

# SAS Newsletter

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- Christina Beard-Moose, Outreach
- David Johnson, Photographer/Historian
- Heidi M. Altman and Brandon D. Lundy, SAS Website

## The Southern Anthropological Society's 48th Annual Meeting

**THEME:** "Physical, Spiritual, Social, and Environmental HEALING" (tentative)

Johnson City, Tennessee, March 7-10, 2013

The conference is hosted by [East Tennessee State University](http://www.etsu.edu).



Accommodations will be at the

[Carnegie Hotel & Spa](http://www.carnegiehotel.com)

1216 W. State of Franklin Rd.

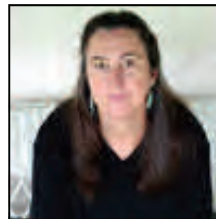
Johnson City, TN 37604

<http://carnegiehotel2-px.trvlclick.com/>

Reservations: (423) 979-6400 (\$89+tax)



Melissa Schrift



Lindsey C. King

For information please contact:

Co-Coordinators: Lindsey C. King ([kingcl@etsu.edu](mailto:kingcl@etsu.edu)) and  
Melissa Schrift ([schrift@etsu.edu](mailto:schrift@etsu.edu))

On-line abstract submissions are currently being  
accepted for 2013:  
<http://southernanthro.org/home/annual-meeting/>



Southern  
Anthropological Society



Carnegie Hotel & Spa, Johnson City, TN



## SAS Presidential Update

Dear SAS Colleagues,

Hope your summer is off to a productive and relaxing start. I would first like to thank everyone for your support in my election as president, and I look forward to serving the organization over the next two years. Heidi's shoes are awfully big ones to fill. She leaves her tenure as president with SAS in great shape. Among other things during her administration, SAS not only secured a publisher for the yearly proceedings but also established a professionally designed website along with taking the journal online. And SAS is operating in the black! Thanks to Heidi for her tireless efforts and commitment to SAS over the years and

her steady stewardship as president. Also, I would like to extend a special thanks to the organizers of the Birmingham meetings--Lori Cormier and Sharyn Jones--for putting together a flawless meeting. One of the highlights was certainly the keynote address by noted anthropologist Beth Conklin. In addition, Lindsey King and Melissa Shrift, from East Tennessee State University, have taken the task of the 2013 meetings, which will be held in Johnson City, Tennessee. Details will be posted on the website as they become available. At the board meeting in Birmingham, the board discussed

several items that I hope to help steer through completion over the next two years. I will work with the current editors of the journal to get the journal better formalized with an editorial board, online submissions, and having the journal accessible through online services such as JSTOR, ProjectMuse, and EbscoHost. Now that the proceedings have a publishing home, I also will work with the editors to finish clearing the backlog of publications. The organization's archival project is a big and on-going job, but we hope to have this completed soon. I look forward to working on these and other SAS business and I especially look forward to seeing everyone in Johnson City next spring.



**Robbie Ethridge,**  
SAS President  
Professor of Anthropology  
University of Mississippi

The SAS is requesting submissions for the 2013 SAS Student Paper Competition, and will announce the winner at the 2013 meetings in Johnson City, Tennessee, next March. The tentative deadline for submitting papers is **February 10, 2013**. For details on the submission process, please consult the SAS website, or contact Vincent Melomo at [vmelomo@peace.edu](mailto:vmelomo@peace.edu).

## 2012 SAS Student Paper Competition

The SAS Student Paper Competition Committee announced the winners of the 2012 awards at the annual meeting in Birmingham. The quality of the papers was high and they covered a broad range of areas and topics. Most of the papers were based on ethnographic research which together spanned four continents, while others included a critical review of anthropological theory and a review of research in underwater archaeology. Out of these submissions, the committee awarded two undergraduate paper co-winners of exceptional quality, both of which were based on creative, original ethnographic research, one more descriptive and interpretive and the other more applied and evaluative. **Will Lammons** of Millsaps

College received the undergraduate paper award for his paper, "Spray-Painting Identity and Political Power in the Graffiti of Mérida, Yucatán," and, **Claire Naisby** of Davidson College shared the award for her paper "'Back in the Dark, Again': Rural Solar Electrification in Nicaragua." **Elizabeth J. Blevins** of Appalachian State University, also received an honorable mention for her paper "Refugees and Rebels: An Anthropological Perspective of Human Rights."

For the first time in several years, a graduate paper award was given to **Timothy Gitzen** of Georgia State University for his paper "Bloody Little Secrets:

Narrating Coming Out in South Korea." Gitzen, who conducted fieldwork at a college in South Korea, offered a fascinating analysis of personal narratives of coming out, using them to critically explore theories of global sexual identities.

The winners each received a cash prize of \$200, a certificate, and a selection of books donated to SAS by the University of Alabama Press.

The Student Paper Competition Committee looks forward to receiving submissions for the 2013 student paper competition to be awarded next spring at the annual meetings in Johnson City, Tennessee.

~**Vincent Melomo**, Committee Chair, William Peace University, Raleigh, North Carolina

Photo Credit: David M. Johnson



**Presenting the 2012 SAS Student Paper Awards, Birmingham, AL**

## “Back in the Dark, Again”: Rural Solar Electrification in Nicaragua

2012 Undergraduate  
Student Paper  
Competition Co-  
Winner

Claire Naisby  
Davidson College

### Abstract

Solar energy is promoted as the most promising solution to meet the demand for electricity services in remote locations in developing countries. After many installations across the globe, increasing doubts and problems are arising about the effectiveness and suitability of small photovoltaic systems for rural development. In Nicaragua, there are over 8,000 solar home systems being installed every year; millions of dollars are being invested and no follow-up research exists about the impacts the systems have. This paper examines whether solar rural electrification in Nicaragua is an appropriate technology. My research demonstrates that the lack of proper implementation, follow-up, and maintenance are leaving many rural households in the dark again. After a system is two years old, I found that over three-quarters of the units installed were not fully functional. The research for this paper was conducted during two visits to Nicaragua in 2011 and 2012 and included semi-structured interviews, volunteer work in rural communities, and extensive reading on rural solar electrification. The findings suggest that rural solar electrification projects in developing countries, especially donated systems, are not a sustainable solution when no proper implementation and maintenance structures are established.

**[Keywords:** rural solar electrification, appropriate technology, Nicaragua]

### Prologue

I was sitting outside a house eating lunch – tortillas, beans, and an egg with a mango fresh from a nearby tree for dessert when a concerned man came running up. “Can you help me, please?” he asked. “Are you the solar panel girl? I don’t know what to do!” I had just spent a month in mountainous northern Nicaragua researching solar systems installed on rural houses, and today was no exception of the problems.

I will never forget the look of hopelessness on the man’s face as I followed him back to his house. His wife was in the hospital with his sick daughter; he was home alone waiting anxiously for them to return. As we entered his house, he sighed, “I’m back to using these again – candles and matches.” His solar-powered lights had not been working for over a month now, and he was buying candles and matches just like old times. His daughter was sick, his hope of light crushed, and the worst part, he had no idea what to do about any of it.

I walked into the house; they had two pots by the stove, one bed, a rickety home-made wooden bench, and a small side table holding a few books. Just another home like all the others I had visited, but each house and system I visited had its own unique story.

I tried all the light switches, flipping them on and off, on and off, but no light. Then, I headed straight to the battery. I checked the connections – all good; next, I pulled off the distilled water compartment covers – completely empty.[1] I could see the plates of the battery inside, and they were dry, completely dry.

Claire: “Do you have distilled water?”

Man: “No, I haven’t been able to get any. My daughter is sick. I have to work. I don’t have time. And I don’t know where to go to get it.”

I pulled out my battery charge tester just to make sure the battery was dead. I hooked it up to the battery and turned on

the tester. The lever flickered some minute charge that battery was managing to eke out. I looked apologetically at the desperate man as I tried to form the words. But, I was at a loss for what to say. Finally, I managed to muster up the words that would break this man’s heart, “I’m sorry, but your battery is dead.” I attempted to say this in my most polite and sympathetic Spanish. He showed me the candles he had been using.

Man: “Now what do I do? I had light and now I’m back to buying candles and matches daily. I’m back living in the dark, again.”

Claire: “The only thing you can do is start saving for a new battery, I’m sorry. I’m really sorry, but there is nothing else I can do, I don’t carry batteries in my equipment backpack.”



**Figure 1.** Looking at battery, about to give him the bad news

I realized that my joke was slightly out of place (batteries weigh around 50

*(Continued on page 4)*

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pounds), but I did not know what else to say at that point because I was about to deliver even worse news to him. We were standing there staring down at the battery when the dreaded question came,

Man: "Ok, how much does a new battery like this cost?"

Claire: "Around US\$110."

Man: "And how am I supposed to afford that? Where do I get one of these, anyway? Do I have to go all the way to TECNOSOL in Estelí?"

Claire: "I'm really sorry. The batteries only last three to five years, and yes, you have to travel to Estelí."

As I told him this, I pulled out the informational pamphlet that I had with me that detailed the costs of the parts to the solar system and where he could find the corresponding pieces. I felt hopeless and I knew he did too, but this was the best I could do at that moment.

