

L'Ethnobotanique Montagnaise de Mingan. Daniel Clément. Québec: Département d'anthropologie, Faculté des Sciences sociales, Université Laval, Collection Nordicana no. 53, 1990. \$10.00 Can. Pp. 108. ISBN 2-920197-53-3 (paper-bound).

In this book Clément criticizes the school of anthropology called "ethnoscience," which stresses the role language plays in the way a culture interprets and categorizes nature. The author proposes and demonstrates an alternative approach, i.e. examining the way in which the natural world affects language. It is likely that both approaches are useful and valid. People must use language to understand and express concepts important to their daily lives. If a society migrates into a new area, or if culture contact results in the introduction of new concepts, people will invariably interpret the novel ideas in their pre-existing modes of thought. Over a longer period, however, the language and the thought processes must adjust to accommodate the new ideas, especially if they prove essential to the well-being of the community. Thus language and the natural and cultural environment can each affect the other. Over-emphasis of either one as a causative factor results in an incomplete analysis.

The people studied are the Montagnaise of the Mingan region of northeastern Québec. They are hunter-gatherers of the coastal boreal forest. The book thoroughly investigates their system of plant classification as well as their methods of identification and utilization of plants. The book is worthwhile both in adding to the theoretical framework of ethnobiology and in expanding our knowledge of these little-known people.

Joseph E. Laferrière
Herbarium, 113 Shantz Bldg.
University of Arizona
Tucson AZ 85721 USA