

Culture



W. R. SWAGERTY, *Scholars and the Indian Experience: Critical Reviews of Recent Writing in the Social Sciences*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian (Newberry Library), 1984. 268 pages, US \$22.50 (cloth), US \$9.95 (paper)

Richard K. Pope

Volume 6, Number 1, 1986

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1078455ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1078455ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (print)

2563-710X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Pope, R. (1986). Review of [W. R. SWAGERTY, *Scholars and the Indian Experience: Critical Reviews of Recent Writing in the Social Sciences*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian (Newberry Library), 1984. 268 pages, US \$22.50 (cloth), US \$9.95 (paper)]. *Culture*, 6(1), 81–82. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1078455ar>

Tous droits réservés © Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie, 1986

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

in colonial Cape Verde: A comparative view' (pp. 159-69).

Meintel herself stresses in the Preface that the study will focus on the colonial experience of the Cape Verdeans, with special emphasis on the system of racial relations that colonial experience fostered. She maintains that, 'The race relations and ideology of colonial Cape Verde are in certain respects unique, and thus of interest for the general understanding of racial systems' (p. viii). Rather than a simple dichotomy between 'black' and 'white' as is said by most to mark the racial categorization system in the United States, 'the Cape Verdean racial system resembles the Brazilian in its lack of a history of legalized discrimination, along with informal patterns of racism...' (p. viii).

Following a well-known discussion concerning the distinction between the Iberian and Anglo variants of slavery in the Western Hemisphere, Meintel first explores the resemblances of Cape Verdean slavery to the Iberian model and then (Chapter VI) pursues the comparison on the level of contemporary race relations. Contrary to arguments by scholars such as Michael Banton and Marvin Harris, Meintel maintains that her data and analysis give evidence that, 'racist ideology and racial discrimination are quite compatible with a multicategory racial system of the Iberian sort' even though legalized discrimination is absent (p. 12).

Chapter VII looks at the unique role played by the Cape Verdean colony in the Portuguese empire and looks, particularly, at the wider political context of Cape Verdean race relations. Meintel stresses the importance, for Cape Verdeans, of the notion of "culture" (i.e. the adoption by the blacks of Portuguese norms, mores, concepts of "proper behavior"). She sees the concept as "a key element in Portuguese racial policy and in the dominant folk ideology of race" (p. 12). She concludes by suggesting that, despite the distinction between the so-called "Iberian" and "Anglo" models of race relations, there are greater parallels between the two systems than has been generally understood to date.

The fundamental question addressed here is: Were indigenous peoples—whether African or Amerindian—forever doomed to be inferior under colonial rule, or did certain forms of colonialism allow the acquisition of traits and norms to constitute an 'evolutionary' movement into the category of 'civilized-and-one-of-us'? In a system where race was of minimal concern could one change one's class 'simply' by behaving in accord with the stylistics of the dominant class? Contrariwise, in a racially biased context could one ever

become totally 'declass'—if white—regardless of one's behavior? And if not white, could one ever become totally accepted (to the point where 'a person of color' could set the rules that others followed rather than always living in fear of making a wrong step that might allow elites to sneer that 'blood will tell' or 'one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear')?

To begin, one had to be able to examine racial discrimination. Using a test devised by Marvin Harris and used in Brazil, Meintel arrived at dissimilar conclusions for Cape Verde society. Her thesis is that those like Harris who deny the reality of racial discrimination in Brazil or Cape Verde or wherever have failed to grasp the discriminatory subtleties of the system that *is* at work. Meintel claims that *both* race and class are important supports for a system of social hierarchy and, indeed, 'In Brazil as in colonial Cabo Verde... a key element of the dominant ideology of race is the notion racism does not exist' (p. 162). In Cabo Verde her research indicated that 'discrimination presented as a distinction of 'level' or background is experienced as racism by those who are its object. Social exclusion of those considered to be of a lower level has the function, intended or not, of effecting informal but real racial barriers' (p. 162).