Visions of people like this man fill my thoughts every day. While I cannot replace every dead battery across Nicaragua, fix every system, or talk to every person that has received a donated solar system, I can spread information. This paper seeks to tell the story of households with solar home systems (SHSs) in Nicaragua that are back in the dark again, and my hope is that in some way it will bring them light, sustainable light.

## Introduction

The purpose of the research discussed in this paper is to evaluate whether rural solar electrification is appropriate for Nicaragua. The way the SHS impacts all the facets of people's lives provides a standpoint from which to evaluate if solar energy is a promising solution, as many believe. This requires looking at multiple aspects: socio-cultural, technical, environmental, economic, and political.

### *Why we need energy to alleviate poverty*

Worldwide, 1.5 billion people of the world's population live in dark, smoke-filled homes without access to electricity (Legros et al. 2009). The United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

aim to half the portion of people whose income is less than \$1 per day by 2015. The 2011 United Nations Development Report says the intent of the MDGs is to alleviate poverty while promoting sustainable development. Even though energy is not included as one of the MDGs, a number of studies indicate that modern energy services, services that are clean, affordable, and appropriate, will be a critical factor in achieving the target of the MDGs (Legros et al. 2009; United Nations 2007).

Although there are some methodological difficulties involved in establishing a clear relationship between energy poverty and rural development, "no country has managed poverty alleviation without increasing energy access" (Rao et al. 2009:1698). Access to electricity is required for meeting basic needs such as health, agriculture, education, information, and other infrastructural services (Anderson 2000; Gillis et al. 1992). Applied anthropology is the way to see the effects electricity is having on developing countries increased energy access.

### *Why renewable energy is needed*

To alleviate poverty and mitigate climate change, significant emphasis is being placed on renewable energy (World Bank 2003, 2004; Martinot, Cabraal, and Mathur 2001). The ninth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development identified renewable and rural energy as one of the key energy issues for sustainable human development (Chaurey 2004). Environmental concerns like global warming caused in part by anthropogenic activities linked to use of fossil fuels have focused attention on alternative renewable energy technologies such as solar, micro-hydro, mini-wind turbines, and biogas digesters. The World Bank is a major source of funds for electricity access in developing countries and prefers to fund renewable energy projects for electrification with the hopes of achieving sustainable development (World Bank 2003, 2004; Martinot, Cabraal, and Mathur 2001). Renewable energy technology (RET) in developing countries prevents a dependence on high-carbon infrastructure, reduces reliance on fossil-fuel imports and price fluctuations, accelerates off-grid electrification where

conventional grid connection is not an option, and also creates a new avenue for domestic income creation (REN21 2009; United Nations 2007). Renewable energy technologies are promoted for sustainable growth of third world countries.

### *Current situation in Nicaragua*

Nicaragua is a developing country trying to increase energy access to its citizens; it is the poorest country in Central America and the second poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Currently, over 2.5 million Nicaraguans are living without access to electricity (Rogers 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). The electricity coverage is 65%, the lowest in Central America, and mostly affects households in rural areas that are poor and have no grid access (Cortes 2011).[2] Rural families use dirtier, lower quality, more time-intensive, and more dangerous sources such as wood, kerosene, flashlight with dry cell batteries, and candles. The wife in a non-electrified home where I spent a night woke up at five in the morning to make tortillas and held a flashlight in her mouth the entire time while in the kitchen as I watched. Energy access, according to Paul Oquist, the Nicaraguan Presidential advisor on Energy, is the key to providing citizen security, labor stability, peace, and development in the country (Rogers 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

Most developing countries have a meager and outmoded national electrical grid that, at the current growth rate, would take many years to reach the extensive rural populations affordably (Kaufman 1994; Hankins 1998). Rural solar electrification occurs when a solar home system is installed that supplies electricity to a rural household using a solar photovoltaic (PV) panel and a storage battery. SHSs are being promoted by both the government and international aid organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as feasible and cost effective alternatives for the basic electrification of rural households (Nieuwenhout 2002). The World Bank believes that solar energy is the way to get electricity to rural villages because of five main reasons: cost effectiveness, end user demand, poverty alleviation, time efficiency, and emissions reductions (Martinot, Cabraal, and Ma-

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thur 2001). SHSs are faster and more cost effective than extending conventional grid lines because

- 1) energy companies, in general, are hesitant to expand the grid to rural villages because there is no economic reward;
- 2) areas are inaccessible by machinery and cars;
- 3) the building and expansion of the electricity grid takes a long time to construct.

With the emphasis on United Nation’s MDGs and sustainable development, solar energy has emerged as the preferred means of rural development and alleviation of living conditions (Alzraque-Cherni 2008). Solar energy supply is abundant and the energy production source is localized; it supports the neopopulist idea of decentralized power and “small is beautiful” (Jacobson 2007:145). “Solar energy is a promising solution to meet demand for electricity services of rural households in remote locations in developing countries” and “promises a brighter future for many rural communities” (Nieuwenhout et al. 2000:2) (figs. 2-3).



Figure 2. Very rural household with SHS



Figure 3. Three person household in rural Nicaragua showing off their solar light.

In the past three years, the Nicaraguan government has installed over 7,000 panels on rural homes (Ministerio de Energia y Minas 2010). One private solar company, Tecnosol, reports installing over 50,000 solar systems in Nicaragua that serve over 240,000 people (Van der Jagt 2011). Unlike systems installed in rural areas of Africa, Latin America, Asia, and India that have extensive literature including lessons learned and system reports, Nicaragua has no published after-installation evaluations of SHS.

*Limitation of Solar Energy*

As the number of installed solar systems has increased, doubts and problems are arising about the effectiveness and suitability of small photovoltaic systems for rural development (Nieuwenhout 2001; United Nations 2010). Phase I of the Zacapa project (1999) in Guatemala which involved SHS donated by an NGO, found that after five years, 45% of the installed systems were not working (Nieuwenhout 2002). After completing a thorough literature review on solar rural electrification projects across the world and finding many failed projects, Nieuwenhout et al. concluded, “We have to live with the fact that solar electricity is not an option for the poorest of the poor” (2000:120). They analyze possible solutions because, currently, rural solar electrification seems to be an inappropriate technology.

*Appropriate Technology and Sustainability*

Sustainable development is the expansion of people’s life choices today while making reasonable efforts to avoid seriously compromising those of future generations (Klugman 2011). The most applied notion of sustainability is the triple-bottom line modeled by the sustainable development triangle illustrated in figure 4 (Munasinghe 2009; Meier and Munasinghe 2005). The triangle demonstrates a multi-disciplinary framework of economic, social equity, and environmental dimensions to evaluate sustainable development projects. An SHS can be viewed as an appropriate technology when the system can be sustained over time. To ensure upkeep of the system and long-term use, the economic, social, and environmental aspects need to be consid-

ered and dealt with before, during, and after the project implementation. Appropriate technology is “holistic sustainability” (Yadoo 2011). When analyzing rural solar electrification in Nicaragua as an appropriate technology, I applied the notion of the triple-bottom line as a way to look at the whole picture and contextualize the situation in Nicaragua.

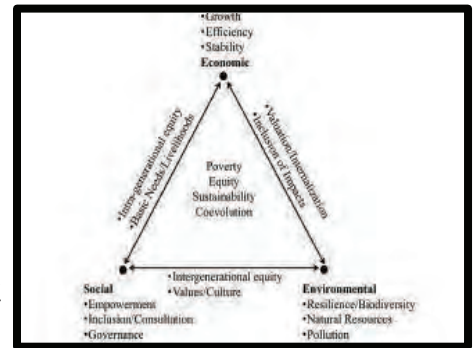


Figure 4. Factors of Sustainable Development  
Source: Munasinghe 2009

One day while I was volunteering at the Solar Center, a farmer stopped by to ask if the Center sold distilled water. He told me he lived in a community, a two-hour walk away that had over twenty donated solar systems, but no source for distilled water. The next day, I threw on my running shoes and ran up the mountain to try and find his community. When I arrived, I was overwhelmed by people asking me to help fix their systems, and every person I talked to told me about another community that also had malfunctioning solar panels. I had no previous exposure to rural electrification, and this experience led me to question whether rural solar electrification is an appropriate technology in the mountains of northern Nicaragua. The lack of distilled water was only the tip of the iceberg of the issues surrounding rural electrification in this area.

**Methodology**

The specific aims for the research I conducted were three-fold: first, to explore how households in Nicaragua have been impacted by the solar technology by looking at the socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions of sustainability; second, to look at the current status

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of the solar systems that have been installed in Nicaragua to help analyze technical and socio-cultural aspects; and third, to conduct a life-cycle analysis to evaluate the technical and environmental efficiency of solar panels installed in rural locations throughout Nicaragua.

