

THE WESTERMARCK ANNUAL LECTURE:

LANDSCAPE AS TRANSFIGURATION

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Definitions of what is a landscape vary between a very loose meaning – an environment transformed by human action or subjectively apprehended – and a very narrow one: the pictorial or literary depiction of a piece of land embraced by sight. A third approach will be favoured, based on the study of the process of transfiguration thanks to which a landscape is constituted. Transfiguration deliberately changes the appearance of a site – through its representation or its arrangement – so that it becomes an iconic sign that stand for something else and renders manifest some of its implicit features. Traces of this process will be examined in native Amazonia, among cultures where there traditionally exists neither figuration of landscape nor pleasure gardens.