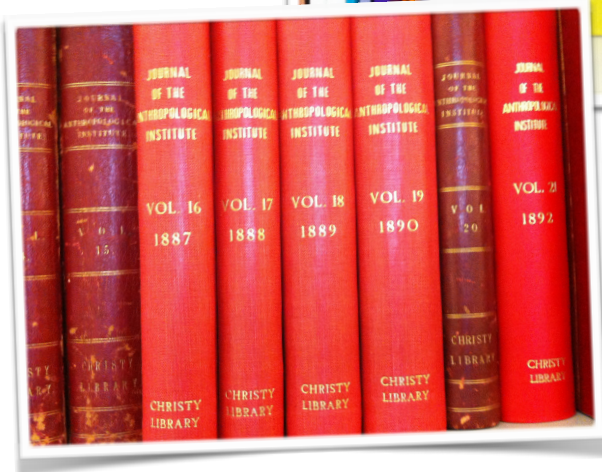# 50 Years of Anthropology

The
Anthropological
Index Online

50 Years of Anthropology

The results of a British Academy funded project

What is the AIO?

AIO stands for Anthropological Index Online, a division of the RAI (Royal Anthropological Institute) that exists online at **aio.therai.org.uk**. It is an index of all the articles written in anthropology from around the world since 1963, and in many cases it links you directly to the abstracts and articles available electronically through safe and specific links to trusted sites such as jstor.org. It used to be handwritten or typed and recorded in bound volumes, but nowadays it is available to search online and is used by millions worldwide every year.

A team of specialised indexers work in an office adjacent to the Anthropology Library (based in The British Museum, London), where anthropology journals from around the world are received, read and indexed i.e. logged into the website as records for anyone to search for. The indexers categorise all the articles they read by subject, origin, and by hundreds of keywords.

What is the relevance of '50 Years of Anthropology'?

The nature of the Index means that many of the articles we incorporate would be difficult to find via other means such as through Google Scholar or similar search engines, so in many ways the AIO gives a clear and the most complete picture we can hope for of what anthropologists have been discovering for the last 50 years.

The project is the first of its kind to begin delving into what we know and don't know so much about in anthropology, and what it means to be an anthropologist today. We have only scraped the surface of what has been happening in anthropology for the last 50 years, yet we have already demonstrated some of the intriguing avenues worthy of more inquiry. The AIO is a great way to help you plan lessons, research essays and answer questions about just about anything from what the Romans did in Britain, to why we use money to buy things, and how people survive in extreme climates. The beauty of anthropology is that it touches on everything you could wonder about humanity and the Index is a safe, easy to use portal into learning more about ourselves and the world around us.

Places & Subjects
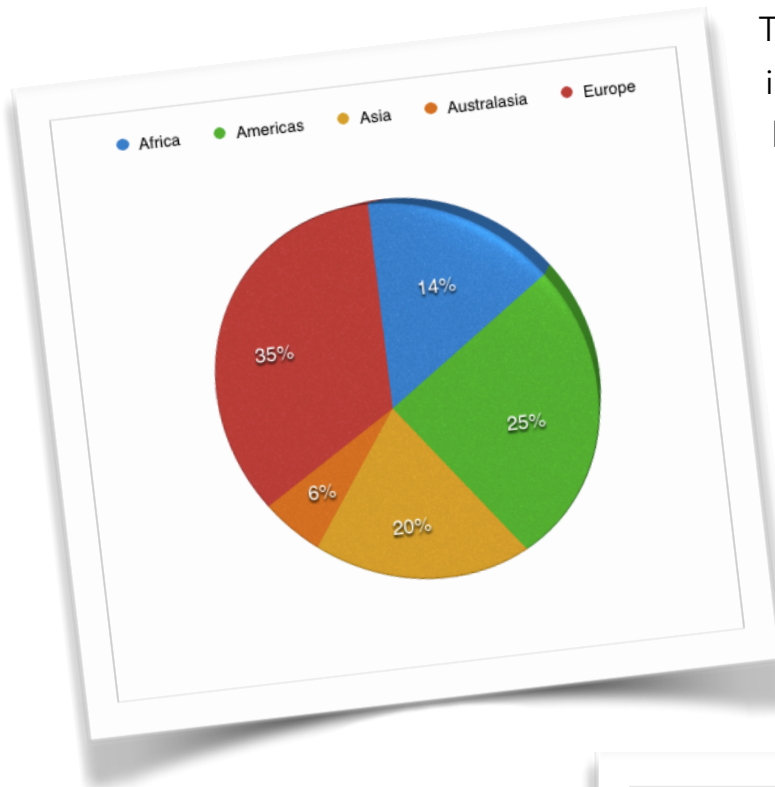
The majority of the articles we have indexed over the last 50 years have been about European places, followed by the Americas, and Asia. Australasia is the least written about continent, which is very curious given its diverse and rich cultures and societies.

