

Lo humano y lo divino: Metalurgia and cosmogonía en la América antigua. ANA MARÍA FALCHETTI. 2018. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá. COL\$55,000 (paperback), 320 pp. ISBN 978-9-58885-254-6.

Reviewed by Dorothy Hosler, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Ana María Falchetti's comprehensive, fascinating, and well-researched book on Indigenous metallurgy in the Americas draws together decades of her own and colleagues' work at the Museo del Banco Central de Bogotá, Colombia. *Lo humano y lo divino* is a major new contribution to our understanding of Indigenous metallurgy in the Americas.

Falchetti's premise is that, for Indigenous peoples of the ancient Americas, metallurgy was sacred and fundamental to reality. This interpretation of the cosmological roles of metal and metallurgy—rather than as a key economic driver, for example—is explicit. Her data come from her own and others' investigations of relevant regional Indigenous mythology, historical sources, archaeological evidence, and archaeologists specializing in ancient metallurgy. Falchetti's view is that metal and metallurgy were central to creating and reifying the nonlinear, mythical reality that was the hallmark of Indigenous societies. She accepts the anthropologically contentious perspective of historian Mircea Eliade that humans universally conceive of metal and metallurgy as supernatural events. For Eliade, metallurgy is analogous to embryonic development, calling up the natural forces required for human transformation and regeneration. This theme of metallurgy and metaphors recurs throughout the book.

After a thoughtful introduction, the second section, "Technical Variation in the Metallurgy of Ancient America," provides a lengthy discussion of the metalwork of the Americas, including artifact types, with a broad geographical scope. For example, Falchetti summarizes research in northwest Argentina and the north coast of Peru, the intriguing copper-arsenic-nickel alloy used in construction at Tiwanaku, Mapuche silverwork, and

the arsenical copper cold-worked objects characteristic of Ecuador. She organizes Ecuadorian metallurgy into temporal phases, citing Roberto Lleras's work. Falchetti's description of west Mexican metallurgy is generally correct and is accompanied by a discussion of Mixtec metallurgy in Oaxaca. She addresses the native copper tradition in the Great Lakes area and the metallurgy of the Mississippian cultures, the Northwest coast, and the Arctic. This section also treats the metallurgy of Colombia—Falchetti's speciality—in detail. The text is straightforward and clear, with only minor misinterpretations of some technical processes.

Additional sections discuss metal and its mythological properties. These include "metal and the energies of colors"; "moons of silver and copper and gestation in the universe"; "color, brilliance, texture, smell and sound"; "color, reflectiveness, brilliance"; "smell, texture and sound"; and "technology, choice and the symbolic message." Myths provide the dataset and the bases for her interpretations. Falchetti cites her own work and extrapolates from others' research, uncritically giving each author equal weight. She did not intend the book to be a critique of scholarly research. However, extensive citations of unfamiliar sources, especially publications from lesser-known authors, were disquieting to me because I do not know the quality of their research. The author may buttress these citations with additional notes or footnotes about sources as an appendix in a second edition or translation.

Throughout the book, Falchetti asserts that understanding the symbolism of metallurgy and metallurgical techniques requires identifying universal principles fundamental to all metal-related mythology. Among these are the Eliadean tripartite division of the cosmos into the upper world, the surface of the earth, and the underworld. In Falchetti's interpretation, Indigenous peoples associate metal with yet other worlds that existed in primordial time prior to the emergence of humanity. Falchetti cites Iroquois and Vaupes myths to support the idea of a primordial, presumably metallic source of being that is luminous and white. This white essence, exuding brilliance and vitality, is generative. In this cosmology, a primordial orb is the source of the origins of

life, manifest in terms of color energies. The primordial white and brilliant light can reside in humans, shamans, priests, and wise men who become leaders, precisely because they understand or embody these origins, mediating between malevolent and beneficent forces. At the upper levels of the cosmos, the white luminous force becomes yellowish and is associated with gold and the Sun. Falchetti discusses the association of the Sun with gold throughout Indigenous societies of the Americas. A section on mythological moons of silver and copper, related in the Americas to the birth of the universe, addresses the relationship of the moon to metallic silver. Falchetti interprets the phases of the moon as analogous to gestation, birth, death, and rebirth. Her final section deals with the ways in which metal ensures social hierarchy, power, survival, and continuity.

