

those of the world in general. He concludes with a call for greater methodological refinement and analytical precision in the future, and he hopes that the journal *Oral Tradition*, recently founded under his editorship, will serve as an international forum for the exploration of such issues.

As an "introductory history," *The Theory of Oral Composition* accomplishes its purpose admirably. It has the capacity to arouse interest on the part of the uninitiated. Its discussion of theoretical issues is concise yet clear, and its bibliographical resources and notes easily allow one to follow these problems into what is by now a highly complex scholarly literature.

### The Domestication of the Human Species

Peter J. Wilson

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. xvi + 201 pp. (cloth)

Reviewer: Michael Blake

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Wilson's insightful and engaging volume poses the question: What are the social consequences of sedentary life? The trail of discussion down which this question leads him and down which he in turn leads the reader is both fascinating and productive. In the first section of the book he introduces us to some of the basic assumptions on which his argument relies. He convincingly elaborates a series of social distinctions from non-human primates to mobile hunter-gatherers to sedentary communities that set the stage for what follows. The essential distinction that he draws is that of "openness" vs. "domestication." These simple words do not convey the complexity of the interrelated ideas that he attaches to them and so their definitions must be expanded and clarified. Wilson sees *open* societies as those that have no permanent boundaries, physical, social, visual or ideological, among members of the group. This is not the simple egalitarian vs. non-egalitarian dichotomy that anthropologists usually make, since some egalitarian societies may be open while others may be domesticated. "Openness" is a basic characteristic of the social order that structures perceptions of morality, conservatism, innovation and all aspects of individual and group interactions. A key shift (if not *the* key shift) in the social evolution of humankind is, according to Wilson's argument, that *open* society gives way to the social closure of domesticated society.

At first I found the choice of *domestication* to be rather confusing, since, as an archaeologist I am usually confronted with its usage in the context of the transformation from hunting-gathering economies to the agricultural production of plant and animal foods. But after reading on (and, I must confess, after consulting my Oxford English Dictionary) it soon became clear that "domestication" provides exactly the right framework on which to interweave so many different implications of the closure of social relations. Wilson is not as concerned with how this domestication of humans comes about as he is with the ways in which the concept can be used in cross-cultural comparisons, and with its implications for understanding social structures. The central element in human domestication is the built environment, specifically, the home. The rise of sedentary society is equivalent to the rise of home-life and the shifts in social values, ideologies and economies that home-

life entails. In fact, as many anthropologists have pointed out, the word *economy* itself derives from the two Greek words *oikos* and *nomos* (house + to manage). Managing houses and households, as Wilson argues, has social, political, ideological, as well as productive implications.

One of the implications of the shift from mobile, open society to domesticated, sedentary society is the rapid multiplication of needs and opportunities engendered by the house. The house is the first and foremost element of the built environment and as such becomes the first truly impressive artifact of human manufacture. Wilson provides a number of ethnographic examples of the symbolic dimension of house construction, materials, layout, decoration and so forth, asserting that this dimension only becomes possible after the demise of open society. With permanent settlement comes group boundedness and closure that creates the possibility for the accumulation of material goods and the concept of ownership or possession. It also signals the beginnings of the notion of privacy/publicity, a distinction that is difficult to maintain in open society. The house stands for the idea of the group, or household, just as a group of houses may stand for the idea of community. Communities may exist without houses only if they are to remain impermanent and undomesticated, but groups need houses if they are to use the past (their own history) to exist in the present and influence the future.

In Chapter Five Wilson discusses the interaction between domesticated life and domesticated death. The elaboration of material symbols of power, especially monumental tombs and temples, becomes possible in domesticated society because the idea of the delimited and permanent group already exists. The relations of power within the group and between groups, particularly élites, rests to a certain extent on the maintenance of visible material as well as social symbols of that power. Some of these symbols reside in the house and some, such as palaces and tombs, are merely extensions of the concept of the house. One of the refreshing aspects of Wilson's discussion here is his ability to draw on ethnographic examples to convey the sometimes subtle contradictions between individual and group quests for power, and the resolution of those contradictions through, for example, witchcraft. Wilson's study is both concise and far-reaching and will provide an important new stimulus to anthropologists interested in the origins and evolution of houses and house-life and their implications for the understanding of human society.

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### **T.T.T. An Introduction to Trance Dancing**

Doug Morgan

Lantylville, British Columbia: Ship Cottage Press, 1984. pp. 132.

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“T.T.T.” stands for terpsichoretrance therapy, Terpsichore being the Greek muse responsible for dance and music. The name is somewhat high-flown for a generally bright and unpretentious book about a form of nonverbal psychotherapy, which according to its enthusiastic psychotherapist-author derives from the phenomenon of trance-dancing that has been observed in a number of different cultures.