

El Caño housed a managed burial precinct for elite personages. It is gratifying how diligently Mayo's research team recorded the procedures that were applied to extract pristine archaeological evidence from its original resting place, thereby ensuring that their knowledge and experience can be applied to other well-preserved sites of this nature.

A primary hypothesis of this site report is that Sitio Conte and El Caño are two independent archaeological sites, even though they are close to each other and their cultural contents are strikingly similar (I:52; II:161). The sites are separated by only 2,500 m, a morning stroll in the dry season. That this space functioned as a boundary between two coeval and possibly rivalrous social units is open to question. In this environment, however, ease of mobility in the four-month period of strong winds and sunny days is radically easier than during the remainder of the year, when rivers and streams flood. Both sites are in the interfluvium between three rivers, each of which rises in the narrow mountain chain ("Cordillera Central") and coalesces into a single, diachronically wavering channel that enters the mangrove-bordered shore of Parita Bay before opening out to the wider expanse of Panama Bay. These two sites' location between land and ocean is one reason for the variety and frequency of marine coastal creatures in the iconography of Greater Coclé art. For example, the Humboldt squid (*Dosidicus gigas*) has been identified in the art of El Caño, but not at Sitio Conte. El Caño continued in use for more than 500 years, when the sociopolitical center of gravity in the Plains of Coclé interfluvium switched to the colonial and extant town of Natá on the banks of the Río Chico, by which time human burial in earthen mounds (often in ceramic urns) prevailed, as reported by R. G. Cooke and colleagues ("Contextualized Goldwork from Gran Coclé, Panama," in *Pre-Columbian Gold: Technology, Style and Iconography*, 2000).

In Volume I, 148 crystal-clear photographs and 54 masterly line drawings of floor plans, stratigraphic profiles, and summaries based on Harris matrices epitomize the excellence of the recording strategy. Mayo Torné presents stratigraphic units in Table 3 and a roster of human skeletons from the first graves in Table 4. Graves 5 and 6 belong to the five ceramic phase but were heavily disturbed by subsequent burial activities; only three adults of indeterminate sex survived. These graves are much simpler structurally than later ones. Five more-or-less intact graves (1, 2, 4, 7, and 8) belong to the second ceramic phase. Grave 2 was occupied almost exclusively by adult males (26 of 27). Grave 7 is the least heavily biased toward adult males, with 15 subadults and 6 adult females; there are no children. The interpretation that these graves were reserved for fighting-age warriors is thus

supported. One can but speculate about the social roles of women and subadults. In my opinion, it is looking increasingly likely that military confrontations increased suddenly in the Pacific lowlands about AD 700; figuring out why is an important research question. The same may well be true for highland Chiriquí, where Barriles's iconography suggests interpretations of conflict and site distribution alludes to mutual hostility among formerly united polities in geographically circumscribed valleys (see Olga Linares, "Prehistoric Agriculture in Tropical Highlands," *Science* 187).

Burial grounds dating to AD 200–600 at the sites of Cerro Juan Díaz, 1–2 km inland straddling Herrera and Los Santos provinces; Sitio Sierra, 12 km inland in Coclé province; and Playa Venado, on the coast of West Panama province, present a considerably more equitable distribution among the sexes in funerary contexts (Nicole Smith-Guzmán and Richard G. Cooke, "Interpersonal Violence at Playa Venado, Panama (550–850 AD)," *Latin American Antiquity* 29: Figure 7). A strong bias toward male interments akin to El Caño and Sitio Conte characterizes the samples from Panama Viejo in later prehispanic times. Statistical manipulations should be able to factor in space, time, sex, age, and place. The El Caño Project sets new standards of field research and laboratory analysis for archaeology in Panama that tackles late and complex sites, which these days are invariably heavily looted. It is gratifying that interested Panamanians, especially the younger generations, can—thanks to Julia Mayo Torné and her team—now be imbued with an important part of their cultural heritage without traveling abroad. They can learn from the methodology of this intelligently conceived and excellently executed project whose didactic innovations are widely accessible for academic use and public appreciation—not only from hard-copy project publications such as this one but also the extensive project website ([http://oda-fec.org/nata-english/view/paginas/view\\_paginas.php](http://oda-fec.org/nata-english/view/paginas/view_paginas.php)). The recent creation of a Ministry of Culture and its embedded Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, Arqueológicas y Culturales raises hopes for a new era for academic archaeology and heritage site protection in Panama.

*Ancient West Mexico in the Mesoamerican Ecumene.* EDUARDO WILLIAMS. 2020. Archaeopress Pre-Columbian Archaeology 12. Archaeopress, Summer-town, Oxford. xviii + 468 pp. \$84.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-78969-353-9.