The breadth of this book is remarkable: I know of no other publication like it. Falchetti presents data on metallurgical techniques across the Americas and interprets extensive Indigenous mythology pertaining to metals and metallurgy. The book is rich, stimulating, and demanding as the author shifts from discussions of primordial time to social hierarchy. There are some questions regarding technical accuracy, however. Although they discuss extremely complex technical achievements, not all of the researchers Falchetti cites are specialists in metallurgy. In many cases, we lack corroborating data from studies of metal structures and chemistry. Falchetti's assertions about universality are difficult to test, so it is up to the reader to accept or reject them on the basis of the evidence presented. Some of her references to mythology would benefit from more thorough documentation.

However, apart from these issues, this is an extraordinary book. It provides a nearly encyclopedic rendition of a great deal of what we know or think we know about Indigenous metallurgy in the Americas. The writing is clear and escapes the pitfalls of dull archaeological text. The book tells the story of prehispanic metallurgy; it also promulgates its own well-informed worldview. I congratulate Falchetti for the depth of her intellectual insight, her capacity to extrapolate, and her thorough understanding of many critical aspects of these technologies.

Los muiscas: La historia milenaria de un pueblo chibcha. CARL HENRIK LANGEBAEK RUEDA. 2019. Editorial Debate, Bogotá. 309 pp., figuras, mapas, 16 láminas, COL.\$51.000 (paper), \$14,99 (ebook), ISBN 978-958-5446-60-1.

Reviewed by Francisco Corrales-Ulloa, Museo Nacional de Costa Rica

La postulación desde la genética y la lingüística de un ancestro común para buena parte de las poblaciones que habitaron el sur de América Central y el norte de Sudamérica, o área istmo-colombiana, ha llevado a la reconsideración de muchos de los desarrollos locales en el área, incluyendo el surgimiento y la conformación de jerarquías sociales. Una de estas poblaciones fue la de los muiscas o chibchas, muy mencionada por el grado de complejidad que se les ha atribuido, y también porque en términos lingüísticos se usó la denominación chibcha para referirse a la estirpe lingüística en la cual se agrupa un vasto número de grupos del área.

En *Los muiscas: La historia milenaria de un pueblo chibcha*, Carl Henrik Langebaek Rueda hace una crítica de los enfoques que han enmarcado a ese grupo como una sociedad jerarquizada con una élite ejerciendo el poder y el resto de la población aceptándolo pasivamente. Esta visión fue alentada desde muy temprano, no sólo por modelos evolucionistas, sino también porque los muiscas son el grupo referente en la construcción identitaria de la nación colombiana, generando de paso muchas interpretaciones sesgadas.

Langebaek busca demostrar que el poder y la jerarquización social adoptan diferentes formas, y que los muiscas, aunque desarrollaron jerarquías y ejercieron poder, se caracterizaron por su diversidad. Esta visión crítica de la construcción de complejidad social se encuentra en boga en la teoría antropológica y arqueológica actual que cuestiona la caracterización de grupos sociales a partir de su clasificación en estadios evolutivos.

El libro se divide en tres grandes secciones: una general sobre el contexto donde se presenta el estudio de los muiscas dentro del ámbito más general de la región istmo-colombiana o "mundo chibcha". Luego una sección sobre los testimonios documentales existentes sobre los muiscas, haciendo una descripción y discusión detallada según temas específicos. Finalmente, se presenta un apartado sobre los datos desde la Arqueología para desde una aproximación comparativa brindar una interpretación del cambio social. La reflexión final se incluye en este apartado.

Un acierto, desde el título del libro, es la visión del pasado precolombino como historia. No ha sido fácil despojar esa etapa del apelativo de prehistoria. Langebaek además la denomina *historia milenaria*, adoptando una visión larga o profunda, como preferimos llamarla. Esta visión permite también establecer conexiones del pasado remoto con los indígenas actuales, pero también con la población mestiza.

Otro mérito es la monumental revisión y síntesis de las abundantes fuentes escritas sobre este pueblo. Estas son comentadas con base en los aportes de