

Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War

By David H. Price

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By the time the United States officially entered World War II, more than half of American anthropologists were using their professional knowledge and skills to advance the war effort. The range of their war-related work was extraordinary. They helped gather military intelligence, pinpointed possible social weaknesses in enemy nations, and contributed to the army's regional Pocket Guide booklets. They worked for dozens of government agencies, including the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Office of War Information. At a moment when social scientists are once again being asked to assist in military and intelligence work, David H. Price examines anthropologists' little-known contributions to the Second World War.

Anthropological Intelligence is based on interviews with anthropologists as well as extensive archival research involving many Freedom of Information Act requests. Price looks at the role played by the two primary U.S. anthropological organizations, the American Anthropological Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology (which was formed in 1941), in facilitating the application of anthropological methods to the problems of war. He chronicles specific projects undertaken on behalf of government agencies, including an analysis of the social effects of postwar migration, the design and implementation of OSS counterinsurgency campaigns, and the study of Japanese social structures to help tailor American propaganda efforts. Price discusses anthropologists' work in internment camps, their collection of intelligence in Central and South America for the FBI's Special Intelligence Service, and their help forming foreign language programs to assist soldiers and intelligence agents. Evaluating the ethical implications of anthropological contributions to World War II, Price suggests that by the time the Cold War began, the profession had set a dangerous precedent regarding what it would be willing to do on behalf of the U.S. government.

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Editorial Review

Review

“*Anthropological Intelligence* is written with vigor. Its author, David Price, is the foremost authority on the way anthropology was transformed by the Cold War and World War II. . . . There are no heroes or villains in this detailed study and this is a testament to Price’s scholarship, careful documentation, and command of the subject matter.” - William J. Peace, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*

"A work of immense scholarship, historical importance and, like all his work in this field, courageous. . . .The publication of *Anthropological Intelligence* is timely, coming as it does when many anthropologists are concerned about the militarisation of their subject through the use of ‘embedded ethnographers’ and the US military's Human Terrain Programme (HTP), which teams social scientists with military units in Iraq and Afghanistan to help soldiers better understand the local culture." - **Jeremy Keenan**, *Times Higher Education Supplement*

“David H. Price’s book adds substantially to a historical understanding of social scientists’ service to government and the military during World War II, and it raises troubling questions about the social and institutional roles of knowledge professionals that transcend the temporal conditions of total war. . . . [A] fascinating and important study. . . .” - **David Paul Haney**, *American Historical Review*

“[A] provocative thesis that deserves to be scrutinized in current debates about the proper role of intellectuals in the societies and polities of which they are members and citizens — and it should be discussed for the sake of clearing away ‘specifically intellectual obstacles to commensuration, communication, and comprehension.’ . . . Anthropological Intelligence assembles a wealth of detailed information, much of it drawn from previously hidden and unusual government archives. . . .” - Richard A. Shweder, *Common Knowledge*

“One of this book’s great merits is the combination of meticulous documentation with lucid analysis. . . . Although we may not agree with him on all analytical conclusions he draws, the scholarly community still has to be grateful for this impressive scholarly achievement. After all, it provides for the very first time a solid basis for a debate which has been long overdue. In all likelihood, this volume will remain the standard reference book for the years to come. It is an indispensable source of insights not only for anthropologists, who will gain a thoroughly new understanding about their own field’s historical contexts of reemergence after 1945.” - Andre Gingrich, *Left History*

“David H. Price is, without any doubt, our foremost authority on the ways in which anthropologists were used in World War II and the Cold War and on the ways in which those wars changed anthropology. Price knows how to use the Freedom of Information Act like no other anthropologist, and he has succeeded in unearthing a wealth of fascinating information about the military uses of anthropology in World War II. *Anthropological Intelligence* is at once a fascinating and entertaining source of trivia on anthropology’s

ancestors and a keenly argued lament for what war has done to a humane discipline. Showing an encyclopedic command of the facts, Price writes with urbane elegance and a strikingly judicious compassion toward those whom he critiques. *Anthropological Intelligence* could not be more timely. At a moment when war is once more on anthropologists' minds, it will become the canonical book on anthropology and the 'good war' while raising troubling questions for those in the age of the 'war on terror' who would like, once more, to mobilize anthropology for war."—**Hugh Gusterson**, author of *People of the Bomb: Portraits of America's Nuclear Complex*

"In this objective and scrupulous account, David H. Price performs an invaluable service by raising a central ethical question: To what extent should social scientists lend their skills to national tasks, even if the goals are not those with which they are in agreement? By carefully documenting what American anthropologists did to help win World War II, he illuminates that murky ethical space that lies between patriotism and the tasks of science."—**Sidney W. Mintz**, Johns Hopkins University

"*Anthropological Intelligence* is written with vigor. Its author, David Price, is the foremost authority on the way anthropology was transformed by the Cold War and World War II. . . . There are no heroes or villains in this detailed study and this is a testament to Price's scholarship, careful documentation, and command of the subject matter."
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(Jeremy Keenan *Times Higher Education Supplement*)

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"In patiently scrutinizing his own profession's past for susceptibility to corruption, Price sets a model for self-examination that the United States as a whole might heed. And once we decide upon which core values should define contemporary America, we will need to live up to them."

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