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Since the 1990s, Eduardo Williams has hosted numerous conferences on western Mexico and shepherded their resulting publications through the Colegio de Michoacán. Between this work and his ethnoarchaeological research on salt making and lacustrine lifeways, he has been in a good position to write this sorely needed overview, the only book-length, single-author summary of the archaeology of western Mexico. This book comprises eight chapters and is abundantly illustrated with 321 figures (some in color) and accompanied by 6 tables. Except for some of the maps, the figures are drawn from existing publications.

Chapter 1 lays out the volume's primary concerns and terminology. Williams defines western Mexico as comprising the modern states of Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit, and Michoacán, but at various points it includes great swaths of Guanajuato, Querétaro, Sinaloa, Zacatecas, and Guerrero. He highlights those features shared by western Mexico and the rest of Mesoamerica, for which he uses the word *ecumene* (from the Greek *oikoumene*), a favored term of our late colleague Phil Weigand, a long-standing collaborator of Williams. For Williams, an *ecumene* is "the universe of cultural and social interactions that coalesced into one of the major cultural areas of the ancient world" (p. 1). Using a multidisciplinary approach, Williams focuses on archaeology but selectively draws on ethnohistory, ethnography, and ethnoarchaeology to expand on economic and subsistence topics. Language, cultural practices, and religious beliefs receive much less attention, to the extent that Williams glosses deities evidenced in western Mexico using Nahuatl terms. Although Williams addresses a mix of theory in cultural ecology and political economy, he states that his primary interest is in presenting a chronologically organized culture history of western Mexico.

Chapter 2 discusses the history of research in western Mexico as told through major publications from 1880 to 1990 and selectively supplemented by later publications. Williams treats the history of research in Michoacán separately from that in Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima, and gives a detailed summary of published literature organized by publication. There is limited assessment of competing interpretations, and Williams treats each publication on its own terms, rather than situating it within a historiographical narrative. Indeed, the historiography of West Mexican archaeology remains in its infancy, and there is much to do in archives and unpublished sources to map out early explorations and the formation of museum collections, which would augment what Williams presents here.

Chapters 3–7 summarize archaeological research by major periods. Chapter 3 addresses the earliest

evidence for habitation in western Mexico. This chapter more than any other draws on Williams's ethnoarchaeological work and that of ethnographers with a material culture bent to flesh out the meager evidence available to date. Chapter 4 covers the Formative period, including the major known cultures such as Capacha, El Opeño, and Chupicuaro and their relationships to Tlatilco and Cuicuilco in central Mexico. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the Classic period, which brings together the more limited evidence from the Early to Middle Classic periods and the major changes that occur in the Late Classic to Epiclassic periods (i.e., after AD 500). Chapter 6 addresses the Postclassic period in the western states and particularly the coast. Chapter 7 covers the Tarascan Empire of Michoacán. Chapter 8, incorporating the discussion and conclusion, makes a plea for additional multidisciplinary research in western Mexico that incorporates ethnography, ethnohistory, and ethnoarchaeology. Approximately half of each chapter is devoted to contemporary Mesoamerica, primarily the major horizons. Hence, the Formative chapter discusses the Olmecs and Cuicuilco in some detail, the Classic chapter has a lengthy synthesis of the archaeology of Teotihuacan, and the Postclassic chapters cover Tula and Mixteca-Puebla archaeology, whereas the Aztecs are treated more briefly.

A pioneering publication like this one is bound to have rough spots. There is a traditionalist focus to Williams's overall narrative with respect to discussions of the Olmec, Teotihuacan, and Tula horizons. Some of the terminology ("civilization" and "ecumene" itself) is dated, quirky, or jarring and merits additional critique. The book presents much material from the long-standing collaboration between Williams and Weigand, including Weigand's maximalist interpretations of political organization and trade connections. For example, Figure 2 shows Weigand's reconstruction of turquoise trade routes from the American Southwest as based on his unpublished sourcing project, much of which has received sustained criticism by more recent specialists.

Dating issues are significant for sorting out major interpretive differences, but Williams does not treat chronology as a research problem and often leaves disjunctions unaddressed. For instance, he considers the columned structures of La Quemada to be derivative of Tula, although various studies have found the architectural form to be earlier in western Mexico. Williams uses Weigand's old chronology for his Teuchitlán Tradition, which extends it until AD 900, even though Weigand's own excavations in the early 2000s demonstrated that the primary site had collapsed by AD 400 or 500. These issues may relate to Williams's decision

to limit the scope of Chapter 2, on the history of research, to research prior to 1990.

The language of the text is oriented toward senior undergraduates and early graduate students; the book would make a meaty baseline text on western Mexico. Publications on this region have probably doubled since Williams's historical cutoff point in 1990, and these have significantly altered our views on many

topics, so this book needs to be supplemented by more recent readings. Despite its weaknesses, Williams has made a monumental effort to pull together the fragmented research and publication record for West Mexican archaeology into a coherent volume. There is no doubt that this is the book my students have been asking for in the way of a comprehensive overview of the archaeology of western Mexico.