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Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

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New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania
www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro

Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74



MARIAN VIOREL ANĂSTĂSOAIE

Born in 1976, in Ploiești, Romania

Ph.D. Candidate in Anthropology, University College, London
Provisional title of the thesis: *The Cuban Revolutionary Counterpoint:
Tobacco-growing and Revolutionary Cosmology in Western Cuba*

Scholarships:

Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle-Saale, Germany (2009)

Marie Curie SocAnth doctoral fellowship, University College, London
(2006-2009)

Eastern Scholar, Civic Education Project, Romania (1999-2001)

Curriculum Resource Center fellow, Central European University, Budapest
(Oct. 2009)

Open Society Institute's Scholarship, Budapest (1998-99)

Two edited volumes, several books chapters and book reviews published both
in Romania and abroad

Participation to international conferences and workshops in France, Germany,
Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom

TRACING THE FOOTSTEPS OF A WORLD ANTHROPOLOGIST: CLUES AND HYPOTHESES FOR A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN V. MURRA (ISAAK LIPSCHITZ)¹

Abstract

This article addresses the relationship between personal identity, political commitment and scholarship in the biography of anthropologist John Victor Murra (Isaak Lipschitz). Born in 1916 into a Russian-Jewish family in Odessa, he grew up, studied and became involved in Communist politics in Romania before his departure for Chicago in 1934. His 1956 Ph.D. thesis at University of Chicago on the Inca state helped Murra to become an influential figure in the field of Andean anthropology. Based on archival work and several testimonies, this article traces the influence of his upbringing and political commitment on his academic career.

Keywords: John Murra, Romania, Spain, the Andes, history of anthropology, Jewish intellectuals, biography

Spain 1938. The Nationalist forces made a breakthrough in April capturing the small town of Vinaroz, on the Castellon-Valencian coast, splitting in two the territory still under the Republican control: Catalonia and the center and the south of Spain. Partly because he feared a French involvement into the conflict, Franco decided to attack Valencia rather than Barcelona – a decision that gave the Republican forces the necessary time to reorganize their defense. In July, the Republicans launched the Ebro offensive in order to regain the territory lost in the spring. This military engagement became the biggest battle of the Civil War. The Loyalist forces aimed at capturing the city of Gandesa, 25 km west of the Ebro, a strategic point in a hilly terrain. The surviving members of the International Brigades supplemented by young Spanish conscripts were involved into

fierce battles with the Nationalist forces. However, the surprise effect of the Republican offensive had been already overcome and Franco hurried men and air support to hold on and push back the Republican forces. Among the wounded soldiers of that battle was John Murra, a 22-year-old member of the Abraham Lincoln brigade. Having had his lower body paralyzed for a couple of months, he eventually fully recovered in a hospital in Barcelona. Since his arrival in Spain at the beginning of 1937, Murra had lived the most formative experience of his life, as he would recount years later.² In 1939, he crossed the French-Spanish border with other internationalist fighters and returned back to Chicago, where he had initially volunteered for the Brigades. In his own words,

The war was very useful to me. It gave me a lot of self-confidence. I grew up in Spain, changing from the boy I was when I arrived, half sport aficionado, half communist. It wasn't because of the combat, for I fought very little; but it was because I could see in action the great communist leaders, which gave me useful antibodies for my maturation. Moreover, the war gave me the Spanish language. I am a graduate of the Spanish Civil War, not of the University of Chicago. What is important, I learnt it during the war (Castro *et al.* 2000:58, my translation).³

Immediately after his arrival in Spain, Murra had been assigned as a translator for political commissars at the headquarters of the International Brigades in Albacete. He was also responsible with the distribution of weekly rations to the US volunteers. For almost a year he witnessed as a translator the meetings of the political commissars, Communist party secretaries and the Soviet advisers. He observed the cynicism, the arbitrariness and the injustice of many political decisions. He also knew about the factional struggle between the Communist Party and other factions like the anarchists and the anti-Stalinist POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification). By the time he returned to the United States, Murra had given up his communist activism and reinvested his humanist, egalitarian, emancipatory aspirations into the study of anthropology.

John Victor Murra was the *nom de guerre* of Isaak Lipschitz, born on August 24th, 1916 in Odessa, into a Jewish family. His parents were not religious; however, Isaak had his bar mitzvah ceremony when he was thirteen years old.⁴ His father, born in 1891, was one of eight siblings. They lost their father early. In difficulty, the mother put the youngest two children in an orphanage. Murra's father left the orphanage when he was

twelve years old and started to work in a rubber stamp workshop, and eventually specialized in paper manufacturing. Isaak's mother (b. 1897) was the youngest of three sisters.⁵

After the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, Murra's family moved to Romania in 1921 in order to avoid the hardships of the Civil War in Russia. His only sibling was his sister Beatriz (Ata), born in 1920. His father decided his children needed to learn foreign languages. Besides Russian and Romanian, Isaak and Beatrice learned German, French, and English. Murra's parents spoke Yiddish and Russian. Murra did not mention Yiddish among the languages he mastered, but he might have been familiar with the language, since Sidney Mintz recollected that Murra's Russian had a Yiddish accent (Carnegie and Mintz 2006:117).

He spent his childhood and early youth in Bucharest. He studied at the Lutheran School (hence his mastery of German), a common practice among the better-off Jewish and Romanian families at the time. As a child and teenager, he practiced football and cycling. He was particularly fond of football, about which he wrote several articles in the left-wing daily *Dimineața*.⁶ He was an avid reader of literature, mostly French, Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse being among his favorite authors. In 1932, he was expelled from the prestigious Gheorghe Lazăr high-school, together with three other colleagues, for being Communist sympathizers. He was also briefly imprisoned on political grounds at the beginning of the 1930s. A formative influence during his period in Romania was Petru Năvodaru or Peter Fischer, another Jewish Communist student, who became a model for Murra.⁷ Petru was five years older than Murra and impressed the latter with his leadership qualities and political commitment. In his life story interviews, Murra talks about Petru as being like an older brother to him.

According to his testimony, "as a child, my dominant thought was to escape my family" (Castro *et al.* 2000:16). He and his father had a distant relationship, but Murra acknowledged his father's support and help when he suffered political persecution on account of his political activism. After obtaining his baccalaureate in 1933 as a privately educated pupil, he travelled the following year to Chicago, where one of his uncles worked as a professional musician. His father died shortly after in July 1935. His mother and sister remained in Romania, surviving the anti-Semitic years before and during the Second World War. His sister was part of the interwar underground Communist Party. After the war she studied and became a physicist. In the late 1980s, she translated into Romanian a revised version of Murra's Ph.D. thesis (Murra 1987).⁸

Soon after his arrival to the US, Murra enrolled at the University of Chicago. He studied sociology and got his BA in 1936. He was also involved in the local communist movement, being arrested several times because of his participation to several anti-war and anti-segregation rallies. Significantly, he attended anthropology courses in the anthropology department – especially those of Alfred Radcliffe-Brown and Fred Eggan – deciding to continue his studies in this discipline. In July 1936 he married an American student and fellow Communist, Virginia Miller.⁹ At the end of 1936, however, the Spanish Civil War broke out and he volunteered through the Communist Youth to defend the Republican cause.

After his return to the US in 1939, he spent the next fifteen years as a graduate student, research assistant and academic instructor. In 1956, he defended his Ph.D. thesis in anthropology at the University of Chicago with the title *The Economic Organization of the Inca State* and further embarked on a long research and teaching career, retiring from Cornell University in 1982. He became an active intellectual broker between Latin American, North-American and European anthropologists interested in the Andean cultures. His path-breaking research on the economic and political structures of the Inca state became a classic in the field and fertilized scholarly debates and anthropological research of the Andean countries. One of his main contributions deals with the functioning of the Andean political communities, based on the idea of a “vertical archipelago” of various ecological zones (Murra 2002).

In this article, I tackle certain aspects of John Murra’s biography that I consider to be essential for the understanding of his emergence as a cosmopolitan anthropologist. A caveat should be stated here: the present study, submitted just at the end of the NEC scholarship and shortly after my return from the research trip, advances preliminary conclusions based on partial analysis of the material collected during my research at the National Anthropological Archives in Washington, DC. A comprehensive analysis of the collected material – something which will take more time – may prompt a reconsideration or reformulation of some of the preliminary conclusions reached in this analysis. Apart my own personal interest in Murra’s legacy,¹⁰ I’ve initiated this project as an anthropologist interested in the history of this discipline. I subscribe to Irvin Hallowell’s proposal that the history of anthropology should be approached as an anthropological problem (Hallowell 1965), implying an understanding of the emergence of anthropology as a knowledge practice in Western

culture and its subsequent diffusion and transformations. This has been the meta-framework that has inspired much of the research in the history of the discipline in the last decades, inspired by the work of George Stocking Jr., himself a student of Irvin Hallowell (see Stocking 2010).

The emergence of the academic discipline of anthropology, which has occurred in certain Western countries, has resulted in four main traditions: the American, the British, the French and the German (Barth *et al.* 2005). Outside this “big four” development, much less is known about other traditions of studying human cultural diversity. Only recently, Russian and other European ethnological traditions have seized the attention of historians of anthropology. In the 1960s, together with larger political processes (decolonization, revolutionary movements) and civic protest such as the civil right movements or the anti-Vietnam war protests, critical voices inside the discipline called for a “re-invention of anthropology” (Hymes 1969) and for a critical evaluation of its colonial past (Asad 1973). In the 1980s, the criticism of anthropology was renewed around key epistemological and methodological protocols, a movement that was inspired by an edited volume that quickly acquired the status of a generational manifesto, *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This time, the main point was not about denouncing power, imperialism, and colonization, but more about the critical examination of the persuasive power of anthropological writing and its validation protocols. These had beneficial effects on the anthropological research: reflexivity or the critical examination of research and writing practices has strengthened the discipline.

Today, one of the directions for the renewal of the discipline revolves around the so-called “world anthropologies” project (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006). This is a consequence of the above-mentioned epistemological and methodological debates and of the emergence of anthropology in countries that only two decades ago were a destination for fieldwork rather than for academic employment like today. The main proponents of this project are anthropologists from Latin America and Africa. They argue, in essence, for transnational networks and projects aiming at overcoming the dominance of Western traditions of anthropology and of particular national frameworks. Provincializing metropolitan centers, multiplying non-hierarchical exchanges and projects across national, regional and disciplinary boundaries are the main strategies meant to foster the emergence of cosmopolitan knowledge practices.

One might wonder what this particular project for a cosmopolitan anthropology has to do with John Murra. In this particular book on world anthropologies, he is mentioned as one of the precursors of the “world anthropologies” project (De la Cadena 2006:204). Murra was, already in the 1950s, practicing a cosmopolitan way of doing anthropology. He developed transnational research projects, engaged personally and professionally with intellectuals from Latin American countries and supported the institutional development of academic anthropology in these countries. This corresponds with his self-image: in the published life history interview he presented himself as being an “interstitial person”:

I am not Romanian, nor American, nor Peruvian. I am an interstitial person and I find difference to be humanly acceptable. I do not see a unique solution to any problem; I think there are various solutions (Castro *et al.*:85, my translation).¹¹

Murra’s cosmopolitanism, both assumed and recognized by current fellow-anthropologists, is a concern of present-day anthropology. We need, however, to be careful not to project today’s standards and definitions of cosmopolitanism retroactively on Murra’s life and scholarship. We need to keep a historicist perspective on the past, trying to understand the development of ideas, scientific careers and theories in their dynamic interaction with social, political and scholarly conditions of their time. In this sense, biographies of scholars are indispensable exercises of intellectual history since they help us understand better how anthropologists’ ideas and cognitive styles have emerged in their own existential struggle with various political, social and intellectual problems and events. Because of his longevity, transnational trajectory, his close relationship to the currents of his time and involvement in some crucial historical events, Murra’s biography offers a particularly rich perspective on twentieth-century anthropology.

I favor a problematized biographical research in order to avoid doing what Martine Boyer-Weinmann calls *les biographies blanches* (blank biographies): biographies without theoretical and methodological points, nor reflexivity, written by omniscient authors who reconstruct chronologically the lives of their subjects. At the opposite end, the biographies based on a project (*biographies à projet*) aim at finding an interpretative angle and the most appropriate form to deal with the singularity of a life (Boyer-Weinmann 2004). One has to be aware of

what Bourdieu denounces as the dangers of the “biographical illusion”: to present the subject’s life as a “coherent and finalized whole, which can and must be seen as the unitary expression of a subjective and objective ‘intention’ of a project” (Bourdieu 2004:299). Even if Bourdieu’s point is well taken, one has to take into account the motives and the moral significance of the need of coherence in the life of a biographical subject – a point made by French sociologist Nathalie Heinich in her criticism of Bourdieu’s position on biographical works (Heinich 2010). Since human life is full of moments of rupture and turning points, Heinich argues that a biographer should aim to understand his/her subject’s search for coherence and continuity in its moral and cognitive aspects.

In the rest of the paper, I would like to address two issues that I consider to be central to Murra’s biography, which need careful consideration based on the study of his personal archives at the Smithsonian Institution and other archives in the US and Romania¹² as well as testimonies of people who knew him.

John V. Murra’s ‘Unresolved Ethnic Identity’

In a recent paper discussing Murra’s classes on the history of anthropology, Frank Salomon, a graduate student of Murra in the 1970s, reveals that the latter shared Claude Lévi-Strauss’s view that “anthropology is a way of living with an unresolved ethnic identity” (Salomon 2009:96). However, Salomon writes that “Murra was notoriously touchy about his own ‘unresolved ethnic identity’” (*ibid.*:97). In particular, he was displeased when someone referred to his Jewish name.

In an important paper on the question of the “Jewish Roots and Routes of Anthropology”, Jeffrey Feldman addresses the question of the way present-day anthropologists deal with the Jewishness of many of their professional ancestors. Based on recent biographical inquiries about the Jewishness of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sol Tax, Feldman distinguishes between two main modes of dealing with the Jewish identity of anthropologists: on the one hand, a static, normative and trans-historical one based on a nostalgic search for ‘Jewish roots’ and, on the other hand, a critically informed perspective, which addresses the contingent and dynamic character of the Jewish identity of certain anthropologists. George Stocking’s essay on Sol Tax’s changing engagement with his Jewish identity is an example of the latter approach. In Feldman’s words,

Stocking treats 'Jewish-ness' as a trajectory in its own right, neither assigning it the status of a dominant variable nor relegating it to the rose-tinted background. Stocking listens to Tax and he speaks back. Jewishness is not just identity, but credo, context, and the tension between the two (Feldman 2004:117).

A contextual and carefully documented perspective on the Jewish (or other ethnic) aspect of an anthropologist's identity is necessary in order to avoid falling into the trap of reifying his/her identity. An example of the latter is the book *Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (1974) of the late sociologist John Cuddihy. He advances a theory of the secularized Jewish intellectual as being constrained to mediate between a subaltern, colonized position of Eastern European Jewish communities and the modern, bourgeois, protestant Western culture. The theories of Freud, Marx and Lévi-Strauss are considered by Cuddihy to be double-edged: on the one hand, they provide an ideology and a charter of social change for their Jewish fellows, on the other, they provide an apologetics addressed to the Gentiles. For Cuddihy, "ideologies (socialism, liberalism, psychoanalysis, Zionism) [are] the functional equivalents of what are accounts, apologies, and excuses on the everyday level of social system behavior" (Cuddihy 1974:6).

One could imagine that what was partly behind Murra's refusal to talk or assume his Jewish background was an effort to refute simplistic visions like that of Cuddihy, more congenial to the WASP conservative academic American establishment of the late 1930s. Salomon's notes on Murra's lectures provide a nuanced view about how Murra's immigrant experience had influenced his reading of the history of US anthropology. Murra underlined the significance of the ethnic identity of Franz Boas or Edward Sapir in their frictions with the conservative elitist university environments of Harvard, Pennsylvania, Yale or New York. In his life history interview, Murra reported the opinion of his supervisor Fay-Cooper Cole regarding the cold reception and the difficulties Edward Sapir experienced during his time at Yale:

When I, at a particular moment, was thinking to enroll at Yale as student, Cole told me: "Look, they killed Sapir"[...] I think he was referring to this situation of a Jew, a poet and an intellectual like Sapir among the troglodytes of the upper classes of Yale, very protestant, very upper class (Castro *et al.* 2000:102).

Murra himself was a visiting lecturer at Yale University in 1962 and 1970, where his close friend Sidney Mintz was a lecturer and then professor of anthropology between 1951 and 1974. Sidney Mintz, born in 1922 into a modest Jewish family in Dover, New Jersey, benefitted from the G.I. Bill and got his Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1951. According to his testimony, he was the first Jew employed by the Yale anthropology department after Edward Sapir. He didn't feel himself to be an outsider, but this was partly because he could pass as being non-Jewish, and partly because Yale University increasingly became, after the Second World War, more tolerant towards ethnic minorities.¹³

Could we explain the change of civil name from Isaak Lipschitz to John Murra simply as a strategy to avoid anti-Jewish discrimination? Change of civil name is one of the strategies discussed by Erving Goffman in his classical book on *Stigma*. Names are "identity pegs" or "positive marks", which can be changed in order to avoid personal identification and/or discrimination. This was a common strategy for many immigrants, not least the Jews coming from Eastern Europe to the US. I would contend that this was not the reason for the name change in the case of John Murra.

In Murra's case, there are testimonies that claim he graduated in 1936 at University of Chicago using his birth name.¹⁴ Moreover, an article based on an interview with him, reported that Murra had to use his birth certificate from Odessa to be allowed entry back to the US in 1939. Isaak Lipschitz used "John V. Murra" as a *nom de guerre* during his involvement in the Spanish Civil War, while still having his birth name as his civil name. After his return to the US in 1939, he started to use John Murra as his civil name, but it is not clear when this change was officially registered.¹⁵

Personal names are attributes of personhood serving both to identify an individual as well as to assign him/her a place in the social world. Contrary to J. S. Mill's view that personal names only denote and do not connote, there are more complex perspectives on personal names, among which the connotative function of aspects of personhood is not unimportant. Anthropologist João Pina-Cabral, for example, writes that

As objectifications of the person's relational constitution, then, wherever they are used, personal names refer to and reinforce those aspects of personhood to which they are associated (Pina-Cabral 2010:306).

The most elaborate explanation regarding the origin of Murra's *nom de guerre* is provided by one of his students in a biographical essay published after his death:

John (or Johnny as he was known when he was young) was chosen for its qualities as a straightforward American name, Victor in anticipation of a successful struggle, and Murra because it is close to the Romanian word for mulberry. That was Johnny's nickname when he was a boy, because of his large, dark eyes (Barnes 2009:6).

However, the reason for choosing his second first name "Victor" was not that it could have been an omen for a successful struggle, as Barnes surmises, but a homage to his political mentor, Petru Năvodaru, whose underground name in the Communist movement was "Victor".¹⁶

In order to understand the permanent adoption of his *nom de guerre* as a civil name, we need to grasp, among other things, the citizenship status of Murra. He lost his Romanian citizenship in 1938, together with more than 200,000 Romanian Jews as a result of the anti-Semitic legislation of the Goga-Cuza government.¹⁷ He was stateless between 1938 and 1950, until he was granted US citizenship after a long legal battle. His involvement in the Spanish civil war and his youth communist activism were considered suspicious by the US authorities at the start of the Cold War. Moreover, as a consequence of the suspicion regarding Communist sympathizers during McCarthyism, Murra received his passport only in 1956.

More generally, his name change could be better understood as being symptomatic of a period of crisis and self-redefinition. In 1939, upon his return to the US, Murra was a stateless former combatant of the Spanish Civil War. Keeping "Murra" as his civil name, Isaak Lipschitz acknowledged and assumed the formative experience of the Spanish Civil War, which, as mentioned earlier, he considered more important than his university education. Moreover, Murra was his name in a community of former combatants who preserved a sense of brotherhood and friendship – a form of fictive kinship. Stateless, with his family trapped in Romania by war and excluded by the anti-Semitic policies of the Antonescu regime, Murra could find support among friends he made during the Spanish Civil War, such as Saul Newton, his psychoanalyst during the crucial years of finishing his Ph.D.¹⁸

This period of crisis and self-redefinition lasted probably until the completion of his Ph.D. I am making this claim tentatively and aware

of the need to substantiate or amend it after systematic research of his personal archive. However, Murra himself offered elements for supporting such a view in his life history interview. He talked about his economic difficulties as a graduate student living on short-term contracts and teaching positions, his struggle with the US federal authorities as they opposed his naturalization because of his past Communist politics. He mentions also his psychological blockages, neurosis and difficulties in finishing his Ph.D. He started in 1949 a long-term therapy with Saul Newton, a psychoanalyst he had met in Spain. This therapy helped him to finish his Ph.D., as he writes in the thesis acknowledgements.

