



SECTION NEWS

Recognizing that the association's sections represent the rich diversity of the discipline's subfields, *AN* includes Section News, which provides news of specific relevance to members of a section (eg, summaries of section business meetings, section meeting presentations, section-featured annual meeting lectures). Members are encouraged to make full use of other *AN* editorial sections to report items of more general interest (funding opportunities, meeting dates, death notices, commentaries). Contact information for section contributing editors is available in individual columns.

American Ethnological Society

AARON A FOX, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

2005 AES Book Prizes

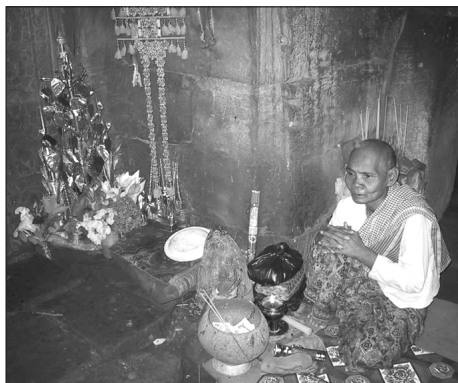
The AES announced the winners of the 2005 AES Book Prizes during our business meeting at the AAA Annual Meeting in Washington DC. Two winners were selected for each of the society's prizes.

The Sharon Stephens Prize for an outstanding first book was awarded jointly to Kim Gutschow (Williams C) for her ethnography *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas* (2004), and to Gastón R Gordillo (U British Columbia) for his ethnography *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco* (2004). The Sharon Stephens Prize committee included Mary Weismantel (chair), Ida Susser and Mary Moran.

Gordillo's *Landscapes of Devils* examines the ways in which culturally grounded labor experiences shape the production of places and, in particular, the role of social memory in the making of tense-ridden spatial configurations. Deeply ethnographic as well as historical, the book is based on the experience of the western Toba, an indigenous people in northern Argentina's Gran Chaco region.

In the early 20th century, the Toba were defeated by the Argentinean army, incorporated into the seasonal labor force of distant sugar plantations, and proselytized by British Anglicans. Gordillo reveals how the Toba's memory of these processes is embedded in their experience of "the bush" that dominates the Chaco landscape. Further, he analyzes how the connections between the bush and other places have produced a shifting, unstable and contradictory geography. The prize committee remarked especially on the extraordinary beauty of Gordillo's writing.

Gutschow's *Being a Buddhist Nun* examines the culture of a Buddhist nunnery, and the nuns' struggles with the Buddhist discipline of detachment. She analyzes how gender and sexuality construct ritual and social power, providing insight into the relationship between women and religion in South Asia today. In awarding the prize, committee chair Mary Weismantel remarked that Gutschow's "[r]efined historical ethnography takes a middle path . . . between those who would deconstruct Buddhism for its innate



A Buddhist nun in a Preah Khan shrine, Angkor, Cambodia. Kim Gutschow was awarded the Sharon Stephens Prize for her book focusing on the culture of Buddhist nunnery. Photo courtesy of Tien Chiu

sexism and those who search to recuperate its most usable aspect, between blind optimism and defeatist attack. But it does more. It also illustrates the value of an ethnographic understanding of the practices nuns undergo as part of their training in asceticism, of the ways in which bodily desires are registered and then transcended, and of the ways in which even the most mundane acts are infused with profound symbolic import."

The AES Senior Book Prize was also awarded jointly to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (UC Santa Cruz) for *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (2004) and to Michael M J Fischer (MIT) for *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice* (2003). The Senior Book Prize committee included Adriana Petryna (co-chair), Kim Fortun (co-chair) and Bill Maurer.

For more information on the winning books, including statements by the prize committees and authors, please visit www.aesonline.org.

AES-Sponsored Sessions at AAA 2005

The AES sponsored 43 panels and sessions at the 2005 AAA Annual Meeting in Washington DC. A complete list of AES-sponsored sessions can be downloaded from www.aesonline.org. If you organized one of these sessions, please consider sending a synopsis of the session and the discussions that ensued to AES webmaster Aaron Fox (aaf19@columbia.edu) for future inclusion in this column and on the AESonline website.