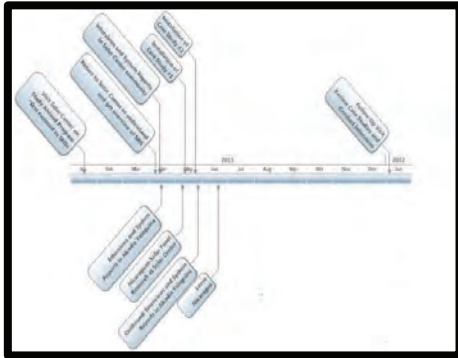


Figure 5. Timeline of My Research

My research included four months in Nicaragua split into two visits: April-June 2011 and January 2012 (fig. 5). During my time in Nicaragua, I volunteered in rural communities to hear their perspectives on SHSs, conducted ethnographic semi-structured interviews, read extensively on rural solar electrification, and upon returning to the United States, did literature research that analyzed the life cycles of solar panels. My base was the Solar Center, an organization that works with a community in alcaldía Totogapla, which neighbors Yalagüina, to reduce deforestation and smoke in the kitchens by constructing solar panels and solar cookers with the cooperation of the women and men in the community. The Solar Center is located in the north of Nicaragua, twenty miles south of Ocotol (fig. 6). On my second visit in January 2012, I conducted follow-up research on the two households where I had installed an SHS eight months earlier, conducted four semi-structured interviews with solar project directors in Managua, and interviewed the project manager for the alcaldía of Yalagüina.

The ethnographic interviews and the technical system report of SHSs in the mountains of Yalagüina involved visiting ninety-six households along with another volunteer, John Warfel. I met John at the Solar Center, and he had previous experi-

ence installing solar systems in the United States and was a great research companion. Our goals were to find out why the families wanted a solar panel, how they purchased the system, and how the use of solar energy had affected their household. We also looked at the current condition of the solar system. At each house, we took pictures, conducted brief semi-structured interviews, reviewed the solar system itself and conducted maintenance on their system when feasible to do so. The notes were later typed up, and photos were added to the respective household's interview and system report.

One-third of my time was spent in the village surrounding the Solar Center where I personally installed two solar systems. Another third of my time was spent constructing a solar panel using Nicaraguan parts, and the last third was spent in rural villages in Yalagüina. My research at the Solar Center had three major aspects: construction of a solar panel, installation, and data collection; ethnographic interviews; and financial analysis with the Solar Center. After household visits and interviews, I selected two homes where I could install two solar home systems. For the first system, I selected the night guard for the Solar Center, the Pérez Garcia family. For the second system, surrounding households were notified of the opportunity to receive a subsidized solar panel. After many home visits and interviews, I chose a family with three children and an older brother studying in school, the Sanchez family. The panel used for this installation is one that I built alongside the engineer, Mauro Pérez Corrales, at the Solar Center. The building of the solar panel from scratch helped in my analysis of the total environmental and economic impacts of rural solar electrification.

**Road Map and Background**

The rest of the paper delineates my research and experiences in Nicaragua with rural solar electrification into five different standpoints: technical, environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and political. Each piece includes various stories, data, and examples to illustrate how the rural solar electrification that I researched in Nicaragua is currently not an appropriate technology because the systems have not been proven to be sus-

tainable over time.

Over two hundred and fifty solar panels have been installed on houses in several outlying communities of Yalagüina. [3] These communities are five to ten kilometers away from the closest electrical grid connection (which can be up to a two hour walk to the closest town) and are hence, unreachable by the grid. For example, I had to get on my backside to traverse a muddy, narrow, steep decline and then went on my hands and feet climbing up the corresponding incline to access a group of five homes in Quebrada Arriba. When I asked how Tecnosol and the municipality got the batteries and supplies up there, the families said that men had to carry the parts on foot!

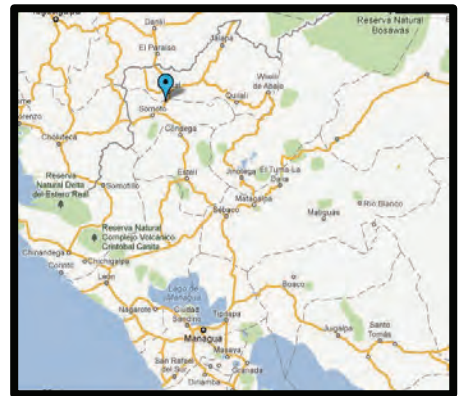


Figure 6. Arrow pointing to area where I conducted my research - alcaldías Yalagüina and Totogapla.

The inaccessibility and prices of the materials creates a prohibitive cost for conventional electricity lines. It costs \$14,000 to extend the single-phase conventional electricity lines one kilometer and \$25,000 to extend three-phase electricity network lines. According to Aracely Hernandez, director of renewable energy for the National Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), it is faster and cheaper for the alcaldía to install solar systems on the houses. In addition, the government does not have to work with the private electricity company, Unión Fenosa, to extend the grid. It is not profitable for the company to extend the grid to such a small rural population, so the full cost of the extension has to be paid by the municipality. The project director of the municipality said in an interview that the government had to look for a

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better solution so that their people could have some light and connect their little televisions; one solution is solar panels.

A series of meetings are held each year with the community members and the municipal government. The largest requested need at the meetings is electricity. To respond to these requests, the municipal governments often choose to install a small solar system on each rural home because it is cheaper and faster than extending the conventional grid lines. The promotion of renewable energy in Nicaragua is also a focus of the ruling Sandinista party that is in power, in both the national and municipal government of Yalagüina. Dating to the 1980s when the party was in power, following the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship that benefitted the elite and neglected the poor and working class, the political party's focus has been the common villager and for this reason, it strongly supports social programs such as healthcare, education, and rural electrification. At the municipal level, each sponsored system includes a 50 Watt (W) solar panel, a battery, a control charger, and three light bulbs. From a sustainability perspective, the batteries require distilled water every month, the light bulbs must be replaced every two years, and the battery lasts three to five years. Currently, there is no maintenance plan for the systems, so almost every home I visited had a problem with their system that left them with limited light or no light at all. The families that I encountered while traveling desperately wanted to make the installed systems on their rural houses sustainable.

### Socio-cultural Evaluation

One of the first houses I visited was so passionate about making their SHS sustainable that their two boys, Jefferson and Winston, came with us to show us the ninety-six households with SHS in that area. The families we visited lived in poor households located in rural villages. The people were mestizo and the average household size was 4.5.[4] The average household income per month was \$48, and most households were subsistence farmers, farming beans, maize, and sorghum. Subsistence farmers made some income by selling their excess crop or by

getting paid to work in someone else's field. During the coffee cutting season, end of December through February, most households had at least one member of the family head to the mountains to cut coffee. They earn around \$100 during their time on the plantation. For many, this is their main source of cash for the year.

Before solar electricity in northern Nicaragua, the households found or purchased low-quality energy sources, using mainly wood, candles, and flashlights with dry cell batteries. The families want electricity for lighting and access to a television. The benefits include improved quality of life, living standards, education through the availability of light during night-time hours (thus, extending their day), improved health, and increased entertainment options.

- 1) Life is brighter, illuminated;
- 2) Felt happier;
- 3) Relaxed, social atmosphere at night after working all day;
- 4) Do not have to cook with flashlights in their mouths;
- 5) Do not have to light wood at night to see, not breathing smoke as they go to bed;
- 6) Do not constantly have to go to local *pulperia* to purchase candles whenever they find the money to buy themselves a couple extra hours of light;
- 7) Entertainment and life less boring (for the families that had a DC TV) [5]; and
- 8) Able to study at night.

I witnessed the last point first hand with Jefferson, the six year old that acted as our solar panel house guide. He spent all Saturday and Sunday hiking around with us and when we returned on Sunday night, he had to do a bit of homework for school the next day. He had to write out all the vowels and write each one twenty times. I helped him with his homework underneath the solar light (fig. 7). Using the solar system, he could help us all day, have dinner, and then still do his homework after dinner. Many parents were able to return to secondary school which was taught on the weekend because they were able to do their homework at night

after their chores were done, the kids were asleep, and their work done in the fields. I found this to be the case in six of the ninety-six systems that I visited.



Figure 7. Helping Jefferson with his homework under solar light!

But, as soon as something went wrong with the system, they were reminded of the dark and people were scared to be in the dark again. The socio-cultural problems included not meeting the end-user demand, expensive replacement parts, and not understanding the system and the limitations of solar.

Another important socio-cultural aspect is the user's awareness and understanding of the system. I did not meet a single family that was accurately informed – understanding the capacity limitations of solar, the future costs and part requirements, and proper maintenance training. SHS cannot be sustained over time if they do not understand the system – if the community is not completely invested and involved in the project.

The average system a household receives has three lights, despite the size of the house and does not include an inverter. About 20% of the households I spoke with wanted an inverter to charge their cell phones and some families still used candles or flashlights to supplement the three lights, especially in houses with more than three rooms. The solar system has benefits, bringing light to these people quickly, but is this really “sustainable development” if these people have no reasonable chance with their income of up-scaling their systems? The general World Bank report on SHS worldwide finds that most households, ultimately, prefer a grid connection for future

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growth, thus having the ability to get larger appliances such as fridges and electric stoves (Martinot, Cabraal, and Mathur 2001).

