

Material Spirits of the Past and Present Studies in Animism(s) and Material Culture Among the Hunter-gatherers and Hunter-herders of Northern Eurasia.

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Since the ontological turn in anthropology and anthropologists' revisitation of animism in the late 1990s, anthropologists have effectively provided theories that extend beyond human/non-human dichotomies to emphasize the agency, subjectivity, and relationality of all entities, human and non-human alike. The influences of these ontological theories on archaeological theory have given rise to a 'post-postprocessual archaeology', known as relational or new materialist archaeology. While these relational archaeologies have contributed significantly in terms of both to the development of non-Western biased archaeological theory and (re)interpretations of archaeological materials, especially within hunter-gatherer archaeology and Stone Age archaeology, they tend to be caught up in the same anthropological-archaeological relation as the earlier paradigms - or theoretical trends - of processual and postprocessual archaeology. The application of anthropological theory within archaeological studies tend to be used as theoretical frameworks and/or ethnographic analogies without consulting the ethnographic materials upon which these anthropological theories rest.

The problem with this is that anthropologists have since long left the study of material culture, resulting in these onto-anthropological and new animist theories being not entirely suitable for material culture studies.

The aim of this dissertation is to study the relation between animism(s) and material culture by directly engaging with the ethnographic studies and materials, mainly focusing on ethnographic collections and visual ethnography, among the animist hunter-fisher-herders and hunter-fisher-gatherers of Northwestern Siberia – an ethnographic demarcation of importance for the study of animism. By drawing on new animistic theory and analysing these ethnographic materials from an archaeological perspective, i.e. ethnoarchaeology of ontology, the second aim is to deconstruct, rethink, and reconceptualise archaeological theories and interpretations of all paradigms relating to the environmental perceptions of the hunter-gatherers and hunter-fisher-gatherers of the early Stone Ages. The paper deals with subjects, such as the past and present animation of things, humans, shadows and fires, as well as the decolonialisation of the understanding of ethnographic museum collections.