

## Reviews

In what seems at first a great jump we are introduced to hairstyles in Tanzania in the early 1990's. Amy Stambach contemplates the war of words on the editorial pages of Tanzanian papers that made hair curling among young women a nationalist issue. This was a discussion not just of the costs to the economy of imported curling lotions and implements. It was also a discussion of consumerism, of "white aesthetics" and their debilitating effects, and finally, of the moral basis of society. Individual morality, and perhaps especially, the morality of young females and soon-to-be mothers, can be the key metaphor for the relation between citizen and state. We are reminded of "Mother India", "La Belle France", "Lady Liberty", and all those other images of the strength of women as the warrant of the health of the state.

How crucial this public morality is to the health of the nation is driven home in Andrew Apter's tracing of the historical process of decline in the Nigerian economy and concomitant decline in public trust, in political probity, and in the processes of governance in Nigeria. In a sort of chicken and the egg conundrum, Apter traces the falling prices of oil and the collapsing trustworthiness and transparency of political processes through the rise in criminality of a sort Nigerians call "the 419". This is the section of the Nigerian criminal code that deals with fraud, forgery, impersonation and a host of scams. One is reminded of the hollow mockery of capitalism that followed the collapse of state socialism in the Soviet Union. One is carried towards the conclusion that without a moral consensus there is no state responsibility. Is it also the case that without state responsibility, there is no civil order?

One is tempted to conclude that the focus on State-Civil Society relations is misplaced if it turns on forms of association. One should rather concern oneself with the content of relations. The ideal of the liberal state may carry a heavy baggage of historically specific forms that were forged in the particularities of the West, but these forms are separate from the content of the ideas. In the post-colonial era of global markets and global media these historically situated institutions may not be the vessels of liberal democratic relations among citizens in relation to vast transnational corporations and to states whose powers are visibly limited. Yet it is clearly too early in the game to write off the liberal state as a dead form. The post-colonial world is yet aborning, and the outcome of the processes underway is far from clear. Perhaps what one might say is that this book is good for thinking about these processes and is a useful rebuke to those politicians who consider Africa irrelevant in the geopolitical landscape.

**Nature and Culture in the Andes, by Daniel W. Gade. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press (1999), xiv, 287 pp.**

**Reviewed by Anthony Bebbington, Department of Geography, University of Colorado at Boulder.**

This is an intriguing book: partly theoretical, partly methodological, often personal and largely empirical it takes the reader through one geographer's struggle to understand a region. The geographer is Dan Gade, the region the Andes. Gade has worked in the Andes for 35 years now, making him one of the academies' most senior and experienced Andeanist geographers. On the basis of that experience, Gade uses this book to lay out a series of arguments that convey his feelings on how cultural geography and landscape interpretation ought to be practiced; and, by implication, how we ought understand the relationships between nature and culture in the Andes.

To make his arguments Gade combines two conceptual/methodological chapters and a conclusion with seven more substantive chapters discussing particular problems of landscape and cultural ecological interpretation in the Andes. The topics of these chapters are quite varied. The problems they address range from the momentous (have the Andean highlands been deforested or are they natural grasslands) to the more arcane (how do rats, people and environment interact to produce the urban landscape of Guayaquil, Ecuador; why do Andean people not milk llamas and alpacas). Whether treating "big" or apparently "minor" questions, Gade consistently uses his topic to argue that in any interpretation of Andean landscapes, nature and culture cannot be separated. This unity of nature/culture he calls the culture/nature gestalt, a term chosen "to communicate a mutually interactive skein of human and nonhuman components rather than opposing polarities or separate entities" (p. 5). Seen through this gestalt, most ecological formations must be understood as culturally transformed or modified, and social formations have to be understood as mediated through ecological processes. Understanding this skein of relationships, Gade argues, requires a mix of

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empirical research, intuition and (at least implicitly) some theory. Methodologically, this requires a deep immersion in a region - such as Gade has lived - and a profound commitment to field presence and fieldwork "as the prime source of information" (p. 28).