**Technical Evaluation**

The technical sustainability evaluation includes the technical system reports, technical training, and the availability of parts (table 1). The average age of the systems we surveyed was 22.6 months. Of all the homes surveyed, only twenty-three of the systems were fully functioning. This means that over 76% of the systems were working in sub-optimal conditional. The four main reasons for sub-optimal performance were dead light bulbs, dead batteries, corrosion, and bad wiring in the battery control charger (figs. 9-13). Out of the 76% of the sub-optimal systems, 17% were not only sub-optimal, but were non-functioning systems. This means that they produced zero light and could not power the black and white TV hooked up straight to the battery. We encountered eight completely dead batteries. The average age of a dead battery was 48 months, with a range of between 11 and 60 months. Three batteries tested had low power and were producing very weak light for only short periods of time. The age for all of these low batteries was 36 months. As I was presenting this report to the Project Director in the municipal government of Yalagüina in January 2012, he asked me the oldest age of an optimally working system. I scanned through my data and found that there was no optimal system over 24 months old!

Surveyed households	96
Fully functioning systems	23
% sub-optimal systems	76%
# lights not working/# lights total	108/285
% of non-functioning systems	17%
# of Dead Batteries	8
Average Age	48 months
# of Low Batteries	3
Average Age	36 months
*No optimal system over 24 months old	

**Table 1.** Technical results from the system reports.

The most frequent maintenance problem that we found was major corrosion on the positive diode on the battery (see Figs. 9-10). In most cases, it had not yet

affected the function of the system, but left to corrode further, the wire would disintegrate off the diode and would no longer be connected to the battery. TECNOSOL installers, when setting up the system, had instructed the villagers to clean the battery with a dry rag but to not touch the diodes. People in almost every house we visited were afraid to touch the wires that connected to the battery on the diode and, according to the families, had been told not to disconnect the wires and clean the diodes when the corrosion appeared. We provided the families with a small package of baking soda and asked them to find an old toothbrush and cup of water.[6] All families were able to find these items around the house, and we showed them how to clean the battery and then we left them to clean the battery themselves while we continued to check other parts of the system. This small technical maintenance problem is just one example of the maintenance needed and follow-up visits needed by a technician that can help these people with the systems.

**Solar System**

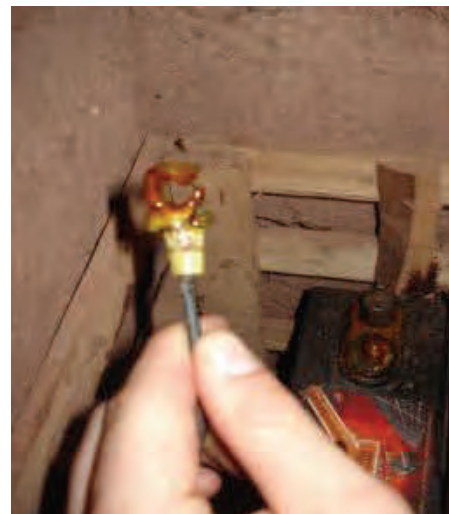
50 W Panel: \$200  
 Battery: \$120  
 Light Bulb (3/kit): \$10  
 Control Charger: \$25  
 Distilled Water Bottle: \$2  
 Wire/Light Sockets/Switches: \$50

**-A battery lasts 3-5 years**  
**-Light bulbs average 2 years**  
**-3 Distilled Water Bottles/year**  
**-Panel last 20-30 years**

**Figure 8.** Parts of a Solar Home System

The research indicates that the technology is not currently appropriate because of the lack of maintenance and a follow-up plan. The system technology is pretty simple, as demonstrated by the two young boys helping us with the maintenance and wiring; the educational barrier to understanding the systems is not huge, but very critical. The main problem was the maintenance of the systems. When there is a technical problem with the system, such as a light bulb dying, a battery dying, running low on distilled water, a blown light switch, or bad wire connec-

tion, the villagers have to travel two hours away from the alcaldía Yalagüina to the closest largest city, Estelí. The city has solar stores where the households can acquire new parts and ask for maintenance help – that is, if they can afford to (fig. 8). However, most households I spoke to did not know that the battery died in three to five years and how much it cost; they were not told a number to call if something went wrong with their system, and some families did not know where to go to purchase the parts. But, the technical system report shows with hard data that the systems are not technically appropriate, mainly because of access (economic and geographical) to parts and proper skill/maintenance training.



**Figure 9.** Bad connection to battery because of corrosion



**Figure 10.** Corrosion on battery

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(Continued from page 8)



Figure 11. Replacing a light bulb



Figure 12. John and Jefferson carrying hard-to-find distilled water jugs to distribute.



Figure 13. Alcadía Yalagüina Security Guard with the informational pamphlet.

**Environmental Evaluation**

While concerns about the environment and rural development are central to discourses about the need for solar electrification, the environmental aspects are rarely explored; the focus is mainly on socio-cultural and economic benefits.

Although SHSs are assumed to contribute significantly to improved living conditions in rural areas, the environmental aspects of the systems have not been investigated in much detail (Nieuwlaar and Alsema 1998). Unlike conventional fossil fuel-based electricity sources, “the environmental aspects of PV power systems are mostly related to indirect processes such as cell and module manufacturing and ‘end of life’ waste management. Careful assessment of such environmental aspects through all life-cycle stages is required to reveal the contribution that PV power systems can make to environmental sustainability within the energy sector” (Nieuwlaar and Alsema 1998:87). The problems with solar are that its production is energy intensive, involves the use of large quantities of bulk materials with some of the substances being scarce or toxic, has large transportation costs, and currently has no disposal method for the various parts (Nieuwlaar and Alsema 1998).

Many reports list technical problems associated with batteries, but only a few explore the recycling of the batteries – which are highly toxic and dangerous to leave around (Nieuwenhout 2001). Nicaragua’s Ministry of Energy and Mines, Francis Davila, said in an interview that they are developing a battery recycling plan, but has not yet been executed. The battery also accounts for the total energy required to produce a solar system. When batteries are not recycled, the energy payback time of the SHS increases by two years (Nieuwenhout 2001). The manufacturing and transportation of the solar panel also requires energy; the energy-input must be considered when calculating the CO2 reductions and climate change mitigation of solar energy (Alsema 1998; Zhang and Dornfeld 2010).

My calculations demonstrate that SHSs installed in rural Nicaragua must be sustained for 3.0 (Nicaraguan-built panels) and 3.2 years (China-imported for panels) to generate the energy required to

produce, transport, and install the panel. The non-recycled battery adds two years to the EPBT extending the EPBT to 5.0 and 5.2 years, respectively. Peer-reviewed research shows that a 49W SHS working for twenty years, with four replacement batteries, needs an energy input of 2,278 kWh and releases 583 kg of CO2 (Alsema 2000). When applying these numbers to the solar irradiance and performance ratio in Nicaragua, the EPBT is now around 16 years!

When the battery dies after three to five years or all the light bulbs go and the system is no longer used, it actually means that it took more energy to produce the SHS and transport it to their house than it was able to generate in its lifetime. The lack of battery recycling and energy payback time for the systems raises questions about the appropriateness of SHS from an environmental perspective.

**Economic Evaluation**

The report results demonstrate that the solar home systems installed in this area are not economically sustainable. The families with an income of US\$48 per month have to pay for all their food, clothes, and health needs clearly cannot maintain the systems working optimally. These people are living under the poverty line, under US\$2 per day and some of the people I spoke with could not even afford shoes. Is it fair to install the US\$550 systems on these houses for two to three years of light, or is it a false sense of hope? The problem is that the batteries require distilled water every month, the light bulbs last less than two years, the battery lasts three to five years, and when something goes wrong with the system, they do not know whom to contact and cannot afford the US\$50 charge that TECNOSOL has for a house visit. Currently, there is no maintenance plan for the systems, so almost every home I visited had a problem with their system that left them with limited light or no light at all. A new battery costs \$110 and a new solar-specific light bulb costs \$8.50. These parts are hard to find in Nicaragua and have to travel to the closest city, Estelí, is a two hour bus ride plus an hour’s walk to the bus stop there and back; the bus

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costs \$3 round trip. One man with a system of twelve months had gathered up enough money to purchase a new light bulb; he was heart-broken when he went all the way to Estelí on the bus and found out that he would not have enough money to get back on the bus if he purchased the light bulb. So, he returned home again without a light bulb. The families that I encountered while traveling wanted to make the installed systems on their rural houses sustainable.

I asked an unemployed woman, living by herself what her plan was when the battery dies in a couple of years, she said that she will be “back in the dark, again” (fig. 14). Her house will remain with all the wiring, sockets, light switches, and a \$200 solar panel on the roof, but she will be left without light.



**Figure 14.** John showing her how to fill battery with distilled water.

People in this area do not have a culture of saving. They live on very little, so when they have any money available, they immediately buy something with it. Extensive training is needed to teach savings practices, especially for systems that they do not have any money already invested in (since they were donated by the government).

