

# CHOICE

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY  
History of Science & Technology

Jennifer Stevens Pub. Mgr.  
Harvard University Press  
79 Garden Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

*The following review appeared in the May 2002 issue of CHOICE:*

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Anker, Peder. **Imperial ecology: environmental order in the British Empire, 1895-1945.** Harvard, 2002 (c2001). 343p  
index afp ISBN 0-674-00595-3, \$59.95

Few books are truly original; however, Anker (philosophy, Univ. of Oslo) puts an original perspective on the history of ecology, linking two major schools of thought (social psychology and imperial ecology) to the imperial aspirations of Great Britain. The UK provided patronage (grants) to support ecologists who in turn provided important concepts strengthening Britain's imperial grip by enhancing resource management and incorporating human ecology into colonial ecosystems. The detailed historical accounts (1895-1945) of the movements championed by Arthur Tansley and Jan Smuts lend credence to the author's novel premise. Chapter 1 offers background from a social psychology perspective; chapter 2 traces Jan Smuts's politics of holism in South Africa, where Smuts, a botanist, became the last pre-apartheid prime minister. Chapter 3 focuses on the Oxford School of Imperial Ecology, headed by Tansley, the father of ecosystem thought; the next chapter highlights the controversy between the two schools of thought. Chapter 5 investigates the incorporation of human ecology and the ethical implications for human rights, and chapter 6 provides a synthesis for a new approach to human ecology. This thought-provoking book provides many new insights into the history of a discipline. It will be news to most ecologists, whose knowledge of their own history is often sketchy at best. All levels. -- *J. Burger, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick*