

E. N. Anderson: Caring for place: ecology, ideology, and emotion in traditional landscape management

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Anderson is deeply concerned with inadequate responses to ongoing global environmental degradation. Accordingly, he offers cases of traditional societies that survived over long time periods without destroying their environments. His focus is on ways humans think about plants, animals, and landscapes because of his conviction that stories about them are what make us care about their continued existence, rather than statistics about their plight. The goal is to learn lessons applicable for contemporary problems by observing ways that traditional people developed strategies to sustain environmental services and found ways to motivate others to do the same.

A premise of the book is that people are motivated to environmental action by community solidarity as expressed through individual responsibility. The author models conservation activities as a feedback process, in which beliefs continually adjust ecological and economic processes of production and vice versa. He assembles scholarly evidence from around the globe and across centuries to argue that inspiring people to act responsibly is done with cultural representations—including religion and art—that are emotionally compelling. Anderson questions if religion is necessary for conservation of the human environment, but admits he cannot prove his own belief that secular morality is sufficient. Readers who agree with Anderson's "cause of humanity in nature as opposed to humanity versus nature" may find the book appealing, but readers who do not already agree are unlikely to be convinced otherwise by the material assembled.

The book is clearly organized: Each section builds on prior sections and the conclusion circles back to the introduction. The first two chapters offer a rationale for the book, a primer of traditional management practices, and an overview of theories of production. Anderson emphasizes the important role of communities that are able to motivate positive behavior by ceremony, ritual, public participation, and field-based education about the resources needed to live. The term 'wide-spectrum' is used for cultures with intrinsic conservation incentives for the ecosystem processes and functions that produce desired resources and are contrasted with cultures that depend on a narrow range of goods and services.

The heart of the book lies with accounts of environmental representations among various groups of people, both in particular cultures (Chapters 4, Yucatec Maya; 5, Medieval Ireland; and 6, China) and in broader regions (Chapter 7, SE Asia; Chapter 8, Western World). In Chapter 3, Anderson offers general portrayals of worldviews because it is cultural practices at this level that most affect landscape-level architecture. A cautionary disclaimer about individual variation and practice draws attention to their role without detracting from his intent to extract general lessons from the cultural sample. One example (Chapter 8) is the observation that the amplitude of conflicting ideologies derived from opposing worldviews about nature is lower in some places than in others and has important implications for conservation practices. The analytical strengths of the author are particularly evident as he delves into each area and region using both professional and personal experience. Anderson selected the cultures profiled so as not to rely on translators, but instead had personal access to source material. The references and index will render the book particularly useful for graduate students. Some information is delivered in parenthetical

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asides, which detract from the text by inserting a discordantly familiar tone and demoting relevant observations to sidebars. The evidence assembled in his world sample leads Anderson to conclude that societies propagate resource management systems and ideals through rituals and arts, with and without religion.

It is in linking evidence from the world sample with contemporary environmental problems that the book founders. The admittedly crude yardstick for measuring management success is how many people were supported over how long and how well. An examination of human and non-human carrying capacity is lacking, despite an assertion that human population density is not well correlated with actual damage. Absent a discussion of density effects on ecosystems and the possible roles of conflicting ideologies in contemporary landscape management, the four points in the conclusion are not derived from the evidence presented in the heart of the book. The four points

advocated are: people must (1) care about the environment, (2) want to learn specific, pragmatic and factual information, (3) learn to be tolerant of others and to value diversity, and (4) realize all lives on the planet are in this together. Hence, the goal of the book remains only partially fulfilled and readers must wait to learn lessons about traditional conservation practices that are directly applicable now. Fortunately, the author plans to write another book focused on Northwest Coast Native environmental management so the wait may be short.

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