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Sacred Objects, Sacred Places combines native oral histories, photographs, drawings, and case studies to present current issues of cultural preservation vital to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Complete with commentaries by native peoples, non-native curators, and archaeologists, this book discusses the repatriation of human remains, the curation and exhibition of sacred masks and medicine bundles, and key cultural compromises for preservation successes in protecting sacred places on private, state, and federal lands.

The author traveled thousands of miles over a ten-year period to meet and interview tribal elders, visit sacred places, and discuss the power of sacred objects in order to present the essential debates surrounding tribal historic preservation. Without revealing the exact locations of sacred places (unless tribes have gone public with their cultural concerns), Gulliford discusses the cultural significance of tribal sacred sites and the ways in which they are being preserved. Some of the case studies included are the Wyoming Medicine Wheel, Devil's Tower National Monument, Mount Shasta in California, Mount Graham in Arizona, and the Sweet Grass Hills in Montana. Federal laws are reviewed in the context of tribal preservation programs, and tribal elders discuss specific cases of repatriation.

Though the book describes numerous tribal tragedies and offers examples of cultural theft, Sacred Objects and Sacred Places affirms living traditions. It reveals how the resolution of these controversies in favor of native people will ensure their cultural continuity in a changing and increasingly complex world. The issues of returning human remains, curating sacred objects, and preserving tribal traditions are addressed to provide the reader with a full picture of Native Americans' struggles to keep their heritage alive.