The final aspect brought up in multiple papers and reports were the income generation the solar home systems were supposed to generate for the households (Anderson 2000; World Bank 2003, 2004 2010a, 2010b). The families I interviewed did not see the SHS as income-generating, however there are possible indirect sources of income like longer small store hours or more time working in the field. I only came across one house with a small store that mentioned it was easier to sell things at night with the light. The SHS I encountered are not

income-generating and are an unrealistic economic burden for these subsistence farmers.

### Political Evaluation

All of the systems that I surveyed were government donations by the local municipal government and are representative of initiatives in municipalities all across Nicaragua. At the end of each year, the municipal government holds small assemblies throughout the communities in the *alcadía* to learn about the preferences, needs, and wants of their residents. At these meetings, citizens currently without electricity will make a solicitation to request electricity in their community. For example, the community leader in Samaschunda, Marcela, made a solicitation in January 2011 for twelve panels for the community because thirty-four houses are currently not supplied with conventional electricity. Twenty are connected illegally with their own cables, and two people died in the past year connecting the illegal wires to the high voltage wires while others are too far away from the grid to access the electricity lines. In May, 2011, the community received the solar panels. Marcela’s process with the municipal government is similar to other stories during my time in the field.

The municipality of Yalagüina receives money from the central government every year to do “projects,” according to the community project manager. In an interview, I was told a portion of that fund is put aside to fund solar home systems in the communities that they decided need the electricity the most at the moment. The allocated money comes from “Transferencias Municipales – Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público.” And at the end of every year, each municipality has to submit a report of all the projects it carried out using the money. The solar systems are donated to the respective houses in *alcadía* Yalagüina, and the recipients do not have to pay anything of the cost of US\$550 (fig. 15).

The current political party in Nicaragua is the Sandinistas led by Daniel Ortega. In November 2011, Daniel Ortega was controversially elected to a third term in office.[7] Nicaragua was on the list of democratic countries published by Freedom House, a Washington-based

think tank, until the elections in November 2011. In January it was announced that Nicaragua had been taken off the list because “the events in 2011 demonstrated that quasi-authoritarian populism still stands as a threat to the region’s political stability” (Rogers 2012a).

The installation of the panels in this area is politically motivated. There is a long history in Nicaragua of political turmoil and war dating back to the Revolution of 1979, the U.S. support of the Contras in the 1980s, the electoral fraud in November 2008, and the latest – the election of Daniel Ortega in November 2011. Most of the homes I visited had Sandanista flags and FSLN party propaganda. The systems are also conveniently installed right around the time of elections of the local municipal government. When interviewing the project director for *alcadía* Yalaguina, I asked if they planned to install a lot of systems in the next year to win votes. His response, “Si, si dios quiere” [yes, yes if God allows], and when I followed up to make sure I understood correctly, I confirmed that the installations are motivated by the elections to win votes. The *alcadía* plans to install 20 more panels in May 2012 – right before the municipal government elections in 2012 in hopes of the Sandinista candidate winning (figs. 16-17).



**Figure 15.** Yalagüina installation in 2010. The households receiving the parts for their SHS.

The vote-winning motivation appears to have rushed projects into the field without proper implementation or maintenance plans for the future longevity of the systems. The government is attempting to install as many systems as possible to impact as many people as possible, but the non-working systems from past projects is money wasted by

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the government, and even result in votes lost from the people that are unsatisfied with their broken SHS. The trend in international solar policy circles is a shift from heavily subsidized donor projects to private market-based approaches that have full cost recovery (Martinot, Cabraal, and Mathur 2001; Hankins 1998; Nieuwenhout 2002). When the system recipients have money invested in their SHS, they tend to care for it more and try to better understand how to maintain it; "Government subsidies are normally not regarded as sustainable," but the municipalities across Nicaragua are continuing to install hundreds of fully donated systems every year (Nieuwenhout 2002:462).



Figure 16. Example of Sandinista propaganda in Managua.

**Conclusion**

Solar energy is currently not an appropriate technology for the households that I visited in northern Nicaragua because the systems are not being sustained for more than two years, on average. I interviewed the Project Director of the solar panel installations in alcaldía Yalagüina, Jaime Morijarrez. I showed him the report that I had put together from my first visit. I left him in shock and concerned about installing the twenty panels that are planned for 2012.

This paper contributes to the continuing effort to understand and improve developmental process of SHS by evaluating rural solar electrification in Nicaragua

through the lens of sustainability and appropriate technology. When thinking about a project such as this, the following considerations and motivations need to be examined.



Figure 17. The extension of the grid where this picture was taken was paid for by the Sandinista government. They painted every electricity pole their colors to show everyone that they paid for the electricity (see dotted circle).

**Socio-cultural:**

- Is the technology what the community wants?
- Can the end users participate in every aspect of the project's installation and maintenance? Do they feel ownership of the system?
- "Ownership of systems is an important influence on the willingness to invest (time and money) on maintenance" (Nieuwenhout et al. 2000:62).
- Are they confidently trained on how to operate and maintain them?
- Can the overall living conditions of the villagers be improved?

**Technical:**

- Can inevitable spare parts be made available from the local/national market in due time and at an affordable price?
- Is there a maintenance plan for future sustainability of the system, including a place for the community to ask questions?
- Is the technology durable over time?

**Environmental:**

- Is there a plan for the recycling and

disposal of the technology at the end of its life?

- Can the technology pay back its energy investment?
- Does it actually reduce GHGs?

**Economic:**

- Can the consumer afford the energy services over the life cycle of the system?
- Does the end-user have a savings plan for the sustainability of the technology?
- Does the technology actually create a source of income generation?

**Political:**

- Are the motives for installing the systems, directed toward long-term solutions or quick-fixes?
- Is the provision of the system free of political patronage?

Ultimately, rural solar electrification projects are about the people, not just the numbers and statistics. A program can install hundreds of systems and talk about how much good installing a hundred systems did, but until you actually talk to the people, one does not know the whole story. For this specific project, I recommend they charge a small usage fee every month for the system and this money would be put towards paying a technician to perform maintenance on the systems when needed. The households with conventional electricity pay a monthly electricity bill. The households with the SHS could have a similar program where the money generated in this program would create a fund to pay for maintenance costs. This is just one of my recommendations that I have crafted after speaking with the households and studying other rural solar electrification projects.

Overall, I believe this research suggests that using solar for electrification is not an easy solution to rural electrification, especially donation-based systems. Installations of systems must be thoroughly contextualized to the location and the people, researched, and properly implemented in order to make the program and systems an appropriate technology.

**Footnotes**

- (1) The deep-cycle batteries used for these

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systems require distilled water. The water needs to be added every one to two months. Without the distilled water, the battery dies.

(2) Honduras has the second lowest electricity coverage: 77% (CIA World Factbook 2011).

(3) The communities include Quebrada Arriba, Santa Ana, Cerro Grande, el Terrero, Rio Abajo, and el Jocote.

(4) Mixed European and indigenous ancestry.

(5) The TVs were black and white and purchased used, very cheaply. Because the TVs are direct current (DC), the families could hook up the TV directly to the battery without having to also purchase an inverter.

(6) Baking soda can be purchased in any pharmacy in Nicaragua for C\$5.

(7) The Constitution of Nicaragua says a president can only run for two terms. Ortega changed the Constitution to be able to run for a third. The report by Freedom house states, "Nicaragua suffered a steep decline in political rights due to irregularities in advance of and during the presidential election, which gave Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega another term in office" (Rogers, 2012a).

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# Zora Neale Hurston Award

## Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of Nomination Packet

~Each nomination should include the following:

- (1) Letter of recommendation in support of the nominee; and
- (2) Summary of the nominee's accomplishments.

~Contextualization of nominee's work should address the following questions:

- (A) What is the significance of the nominee's work within the discipline?
- (B) What is the impact of this work for the community in which the nominee works? How has this work benefitted communities?
- (C) How has this work moved the discipline forward into applications for the larger public?

~Each nomination packet must:

- Be no longer than 10 pages.
- Include 2 additional copies of packet materials for the 3-person committee.

The selection review committee consists of two appointed members of the Southern Anthropological Society Zora Neale Hurston Award Committee and the Zora Neale Hurston Award Chair. Annual deadline for receipt of nomination materials is November 1st. Supporting materials will not be returned. The Zora Neale Hurston Award may not be annual and will be awarded only if the committee deems nominees of merit.

Recipients will be contacted by January 1st so that they may make arrangements to attend the annual meeting in the spring. The Hurston Award winner will be announced and stipend and Zora Neale Hurston engraved award will be presented at the annual meeting banquet.

Please send electronically, nominations with supporting materials to:

Dr. Lisa J. Lefler  
 Zora Neale Hurston Award Chair  
 Culturally Based Native Health Programs  
 College of Health & Human Science  
 Western Carolina University  
 Cullowhee, NC 28723  
 Email: [llefler@email.wcu.edu](mailto:llefler@email.wcu.edu)  
 Phone: 828-227-2164

*Please note changes for the ZNH Award. Please consider nominations and submit before **November 1, 2012.***



# James Mooney Committee Activities and Announcements

~by Betty J. Duggan (New York State Museum) and Daryl White (Spelman College)

The Mooney Award is awarded annually for the best new book about the South or Southern peoples and cultures (past or present) in, of, or from the region. Nomination criteria, contacts, instructions, and deadline for this award are posted on the SAS website. Nominations are due no later than **August 31, 2012**.

