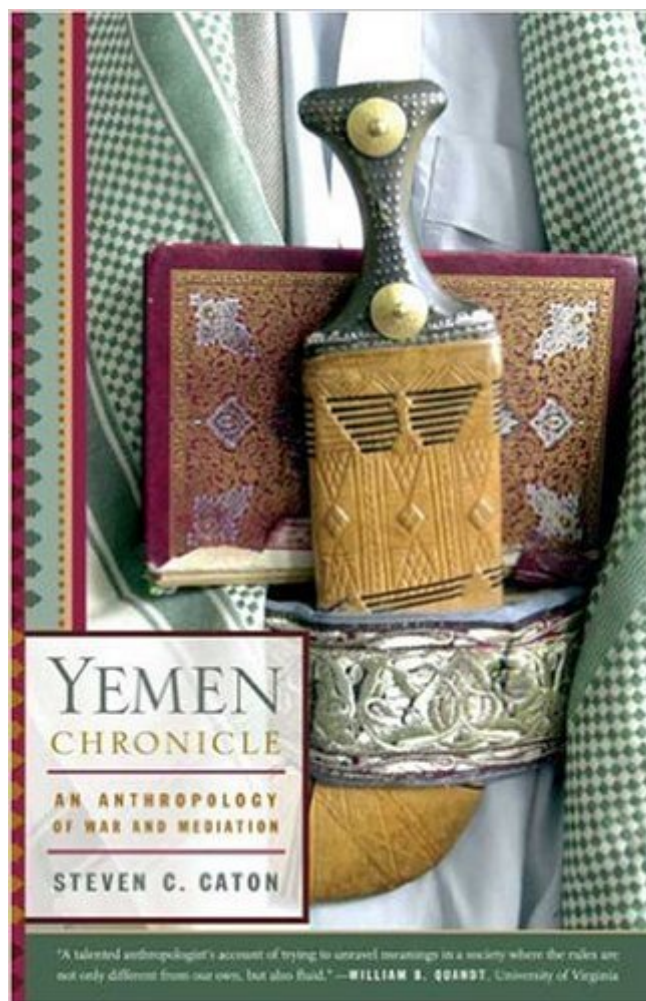


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Yemen Chronicle: An Anthropology Of War And Mediation



Synopsis

In 1979, Steven C. Caton went to a remote area of Yemen to do fieldwork on the famous oral poetry of its tribes. The recent hostage crisis in Iran made life perilous for a young American in the Middle East; worse, he was soon embroiled in a dangerous local conflict and tribal hostilities simmered for months. *Yemen Chronicle* is his extraordinary report both on events that ensued and on the many theoreticalâ•let alone practicalâ•difficulties of doing ethnography in such circumstances. Caton also offers a profound meditation on the political, cultural, and sexual components of modern Arab culture.

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Customer Reviews

A few years ago I read Steven Caton's "Peaks of Yemen, I Summon" and thought that it was a fabulously intelligent and well-done study which depicted the role of poetry in conflict resolution in Yemeni society. I remarked in my review that it would behoove our politicians, who are making decisions that affect both Yemen and America, to read the book and ponder its significance for their decisions. I had little hope that this would actually happen. When you read such books as Caton's and Paul Dresch's history and then read the newspaper accounts of events, or of US government policies, you can only despair. The present volume doesn't present such a wide picture of Yemen's society or politics, but rather places the anthropologist in his chosen research site and gives a wonderful picture of day-to-day Yemen. It is a study, if you wish, of "how it was done" and as an anthropologist who has done several bouts of field work, I may say that Caton's work was done with a great deal of difficulty. Yemen was never going to be easy given America's behavior in the Middle East and the complex conflicts in that once-remote nation. You may read "Peaks" first or this one,

but they are each enriched by the other. Not many anthropologists write the story of their research lives, but a few have. I am thinking of David Maybury-Lewis and "The Savage and the Innocent", of Hortense Powdermaker's "Stranger and Friend", and perhaps Paul Rabinow's "Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco". Then you might look at Margaret Mead's works and Malinowski's diaries, but they are more just thoughts put down while doing the work (latter) or carefully crafted later on (former). In recent decades it has become the fashion (if not obligatory) for the anthropologist to put herself/himself into the picture.

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