mackiernan, a CIA agent working under State Department cover. Bessac joined Mackiernan and "a group of White Russians and Mongols," Price writes, "packing gold, machine guns and an assortment of other light arms, ammunition, hand grenades, a shortwave radio, and Geiger counters on an overland trip to Tibet." Mackiernan was killed—in fact the CIA later recognized him as the first agent killed in the line of duty. Bessac made it out and wrote about it in *Life*

[1] David H. Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[2] David H. Price, *Weaponizing Anthropology: Social Science in Service of the Militarized State* (Edinburgh: AK, 2011).

magazine, "with no mention of the political dimensions of the mission or of Mackiernan being a CIA agent." (150-151). The book gathers many such lively examples and applies a common test of ethics and honesty. Bessac's account, for instance, "strains credulity" (150).

The more interesting type of culprit (if culprit is the right word) is the "half-unwitting scholar who was not directly concerned with the forces and politics of the Cold War, even while contributing to the intellectual discourse in ways that supported American hegemony" (98). This is how Price describes Clifford Geertz, who worked as part of the Modjokuto Project in Indonesia starting in 1952. It had been funded by the Ford Foundation, and then moved to MIT's Center for International Studies (CENIS). CENIS's connections to the CIA were exposed by William F. Buckley, of all people, in 1957. In an interview with Price, Geertz recalled "a certain mild paranoia" among his colleagues about where the money came from (95).

Price's readings of scholarship from the era comes down to alignment and access. "Though Geertz insisted that CENIS's economists did not impact his work, his analysis aligned neatly with theirs." Geertz's model of "involution" in treating the "systemic poverty and political brutality of Indonesia," his emphasis on "ideology" rather than "the material forces of colonialism," aligned with those who paid the piper, as some critics noted in the 1970s (97-98). Geertz's own insistence notwithstanding, his work "was shaped by the milieu of CENIS." And whatever Geertz knew about his research funds, wire-pullers like Rostow and the CIA-affiliated economist Max Millikan "had access to *his* research" (98). Price's point, in the end, is that any claim to apolitical work is moot in a discipline that was wound up with the Cold War. All cockfights are political.

By the mid-1960s, naïveté or half-wittedness is harder for *Cold War Anthropology* to stomach. The anthropologist Gerald Hickey worked in Vietnam for RAND, cameoed in the 1958 film adaptation of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, and embraced the ideology behind the Strategic Hamlet Program. Price's assessment of Hickey's reports is withering: "He wrote as if he were living between dimensions in a world where traditional Vietnamese ethnic and linguistic groups maintained an existence outside of the American carpet bombing, napalm, and Agent Orange" (313). By contrast, Delmos Jones, who had conducted research in Thailand and would become a founder of the Association of Black Anthropologists, awoke to the dangers of cooptation and complicity. He withdrew and wrote with measured eloquence about the culpability of anthropologists.

The denouement of Price's history is the American Anthropological Association's belated adoption of an ethical code in 1971. But a true reckoning for the discipline would be practically impossible. Price's argument is about hegemony, and arguments about hegemony make it difficult to salvage the untainted from the tainted. *Cold War Anthropology* has this in common with recent books like Inderjeet Parmar's *Foundations of the American Century*, which likewise found ostensibly-but-not-really nonstate, nonpolitical, scientific/nonideological foundations undergirding academic networks and American hegemony.[3] Price's preface notes that "the Pentagon and the CIA can be difficult to write about in ways that do not make them out to be totalizing forces that explain everything, and thereby nothing, at the same time" (xiv). At times, even while Price's connecting of institutional and intellectual dots is heroic, the book falls into that trap.

[3] Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

This somewhat saturated argument about hegemony might paradoxically deflate some of the outrage or disappointment that earlier chapters provoked—or at least it did for this reader. The epigraph to chapter seven quotes a 1958 letter from Melville Herskovits—a remarkable and still noble figure in the history of modern African and African American Studies—to the CIA's Allen Dulles, saying that the African Studies Association "would be happy to aid you in any way that it can" (165). *Et tu*, Herskovits? The CIA's "ethical depravity" (220) is the well, and pretty much every anthropologist drank from the bucket, wittingly or unwittingly, in good faith or bad.

Cold War Anthropology argues that the Cold War hegemonically inflected the discipline of anthropology, that "military and intelligence agencies quietly shaped the development of anthropology." Price attends to "gentle nudges" and broad but subtle incentives that steered the discipline over three decades (xi). And yet this ever-present shaping was not at all quiet, and the same evidence might support a different kind of argument—one that is less about tragedy than about farce.

A farce, I hasten to add, can be as disastrous and ethically bankrupt as a tragedy, but it might better accommodate, say, the Pentagon's frequent misunderstandings of what anthropology could actually achieve. The Pentagon-funded Special Operations Research Office (SORO) at American University "fantasized about weaponizing ethnographic knowledge to manipulate native populations in absurd ways," imagining that studies of witchcraft could fuel magic-based counterinsurgency campaigns in Congo (255-6). Also farcical is the extent to which, by the 1960s, anthropologists faced a general suspicion of being tied to the CIA even when they were not. Some of Price's details call to mind Joseph Heller more than John le Carré. An anthropologist who had studied in Zambia tells a visiting lecturer that a particular scholar in Zambia was CIA; it turns out that the lecturer, John Stockwell, had himself supervised CIA agents in Zambia, and "the person she named was *not* one of them" (222). It was less that the discipline was poisoned than that the entire environment was.

Such was the Cold War's predicament of culture. The CIA and the Pentagon paid the piper and often called the tune. But just as often the tune was a cacophony.