We index articles based on their anthropological subject of which we have five: Archaeology, Cultural, Linguistic, Physical, and Other.

Other includes obituaries of famous anthropologists and reviews.

When looking at the Index we discovered that we index more articles and journals today than ever before and that some subjects have steeply

declined in popularity - in particular Archaeology and Linguistics whereas Physical and Cultural have remained pretty much as prolific (proportionately) as they were decades ago.

Languages

Language of Articles About Shamanism 1963-2013
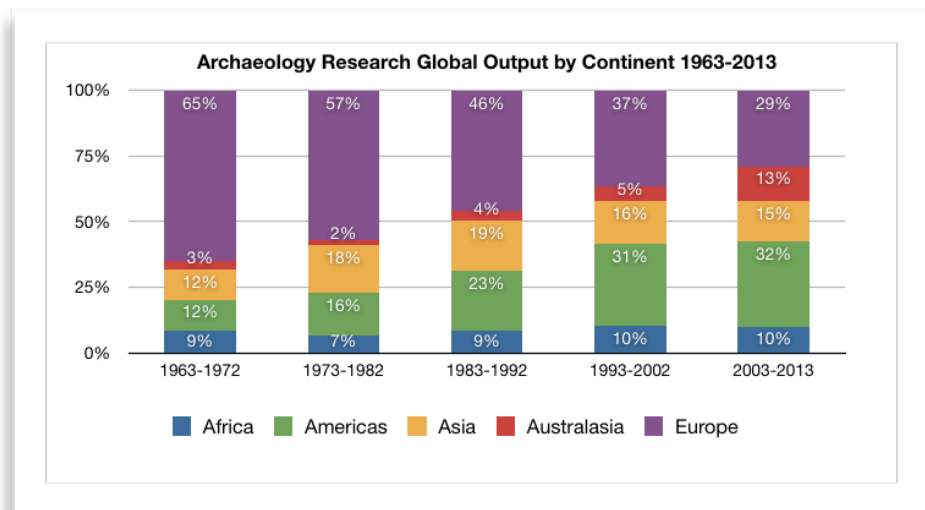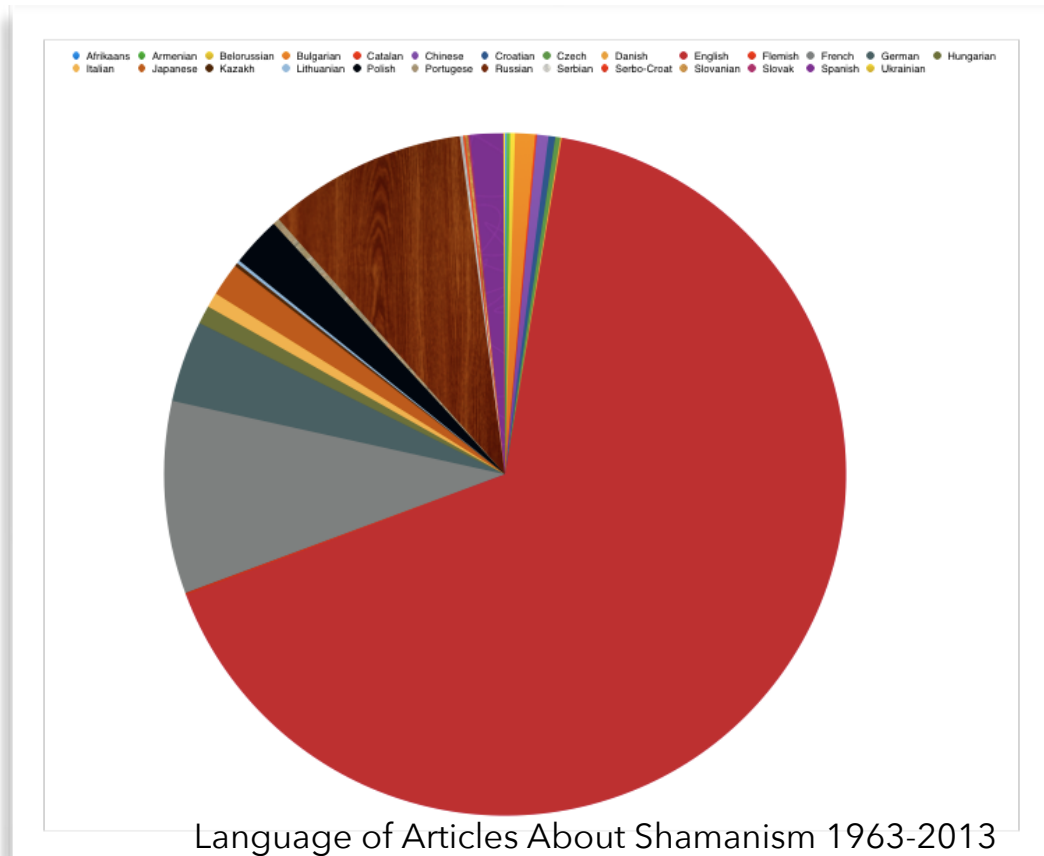
The AIO indexes articles from more than 40 languages. Many of these articles have never been translated into English, and the Index holds the key to their discovery for non-native speakers through title translation and categorisation by subject, place, and keywords.

