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## *Structured Worlds: The Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherer Thought and Action*

edited by Aubrey Cannon. Equinox Publishing, Sheffield. 212 pp.  
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LEWIS BINFORD'S CONTINUUM OF hunter-gatherer mobility strategies is an epitome of a materialist, reductionist processual archaeology. Mobility patterns play significant roles in structuring the hunter-gatherer archaeological record; mobility patterns are strongly determined by a few environmental variables and human population densities (Binford, *American Antiquity* 45:4–20; Binford *Constructing Frames of Reference: An Analytical Method for Archaeological Theory Building Using Hunter-Gatherer and Environmental Data Sets*, 2001). The book at hand offers an alternative or complementary view, or views, making the strong claim that the archaeological record is structured by patterned quotidian human behaviors which flow from “cosmology, social relations, perceptions and values” (p. 1). It seeks to show this through a set of empirically grounded case studies.

A central issue for such an approach is overcoming the well known archaeological inferential hierarchy (e.g., Hawkes *American Anthropologist* 56:155–168) which was perhaps most elaborately developed by MacWhite (*American Anthropologist* 58:3–25) who recognized 10 levels of archaeological inference, the lowest being “taxonomic and mechanical”—artifact classification—and the highest “Psychological”—“complex

inferences from material culture to the behavioral and ideological culture of a social group or individual person.” For MacWhite the lowest levels are pretty inferentially firm, limited mainly by data gaps, while for the highest levels—thought to be farthest from our data— inferences are increasingly hypothetical and reliant on intuition. The book seeks to make the case and demonstrate that this is incorrect; that the material record is a record of human thoughts, actions and intentions and can tell us as much about world view as it can about economic strategies.

The book also contributes to a literature, strongly inspired by the work of Tim Ingold, that seeks to demonstrate that hunter-gatherers are not more pragmatic, not more economically rational, not more optimizing than the rest of us because they are somehow closer to Nature and hence more subject to its whims. Rather, it is argued that hunter-gatherers, like all of us, live in worlds constructed out of symbols and, like the rest of us, they act in those worlds.

The book grew out of a symposium that Cannon organized for the 69th Annual SAA meetings in Montreal in 2004 with three additional contributions. It contains twelve chapters, including Cannon's introduction and concluding, wrap-up chapter. Cannon's

introduction clearly states the book's core claims and lays out several themes that he sees linking the various chapters. He stresses the importance of landscape, cosmology, and social relationships. As with all books on hunter-gatherers, mobility is central. Cannon feels that what sets this book apart is the papers' stress on the work and agency required to ensure cultural continuity in the face of change at many scales.

The ten substantive papers are in some ways diverse, and in some ways not. For example, there are four on northwest Europe, two on Jomon, yet none from the Southern Hemisphere or the tropics. Peter Jordan's paper is a contribution to his ethnoarchaeological reflections on the Eastern Khanty of Siberia. Here he shows how mobility organized by cosmology generates a material archaeological record. Jordan has the advantage of informants. Ingrid Fuglestad examines the relationships among landscape perception, cosmology and post-Pleistocene settlement of Norway using the opposition of animism and totemism as a prism for looking at changing settlement patterns, shifting material culture and rock art. Cannon continues his sustained meditations on the Namu site, arguing here that the history of settlement patterns on the central British Columbia coast centering on Namu are inexplicable using the usual materialist grounds, asserting that cultural and spiritual values can trump long-term demographic processes. Gerald and Joy Oetelaar add to the fascinating literature based on *Nitsitapii* (aka Blackfoot) maps, discussing the dynamic relationships among movement, routes, landmarks and oral traditions.

Milne uses lithic technology to explore the role island interiors played in Paleoeskimo landscape learning, land

use patterns, seasonal rounds and social networks. Her interpretation hinges on novice flintknapping. McFayden critiques the focus on places in landscape studies (landscapes as networks of places) and argues that people were not so much making places as creating spaces, including but not limited to Ingold's taskscapes. She uses lithic scatters as her evidence. In contrast, Janik focuses on the social and symbolic dimensions of food choices and the role food can play in creating social persona and marking social differences. Using ethnographic analogies based on a data set of 113 societies drawn from the HRAF files, Knutsson specifically looks at the shift from Mesolithic mobility to Neolithic sedentism in Scandinavia, but she also is concerned with ethnographic analogy and the degree to which we can discover universals in human behavior. Matsumoto briefly discusses the complex topic of Jomon anthropomorphic figurines, which are spatially and temporally diverse, tentatively suggesting a relationship among figurine production, population growth and circular settlements. Despite their formal diversity, the figurines seem to consistently represent women, and Matsumoto argues for female centrality in Jomon ritual and society. The last substantive paper is Kaner's on Jomon residential shifts and using what he calls "building chains"—construction histories—of Jomon structures as a social archaeological method ultimately for understanding Jomon social complexity, which is a slippery topic. The book's final paper is Cannon's coda to the book.

I found all the papers interesting and thought provoking, even the less successful ones. However, they are very particularistic, with each author operating within their own framework. They

do share some things. As Cannon says in his introduction, common themes include landscape and mobility; the patterned and not so patterned movement of groups and individuals across, through or into landscapes produced by the accretion of meanings and actions on landforms. Despite this centrality, no paper directly confronts mobility and examines it in all of its scalar complexity. In the same way, every author uses the notion of landscape in somewhat different ways. This may reflect a desire for short, succinct empirical case studies. But the result is that it is difficult to come away with a clear idea of what landscape means. Another more implicit theme is an almost visceral discomfort of straightforward ecological or materialist explanations for mobility (or lack of it), social change and so on. This takes the form not of a sustained critique of materialism but repeated statements that it is not enough. This discomfort extends to approaches which are analytical, that is, which break down human behavior into different dimensions and study those separately. The papers are all strongly holistic in theory, although all settle for some form of analysis. Some chapters have good ideas but not much data; others suffer from the fallacy of false alternatives in which we are presented with are only two interpretative choices, in this case a materialist one and the author's non-materialist alternative.

All that said, the book is valuable for grappling with something both difficult and valuable, which is to present strong empirical archaeological studies emphasizing "cosmology, social relations, perceptions and values." One might argue it is difficult because of the inherent difficulties in tackling such issues using archaeological data, although I think Hawkes' and MacWhites' notions of an inferential hierarchy are self-reinforcing impediments to developing appropriate methodologies. As a consequence, we haven't made much progress. It is an anthropological truism that humans invest their worlds with meaning. The evolution of the capacity to devise meaningful worlds, to symbol, is a *sine qua non* of human evolution. We reflexively find patterning everywhere, such as among stars that may be light years apart in the cosmos, name those cognized patterns and operate on the basis of their reality. Archaeology needs to be able to tackle this. This book helps move us in that direction.

I recommend the book for graduate students and professionals with interests in the topics it explores. It is too expensive to be a good undergraduate book. The pricing suggests the publisher expects it to be purchased primarily by libraries.

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