



The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology (Contemporary Ethnography)

By Paul Stoller



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Anthropologists who have lost their senses write ethnographies that are often disconnected from the worlds they seek to portray. For most anthropologists, Stoller contends, tasteless theories are more important than the savory sauces of ethnographic life. That they have lost the smells, sounds, and tastes of the places they study is unfortunate for them, for their subjects, and for the discipline itself.

The Taste of Ethnographic Things describes how, through long-term participation in the lives of the Songhay of Niger, Stoller eventually came to his senses. Taken together, the separate chapters speak to two important and integrated issues. The first is methodological—all the chapters demonstrate the rewards of long-term study of a culture. The second issue is how he became truer to the Songhay through increased sensual awareness.



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Review

"An ingeniously constructed springboard for a criticism of anthropology."—*African Studies Review*

"This book is one of the most interesting and useful recent instances of anthropology at the crossroads. . . . [Stoller] fluidly articulates the central tension in the discipline today."—*Man*

"The author succeeds in being provocative, making claims that are contrary to conventional anthropological wisdom or have long been incorporated as basic tenants, but which are questioned afresh"—*Anthropology and Humanism*

"This tantalising exploration of the anthropologist's relation to the Other provides a refreshing, optimistic and creative outlook on the perennial dilemma of ethnographic representation. Based on more than seven years' fieldwork amongst the Songhay of Niger, Stoller concocts an anecdotal mille of sights, sounds and smells that flavour the natives' inner world. His exegesis is a masterly example of concision and ingenuity, narrating both mundane and extraordinary incidents that occurred during his initiation as a Songhay sorcerer—An eminently digestible recipe of Songhay socialization, peppered with provocative musings on the anthropological endeavour."—*Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*

About the Author

Paul Stoller is Professor of Anthropology at West Chester University and the author of *Sensuous Scholarship*, also available from the University of Pennsylvania Press.

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