One of our case studies examined was shamanism, a topic of research found in every continent and most countries - from Finland to Fiji. In 50 years anthropologists have published their research about shamanism in 28 different languages including Catalan and Kazakh. Perhaps unsurprisingly the majority of these were published in English, followed by French and then Russian.

The entire Index is written in English online, so it's easy to access by educators and students. Many foreign articles will also include an English summary (especially in more recent decades) meaning it's easy for everyone to access the knowledge of these articles existence through the AIO.

Keywords

Keywords that describe the articles full content only became commonplace in the Index during the 1990s. This follows the trend for journals' inclusion of keywords often at the beginning of articles that they publish. When an indexer indexes an article they have read, the keywords they select have an impact on how we search and discover articles online, and so they are very thorough and thus very indicative of what the article is about, more so than just the title alone. In the project we used keywords to identify the articles in our case

studies, for instance, about specific countries such as the UK and on certain topics such as Islam. You can see an example of this in the word cloud above that shows (by font size) the most popular keywords for articles written about cultural anthropology in the UK from 2000-2010, and to the left which shows most popular keywords overall in articles about Brunei.

Conclusions

What did we find out?

Several case studies that came from the project showed how different aspects of anthropology can be explored further by researching what exists within the Index. The many findings are numerous and complex but most succinctly we discovered that there is much yet to be discovered in anthropology amongst both what exists in the written form and what yet is to be uncovered in the field.

When we looked at archaeological sites of comparable importance around the world, for example, we found that some had been neglected, as if forgotten about, whereas others had been overly researched and remained areas of high interest even today, like Stonehenge.

We found that one keyword is not enough. When looking at a topic like shamanism that has been written and researched almost universally, what one anthropologist deems a shamanic ritual to be might not be how another describes it. As such, to uncover the bigger picture, we need to consider animism and spirit possession as shaman keywords too, and we need to consider how we learn and see these aspects of culture differently, depending on our own society and cultural background.

We found that a lot of work written in non-English languages is often overlooked purely because of the language barrier, and that the Index is a means to overcome this. A search on the Index can signpost to non-English and other less popularised work. The AIO yields search results that offer everybody the opportunity to read those lesser known articles and discover qualitatively as well as quantitatively a bigger picture.

Why not find out more for yourself?

Searching the AIO is so easy and it's free, simply log on to **aio.therai.org.uk** and you can search by any keyword by clicking on quick search (just like you would on any popular search engine) or you can select advanced search if you want to hone your results down to ethnic group, decade and more. The AIO is part of the RAI's ongoing commitment to education and research in anthropology, so don't hesitate to get in touch if you need more support or information, simply email **aio@therai.org.uk**