There were two winners for the 2011 James Mooney Award announced at the annual SAS conference banquet in March, 2012. These two fine anthropological studies focused on Native American cultures, one illuminating the temporally-distant Contact era and the other probing critical contemporary issues. Congratulations once again to Robbie Ethridge, author of *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010) and Circe Sturm, author of *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-first Century* (SAR Press, 2010), for their accomplishments in bringing these sterling new contributions to professional and broader audiences.

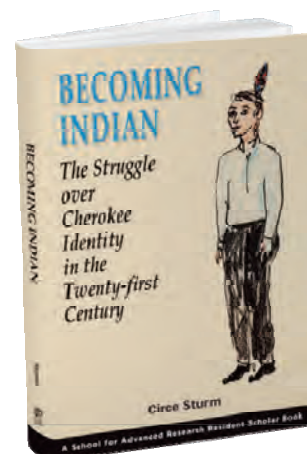
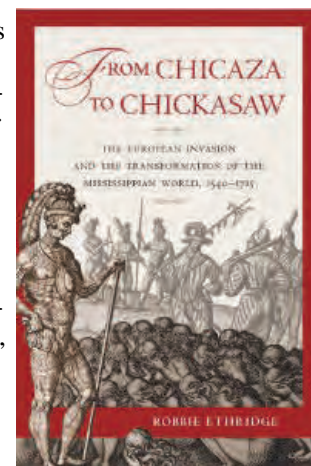
These two books to Southeastern and North American Indian studies contribute to opposite ends of the chronological spectrum, but each, in its own time frame, addresses profound social, cultural, and interethnic relations, and outcomes of those relations, for Native peoples of the Southeast.

Robbie Ethridge's book, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, has been described by some scholars as a sweeping regional history of the transformation of Native South from the De Soto's 1540 *entrada* through the early eighteenth century Yamassee War, which ended the socially- and culturally-devastating economic practice of Indian slave raiding by Natives for sale to Europeans. Built on her comprehensive knowledge of the documentary and published sources and archaeological, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic studies, and especially of the peoples who coalesced to become the historic Chickasaw, and Ethridge's analysis and synthesis of the rich primary and secondary resource materials, *Chicaza to Chickasaw* is a prime example of the four-field approach to anthropological research. As such, it contributes greatly to Southeastern Indian, regional, and anthropological studies.

Circe Sturm's book, *Becoming Indian*, is an ethnographic study firmly situated in the twenty-first century, but informed by knowledge of centuries of social, cultural, and interethnic relations, practice, and change. It specifically examines Cherokee identity politics and the phenomenon of racial shifting by individuals who have in recent decades changed their racial self-identification from non-Indian to Indian on the U.S. census. While social and cultural values behind race shifting for these individuals, who come from varied walks of life and differing motivations, Sturm finds that all share a strong conviction that they have Indian blood and, therefore, a right to assert their indigeneity. While Southeast Indian specialists and federally-recognized Cherokee nations will find Sturm's exploration timely, with historically-recognizable antecedents, yet ever-new twists, it should be required reading for policy makers and expert witnesses, as increasing numbers of race shifters band together into organizations seeking [and receiving] state recognition and resources, as "Indian tribes."

## CIRCE STURM THANKS THE SAS:

I am deeply honored to have been named co-winner of the 2011 James Mooney award, and to have my book recognized alongside Robbie Ethridge's tour de force on the Chickasaw. When I look at the list of previous winners, I feel somewhat stunned and also quite moved to find myself among such luminaries in the field. In many respects, the seeds for my book, *Becoming Indian*, took root here at the Southern Anthropological Society's annual meetings twelve years ago, when I presented my first paper on this topic back in 2000. As a junior scholar at the time, I received so much supportive feedback and encouragement that I knew there was a book in there somewhere. Well, over a decade later, here it is, and I thank all of you for the initial push that made this book possible. This book has been a long time coming, in part because it deals with such a controversial topic. I constantly struggled to find a way to represent all sides of the story in a manner that was both fair and compassionate, and yet that didn't shy away from the important social and political consequences of this growing movement to reclaim indigenous identity and tribal status. Over the years, I counted on the support of family, friends, colleagues, and scholarly communities like the SAS, to help me negotiate that difficult terrain. For that unfailing support, I am immensely grateful. I also wish to acknowledge the good people at SAR Press, who made publishing this book such a pleasant process, and who were nothing but supportive, kind and patient in ushering this book into being. My sincere and heartfelt gratitude goes to SAS for this immense honor.



The Southern Anthropological Society requests nomination for

**THE JAMES MOONEY AWARD**

The purpose of the James Mooney Award is to recognize and thereby encourage distinguished anthropological scholarship on the South and Southerners. Presented annually, the award includes a \$500 cash prize and certificate of recognition to be presented to the winning author at an awards ceremony. In addition, an Honorable Mention Award includes a certificate of recognition. The winning presses will also receive a certificate of recognition and will be granted free exhibit space at the Society’s annual meeting and, for one year, free advertising space for the winning books in the Southern Anthropologist. Previous recipients of the James Mooney Award may be found at: <http://southernanthro.org/>

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

To be considered for the **2012 James Mooney Award** (presented in 2013), a book must have been published in 2011 or 2012. The judges welcome works on the South or Southern peoples and cultures (past or present) in, of, or from the region. Books may be from any subfield of anthropology or from other disciplines so long as the primary perspective of the work is anthropological. Co-authored books may be nominated, but edited volumes may not. The nomination must clearly be for a single book, even if it builds on prior work by the author or others.

**NOMINATION AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES**

Nominations for the 2012 James Mooney Award may be submitted by a press or an individual. The nomination should include a letter briefly describing the subject, identifying the anthropological significance of the work, and giving the name, address, and telephone number of the author. The letter of nomination should be accompanied by three copies of the book, one for each member of the selection committee. (In lieu of submitting book copies, individuals may submit a brief summary or review of the nominated book. The Mooney committee chair may then opt to seek copies from the publisher.

An unsuccessful title may be re-submitted once.

Titles must be submitted for consideration by **August 31, 2012**. Please send submissions to Daryl White, the Mooney Award Press Coordinator, whose address is below.

Books will be judged by a committee of anthropologists from different subfields in the discipline. The winner will be announced in March of 2013 at the [annual meeting](#) of the Society in Johnson City, Tennessee.

**CONTACT:**

**SEND BOOKS TO:**

**Dr. Daryl White**, Mooney Award Press Co-ordinator  
 Professor & Chair, Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
 Campus Box 1702  
 Spelman College  
 350 Spelman Lane SW  
 Atlanta, GA 30314  
 Phone: 404.270.6053  
[dwhite@spelman.edu](mailto:dwhite@spelman.edu)

**ALL OTHER INQUIRIES:**

**Dr. Betty Duggan**, Mooney Award Committee Chair  
 Curator of Ethnography and Ethnology  
 New York State Museum  
 CEC, Room 3140  
 Albany, New York 12230  
[bduggan@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:bduggan@mail.nysed.gov)

Table: Number of books nominated for Mooney Award and presses submitting them, 2001-2012

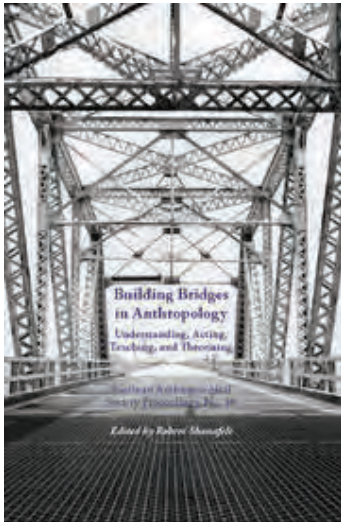
Award Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Books submitted	11	7	15	16	13	9	13	8	13	13	15
Presses	7	5	8	8	9	5	9	7	6	7	6

We solicit nominations from the following presses: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Cambridge, Chicago, Duke, Florida, Georgia, Harvard, Illinois, Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, \*Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oxford, Princeton, School for Advanced Research, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Texas A & M, Virginia, Waveland Press, West Virginia, Yale, Maple Press, and University Presses of America.  
 (\*Unfortunately, the University of Missouri recently announced it was discontinuing its press.)