I would contend that this period of redefinition partly overlapped with another critical phase in the anthropologist's education, i.e. the fieldwork and the writing of his Ph.D. thesis. Claude Lévi-Strauss spoke of the importance of fieldwork for the would-be anthropologist in order to "accomplish that inner revolution that will really make him into a new man" (Lévi-Strauss 1963:373). He explicitly compares the fieldwork experience with psychoanalytical training. It is a necessary training in order to form that cognitive capacity to perceive and organize forms of social existence as a whole:

Such forms of social existence cannot be apprehended simply from the outside – the investigator must be able to make a personal reconstruction of the synthesis characterizing them; he must not merely analyze their elements, and apprehend them as a whole in the form of a personal experience – his own (Lévi-Strauss 1963:373).

For non-anthropologists this might look like a self-serving professional myth, but it is something that has remained the classical training experience of the discipline so far, overcoming critical scrutiny from outside and inside the discipline (cf. Clifford and Marcus 1986).

Murra's case is an interesting one in this respect. His Ph.D. thesis was not based on proper fieldwork, but on library research. This might seem to invalidate what I have just said about the importance of fieldwork for anthropological training and its cognitive and emotional transformative effects. However, Murra had, for six months, in 1941-1942, his first research experience in the Andes, as a member of an archeological research team in southern Ecuador. This first experience, even though short, was decisive for his formation as an anthropologist interested in the Andes. As well as providing the material for his master thesis defended in

1942 at Chicago and to his first professional publication, this fieldwork also enabled him to obtain insights and some working hypotheses which were later explored in his thesis. According to his testimony

In 1941-42 I was overwhelmed by the Andean life...then I could see all there was, I read the scientific literature and I saw it was a very good, very big topic... (Castro *et al.* 2000:66, my translation).¹⁹

It took another decade of reading the anthropological literature, of extensive archival research on the first chronicles written by Spaniards after the conquest of the Inca state, and of exposure to innovative ideas such as those discussed by the group around Karl Polanyi in order for him to produce a Ph.D. dissertation that subsequently inspired a whole regional research program.

John Murra didn't see himself as an immigrant living in the US. In an oral history interview with anthropologist May Mayko Ebihara he says

Again, because I'm a Romanian. Maybe that is, I should have said that earlier. I don't think of myself as an immigrant. I have not come here to be a Romanian-American. I'm a foreigner and I plan to leave.²⁰

This remark should be placed in the context of that particular moment of Murra's life as he was close to retirement from Cornell University and unsure where he will settle permanently after that. Nevertheless, it also points to the fact that Murra stressed the Romanian component of his identity rather than his Jewish origins or his US nationality. It is a point that needs to be closely looked at through the reading of his personal diaries, in order to understand how he worked through his own personal conflicts, insecurities and personal history. We should consider here the larger phenomenon of the European refugees, among which many Jewish intellectuals and scholars, escaping the Nazi persecution in Germany or other countries under Nazi control (Fleming and Bailyn 1969; Coser 1984). Murra's relationship with other European immigrants and his connection with the US should be placed within the larger context of this European exodus in order to understand the specificity of his case and the commonalities it shares with other cases. In comparison with the large, mostly German-speaking Jewish refugees who came a few years later to escape persecution, Murra arrived as a simple immigrant in 1934. Being only eighteen years-old, he lacked the cultural capital and connections

of more established scholars, but he could enroll at university and could obtain his first academic degrees. Lacking the organizational support and connections of other European refugees (mostly based in New York), Murra managed, nevertheless, to make friendships and obtain support from academic patrons in Chicago in order to make a living and put the basis of an academic career, in spite of delayed acquisition of the US citizenship.

A last point regarding the role of ethnicity or ethnic conflict in his personal redefinition and scholarship needs to be made. Based on my on-going reading of his work and of reviews, testimonies, commentaries and obituaries dedicated to Murra, as well as the preliminary reading of documents from his personal archive, I would contend that his experience in the multi-ethnic and conflict-driven atmosphere of interwar Romania was a formative experience that made him emphasize ethnicity as an important category of social analysis (Salomon 2009:96) and gave Murra the impetus to continue his training as an anthropologist once his involvement in the Spanish civil war ended.²¹ This claim is substantiated by an elaborate answer Murra gives to May Mayko Ebihara in the above-mentioned life history interview. Asked whether there was something in his early life that influenced him to become an anthropologist, Murra answered, at length, by firstly evoking his childhood multiethnic experiences in Romania, with Bulgarian and Gypsy/Roma sellers on the street, and secondly by giving a short exposé on Romanian history and its nation-building process stressing the role of intellectuals in articulating Romanian ethnicity. He explicitly compares the nationalist independent movements in the Balkans, stirred by intellectuals mostly trained abroad – for example in France, as in the case of Romanians –, with the African independence movement a century later.²² He continues by explicitly comparing himself to the intellectuals involved in Romanian nation-building:

I see my role in the Andes or in Puerto Rico like that of those Romanians who came from under Hungarian-Austrian rule and in the early nineteenth century insisted that, yes, our language gets re-written. Yes, we have a history even though we haven't had a polity for three hundred years and have lived under the Turks. So in that sense, I was prepared for anthropology.²³

Murra's socialization in the culturally effervescent interwar period in Romania, where intellectuals played an important role in formulating and participating in various political and cultural projects concerning

the consolidation of a new expanded nation-state, might have sensitized Murra to become more receptive to Latin American intellectual traditions thus making him more willing to engage with local intellectuals than other anthropologists. In the 1950s and 1960s, when subaltern and post-colonial studies were still a thing of the future, Murra paid attention to, collaborated with and promoted local intellectuals in Puerto Rico and especially in the Andean countries. His friendship and intellectual exchange with the Peruvian writer and anthropologist José María Arguedas was arguably the most emblematic one (Murra 1983; Murra and López-Baralt 1996).

J.V. Murra's Political Engagements: From Communist Youth Activism to the Radical Potential of Anthropology

The second aspect I consider worth investigating is the complex relation between Murra's precocious political activism, his experience of the Spanish Civil War and his post-1939 political stance. Time and again, he mentions his early political activism in Romania during the 1930s. However, we know so far very little about this. For example, we don't know the exact circumstances, reasons for and the length of his imprisonment as a result of governmental persecution of Communist sympathizers. Murra mentions the very important influence of Petru Năvodaru, a Communist Party member, on his political awakening. The political scientist and historian Vladimir Tismăneanu mentioned Năvodaru among the few 'idealists', as opposed to many opportunists, inside the higher ranks of the Romanian Communist Party.²⁴ He was close to Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the communist leader who was sentenced and executed in 1954 during the Stalinist period. It seems that Năvodaru barely escaped imprisonment at that time. John Murra retained a life-long admiration for Năvodaru and met with him each time he visited Romania, in 1967, 1976 and 1986. Further research on Năvodaru, especially on his life and political trajectory, would be needed in order to understand the type of personality and political engagement that Murra found so compelling and admirable.

