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Intro Matter

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Journal of Ecological Anthropology

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Editor's Note

This year's special issue of the Journal of Ecological Anthropology is devoted to an exploratory essay on developing theoretical methodology in the study of human ecosystems. Its authors are aware of the fantastic hubris implied by this attempt. Luckily, such an ambitious project is necessarily a group effort and many have been involved from its inception. We now solicit our reader's participation in the effort to develop methodology in ecological anthropology. A coherent theory of human ecosystems will only emerge out of public communication of ideas, creative contributions and critical exchange. This journal was created as a forum for advancing theory and practice in ecological anthropology by both conventional and unconventional means. We ask our readers to participate by communicating comments, critique and contributing ideas you may have for the essay "Method for Theory: A Prelude to Human Ecosystems." Letters, emails, cartoons or graphic models will be published as Letters to the Editor in upcoming volumes of the JEA.

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Method for Theory: A Prelude to Human Ecosystems

H.E. KUCHKA

INSCRIPTION ON A BRIDGE AT THE SUMMER PALACE OF THE FORMER EMPERORS OF CHINA

THERE ARE THREE MONKEYS WHO CANNOT SEE THEIR FACES.
THERE IS A BRIDGE BUT NO WATER.
THERE ARE WINDOWS BUT THEY DO NOT OPEN.
THERE IS A TABLET BUT NO WORDS.
THERE IS A MIRROR BUT YOU CANNOT SEE YOUR FACE.
THERE IS A GATE BUT NO ONE PASSES THROUGH.

Truth in Advertising:

The following essay is a somewhat twisted mimicry of Pickett, Kolasa and Jones 1994.

Preface

This two-part essay represents the product of an exercise in developing method for theory, beginning Fall 1999 in the Complex Systems II graduate seminar in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Georgia. It was motivated by dissatisfaction with both the understanding and practice of theory building presently available in ecological anthropology. We sought to integrate an expansive approach to method-for-theory with our developing human ecosystems perspective.

We needed a strong method-for-theory to provide a common framework for our diverse interests in human ecosystems. *Ecological Understanding* (Pickett, Kolasa and Jones 1994) was chosen as the model exposition. As a guiding model it is an excellent place to begin. Cleverly done, well organized, easy to read, it misses very little about the nature of theory relevant to biological ecology. Our immediate goal was to rework its structure and content in the service of human ecology, particularly to enhance our approach to human ecosystems.

The author of this essay is given as H. E. Kuchka. H. E. is the abbreviation for Human Ecosystems. Kuchka is *the group*.¹ This moniker was inspired in part by the character and creative spirit of the late 19th Century musical study group in Russia that included Rimsky-Korsakov, known in the West as the Mighty Five. Our group's ultimate goal is to establish a truly anthropological understanding of human ecosystems, drawing upon a broad range of human variation and historical perspectives, while at the same time adapting the compositional techniques and scholastic backgrounds of other, more mature, ecological disciplines.

Felice S. Wyndham, Guest Editor

¹ In this production it was Felice S. Wyndham, Eric C. Jones, Mitchell A. Pavao-Zuckerman, Suzanne E. Joseph, Rebecca K. Zarger and Charles R. Peters, with contributions from David G. Casagrande, John R. Stepp and Warren P. Roberts.