Prepared by Daryl White, 6/6/2012

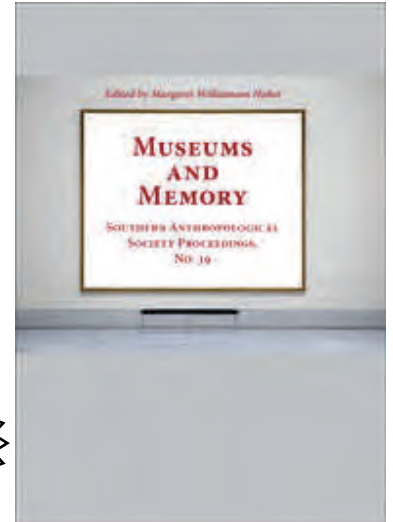


# SAS Proceedings



Two new volumes of Southern Anthropological Proceedings are available from Newfound press, *Museums and Memory* (<http://www.newfoundpress.utk.edu/pubs/museums/>) edited by Margaret Williamson Huber and *Building Bridges in Anthropology* (<http://www.newfoundpress.utk.edu/pubs/bridges/>) edited by Robert Shanafelt. These are fully available online, but also may be purchased in paperback form. The price for each is \$24.95, but call 1-800-621-2736 to ask for the SAS member 20% discount. We would especially like to thank Jayne Rogers of Newfound Press and Scot Danforth of the University of Tennessee Press for their hard work and support of these volumes.

~**Robert Shanafelt**  
 SAS Proceedings General Editor  
 Associate Professor of Anthropology  
 Georgia Southern University



## News from the *Southern Anthropologist*

 Southern Anthropologist Journal of the Southern Anthropological Society	
Volume 35, Number 2	Winter 2010
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"I Know You!" Understanding Racial Experience and Racial Practice within the Lumbee Indian Community <i>David S. Lowry</i> .....	26
"You Have to go North to Find the South": Situating Central Florida in the South for Birth Research <i>Erica Gibson</i> .....	52
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A single edition of the *Southern Anthropologist* will be out at the end of the year with a major section on using digital media in teaching anthropology. The expectation is to return to a twice-a-year format in 2013. We invite submissions for future issues at any time. Submissions and inquiries can be sent to [south-ernanthropologist@gmail.com](mailto:south-ernanthropologist@gmail.com). Submissions should contain a brief (200 word) abstract, and should conform to the "AAA Style Guide" (2009) accessible at [http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style\\_guide.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf). If you have an idea for a collection of articles around a central theme for a future issue, we would be happy to discuss those possibilities. Book and film reviews (approximately 800 words or less) are also welcome. We are considering adding a "Research Notes" section that will allow us to feature innovative and important research in progress; these research reports will also be submitted to a review process. Have something that would be well suited to that section? Please send it to the above email address. Finally, if you would like to have your name added to a list of reviewers for submissions, please let us know.

~**Julian M. Murchison** and **Matt Samson**, co-editors

"We are also considering the formation of an editorial board of five to seven people who can help coordinate the review of articles across the subdisciplines."

# Report on SAS Archives

Last spring Margaret Huber kindly travelled to St. Mary's College of Maryland to deliver a box of records, letters, and other SAS archival materials. My goal is to organize, catalog, and scan these and make sure copies (.pdf) of the digital record (DVDs) are distributed to several locations. Redundancy I think is key when it comes to records. I will be happy to curate the paper records as long as the SAS would like me to do so. The spring 2011 semester was my last before retiring from St. Mary's College of Maryland... and with the best of intentions, I thought I would get the scanning done during the summer... but no sooner than I retired, Kate and I were asked by a Rapa Nui (Easter Island) colleague to help design museum exhibit on Polynesian navigation on Tenerife... which has kept us busier than ever. So I have not done the scanning yet, but I assure you that the records are safe and sound in my relocated office at home. As part of the project, I will try to find and catalog materials that are stored at other institutions such as LSU or the Smithsonian. If any SAS members know of additional archival materials, please let me know.

~Dan Ingersoll, Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus, [dwingersoll@smcm.edu](mailto:dwingersoll@smcm.edu).



## In the News ...

The Southern Register. Spring 2012. The newsletter of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. The University of Mississippi

[Excerpt]

The Southern Anthropological Society recently honored University of Mississippi professor of anthropology Robbie Ethridge by awarding her the prestigious Mooney Award for her book *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540–1715* (UNC Press, 2010). Using a new interpretive framework that Ethridge calls the “Mississippian shatter zone” to explicate these tumultuous times, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw* examines the European invasion and the collapse of the precontact Mississippian world and the restructuring of discrete chiefdoms into coalescent native societies in a colonial world. “I was absolutely thrilled to hear that I won,” Ethridge said. “Over the years, Mooney Award-winning books have profoundly shaped my intellectual life and scholarship, so to be included among this list of books is quite an honor.” The purpose of the James Mooney Award is to recognize and thereby encourage distinguished anthropological scholarship on the South and Southerners. Presented annually, the award includes a \$500 cash prize and certificate of recognition. “Dr. Ethridge’s scholarship on Southeastern Indian groups is nationally and internationally recognized,” said Kirsten Dellinger, chair of the department of sociology and anthropology. “The Mooney award for her most recent book further confirms her continuing contributions to this field. We are so fortunate to have her as a member of the faculty at the University of Mississippi and we congratulate her on this well-deserved and distinguished honor.” Ethridge’s areas of expertise are historical anthropology and environmental anthropology, with an area focus on the Indians of the Southern United States. [p. 28]

**“Over the years, Mooney Award-winning books have profoundly shaped my intellectual life and scholarship.”**

# SAS Endowment Fund

**To:** Southern Anthropological Society Members and Friends

**From:** Max E. White, Endowment Treasurer

Greetings everyone. Please consider donating to the SAS Endowment Fund. All contributions are tax deductible and will help us attain our goal of creating an endowment to be used to promote Anthropology and anthropological research in the American South.

The Endowment Fund of the Southern Anthropological Society was established several years ago and continues to grow. The stated purpose of the Endowment Fund was to support and encourage anthropological research in the South (or about the South), and to promote anthropology in the South. The original thinking was to create a fund of some \$30,000 which could be drawn upon at the discretion of the Executive Board. The total amount in the Endowment Fund (as of June 8, 2012) is \$22,669.18. With economic conditions as they are, donations have fallen off sharply in recent years, but the few contributions we have received, plus the interest generated, keeps the fund growing. Please consider contributing to this worthy cause, and keep in mind that all contributions are tax-deductible.

You may make the check out to **SAS Endowment Fund** and mail to:

**Max E. White**  
**SAS Endowment Treasurer**  
**Department of Social Sciences**  
**Piedmont College**  
**Demorest, GA 30535**

You will receive a letter of acknowledgement in return mail. Thank you in advance for your support, and I look forward to seeing you at the meeting in Tennessee in March.

Sincerely,

Max E. White, Ph.D.



Photo Credit: David M. Johnson

**2012 SAS Conference Organizers Lori Cormier (right) and Sharyn Jones (left) with the Keynote Speaker, Beth Conklin, Vanderbilt University (center)**

**Donate to the SAS Endowment Fund.**  
*It is tax deductible!*



Photos Credit: David M. Johnson

**Max E. White (left) and J. Anthony Paredes (right) at the 2012 SAS Opening Reception, Birmingham, AL**



Photos Credit: David M. Johnson

**SAS Presentations, Birmingham, AL, 2012**

# SAS Secretary-Treasurer's report 2012

## Southern Anthropological Society

Summary Financial Statement

Prepared 1 July 2012

Brandon D. Lundy, Secretary-Treasurer

Checking Account Balance, 1 July 2012 **\$24,635.82**

The total cost for the 2011-2012 annual meeting in Birmingham, AL was \$11,064.45. UAB generously reimbursed the SAS \$1,225.98 for the Opening Reception and Awards Banquet making the clubs expenditures \$9,838.47. Revenue brought in for this year's meeting including the sale of banquet tickets, SAS membership, and meeting registration totaled \$14,391.08. Therefore, the club continues to operate in the black for another year!

### Highlights from the 16 March 2012 Board Meeting minutes in Birmingham, AL.

- The SAS website now has a PayPal account for membership and meeting registration. We may be adding Endowments and Banquet fees to this account through the online donations function.
- A new web-based Google Docs registration enrollment and abstract submission form for the annual meeting has been added to the "Annual Meeting" page of the SAS website. It will be beta-tested for the 2012-2013 meetings in Johnson City, Tennessee. The information should be automatically stored in a database accessible to the conference organizers, SAS President, and SAS Secretary-Treasurer.
- Heidi Altman has agreed to continue to help clean-up/edit the SAS website as part of her outgoing presidential duties.
- A similar electronic submission system is being discussed for use by the editors of the *Southern Anthropologist*. The editors of the *Southern Anthropologist*, Matt Samson and Julian Murchison, are working to make the journal biannual and dependable. Ideas discussed for the journal include developing an editorial board made up of SAS past officers (~4-5) as well as possibly making one issue per year dedicated to professionals while the second could include graduate-level submissions. The editors request renewed marketing of the journal by the SAS membership to increase the number of submissions received. Once the journal is being published online consistently, talks will continue to get the issues added to one or more online databases with broader access and appeal (i.e., Ebsco, JSTOR).
- The board discussed the need to bring additional presses to the meeting. Appreciation to the University of Alabama Press for their support was expressed.
- Over the coming year, Lisa Lefler has been asked by the board to revise the Hurston Award nomination process such as eliminating the need for letters from the "host community". The \$500 cash award and plaque for the Hurston Award will continue to come from the Endowment Fund. David Johnson and Daryl White were nominated to serve on the Hurston Award Committee alongside Lisa Lefler as Chair.
- Daryl White distributed a list of presses and average number of yearly submissions for the Mooney Award. SAR was added just this year. Betty J. Duggan and Jennifer Nourse will be stepping down from the committee while Robbie Ethridge will rotate back on as the Committee Chair. Robbie will select/nominate other committee members for a three year term over the coming year. The 2011-2012 Mooney Prize had nine book submissions and the committee decided to present co-winners.
- The Wilmington, Chattanooga, and Richmond SAS Proceedings are currently being edited under the direction of Robert Shanafelt. The volumes are now open access online as well as print-on-demand through Newfound Press. This year saw the publication of two volumes, *Museums and Memory* (Huber) and *Building Bridges in Anthropology* (Shanafelt).
- The 50th Anniversary meeting planning is already underway for 2015 in New Orleans. Over the next two years, the meeting sites will be East Tennessee State University, Johnson City (2013) and Arkansas (2014).
- Outgoing President Heidi Altman thanked the board for their hard work over the last year.