Having laid his conceptual foundation, Gade then uses it to re-read and challenge a series of taken-for-granted assumptions about Andean landscapes and cultural ecological practices. His starting point is to reflect on the very notion of the Andes. While considering the varying meanings given to the term, he suggests that "[t]he most profound meaning of the Andes ... comes not from a physical description, but from the cultural outcome of 10 millennia of knowing, using and transforming the varied environments of western South America" (p. 34). At the core of *lo andino* is therefore a "culture complex" that has survived the colonial period and the technological changes of the modern world - a complex that has at its cultural ecological core "an agropastoralism that takes advantage of environmental diversity" to minimize risk and foster self-sufficiency (p. 36). This is a relatively familiar assertion, characteristic of the boom of cultural ecological, anthropological and ethnohistorical work on the Andes in the 1970s and 1980s. It is also, however, a slightly problematic one. While Gade's earlier argument that *lo andino* is a cultural historical outcome of 10 millennia of mutual imbrication of nature and society implies it is more process than product, the subsequent definition seems to fix *lo andino* in particular practices. Furthermore, it finds in *lo andino* a resistance to certain types of contemporary change but not to others from earlier historical moments. An initially historicized and hybridizing notion of *lo andino* thus totters on the brink of essentialism. This uncertainty is significant because in this and some of the following chapters, Gade's particular, and critical, takes on modernity and development, appear to betray a lingering nostalgia for something that is truly Andean. Yet if we are to argue that *lo andino* is a nature/culture that is always in process, then such lingering essentialisms surely cannot be the basis from which to critique modernity and development: the foundations for critique have to be found somewhere else. If that somewhere else is an equally modern notion of "rights," be these to alterity, or to inclusion, then nor can a notion of *lo andino* be so instinctively critical of the modern.

Several of the substantive chapters that follow this more conceptual and reflective pair of introductory chapters were the highlights of the book, at least for this reader. Gade's technique of using a particular problem to reflect on larger issues, while at the same time addressing the landscape problem at hand, is often fascinating and always impressive for the broad arsenal of knowledge and information that he mobilizes. In arguing, for instance, that contrary to many popular beliefs the Andes were once far more forested than today, Gade uses a mixture of archival, ethnographic, remotely sensed and ethnohistorical information. These diverse information sources are then blended with a form of deductive reasoning to arrive at a concluding interpretation of the problem at hand. In other chapters Gade combines this battery of approaches with comparative analysis (e.g., using ethnohistorical and archeological information from the Near East to explain why Andean camelids are not milked), personal experience and simple discovery.

The technique - and the style of analysis it delivers - are resonant of Carl Sauer's approach to cultural and environmental history, and it is not surprising that Gade frequently refers to Sauer and recognizes him as an inspiration for his own work. The penultimate chapter of the book is dedicated to an analysis of Sauer's own contributions to the understanding of crop diversity in the Andes. Indeed, as is often the case with Sauer, Gade's chapters are consistently entertaining, thought-provoking and impressive for the amount of reflection and thought that has clearly gone into them. Also as in Sauer's writings, some of the arguments are more compelling than others. For this reader, the chapters on highland deforestation and the impacts of malaria on settlement patterns were the most convincing. But each of the chapters left me with new knowledge, and new questions of my own, and that surely is the hallmark of a successful book - that it piques one's curiosity to probe further, and think further about things that one might otherwise not have pondered.

One of the more intriguing things about this book is the way in which Gade puts himself into its text. While such reflexivity is not uncommon in new cultural geography and contemporary cultural anthropology, it is far rarer in that school of cultural geography that draws its inspiration from Sauer and his early students. Perhaps for this reason, Gade's way of taking his own authorship seriously is more refreshing than many: his style is less jargon-ridden, and more personal than theoretical in tone. It conveys his passion for this part of the world, and the sense in which it is not only culture and nature that have become mutually imbricated but also Dan Gade and the Andes. Dan Gade is an engaged, fascinated and somewhat spellbound commentator on the Andes.