Murra's sister Ata (Beatrice) Iosifescu, a physicist, was married to the literary critic Silviu Iosifescu, both deceased now. They were members of the Communist Party before 1944 – the group of underground communists or *illegalisti* as they are commonly labeled in the historiography. They were friends with the sociologist Pavel Câmpeanu, another underground communist and the author of very insightful political analyses of late Romanian socialism (Câmpeanu 1986).

The experience of this network of underground communist activists – later academics or professionals with little involvement in political decisions and increasingly critical of the socialist regime (without ending up being dissidents) – is extremely helpful in understanding Murra’s disenchantment with Communist party politics and his view of really existing socialism. It might be the case, and this is a point to be further explored, that his retreat from political activism and critical posture towards state socialism was not only an effect of his Spanish experience, but also of his familiarity and direct contact with this particular group in Romania. What were the political aspirations and experiences of these people who remained in Romania? Since most of them were of Jewish origin, it would be important to understand how they coped with the anti-Semitism of the 1930s and 1940s, but also with that of the post-WWII socialist Romania. How did they experience the Stalinist years and the increasingly repressive years of the late socialist period in the light of their youthful involvement in the Communist movement? An answer to these questions could be formulated after a careful examination of the voluminous correspondence between J. Murra and his sister Ata Iosifescu (in the NAA) and other documents in the files of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (*Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității* – CNSAS).

There is another dimension of Murra’s political engagements and ideas, which has been very little discussed in obituaries and articles dedicated to him, i.e. his commitment to the African independence movement and his collaboration with African intellectuals and politicians. His deep attachment to and collaboration on African issues, especially independence of African countries and their political and economic development was one of the discoveries of my research in his files at the NAA (see also Barnes 2009:19).²⁵ This greatly overlapped with his theoretical interests in the British social anthropological work done in Africa – a body of work he came to appreciate for its ethnographic and methodological qualities while studying in Chicago with A. Radcliffe-Brown, and which he drew upon in his interpretation of the Inca statecraft and ethno-historical work.²⁶ In the late 1940s and 1950s, John Murra was seen as an expert on African cultures. In 1951-52, he worked as an African area specialist for the Trusteeship Council, United Nations, writing research papers on land tenure in African trust territories.²⁷ In 1952, he was consulted by two sociology faculty members at Boston University for a project to establish at that university a comprehensive African area program.²⁸ This initiative was successful, but in the end John Murra wasn’t hired, since a local faculty

member, Bill Brown, became its first director. As late as 1962, Murra was willing to do research in Africa, in particular in a Ghana research project drafted by anthropologist Stanley Diamond, but this project was never started, most probably because of lack of funding.²⁹

Perhaps the most detailed and enlightening formulation of Murra's conception of the relationship between anthropology and politics lies in several letters he wrote to Peruvian anthropologist Carlos Ivan Degregori in 1968.³⁰ The latter was at that time a graduate student at Brandeis University on a scholarship John Murra had helped him to obtain. Degregori wrote frequently to John Murra for advice during that year, searching for answers to pressing problems regarding the way anthropologists could answer the political challenges of the moment. In a letter dated March 7th, 1968, Degregori confesses to Murra that, in spite of his excellent grades and learning experience, he feels a bit alienated and puzzled to see how intellectuals and anthropologists around him become very learned specialists, while being "sad" (*tristes*) and "without hope" or "having agreed/compromised" (*han pactado*) with the powers that be. Murra answers on April 12th, 1968, in a letter which he drafted three times (the first two also kept in his personal archive). It is a 4-page-typed letter in Spanish, in which he formulates his vision of how to reconcile the demands of political action and those of anthropology. One could think of this letter as a sort of *Anthropology as a Vocation* manifesto, a half-century later personal answer to questions which also animated Max Weber in his two conferences on science and on politics (Weber 2008).³¹ Murra shares the concerns of Degregori regarding the depoliticization of and the sterile and excessive specialization of anthropological research. He writes about his personal experience in the Spanish Civil War as his contribution at the time to fighting fascism and impeding the outbreak of a world war. He continues by saying that he returned from Spain with a different vision of himself and of his political commitments. Murra outlines three possible paths open to a politically engaged intellectual/anthropologist.

The first one would be the revolutionary action and he cites the case of Ernesto Che Guevara who abandoned medicine for the revolutionary struggle. Murra considers this to be a valid solution as he himself subscribed to it in 1937. He adds, though, an important caveat: one has to know not only what one opposes, but also for what one fights. The second solution is that of poets, writers and artists. He mentions the case of Pablo Neruda and José María Arguedas. For Murra the artistic work helps humanity to keep on imagining and striving for a solution to all evils. The third possibility is

that of the intellectual who is neither a revolutionary nor an artist, but “one that shares the rejection of the existing societies and strives for a society closer to people and to its human potential.”³² These intellectuals need to understand the lost cultural tradition of indigenous people who had been defeated by the colonial powers and to help with the strengthening of their cultural resources, notwithstanding the indigenous languages. Murra puts it bluntly “In the Andes it appears to me more revolutionary to fight for the use of the Quechua in teaching and for popular and high literatures in the Andean languages than to assault banks...”³³ Equally important, Murra sees the role of intellectuals as contributing hitherto unconceived solutions to human problems as well as “formulating NEW QUESTIONS” (all caps in the original).³⁴ Anthropology’s role in the present, Murra continues, is to show that cultural diversity is a pool of resources and solutions designed by a multitude of communities. This includes also the study of kinship (the political relevance of which Degregori had questioned in a previous letter), which is for Murra a reason to make anthropologists proud of their discipline: “it [kinship – *parentesco*] is an example of human creativity like a poem is or a geometrical theorem and nobody but us have discovered it and valued it.”³⁵

Murra’s statement on how one could find a way to accommodate anthropology and politics corroborates other interpretations of Murra’s belief in the radical potential of anthropology as a source for alternative, utopian thought – a point also made by Salomon (2009) and by Barnes (2009). In 1968, when youth protests against political establishment had been ignited around the world, his answer might have seemed too compromising in the eyes of more radical anthropologists. However, his own early political involvement and disillusionment with Communist party politics pushed him to search for and support the cause of anti-colonial movements and indigenous groups in Latin America and Africa.

Conclusions

This preliminary account is part of a larger project which will hopefully result in a biography of John Victor Murra based on more archival research and interviews with people who knew him personally. His long life, his involvement in crucial events of the twentieth century, his transnational life and the influence of his scholarship on Andean anthropology make him a very compelling figure for the history of twentieth-century anthropology. While only a book-length biographical account could do justice to such

complex personality, in this text I have chosen to tackle some crucial aspects of his biography, i.e. his own sense of his ethnic identity and his political commitment. For these dimensions of his biography, I have identified the period between 1936 (the year he went to Spain) and 1956 (the year he defended his Ph.D.) as being a crucial one in his life, when Murra had to deal with major challenges: redefining his political activism, discovering anthropology as his vocation and defining his own path within the discipline, fighting for his US citizenship under the threat of being expelled because of his political commitments and clarifying the nature of his attachments to Romania and to his relatives and friends there. This is a period when, significantly, he experienced a precarious economic status with short-term academic or research contracts. During this time, too, he built strong intellectual and personal friendships that helped him find a path and settle in a new adoptive country. There is a sense, though, that Murra never came to see the US as his home country – for example, he refused to consider himself as an immigrant or a Romanian-American. He emphasized both his Romanian upbringing and his cosmopolitan aspirations, while playing down his Jewish identity. We still need to understand, by a careful contextualization and reconstruction of that period of his life, how these three aspects of his personality played a role in his life choices, interaction with his peers and fashioning of his scientific persona.