Though modest and unpretentious, this monograph makes an important contribution to the literature on race and race relations and supports Meintel's claim that 'it is misleading to oppose race and class as two entirely separate "determinants of stratification" of the social placement of individuals. Rather, the racial hierarchy and the ideology that supports it must be seen as bulwarks of a given class order. In colonial Cape Verde... it was not only a local class order that was at stake, but the Portuguese colonial system as well (p. 163).

W. R. SWAGERTY, *Scholars and the Indian Experience: Critical Reviews of Recent Writing in the Social Sciences*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian (Newberry Library), 1984. 268 pages, US \$22.50 (cloth), US \$9.95 (paper).

By Richard K. Pope
University of Regina

This provides an invaluable guide to recent literature in the area of Indian-White culture contact, which is primarily from the United States

but which also includes some recent Canadian work. It consists of ten articles written by scholars who have themselves been significant contributors to the field; each article is presented in the form of a bibliographic essay on a broadly defined topic which is inclusive in scope and, in some instances, trenchant in comment. Many of the studies reviewed in this volume appear to shift away from parochialism of place, period or discipline towards the more theoretical and comparative approaches which have been encouraged for several years by various centers of Indian Studies, such as the sponsor of this volume itself, which is the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian. Although designed for the specialist, any teacher will find here a veritable market bazaar of enticing and well labelled items from which to choose materials useful for a wide variety of classes.

Rik PINXTEN, Ingrid VON DOOREN, and Frank HARVEY, *The Anthropology of Space: Explorations into the Natural Philosophy and Semantics of the Navajo*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. 240 pages, US \$32.50 (cloth).

By Ellavina Perkins
Navajo Community College
University of Arizona

The *Anthropology of Space* is a collection of every conceivable Navajo spatial terminology, and appears to be well documented research work. The Navajo script is commendable with only minor mistakes.

The book is full of valuable data for those who are inclined to research, particularly those researchers in the ethnographic arena. It is designed to serve them as a training manual and a guide to doing similar fieldwork among the Navajo. It is highly technical as shown by the Universal Frame of Reference (UFOR), an apparatus Pinxten devised to collect and research Navajo spatial terminology. UFOR is a maximal set of spatial discriminations that human beings are capable of making, and may be used for ethnographic research in any semantic field.

This book is purely academic and meant for scholars on the caliber of Pinxten, particularly those who are used to the Northwestern University context which seems to be limited to the students of Ossy Werner and the like. To the layman this book

is inaccessible and irrelevant; however, it can still be useful to some Navajo scholars as resource material. It may especially be useful in the holistic approach to teaching mathematics to Navajo students by the few Navajo teachers who are literate in Navajo, since Pinxten has certainly laid out, to a great extent, a plan for how this can be done.

As a whole, I find Pinxten's book an excellent and reliable piece of work on the Navajo language and a tribute to one institutional philosophy: "to promote, nurture and enrich the Navajo culture and language." Ethnographic works such as Pinxten's are needed and deserve such attention as that given by him to spatial semantics, toward the preservation of the Navajo language and to determining how the language is faring in such a defined domain.

The reliability of Pinxten's book is partially attributable to his collaboration with one of the foremost authorities on the Navajo culture and a person who has many years of experience working alongside individuals like Pinxten. I commend him for selecting Mr. Harvey as his consultant.

I especially appreciate Pinxten's reason for supporting the native approach to research and education: "there is today the phenomenon of the totally inappropriate education, leading to misunderstanding and sociocultural and psychological alienation of Navajo children and adults. With its almost complete lack of consideration for the authentic Navajo world view, the school curriculum is scarcely integrated into the native context. The result is that people at some point have to choose between their system of knowledge and the Western alternative. Most people never choose and come to live and think in a 'divided world', partly Navajo and partly Western. Nobody deserves this second rate treatment in a democratic society."

Denys DELÂGE, *Le pays renversé. Amérindiens et européens en Amérique du nord-est 160-1664*. Montréal, Boréal Express, 1985. 424 pages, maps.

By Bruce G. Trigger
McGill University

This is an innovative and important interdisciplinary study. It offers the first comprehensive analysis of the French, Dutch, and English colonization of northeastern North America during the early and middle decades of the seventeenth