American Ethnologist Editor Sought

The board of the AES invites nominations for the editorship of *American Ethnologist*. The three-year term as editor, renewable for a fourth year, will begin in July 2007. Letters of interest and nominations should be sent electronically to David Nugent, search committee chair, by April 15, 2006 (dlnugent@colby.edu). Persons interested in the position (and those nominated by others) will be sent further information about the application process. More information will be available soon on AESonline.org.

Changes to the AES Board

During the AES Board Meeting at AAA 2005, the board welcomed our new President-Elect David Nugent and our new Councillor Carla Freeman. Ida Susser took over as the society's new president. Aaron Fox will assume the post of secretary.

The board expressed the society's gratitude to outgoing President Catherine Lutz, outgoing Secretary Ralph Litzinger and outgoing Councillor Kenneth George. A quorum of board members will meet on April 21, 2006 in New York City, and the board invites members to submit items for board consideration before that date.

Send contributions to Aaron Fox at aaf19@columbia.edu.

Anthropology and Environment Section

CRYSTAL FORTWANGLER, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Tropes in Trouble? Religion, Nature and Culture Revisited

By Kristina Tiedje (ISSRNC Secretary)

Many anthropologists presently consider the terms religion, nature and culture problematic. If inclined to utilize them in research proposals or ethnographic texts, one must deconstruct, contextualize, problematize or even invent entirely new tropes to try to capture that which is signified by these amorphous terms. Another common strategy to avoid criticism turns such terms into plural forms, which signals to the sophisticated reader that earlier descriptions are *passé now* that cultures engage in religious beliefs and practices, within diverse and contested environments.

Such issues have given rise to debates among anthropologists and other scholars struggling to understand the relationships between the human religious sensibilities and the habitats in which they are situated. Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that a new academic society is forming, the *International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* (ISSRNC), which is intended, among other things, to provide a venue for scholars interested in debating the contested meanings and issues surrounding the troubling tropes of religion, nature and culture.

This is no place to provide a comprehensive discussion of the disenchantment of former *meta-réc-*

its in anthropological theory. But we can focus attention on diverse questions related to religion, nature and culture within anthropology and the environmental and humanistic sciences. This seems useful since the pillars of anthropology have been built upon these three concepts and their complicated, intertwined relationships analyzed.

Indeed, the big questions that animate much environmental and ecological anthropology, as well as related fields like historical ecology and environmental history, directly address the relationships between human beings, religions and the Earth's living systems. The answers remain difficult, complex and complicated because they are mixed up with diverse cultural, historical, political, economic and environmental variables.

While this is also no place to advance definitive meanings for religion, nature and culture, I do propose that we consider these notions as *closely linked domains of human experience* that need to be studied holistically and in ways that focus on their relatedness. I am not alone in this, as interdisciplinary research exploring the intersection of religion, nature and culture, in indigenous and other societies, has been proliferating.

Anthropologists were, of course, among the earliest scholars striving to understand the interactions and reciprocal influences among religions, cultures and environments, and these interests have continued in recent decades through the work of leading figures in pioneering ecological anthropology, ethnobiology and undertaking the analysis of traditional ecological knowledge. Such work has had real world impact as conservationists draw on such analyses to help them understand how to work for and with people situated in diverse habitats.

These approaches are exemplified in the volume edited by the late Darryl Posey entitled *The Cultural and Spiritual Dimensions of Biodiversity* (1999). Further, the accent placed on traditional ecological knowledge and the nature-oriented religious beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples, found in much of the current anthropological literature, is mirrored by religious studies and other scholars who focus their attention on the spiritual dimensions of everything from the world's largest religions, to new religious movements, neo-pagan and new age subcultures, to outdoor enthusiasts and artists, to environmental scientists and activists. Such diverse actors and movements often consider nature to be sacred and worthy of reverent care in their own ways, as shown in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, edited by Bron Taylor (2005).

There has indeed been a remarkable proliferation of scholarly literature, grounded in diverse disciplines, asking in what ways religions and cultures have shaped or might shape environments, both positively or negatively, and conversely, considering whether and if so, how and when, natural environments shape human consciousness and behaviors, including religious perceptions and practices.