Photo Credit: David M. Johnson

# BOOK REVIEW

**Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic.** *Sonja Luehrmann*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011. 275 pp.

**Amanda Woomer**

Kennesaw State University

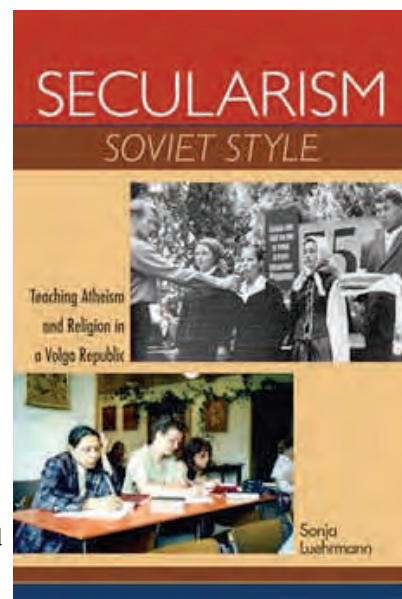
Sonja Luehrmann explores the connections between Soviet-era atheism and the post-Soviet resurgence of religion. *Secularism Soviet Style* is an in-depth and carefully articulated consideration of the manners in which society is built, transformed, and impacted through structures of learning and socialization. Luehrmann's thoughtful ethnography, combined with an extensive review of local and national historical archives, provides the reader with a comprehensive reflection of the relationships between secular modernism and religious life in the Volga Republic.

At its foundation, the book questions the proclivity towards black and white depictions of Soviet society as inherently secular. Challenging this characterization, Luehrmann points to the ways in which the region's religious history and the Soviet pursuit of modernization influenced one another in the course of developing what she refers to as a didactic public. Despite their contradictions and significant differences, both atheist and postsecular efforts to construct a particular type of community relied on standardized forms of teaching and knowing. Dogma originating in an abstracted and oftentimes distant center was subsequently adapted for and diffused to particular peripheral audiences. Related ideas about didactic relationships, institutional reliance on specific modes of knowledge circulation, and the promise of societal transformation are explored throughout the book's four sections.

To provide the reader with a foundational context, Luehrmann begins the book by outlining the broad arguments of Soviet atheists against religion. Soviet propaganda depicted religious ideology and even traditional rural life as a backwards and isolating force, one that solidifies social boundaries and increases individual isolation. In strict contrast to the divisive nature of religion, the Soviet secular project sought to instead create a cohesive and national community based on personal growth, societal progress, and a shared Soviet identity. Despite this historically constructed separateness, Luehrmann draws parallels between secular and religious institutions throughout the book with concrete and exhaustive examples.

One of the most important ideas Luehrmann develops is the Soviet concern "with methodology as the crucial link between recognizable facts and changing ways of life, between knowledge and behavior, between theory and practice" (p. 60). Creating an authentically secular society meant developing didactic methodologies for transmitting prescribed knowledge in contextually appropriate ways. The desired result of this would be not only the development of a true Soviet republic, but also the suppression of religious emotionality and fervor in favor of atheist rationality. The Soviet propaganda or knowledge architecture used numerous lectures and events such as the Evening of Miracles without Miracles in order to take a centralized message and disseminate it through a local human network.

The examples of attempts at ideological engagement that Luehrmann describes were not without their obstacles. Methodicians –individuals responsible for propagating the secular message– were forced to not only make the centrally approved



## BOOK REVIEW

material contextually comprehensible, but also to answer for any ideological contradictions. Although this “combination of local flexibility and disciplinary rigidity” (p. 106), highly dependent on individual methodicians and their unique creative capabilities, allowed the Soviet secular message to reach widespread audiences, the result of transmitting a message from the center to the periphery often resulted in misunderstandings.

Methods for the translation of the prescribed ideology to specific local contexts and audiences continued to be used for religious socialization in postsecular Russian society. Although they regretted losing years of spiritual learning during Soviet secularism, many individuals depicted in the book valued the leadership training and skills they had acquired from being part of the Soviet didactic network in charge of disseminating knowledge. Other characteristics of secular society that carried over into the resurgence of religious communities included the importance of authority and hierarchy. For example, evangelical preachers often modified the sermons of religious leaders to fit local communities, and the Russian Orthodox Church remained highly centralized.

The Soviet modernizing agenda also resulted in the transformation of physical space, as the government converted religious buildings into secular spaces of learning. These alterations were often reversed in the late twentieth century during the resurgence of religion as a way of reclaiming space as well as authority. The specific instances Luehrmann describes illustrate another manner of co-opting the public in the creation of a certain *type* of society. Buildings were used as a way to either link people with people or people with God or some other higher power.

One of the book’s main strengths is Luehrmann’s elegant and informative illustration of general themes through the use of detailed accounts of historical documents and records, descriptive images of social spaces, and numerous evocative interviews. Her ethnography exhibits for the reader not only the institutions of secular and religious society, but also the impact that these structures had on real people and their lives. Those interested in the impact of religious devotion and political ideology on the structures of society as well as those concerned with various structures of knowledge dissemination will find this book both illuminating and engaging. Overall, Luehrmann’s work has a great deal to offer both as a detailed historical depiction of the Volga Republic as well as an astute investigation of the interconnectedness of religious and secular life.

**Do you have something to share with the SAS? The SAS Newsletter is the perfect outlet for SAS-related news, updates about activities of the membership, and information on forthcoming publications. If you would like to contribute to the Winter 2012 issue, please contact:**

**Brandon D. Lundy**  
**SAS Secretary-Treasurer**  
**Newsletter Editor**  
**Email: [blundy@kennesaw.edu](mailto:blundy@kennesaw.edu)**




## Southern Anthropological Society

For more information, contact:

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 **SOUTHERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**

REGISTRATION AND DUES  
Year: 20

Every person planning to attend the annual meeting must pay **both** membership dues and a registration fee.

You may pay fees in advance or at the meeting. If you pay in advance, please send checks, made out to the Southern Anthropological Society, to  
Brandon Lundy, SAS Secretary-Treasurer  
Department of Geography and Anthropology  
Social Science Building (SO), Suite 4042  
Kennesaw State University  
1000 Chastain Road  
Kennesaw, Georgia 30144-5591

Please also include this form with your payment.

Do not send your abstract to this address. Abstracts should be sent to the Program Chair, Lori Cormier, [lcormier@uab.edu](mailto:lcormier@uab.edu).

**Membership category (please indicate one):**

Professional	\$ 75.00
Student/retired	\$ 35.00
Joint	\$100.00

(for couples who want to join together)

**Registration fees (please indicate one):**

Professional	\$ 75.00
Student/Retired	\$ 35.00
Joint	\$100.00

(for couples who want to attend the meeting together)

**Total amount** \$

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Institutional Affiliation(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Heidi Altman,**  
**SAS Past-**  
**President**



## Dear SAS Membership,

I hope that everyone is having a relaxing (or adventurous) summer with plenty of time to write, study, organize, teach, travel or sleep... just as you like it! As the summer moves on, I find myself trying to catch up with projects that got started along the way but not finished. With regard to SAS, this means finding time to help Brandon with updating the webpage, and also pulling together all the notes I have collected in my time as (variously) secretary/treasurer, president-elect, and president, about the different roles and responsibilities the board members have, procedures for hosting the annual meetings and other occasional pieces of business that have to be attended to, but are in danger of being neglected if they are not written down with instructions. Fortunately, I have the board's discussion group messages, past versions of policies and procedures that we have worked on, my own notes, email, and other documentary sources to draw from, but if any of you members have suggestions for me to include or to bring to the board at our next meeting, please email me at [heidi.altman@gmail.com](mailto:heidi.altman@gmail.com) and put "SAS Policies and Procedures" in the subject line. If some of you have been with SAS for many years and have noticed that we have forgotten some things or neglected some things that we have done in the past, please also feel free to email me. I look forward to producing a document that we can have and adapt as time goes on, that keeps us on track. Thanks so much for your continued support of anthropology in and of the South.

**-Heidi M. Altman**  
SAS Past-President  
Associate Professor of Anthropology  
Georgia Southern University