

he urges scientists working at different tropical sites to address common questions using common protocols. He also points out that in order to have any flora and fauna left for comparative studies, tropical biologists need to become more involved in conservation and political action.

Finally, as an indication of how socioeconomic realities affect the study of tropical organisms, three chapters by Butterfield and Montagnini describe the human events that have led to the "peninsularization" of La Selva in a sea of pastures and how La Selva scientists and OTS can contribute new knowledge to agroecology and forestry. Costa Rica is currently prepared to spend millions of dollars on reforestation projects. Timber and fuelwood screening trials that began at La Selva in the 1980s will contribute important new data about the performance of native and exotic tree species that are needed for such projects. This information is critical for preventing forest reserves such as La Selva from disappearing under the relentless expansion of the Costa Rican human population.

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## The Columbian Exchange

**Ethnohistory and Archaeology.** Approaches to Postcontact Change in the Americas. J. DANIEL ROGERS and SAMUEL M. WILSON, Eds. Plenum, New York, 1993. xvi, 237 pp., illus. \$35. Interdisciplinary Contributions to Archaeology.

The Columbus quincentenary in 1992 stimulated an enormous amount of research about the political, economic, cultural, ecological, and demographic impact of European expansion across the Americas. This volume, which evolved out of a 1988 Society for American Archaeology symposium, represents one strand of these efforts. It reflects the attempts by many anthropologists to grapple in a theoretically and methodologically sophisticated fashion with one of the most dramatic conjunctures in human history. Populations that had been biologically and culturally isolated for 12,000 years suddenly collided, with creative as well as catastrophic results. In order to study that conjuncture, social scientists have had to combine disciplines, or forge new subdisciplines, to analyze what biological historian Alfred Crosby calls the Columbian Exchange.

Among anthropologists, two of the most contemplated combinations are ethnohistory and archeology. Yet, as many of the chapters in this volume make clear, that collaboration is an uneasy one, fraught with epistemological problems and unrealized possibilities. Co-editor Wilson notes that archeologists generally focus upon large-scale processes that yield "gross evidence for changes in social relationships" and that "may take several generations, or even hundreds of years to make themselves apparent in the archaeological record" (p. 22). Historians immerse themselves in microprocesses, or "culture change under the magnifying glass," that reveal "the role of chance—extraordinary personalities, unusual conjunctures of events, droughts, personality conflicts, botched assassinations, and other unpredictable occurrences."

The trick is to integrate the two—a task the 12 anthropologist contributors attempt in widely varying degrees as they explore how indigenous societies from Central America to Lake Superior responded to European influences. They note the catastrophes of conquest, particularly the devastating impact of Old World diseases, but they also concentrate on how these societies manipulated their changing worlds to pursue their own goals and reinforce their own cultural values, particularly through trade. "A metaphor for the view of Native Americans as passive recipients of European culture has been the myth of European traders exchanging worthless trinkets of their own, choosing for the commodities the New World peoples controlled," the editors note in their introduction. "As many of the chapters in this volume and elsewhere demonstrate, the desirability of different classes of European goods within native cultures was highly variable and culturally determined."

The selectivity of Native Americans is a major theme; so too is the importance of indigenous symbolism, status, and social stratification. Among societies as far away from one another as the Narragansett of modern Rhode Island and the Creek confederacy of Alabama, copper had sacred significance and conferred prestige and perhaps power upon its possessor. Among the Creek, Waselkov observes, "The sudden widespread availability of this formerly scarce commodity, now in the form of sheet brass, must have created a crisis in the social hierarchy. Combined with other processes (such as population decline, military defeats by DeSoto's army, and the discrediting of the priesthood through lack of effectiveness against new diseases), devaluation of the metal's sacred content probably contributed to the decline in

chiefly authority that evidently occurred during the protohistoric period."

*Ethnohistory and Archaeology* is most successful in demonstrating the complexity of culture change among the peoples of North America after contact. Authors like Waselkov on the Creek, Perttula on the Southern Caddo, and Turnbaugh on the Narragansett skillfully document the ways in which Native Americans played off European powers against one another, imposed their own meanings on European trade goods, and developed innovative political and economic responses to demographic decline and foreign intrusion. In many cases, they were fighting a losing battle, but they fought it well.

The contributors are less successful at another of the volume's stated aims—to "weld the methodologies of archaeology and historical research within the framework of anthropological theory to produce a view of the past not solely dependent upon the biases of one." Several contributors utilize only archeological or documentary evidence but not both. Many others employ archeological data to test patterns of social and cultural change glimpsed first in the historical record. Their results are intriguing, but, as the editors themselves admit in their thoughtful afterword, they do not yet represent a true welding of the two methodologies.

Moreover, the documentary record itself is rarely subjected to the rigorous scrutiny ethnohistory demands. Several authors, particularly Rogers, critique acculturation theory while building upon its contributions and insights. Yet even though the editors stress the need to explore the indigenous meaning as well as material consequences of both artifacts and culture change, that meaning often remains elusive or secondary to more processual anthropological concerns. As ethnographers William Merrill and Edward Spicer have pointed out for the Rarámuri (Tarahumaras) and Yoemem (Yaquis), respectively, however, not only artifacts but religious rituals of European origin, such as the celebrations of Holy Week, have been interpreted within a fundamental Uto-Aztec rather than European philosophical framework. This is not acculturation, or even syncretization, but something far more profound. Native Americans did not substitute European forms or meanings for indigenous ones. Nor did they fuse them. On the contrary, they transformed European elements and gave them radically new meanings even as those elements were transforming or destroying their societies.

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