These trends suggest that the study of religion and nature constitutes an emerging interdisciplinary field that should be of interest to members

in this section who, not incidentally, have already been taking an active part in fostering these dialogues and playing leading roles in the creation of the already-mentioned ISSRNC. The desire to promote greater interdisciplinary exchange on this subject has animated the society and its newly sponsored journal to launch in 2007. An inaugural ISSRNC conference will be held at the University of Florida, April 6-9, 2006. Featured speakers include Carolyn Merchant (U California), Stephen Kellert (Yale), Dieter Groh (U Konstanz) and Robin Wright (U Florida).

More information about the society, journal and conference can be found at www.religionandnature.com.

Please send contributions to this column to Crystal Fortwangler at crystalf@umich.edu.

Archeology Division

LISA J LUCERO, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Tulane Anthropologists Need Books

Judith Maxwell, chair of the anthropology department at Tulane University, has compiled a wish list for professors and graduate students who lost their books as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The complete wish list can be found on their department website: www.tulane.edu/~anthro. If you have a colleague in the department, please email them directly and ask how you can help. As of January, they are still waiting for an address where to send the books. They continue in recovering and assessing damages to offices and classrooms. You can also email Maxwell at maxwell@tulane.edu for any updates on the department's needs.

Call for Nominations

By Robert Paynter (AD Nominations Committee Chair)

The nominations committee and executive board are beginning to put together the slate for the 2007 AD and AAA elections. The process involves the nominations committee submitting a pool of names to the spring meeting of the executive board, at which time the board develops a list of potential nominees who are formally approached by the nominations committee for participation in the election.

If you would like to be considered as a potential nominee for terms beginning in fall 2007 or if you would like to mention someone else for consideration, please be in touch with Bob Paynter (rpaynter@anthro.umass.edu), chair of the nominations committee, Charles Cobb (ccobb@binghamton.edu), or Helen Pollard (pollardh@msu.edu) members of the nominations committee by April 1, 2006.

Four positions within the AD are open with terms beginning immediately after the AAA meeting in fall 2007:

- *President-Elect* (2-year term) The president-elect assumes the duties of the president in the event of absence, death, resignation or incapacity of the president, and succeeds to the office of president at the expiration of the term as president-elect. The president is the presiding officer of the AD and represents the AD to the AAA and to wider public and professional audiences.
- *Treasurer* (3-year term) The treasurer keeps the fiscal records of the AD and oversees budgetary matters in conjunction with the AAA finance office.
- *Publications Director* (3-year term) The publications director serves on the executive board and oversees soliciting and publishing the *Archaeology Papers of the American Anthropological Association* series.
- *Member at Large* (2-year term) Members at large serve on the executive board and represent the diverse interests of the membership.

We are also seeking people interested in serving in AAA offices with terms beginning immediately after the AAA meetings in fall 2007. A sense of the goals and membership of these committees can be found on the AAA website (www.aaanet.org):

- President-Elect* (2-year term)
- AAA Executive Committee* (3-year term)
- Nominations Committee* (3-year term)
- Archaeology Seat*
- Long Range Planning* (3-year term)
- Committee on Public Policy* (3-year term)
- Committee on Ethics* (3-year term)
- Committee for Human Rights* (3-year term)
- Committee on Minority Issues in Anthropology* (3-year term)
- Committee on the Status of Women in Anthropology* (3-year term)

Send news, notices and comments to Lisa J Lucero, Dept of Sociology and Anthropology, New Mexico State U, Las Cruces, NM, 88003-8001; tel 505/646-1359; fax 505/646-3725; lislucero@nmsu.edu.

Association for Africanist Anthropology

JENNIFER E COFFMAN, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

More Dispatches From DC

Our AfAA business meeting allowed many longstanding members and newer members to socialize with one another and discuss our association's future. We decided to develop two new international liaison positions to extend AfAA membership, activities and collaborations. Ben Soares (Leiden) agreed to run as European liaison and David Coplan (Witswatersrand) as African liaison.

Many thanks to David Turkon and Maria Cattell, AfAA section program co-editors, for their continued excellent work reviewing and organiz-