

strikes me now is that Reddy has provided a model for how even such ephemeral cultivation practices may be reflected in the archaeological record.

Gail E. Wagner
University of South Carolina
Department of Anthropology
Columbia, SC 29208

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Nature, Culture, and Big Old Trees: Live Oaks and Ceibas in the Landscapes of Louisiana and Guatemala. Kit Anderson. 2003. University of Texas Press, Austin. Pp. 183 + photographs. \$19.95 (paper). ISBN 0-292-70212-4.

Anyone interested in big trees who has visited Tikal in the Guatemalan Petén will immediately recognize the towering ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra* (L.) Gaertn.) on the book's front cover. Loving big trees and having conducted ethnobotanical research in Guatemala as a graduate student at Tulane (in New Orleans), I was initially drawn to the book by those associations. I became curious almost immediately: why *these* species and not others; what kind of conclusions could the author possibly draw; will the book be theoretically useful or "just" a good read?

The book is divided into five chapters and neither the first nor the second chapter did much to satisfy my curiosity. Chapter One, Introduction: Human Tree Relationships, served its purpose in detailing where the text would go, summarized nicely how big trees have shaped human imagination, and outlined how trees might shed some light on the trajectory of culture. Chapter Two, Dances with Trees: Notes from the Field, is an amalgam of stories from the author's fieldwork in the two locales. The black and white photographs are many and quite excellent, as are many of the stories. However, I finished reading the chapter feeling that the descriptions were somewhat shallow and anecdotal, especially on the side of the Guatemalan ceiba. The chapter's concluding section, Patterns and Questions, did not answer the question that kept coming to me: "Where is this going to go?"

Chapter Three, Natural History: The Secret Lives of Ceibas and Live Oaks, is very well done. The botany, ecology, and natural history was a real pleasure to read—very accurate, detailed, and nicely written. The comparative maps and associated discussions documenting the "natural" versus the "cultural" distributions of the two trees were very revealing and insightful. As in previous chapters, the photographs were excellent, telling, and perfectly parallel with the text. Human behaviors that have affected the distribution of the trees were elucidated and the *meaning* of the text and the reason for its authorship started to emerge.

Chapter Four, Cultural History: How Trees Develop Character, was also excellent. Again, the information on the Louisiana live oaks (*Quercus virginiana* P. Mill.) was more detailed. The ceiba received approximately 16 pages of text and the live oaks about 26. Nevertheless, the discussion on the cultural associations of the live oaks was wonderful in terms of detail, breadth, and writing. And it was in this chapter and especially in the chapter's closing section where the two trees' similar "role" in the cultural context was highlighted: "Within the cultural landscape, live oaks and ceibas occupy some remarkably similar niches." That in itself may not be very remarkable, but the degree and extent to which this is true is quite extraordinary. The discussion on the control that land tenure, town structure, and architectural style exerts on the life histories of these trees is very engaging. But the final chapter, Coda: Charismatic Megaflores and the Making of Landscapes, would be the one that would decide whether or not the text would come to any striking or at least significant conclusions.

On page 154 of the final chapter the author admits, "Sweeping generalizations concerning cultural attitudes toward these big trees are pointless, I found." Nevertheless, by her examination of these fantastic trees, Anderson uncovers some interesting, generalizing points: trees are not passive but active participants in the creation of landscapes; trees acquire symbolic meaning over time; individual humans, through tree planting and care, can play an enormous role in the transformation of landscapes; and, certain trees achieve favored status in particular ways. These insights are valuable. They also help answer some of my concerns relating to the book's purpose. Simply stated, the two trees share many of these characteristics listed above in common—they play a similar "role" in relation to humans. But these characteristics were discovered *post facto* and do not clarify why such comparative investigations were initiated. Also, the chapter's penultimate section, "Nature and Culture," does not treat this widely discussed dichotomy with enough detail. The wealth of information on historical ecology, which could shed significant light on the question, generally speaking and where these two trees are concerned, is not addressed.

Anyone who loves trees and loves to think about the meaning of trees should absolutely consult Anderson's text. The book is informative, very well written, replete with many superb photos, and reaches some interesting conclusions. As for my first question: even though I still do not fully understand the author's decision to write about ceiba and live oak, and the book left me wanting more detail and analysis, its many charms compensate for these criticisms.

Darron Collins
Director of Ethnobotanical Field Studies
The Amazon Conservation Team
Arlington, VA 22203

What Place for Hunter-Gatherers in Millennium Three? Thomas N. Headland and Doris E. Blood (eds.) 2002. SIL International and International Museum of Cultures Publications in Ethnography 39. Dallas, Texas. Pp. 129. \$19.00 (paper) ISBN 1-55671-132-8.