

BOOK REVIEW

ETHNOGRAPHY OF PROTECTED AREAS: ENDANGERED HABITATS – ENDANGERED CULTURES. Edited by Peter Simonič. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, 2006.

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Ethnography of Protected Areas

contributes to the literature on anthropological perspectives on nature conservation through the creation of national parks and other protected areas. The edited volume's subtitle, *Endangered Habitats – Endangered Cultures*, stems from the editor's belief that cultures and societies in and near protected areas are endangered and need protection. He sees this as "an anthropological response to contemporary ecology, politics, economy and human rights" (p. 8).

Ethnography of Protected Areas is organized into a brief introduction plus 16 chapters. Five chapters focus on Slovenia, seven concern other European countries, and the remaining four chapters draw on experience elsewhere in the world. The editor's three-page introduction explains that this volume originates from an international symposium: "It was our wish to learn about experiences in other parts of the world, in view of the plans of the Slovenian environmental administration to extend the protection of the national territory from 8 to almost 30 percent" (p. 8). The chapters are organized into five themes – legislation, landscape, diversity, subsistence, and management. These themes appear only in the table of contents, however; there are no subheadings or overview discussion at the beginning of the sections.

The chapters under the theme of "*Legislation*" address laws and policies

concerning protected areas. Rather than place-specific case studies, these chapters address conservation at a policy or thematic level. Marija Zupančič Vičar, a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas from Slovenia, discusses why protected areas are important to society, reviews the protected areas classification system of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), describes some protected area management tools, and concludes with the successes and problems of conservation in Slovenia. Next Zvezdana Delak Koželj, from the Slovenian Ministry of Culture, focuses on the conservation of cultural heritage (e.g., architecture and space), discussing the national and international legal framework as well as the need to integrate cultural heritage conservation with that of natural heritage. Agustín Coca Pérez from the University Pablo de Olavide, Andalusia-Spain, also addresses cultural heritage, focusing on the legal framework for conservation within the Spanish state of Andalusia. In discussing the need to pay more attention to the relationship between nature and the people who live there, he argues that conservation efforts will improve if local residents are involved in decision making.

The two chapters under the theme of "*Landscape*" provide ethnographic case studies of specific locations in northwestern Slovenia. Boštjan Kravanja's chapter on "Sacred Meaning: The Significance of Extraordinary Places in

Ordinary Settings” focuses on mythological and religious landscapes in Breginjski Kot. The author, an ethnographer from Slovenia’s University of Ljubljana, concludes that there is role for anthropologists in understanding the relationship between people and their environment in areas identified for conservation efforts. Matej Vranješ from Humanities Faculty at Slovenia’s University of Primorska discusses local views about the Triglav National Park, including the relations between locals, the state, and weekend visitors.

The two chapters grouped under the theme “*Diversity*” address somewhat disparate topics. The chapter on ethnobiodiversity by Szabó Attila from the Biological Database Laboratory in Balaton füred, Hungary, is a call to document what has variously been called local or traditional ecological or folk knowledge about plants. He provides a detailed classification scheme for plants in terms of their proximity to people and discusses methodologies for documenting this knowledge. Meanwhile, the contribution by British anthropologist Antonia Young focuses on efforts to establish a transboundary Balkan “peace park” at the intersection of Albania, Montenegro, and Kosova/o. In addition to describing a trek organized across the proposed park to explore the ecotourism possibilities, the author discusses the “peace park” idea and some of the challenges facing these efforts.

Each of the five chapters under the theme “*Subsistence*” presents a case study from an existing or proposed national or nature park, with a focus on the role that the park resources play in local lives. Javier Escalera Reyes from the University of Pablo de Olavide, Andalusia-Spain, describes a pond and spring in Pegalajar, which

were important for recreation as well as for the traditional agricultural system. The example of what happened when the spring stopped flowing and the pond dried up demonstrates the importance of these features in the identity of local residents. University of Wisconsin geographer Michael J. Day describes the reaction of various stakeholders, including conservation organizations, local residents, business interests and the national government, to the proposed establishment of a national park and world heritage site in Cockpit Country, northwest Jamaica. Italian anthropologist Sandro Piermattei reports on a research project on local agrobiodiversity in Italy’s Monti Sibillini National Park, which was established at time when national-level conservation policy promoted parks as place where protect environment but also allow local population to live and work. Berlin-based anthropologists Britta Heine and Sina Arnold report on fieldwork conducted in Ngurdoto Village, Tanzania, focusing on the relationship between Arusha National Park and local communities. They describe improvements in the park-community relationship when park started to pay attention to local communities and instituted a benefit-sharing scheme in which villagers have a say in where money goes. Dihider Shahriar Kabir and Sabir Bin Muzaffar, from the School of Environmental Science and Management at Bangladesh’s Independent University, describe a research project that documented resource use, including shrimp larva collection and forest products harvest, by residents in and around the Sundarban, which is a large protected mangrove forest on the southwest coast of Bangladesh.

The volume’s final theme is “*Management*.” Two chapters focus on national-

level strategies for protected area management and two discuss specific locations. British anthropologist Helen MacBeth discusses public opinion before the launch of two new national parks in Scotland, largely based on her reading of published reports. Prabhu Budhathoki from the International Centre for Protected Landscapes describes methods used to promote community participation in conservation in Nepal, concentrating the usage of park revenues for conservation and development activities in the buffer zones around the park. Peter Meurkens, from the Dutch organization Identity Factory South-East, describes the efforts to manage public recreational use of parks in the Netherlands. In this case, the focus is nature as an object for recreation and leisure, rather than the relationship between parks and local residents. In the final chapter, Slovenian ethnographer and volume editor Peter Simonič describes his efforts to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, including using student fieldworkers, in Pohorje, Slovenia, an area that has been proposed for protection as a national park. Simonič reflects upon some of the challenges of doing such fieldwork, including how ethnographers should position themselves in a park's social relations.

Overall, *Ethnography of Protected Areas* seems to achieve the goal of the symposium from which the papers originated, that is, it contributes to a better understanding the relationship between conservation efforts and local communities. For me, the most useful chapters in this regard were those describing specific management efforts to improve park-community relations along with ethnographic case studies describing concrete studies of particular aspects of the relationships

between communities and the local environment, the park, or both. In light of the practical goal of the volume, the discussion of anthropological theory in the chapter by Simonič was distracting, and the chapter by MacBeth could have been benefited from a better understanding of protected areas. A conclusion that drew out the main points of the chapters would have been a welcome addition, as would additional editing of the chapters written by non-native speakers of English. This book will be of interest to social scientists who study the relationship between communities and conservation and to protected area planners and managers. Some of the chapters might be appropriate supplemental readings upper level or graduate courses addressing communities and conservation.