Gade's willingness and concern to convey this sense of the personal is very welcome. It challenges all of us to be a bit more humble, and to reflect on the ways in which our own motivations, fascinations and backgrounds influence our interpretations of the landscapes we move through. Indeed, I am writing this review in the same Cusco where Gade did his earliest work and - while nowhere near as versed in the cultural history of this sub-region as is Gade - I am spending some time in parts of the same Vilcanota valley from which he clearly draws so much of his

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inspiration. As I do this work, Gade's book helps me perceive some of the many ways in which nature/culture constitute each other in this region. But in the end, perhaps reflecting my own passions, I perceive a somewhat different skein of relationships linking environment and society - a skein driven by processes that exclude and dominate certain nature/cultures, to the privilege of others, an intersection in which power and ecology have to be understood together. I also see intersections in which modernity is as much part of lo andino as is history, and in which social actors look to the modern as much as to anything else as they attempt to breach these processes of exclusion. Reading this book as I do this work warns me to think carefully and self-critically about the way I see the cultural and political ecology of this region; doing this work as I read the book reminds me that there are many ways of framing landscape interpretations, in the Andes as elsewhere. None is privileged, nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive in their entirety. But they lead us along different paths and, perhaps, invoke different futures.

### **Game Theory Evolving: A Problem-Centered Introduction to Modeling Strategic Interaction, by Herbert Gintis. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2000), 528 pp.**

**Reviewed by Edward Castronova, Department of Economics, California State University - Fullerton.**

In 50 years, graduate students in the various social science disciplines will take a common course in Human Behavioral Theory, and the content of that course will include much of the material in this book.

The behavioral theory Gintis presents is based on two simple ideas: First, that people form rules and habits of action that regulate their decisions in complex social environments (as opposed to precisely calculating the right decision in every situation); and second, that the rules people stick to are the ones that survive a process of evolutionary selection, where the fitness of a rule depends on how well it works. To me, these two ideas, which together constitute the core of evolutionary game theory, are not only simple, they are pretty obviously true assumptions about real people. Still, they are definitely outside the paradigm in contemporary social science. The two approaches often come to the same answers, but not always. Gintis argues that the evolutionary approach is superior to the rational choice approach. Whether he is right is up to the reader; I will only note that the methods of evolutionary game theory are by themselves so simple, elegant, and persuasive that they are worth one's attention. This book is a great way to learn about them from scratch.

Gintis assumes that the reader knows only a little algebra and basic calculus, but has a willingness to fiddle around with equations and numbers if it helps to understand an interesting problem. The method is to introduce a few basic ideas at the start of each chapter, and then give the reader a bunch of problems to work through. It is an excellent teaching strategy. The problems hone intuition about how the models reflect society, which is the point of using the math in the first place - there is no threat here of becoming lost in pages and pages of meaningless theorems and proofs. Instead, the focus is on understanding the underlying logic of the situation, and the situation is almost always very human and very real. People who work through this book will actually understand and be able to work with the theory it presents.

The book begins with five chapters and about 120 pages on the basics of game theory: the idea that people are players in a game, that there are points to be won, and that decisions interact in funny ways to determine the score. All the standard material is here, but presented, as I mentioned, in a way that is much more interesting and much more amenable to understanding than the standard game theory texts. Since evolutionary game theory has its roots in the area between economics and biology, examples are drawn from both, although the emphasis is on economics. Biologists will learn that companies, like animals, can make credible or incredible threats to obtain territory, but economists will learn that birds, like people, will sometimes engage in apparently selfless behavior for truly selfish reasons. Both will learn that Klingons will do - well, whatever, who cares? That is to say, one knock on the examples and problems is that they are occasionally too cute, in the sense that they either trivialize something that is really quite important, such as the Tragedy of the Commons, or that they become puzzles with no apparent relevance