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Intro Matter

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Journal of Ecological Anthropology

VOLUME 4, 2000

Editor's Note

When the *Georgia Journal of Ecological Anthropology* began 5 years ago, its purpose was to provide an outlet for research and commentary in the "new" ecological anthropology and train graduate students at the University of Georgia in publishing and editing. Starting with volume II, we moved to a fully peer-reviewed format and began to actively solicit contributions at a national and international level. Today the journal is received by people and institutions worldwide who are involved in a wide range of disciplinary and research interests related to ecological anthropology.

The success of the journal, along with our shift to a fully peer-reviewed format, has led us to change our name to the *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* beginning with this volume. Please note that this includes a new ISSN (1528-6509). We are also pleased to announce the formation of an editorial advisory board (see below).

Beginning with this volume, we are introducing a new feature called "Crib Notes." This feature is intended to be a venue for short topical essays of interest to ecological anthropologists. We hope you find it of interest.

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Preface

Is it possible to have progress in anthropology without revolution? Thomas Kuhn's description of scientific revolutions helps provide a framework for understanding what happens, or perhaps fails to happen, in our discipline. In Kuhn's description of the paradigm shift, one set of ideas takes a central, dominant position and is scrutinized by most practitioners within the field. Alternative explanations of observed phenomena and alternative variables of analysis are marginalized—as are proponents of alternatives who attempt to displace the dominant paradigm. The dominant paradigm is critiqued in every possible permutation until internal faults in logic become too clear, or until the increasing scope of analysis reveals too many phenomena that cannot be explained. This results in an epistemological crisis—often followed by an intense struggle by previously marginalized scientists to advance their ideas as the central paradigm. But in order to be acceptable, the new paradigm must be at least partially reconciled with the waning paradigm. According to Kuhn, science is cumulative and progressive precisely because lessons learned from the thorough scrutiny of dominant paradigms inform and direct paradigm shifts.

This describes disciplines such as physics, economics, and ecology very well. But many anthropologists might find it difficult to characterize their own discipline in Kuhn's fashion. The development of anthropology has been more appropriately described as agenda-hopping than fair and exhaustive critiques of dominant paradigms. The benefit may be that we avoid hegemony in our truly holistic discipline. The cost is that many good ideas are abandoned long before they have reached their fullest potential. We've seen revolution, but have we seen constructive theoretical development?

The papers in this issue of the *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* reflect a willingness to constructively critique and improve upon what we consider to be valuable ideas that either go unchallenged, in the case of Suzanne Joseph's critique of anthropological evolutionary ecology, or have fallen out of favor with anthropology's "pop culture." Rather than dismiss cybernetic modeling as overly reductionist, Mitch Pavao-Zuckerman and Felice Wyndham offer suggestions for overcoming some of the methodological problems of the past, not the least of which is developing ideas for reconciling scales of analysis. Eraldo Medeiros Costa-Neto and David Casagrande offer some new ideas about how linguistic categorization can provide insights into human relationships with the non-human world. And Will Van de Berg shows the importance of conducting ethnography at multiple scales, rather than abandoning the local for the global or vice versa.

We hope our readers find this issue as stimulating and provocative as we have. Whether dealing with individual cognition involved in linguistic classification, community-based decisions about tourist development, or the potential emergence of a noöspheric global consciousness, we encourage anthropologists to continue to think across scales of time and space in hopes of contributing to theoretical and applied advances within ecological anthropology, and to use the best ideas developed in the past as a way of grounding our thinking in order to avoid being swept up in revolutions without a sense of direction.

David G. Casagrande and Rebecca Zarger, Editors

The other extinction crisis.

You already know about the extinction danger facing animals and plants all over the planet.

But did you know that many of the world's 6,000 languages are in danger of disappearing?

It's true. Most are small to begin with. Some face active repression by governments.

All have to cope with the rising tide of English and other large languages.

Every language is unique—a priceless, irreplaceable repository of the human intelligence built up over hundreds or thousands of years. Each time a language dies, the creative process and knowledge it embodies dies too. Often, the knowledge lost is about the natural world and human interactions with it. Such wisdom can never be reproduced.

Terralingua is new international nonprofit organization devoted to preserving the world's linguistic diversity—and to exploring connections between cultural and biological diversity. We believe that every language is inherently valuable and worthy of being preserved, and that freely deciding which language to use is a basic human right. To encourage the preservation of languages, we seek to create an atmosphere of tolerance and reciprocal respect for cultural distinctiveness. We also believe that many of the same factors driving the extinction of animal and plant species also play a role in threatening the world's languages. And we believe that biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity support and enhance one another.

Our approach is to address *both* extinction crises in a unified way.

Please join Terralingua as we start our search for solutions.

Write or see us on the Web for more information.

Terralingua

Partnerships for Linguistic and Biological Diversity

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