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Material Culture and Sacred Landscape: The Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty

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suggest that the cultural and intellectual inertia that exists can be overcome by glimpsing a new vision. Rather than fearing that things will get worse, people can learn to gain confidence in their communities and nurture their commitments to them as active economic development strategies at the grass roots.

I recommend this book for all economic anthropologists engaged in economic development issues in rural communities. Power thinks more like an anthropologist than an economist, but his academic economic science rhetoric brings a much needed perspective to rural economic development and environmental preservation from the grass roots.

Barbara J. Dilly, Department of Anthropology,
Creighton University

Material Culture and Sacred Landscape: The Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty

PETER JORDAN

ALTA MIRA PRESS, WALNUT CREEK, CA,
2003

308 PP. \$80 HARDCOVER, \$29.95 PAPERBACK

REVIEWED BY THOMAS J. PLUCKHAHN

It seems safe to assume that I am not the only archaeologist who experiences something akin to a pang of longing when I have occasion to pick up an older ethnography. Many of the ethnographers of the early and middle twentieth century devoted almost as much attention to the material culture and environment of the people they studied as the people themselves. For all their shortcomings, these early ethnographies presented a richness of detail that is too often missing in contemporary works of cultural anthropology: settlement maps, illustrations of house patterns, accounts of subsistence techniques, and descriptions of everyday material objects. I was thus perhaps predisposed to have a favorable opinion of

Jordan's book and its close attention to Khanty material culture. But this is not a work of vulgar materialism, nor is it a return to the simple descriptive style of many past ethnographies. His primary concern is describing how the Khanty material culture, including landscapes, is 'enculturated' (i.e., given symbolic meaning) through physical transformation or incorporation into the symbolism of social practices.

Jordan draws from a number of theoretical strands in an effort to find a middle ground between cultural materialist ("socioecological") and interpretive ("semiotic") approaches to hunter-gatherer studies. By his own admission, however, the middle ground he proposes leans heavily toward interpretive theories of material culture, which he sees as a corrective to the materialist approaches that have traditionally dominated this field (p. 22). While the terms he uses may be unfamiliar to some readers, his theoretical discussion is clear (free of much of the jargon inherent in the primary works) and even-handed (pointing out some of the limitations and criticisms of these approaches).

Jordan contextualizes his ethnographic material in broad temporal and spatial scales, placing the Khanty in a macro-regional, *longue durée* historical context. This history is phrased in the language and perspective of world systems theory, while extending discussion and credence to its many critiques. While readers anxious to get into the details of the ethnography may wonder why this wasn't incorporated into his earlier theoretical discussion, as an archaeologist I appreciated the inclusion of an extended historical context. World systems theory is appropriate for understanding this history, given that the Khanty paid fur in tribute to the Tatar Khans during the medieval period, were later incorporated into fur tax systems of the Russian and Soviet empires, and today occupy a landscape valued for its mineral resources.

Having dispensed with the historical context, Jordan turns to the heart of the ethnography. In addition to material from a 10-month field study of communities on one tributary of the River Ob', he makes good use of other scholarly works and ethno-historic data. He reviews many of the fundamental aspects of Khanty society, including gender roles, kinship, settlement patterns, and subsistence practices.

The bulk of his ethnographic material, however, focuses on the significance of animals and landscapes in Khanty cosmology and ritual. These discussions nicely illustrate the role that human agents play in the regeneration of nature through ritual practices. More specifically, he demonstrates that the creation and use of material artifacts within the landscape plays an integral part in the continual renegotiation of the relationship between people and animals.

The final part of his discussion describes the enculturation of place and space, respectively. By the former, Jordan refers to how individuals are socialized within the material spaces inhabited by the community, as well as how specific places in the landscape are enculturated by the transformation or deposition of artifacts and by the construction of structures. He traces the history of one community through four generations of visits to ritual sites. Jordan uses the phrase “enculturation of space” to mean the wider appropriation of the landscape through patterns of land tenure and territoriality.

His concluding chapter is short and somewhat redundant with the shorter summaries presented at the end of each of the other chapters. I would have preferred a longer synthesis that integrated the theoretical discussion in the early chapters with data presented later. However, my main complaint is with the quality of the text, which at times appeared as if it was printed on a poor quality desktop printer. I was also distracted by the frequent use of bulleted text, but many readers will no doubt appreciate having key points highlighted.

Aside from these few minor problems, Peter Jordan's book is a major accomplishment. By integrating the study of material culture into an ethnographic analysis of a contemporary society, Jordan has produced a work that should be of interest to a broad array of social scientists and theorists. Ethnographers will appreciate this account of a little-studied society in a portion of the world that is relatively poorly documented. Scholars of hunting and gathering societies may enjoy the book for its purely descriptive value, but they—as well as researchers with an interest in environmental studies and religion—will no doubt be impressed by the attention Jordan devotes to the manner in which the Khanty give meaning

to the landscape. Social theorists will be interested to read an example of how abstract concepts like “structuration” and “praxis” can be made concrete. Finally, archaeologists will find an ethnography that not only pays attention to material culture, but does so in a theoretically sophisticated manner. In short, this is a book that I highly recommend.

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The Hot and the Cold: Ills of Humans and Maize in Native Mexico

J. M. CHEVALIER AND A. SÁNCHEZ BAIN
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, TORONTO,
2002

344 PP. \$65.00 HARDCOVER

REVIEWED BY CAMERON ADAMS

In *The Hot and the Cold* the authors enter an ongoing debate regarding the “humoral system” in Latin American ethnomedical systems championed by Foster (e.g., 1994) and López Austin (e.g., 1980 and 1986) respectively. The central thesis of this work is that George Foster's theory of the humoral origin of the Latin American hot/cold system is incorrect. In addition, they argue that the basic hot/cold system should be modified to include a heliotropic model. This shifting focus plagues the book and weakens the authors' argument throughout.

Chevalier and Sánchez Bain, following López Austin, take the position that the hot/cold system in Latin America is of pre-Columbian origin, not a Spanish colonial artifact. The claims against the Spanish humoral source are threefold. First, the authors argue, the humoral system has no “humors.” Because there is no reference to blood, phlegm and