



## **The Social Life of Trees: Anthropological Perspectives on Tree Symbolism (Materializing Culture)**

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The passionate response of the British public to the Newbury Bypass is a revealing measure of how strongly people feel about trees and the environment. Similarly, in the United States, the giant sequoia of California is an enduring national symbol that inspires intense feelings. As rainforests are sacrificed to the interests of multi-national corporations and traditional ways of life disappear, the status of forests, the cultural significance of trees, and the impact of conservation policies are subjects that have inspired intense engagement. Why do people feel so strongly about trees? With this explosion of interest in environmental issues, a serious study of what trees mean to people has long been overdue.

This interdisciplinary book responds to this need by providing the first cross-cultural analysis of tree symbolism. Drawing on rich case studies, contributors explore the processes through which trees are used as metaphors of identity and continuity. Political struggles over forest resources feature prominently, and the perceptions of trees in various cultures provide telling insights into the ways in which human societies conceptualize nature.

As well as being a major contribution to the field of symbolic anthropology, this comprehensive study will be essential reading for students in a wide range of courses and for anyone with a keen interest in the politics of ecology, the occult and neo-paganism, and the history and sociology of environmentalism in its widest sense.

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