For current anthropologists, especially for those at the beginning of their post-doctoral career, his innovative research in the Andes and personal involvement in transnational research cooperation, exchange and training, could serve as an example for bridging still unequal academic exchanges between US and Western European anthropologists and those based in Latin America and Africa.

For discussing the reception or, more accurately, the non-reception of Murra's scholarship in Romania one would need to give an elaborate picture of the challenges of the development for anthropology in this country for which there is no space in this paper. Nevertheless, Murra's work and engagement with other intellectual and cultural traditions could help to broaden the geographical reach and conceptual realm of Romanian anthropology, which is still largely confined to Romania and neighboring countries. Murra's insightful combination of various kinds of data (archaeological, historical, ecological, and ethnographical) for building theoretical interpretations of phenomena such as Inca statecraft and Andean cultural ecologies could push anthropologists from Eastern Europe to set up comparative and trans-disciplinary projects.

NOTES

- ¹ This paper is the first published article based on my research project as a NEC International Fellow during the 2013-2014 academic year. In June 2014, I did research at the National Anthropological Archives, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington working on the John Murra Papers, benefiting from the amazing support of the NAA staff, especially its reference archivist Adam Minakowski. This research trip was made possible by the financial support of the NEC, which does not bear responsibility for the points expressed in this paper. I thank Anca Oroveanu for putting me in contact with Maria Iosifescu, John Murra's niece. In June 2014, I met her in New York and she kindly and generously gave from her time and provided me with rich stories about her uncle and her family in general. Two US anthropologists were helpful in initiating my interest in Murra's life and work. Herb Lewis told me about his experience as a graduate student doing fieldwork summer trips in Martinique under the supervision of John Murra back in the 1950s. He also put me in contact with his colleague, Frank Salomon, who was very helpful and provided me with material and advice concerning Murra's life and oeuvre. In Romania, Zoltán Rostás was a very supportive interlocutor on this project. Back in Halle, where this project initially took shape, I benefited from Mihai Popa's and Patrick Heady's comments and encouragement. Puiu Lățea was an attentive and critical interlocutor while discussing this project and the history of the US anthropology in general. Before going to print, this text improved after an attentive reading by Ioana Măgureanu. Benjamin Keatinge generously provided a careful proofreading of the text. Of course, the usual disclaimer applies here too: the inaccuracies, misunderstandings are my sole responsibility, and not of any of my generous interlocutors.
- ² Harry Fisher, a former member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, published his memoirs about his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. They contain information about John Murra's involvement in the Spanish Civil War (see Fischer 1997:159-61). For a more general perspective on the Abraham Lincoln brigade, see Carroll (1994).
- ³ In the original Spanish text: "Pues, la guerra me ha sido muy útil, porque me ha dado mucha más confianza en mí mismo. De ser un muchacho cuando llegué, medio deportista, medio comunista, crecí mucho en España. No por pelear, porque luché muy poco, pero ver a los grandes líderes del comunismo en acción, me creó unos anticuerpos que me educaron. Además, la guerra me dio el castellano. Yo soy graduado de la guerra civil española, no de la Universidad de Chicago. Lo importante lo aprendí en la guerra." (Castro *et al.* 2000:58).
- ⁴ Invitation card for the bar mitzvah ceremony for Isaak Lipschitz, at the Choral Temple Synagogue in Bucharest, document in the JMP, NAA, Smithsonian Institution.

- ⁵ NAA contain a certified copy of Asna Bialic's birth certificate – Murra's mother. It states that she was born in Chişinău on December 16th, 1897 as the daughter of Moise Leib Bialic and Clara Bialic. Maria Iosifescu, one of the daughters of Ata, Murra's sister, believes that this birth certificate is not accurate, since she believes the family was from Odessa and not from Chişinău. According to Maria Iosifescu (personal communication), this certificate stating the birth place of Asna Bialic to be in Chişinău, helped her grandmother and her mother to avoid losing the Romanian citizenship after the enactment of the Goga-Cuza anti-Semitic legislation in 1938.
- ⁶ At the NAA, in the John Murra Papers (Series IV Biographical, Box 1, Folder 'Spain – Civil War') there is a photocopy of an article from *Dimineața*, September 27th, 1932. It is a chronicle of several football games from Bucharest, notably that between Juventus and Macabi clubs. The article is signed 'A. Lpș.' In a letter dated October 9th, 1980, Ata Iosifescu writes to her brother about how she discovered an envelope among their mother's papers, on which it was handwritten 'Mura.' It contained five clips from the newspaper *Dimineața*, from September 1932, signed either 'Alexandru Lăpuşneanu' or 'A. Lpș.' Choosing a pseudonym was a common practice among the collaborators of the newspaper *Dimineața*, many of them being of Jewish origin. John Murra spoke in several interviews about this short trial period as a young journalist in Bucharest as being a very formative experience. In an entry from his personal diary dated January 29th, 1961 he lists among the good things that happened in his life his collaboration with *Dimineața* newspaper.
- ⁷ Petru Năvodaru (1913-1988), born Peter Fischer, an economist by training, was a Romanian-Jewish member of the illegal Communist Party during the 1930s and 1940s. Maria Banuş (1914-1999), a Romanian-Jewish writer and member of the Communist movement alongside Năvodaru, kept an extensive diary, recently published, which contains frequent annotations of Petru Năvodaru's underground activities during the WWII. She portrays Năvodaru as driven by a Romantic, idealistic dedication to the Communist cause, partly expiatory due to a guilty consciousness of being a member of a wealthy Transylvanian family (Banuş 2014:523-4). After 1947, Năvodaru became part of the socialist bureaucracy in charge of economic planning, but he was a marginal member of the Communist nomenclature. He was close to Bellu Zilber and other former underground Communists like Gheorghe Preoteasa. In the last decade of his life, he fell into political disgrace and was under *Securitate* surveillance as his daughter was married to the dissident-writer Paul Goma.
- ⁸ John Murra Papers (NAA) contain a folder with letters regarding the translation and the publication of Murra's book in Romania. Most of the letters are written by Ata Iosifescu, asking her brother for information and clarifications, and informing him about the ongoing interactions with the

