

Cold War Anthropology

The CIA, the Pentagon and the growth of dual use anthropology

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<www.dukeupress.edu>

Beginning in 1967, journalists and academics have shown that during the first Cold War with the Soviet Union the CIA tried to use, influence and control swathes of intellectual life across the world and at home. Book publishing, art, psychiatry, academia, student organisations, political parties, newspapers, magazines, charities and motion pictures were all incorporated into this anti-Communist crusade.¹ And so was anthropology.²

In the first half of his book Professor Price assembles what is now known of the CIA's (and the Pentagon's) activities in anthropology during the period leading up to the initial exposure of the Agency's network of front organisations in 1967. This is an enormously detailed and impressive piece of research, little of which is surprising now. Seeking to understand parts of the world which were largely *terra incognita* to Americans, the Agency (and the Pentagon; but mostly the Agency) funded anthropological research in areas of interest to it and tried to control the anthropologists' professional body. It did these things using its front organisations and its agents within the field, or through friendly third parties, such as the Ford Foundation. The careers of those who co-operated flourished; those of the recalcitrant did not.

If the information thus acquired had much impact on American foreign policy – on counter-insurgency strategy, for

1 In reality it was a world-wide conflict between two models of economic development: the American capitalist model (a.k.a. imperialism) versus that of national economic development.

'Communism' was a version of national economic development.

2 An account of the events leading up to the initial 1967 articles in the *New York Times* can be read by going to

<<https://books.google.co.uk/>> and entering there 'Sarah Miller Harris + Patman'.

example – little evidence of that is shown here. What did happen was that the use of anthropology as cover for the Agency's officers and agents in the field contaminated the discipline: in parts of the developing world 'American anthropologist' became synonymous with the CIA.

In the second half Price describes in great detail the politics of the American Anthropological Association (AMA) after the CIA's role was exposed in 1967, when various radical groups within anthropology tried – and ultimately failed – to detach the AMA from state influence and introduce professional limits on research which could be of use to the American military-intelligence state: the dual-use anthropology in the book's subtitle.

The final chapter has an elegiac tone to it as Price contemplates the state of US universities today.

'As the generation of 1960s and 1970s activist retires and dies off, universities increasingly find themselves without a generation of professors who know firsthand the history of CIA and Pentagon intrusions on our campuses and in our disciplines. With the loss of this institutional memory, the remaining generations of scholars need to study this history to understand why these relationships endanger prospects of free inquiry. Those who bother learning this history will struggle against an incoming tide, as three decades of neoliberal programs' impacts on student loan debt, campus austerity programs and new enticements of military funding converge to transform American universities into even greater extensions of military and intelligence programs, as increasingly the remaining tenured faculty respond with silence.' (p. 363)

Robin Ramsay