- editors in charge of the publication of the book. John Murra answers, in detail and in Romanian, his sister's inquiries and this exchange is particularly interesting for the understanding of the challenges of translating certain anthropological concepts and some notions of Andean cultures into Romanian.
- ⁹ He divorced Virginia Miller in July 1940. Murra's second marriage with Elisabeth Ann Sawyer (February 1946) also ended in divorce in 1958.
- ¹⁰ I first came across Murra's name in Paris in 2004 while I was studying for a Master in Anthropology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. His work was used and commented on in the Latin American interdisciplinary seminar of the EHESS. At the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle-Saale, I met in 2010 the US anthropologist Herb Lewis with whom I discussed Murra's Caribbean connections, especially his participation in the Puerto Rico research coordinated by Julian Steward (1956) and his association with Vera Rubin and the Research Institute for the Study of Man, which organized fieldwork training for graduate students in the Caribbean area (Martinique, Jamaica). John Murra was the fieldtrip supervisor of Herb Lewis (then a graduate student at Columbia University) and five other students from Vassar College, Columbia University and University of Montréal in Martinique during the summer of 1956.
- ¹¹ In the original Spanish text: "Pregunta: Pero hay mucho antropólogo formal, cualquiera sea la disciplina a la que se dedica, que puede escribir magistralmente un texto, pero que no está comprometido con ninguna cosa. Eso es la diferencia. Murra: Pero esto no se me ocurrió nunca (risas). Yo estoy en este negocio. Es que también lo necesito. No encajo. No soy ni rumano, ni norteamericano, ni peruano. Yo soy una persona intersticial y la diferencia me parece humanamente aceptable. No veo una sola solución a un problema; creo que hay varias soluciones." (Castro *et al.* 2000:85).
- ¹² The National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* (CNSAS)'s archives contain documents regarding John Murra which I haven't consulted yet.
- ¹³ See Oren (2000:141-145) discussing the discrimination suffered by anthropologist Edward Sapir during the 1930s at the Graduate Club of the University for his Jewish activism and identity.
- ¹⁴ Memorial statement about John Murra at Cornell University (2006) by Jane Fajans, Chair; Frederic W. Gleach, John Henderson and Bernd Lambert; retrieved from <http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/memorials/murra.pdf> (last accessed, July 31st, 2014).
- ¹⁵ In the summer of 1941, John Murra prepared for his fieldtrip in Ecuador, which entailed bureaucratic paperwork in order to be allowed to travel outside the US. He had applied by that time for US naturalization, but he hadn't yet been granted US citizenship (it would take almost another decade). In a letter by Fay-Cooper Cole, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago to S. E. Duran Ballen, Consul General of the Republic

- of Ecuador, 'Isaak Lipschitz' appears in parenthesis, as a name of John Victor Murra (letter of Fay-Cooper Cole to S. E. Duran Ballen, August 8th, 1941, NAA, JVM Papers, Series IV, Biographical, Box 1, Folder 'Ecuador Trip'). Also in an official letter from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, US Department of Justice to Fay-Cooper Cole, it is stated that "there appears to be some question as to Mr. Murra's correct name, as shown on the manifest of his arrival" (letter of Marchall E. Dimock to Fay-Cooper Cole, July 16th, 1941, NAA, JVM Papers, Series IV, Biographical, Box 1, Folder 'Ecuador Trip').
- ¹⁶ Maria Iosifescu, personal communication, June 2014.
- ¹⁷ The decree no. 169, from January 22nd, 1938 reviewed the citizenship of all Romanian Jews. Those able to prove they had been residents of Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina before the formal unification with the Romanian Kingdom in 1918 could retain their citizenship. Since Odessa was not part of Bessarabia, the Jewish residents of the city who moved to Romania, like Murra's family, were stripped of their Romanian citizenship.
- ¹⁸ Saul B. Newton (1906-1991), whose original family name was Cohen, was born into a Jewish family in St. John's, New Brunswick, Canada. After studying at the University of Wisconsin, he went to Chicago where he was involved in Communist, unionist and anti-fascist circles around the University of Chicago. He fought in the Spanish Civil War and in the Second World War. He had no formal training in psychoanalysis, but his first wife Jane Pearce, M.D., was a qualified psychotherapist and follower of Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949), an innovative psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Saul Newton and Jane Pearce established in 1957 the Sullivan Institute for Research in Psychoanalysis, a psychoanalytical institute and a commune in Upper Manhattan. For a biographical *aperçu* of Saul B. Newton, see the essay published by his step-daughter and anthropologist Esther Newton (2001). Amy S. Siskind, a former member of the Sullivan community, has published a monograph dedicated to the Sullivan Institute, based on interviews with former members of the community after its dissolution in the early 1990s (Siskind 2003). For this current project, I am interested in understanding how Newton's particular psychoanalytical doctrine might have influenced John Murra's relationship with his family and especially with his mother. In this respect, Murra's intimate diaries, preserved at the NAA, are a vital source, as they contain notations of Murra's interactions and sessions with Saul Newton.
- ¹⁹ In the Spanish original text: "En 1941-1942, quedé deslumbrado por lo andino. Ocurrió en el Ecuador. Yo fui para ganarme el pan no fui para hacer grandes proyectos intelectuales. Sin embargo allí vi todo lo que había, conocí la literatura y vi que era un problema muy bueno, muy grande." (Castro *et al.* 2000:66).

- ²⁰ Transcript of an oral interview realized by May Mayko Ebihara with John Murra on August 24th, 1981, p. 15 (May Mayko Ebihara oral history interviews with anthropologists, NAA, Box 1, Folder ‘Murra, John’).
- ²¹ Frank Salomon argues that ethnicity was a more important variable of analysis than class for Murra, which set him apart from other Marxist or materialist approaches in anthropology such as those proposed by Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz. Moreover, during his classes on the history of anthropology Murra stressed the centrality of ethnicity for understanding the academic battles of foreign-born intellectual leaders such as Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski (Salomon 2009:96).
- ²² In spite of the fact that he left Romania in 1934 and didn’t return until 1967, John Murra remained in contact, sporadically during the war, but more intensively after the end of the WWII, with his mother and especially his sister in Romania. Furthermore, he also seemed to be concerned about the political transformations in Romania immediately after the end of WWII. At the NAA, I found a four-page typed memorandum, in Romanian, entitled “Problema Minoritatilor Etnice din Romania” [The Problem of Ethnic Minorities in Romania] (JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 19, folder “[Iosifecu, Ata and family], 1940-1978, 1988-1990”). It is signed “John V. Murra (Ion V. Mura), Profesor de Etnologie, University of Chicago.” The document is not dated, but judging from its content and the events it refers to one could assume it was written between 1945 and 1947. It gives an overall picture of interwar Romanian policies regarding ethnic minorities, pointing out their persecution at the hand of Romanian right-wing governments, especially the targeting of Jewish and Hungarian minorities (he does not mention though the persecution of Roma under Antonescu regime). The report addresses also the situation of the German minority and its collaboration with the Nazis during WWII. Murra suggests that a rectification of borders, as was the case between 1940 and 1944, when northern and eastern Transylvania was under Hungarian sovereignty, would not be a realistic and peaceful solution. Instead, a peaceful coexistence inside the same borders, inside Romania, could be the only viable solution. The document mentions a map of Romania showing the demographic proportions of ethnic minorities, but this seems to have been lost. The circumstances of its production and the utility of such a document are not clear. Most probably, in the aftermath of the WWII, in the context of peace negotiation and pacification of Eastern Europe, John Murra was asked to make a report of the ethnic minorities’ situation in his country of origin. However, considering the fact that the document was written in Romanian, one could assume that the public or its designated addressee was Romanian and not American.
- ²³ Transcript of an oral interview realized by May Mayko Ebihara with John Murra on August 24th, 1981, p. 5.

- 24 Tismăneanu, V. (June 30th 2013), "Cine a fost Petre Borila? Intre Familia Comintern si familia Ceausescu (Updated)", retrieved from <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa/cine-a-fost-petre-borila-intre-familia-comintern-si-familia-ceausescu/> (last accessed on July 15th, 2014).
- 25 In 1952-1953 Murra was a consultant on West African affairs for the Foundation for World Government. In this capacity, he attended the North American Assembly on African Affairs in Ohio on June 19th, 1952. In a letter to Basil Davidson dated August 15th, 1952, he makes an all-round description of the gathering and of the need for providing more information on economic development in Africa, especially regarding the protection of mining resources. He writes to Davidson that "my experience and association with people from West Africa at the UN and outside that organization confirms your findings: there is a serious lack of interest in economic matters and a lack of information and awareness of the complexities of economic development in mid-twentieth century. I have encountered this underestimation in Puerto Rico and elsewhere in the Caribbean and read enough of it for other parts to think of it as a concomitant of dependent status in our time" (letter from JM to Basil Davidson, JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 10, folder 'Davidson, Basil').
- 26 His theoretical preferences were with the Manchester school under the leadership of South-African and British anthropologist Max Gluckman (1911-1975). Murra and Gluckman sporadically corresponded. In a letter exchange with Mexican anthropologist Susan Drucker-Brown, Murra answers to Susan's dilemma of where to go for a Ph.D. in anthropology – Cambridge or Manchester – by rephrasing it as a choice to work either with Meyer Fortes or Max Gluckman: "As to the choice between Gluckman and Fortes, I am pro-Manchester for ideological, not personal, reasons. I simply like Gluckman's anthropology much better than Fortes'." (Letter of J. Murra to S. Drucker-Brown, June 16th, 1960, JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 10, Folder 'Drucker-Brown, Susan'). It seems that Murra's preference didn't deter Susan from doing her Ph.D. at Cambridge University under the supervision of Fortes with a thesis on the Mamprusi people in Northern Ghana. For an illuminating article on Fortes' personality and influence on her career, see Drucker-Brown (1989).
- 27 'CV of John Murra', JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 6, folder Boston University.
- 28 JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 6, folder 'Boston University' contains letters exchanged between Alvin Zalinger, Department of Sociology, Boston University and J. Murra. The folder also contains a copy of a 'Prospectus for an African Area Studies Program at Boston University', to be submitted to the University Administration. John Murra appears as one of the two consultants for the Faculty Committee for an African Area Studies Program. Interestingly, the folder contains a letter of John Murra to Melville J. Herskovits, a leading

specialist on Africa at Northwestern University, asking for advice concerning the initiative to establish the African Area program at Boston University (J. Murra, letter to Melville J. Herskovits, April 16th, 1952). On April 23rd, 1952, Melville J. Herskovits answers John Murra advising the latter to go with the initiative. The initiative to establish the program was successful and its first director was Bill Brown. Alvin Zalinger writes to J. Murra on March 11th, 1953 informing the latter of the success of the establishment of the program and advising him to apply for a position at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Since this is the last letter in the folder, it is unclear if John Murra followed the advice and applied for that position or not.

29 A memorandum dated 'February 1st, 1962', by Dr. Stanley Diamond, Research Anthropologist, National Institute of Mental Health addressed to Dr. John Edgcomb, Chief of Ghana Unit, National Institutes of Health, contains a research proposal dealing with "the psychopathological factors associated with the transformation from traditional ways of life to transitional, i.e., relatively 'urbanized', 'westernized', 'commercialized', and 'secularized', behavioral modes" in the Southern Sector of the Volta Region." (Memorandum from Dr. Stanley Diamond to Dr. John Edgcomb, February 1st, 1962, JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 10, Folder 'Diamond, S.'). Various staff possibilities were proposed, including J. Murra either as principal investigator or co-investigator with S. Diamond.

30 Carlos Iván Degregori Caso (1945-2011) was a Peruvian anthropologist and professor at the University of San Marcos and researcher at the Institute of the Peruvian Studies (*Instituto de Estudios Peruanos*). He was a member of the *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* ('The Truth and Reconciliation Commission') established by the provisional president of Peru, Valentín Paniagua, in 2001 to address the internal violence in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s due to the armed confrontation between the army and the Shining Path and the Revolutionary Movement Tupac Amaru.

31 Max Weber's speeches on *Science as a Vocation* (München, 1917) and *Politics as a Vocation* (München, 1919) have become classical references for understanding the dilemmas of science and politics in the twentieth century. Understandably, his vision is shaped by the concerns of German academic life at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially by the opposition between a vision of education as *Bildung* or humanist self-cultivation and one focusing on the production and transmission of more narrowly specialized knowledge. Weber defended the latter perspective and interpreted scientific progress as an important factor in the overall process of 'intellectualization' subsumed under the modernization of the world. In this regard, however, contemporary science can no longer offer answers to questions about the meaning of the world or about ethical norms for conducting one's life. The space at my disposal allows me to make only a short remark regarding a comparison between Weber's conception of

science and Murra's vision of anthropology. Murra defends the humanistic and comparative pursuit of anthropology in documenting and understanding the "[c]ultural history of all human societies, with a special, though not exclusive, commitment to those civilizations vanquished in the expansion of Europe and the United States..." (Murra 1982 cited in Salomon 2009:99). While in his comparative scholarship Weber aims at understanding the uniqueness of the development of European modernity, Murra argues for the importance of uncovering and defending the diversity of human cultural innovations within the overall process of human evolution.

³² Letter of John Murra to Carlos Iván Degregori, April 12th, 1968 (NAA, JMP, Series I, Correspondence, Box 10, Folder 'Degregori, Carlos Iván').

³³ *Ibidem*; In the Spanish original: "...En los Andes me parece mucho más revolucionario luchar por el uso del Quechua en la enseñanza, por una literatura (tanto popular como artística) en los idiomas andinos, que atacar bancos..."

³⁴ *Ibidem*; In the Spanish original: "Me parece que nuestro papel, el de los intelectuales es de formular NUEVAS PREGUNTAS, tener mejor visión de lo que puede ocurrir, del tercera y quinta y tercerdécima movimiento. Guardar un ojo sin pánico cuando la gente movida solo por lo cotidiano se hunde en él."

³⁵ *Ibidem*; In the Spanish original: "...yo insistiría que el parentesco es solo un tema entre tantos pero nuestro, antropológico y somos orgullosos de haberlo descubierto. Es un ejemplo de la creatividad humana, como un poema, como un teorema geométrico y nadie sino nosotros lo hemos descubierto y valorado."

Archival Collections

- John Victor Murra Papers (JVMP), National Anthropological Archives (NAA), Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.
- May Mayko Ebihara oral history interviews with anthropologists, ca. 1959-1986, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.

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