

esos espacios para configurar distintos aspectos sociales y políticos, como la territorialización, los marcadores espaciales, las relaciones humano/no humanos y la constitución de liderazgos. Finalmente, el tercer tema tratado da cuenta de las particularidades de las trayectorias históricas de sociedades aldeanas que habitaron a uno y otro lado de la cordillera andina (Tarapacá y sur de los Valles Calchaquies), antes y a lo largo del primer milenio de la era, para lo cual se focalizan en el análisis del paisaje edificado, la inversión arquitectónica, los materiales que los caracterizan, juntamente con una interesante discusión teórica de los alcances y limitaciones del período formativo.

Si cambiamos la mirada para el análisis de los casos tratados en el libro, observamos que la escala temporal y espacial es tan amplia que seguramente en cada uno de esos segmentos habrá muchísima variabilidad en la diversidad, ya que los casos analizados se ubican temporalmente desde el arcaico hasta los incas. Con lo cual este libro constituye un primer aporte para delinear el inmenso mosaico cultural que caracteriza al Cono Sur prehispánico y, seguramente, será complementado con futuras producciones que ampliarán el complejo y diverso panorama socioambiental. Espero que en esa oportunidad se complementen nuevas líneas de evidencias (paleoambientales, bioarqueológicas, isotópicas, de procedencia de materias primas, entre otras) que se integren a las tratadas para conocer la variabilidad en la diversidad, considerando segmentos temporales más acotados en escalas espaciales regionales y macro-regionales de las vertientes andinas.

*Amerindian Socio-Cosmologies between the Andes, Amazonia and Mesoamerica: Toward an Anthropological Understanding of the Isthmo-Colombian Area.* ERNST HALBMAYER, editor. 2020. Routledge, Abingdon, UK. 354 pp. + 38 illust. and 11 tables. €120.00 (hardback), ISBN 9780367808099; €33.29 (ebook), ISBN 9781003010487.

*Reviewed by* Alexander Geurds, University of Oxford

This edited volume offers a contribution to conceptual discussions on the cultural relatedness of Indigenous societies of southern Central America and parts of Colombia. In contrast to earlier, area-wide comparative frameworks offered for this key geographical part of the American hemispheres, this book is based on ethnographic and linguistic insights that are complemented by archaeological data, rather than the other way around. The editor, who leads an Americanist research group at the University of Marburg,

positions the book in opposition to a view on Indigenous societies in this part of the Americas as having all but evaporated; this argument was originally voiced by Julian Steward in his definition of the Circum-Caribbean Area many years ago. The well-integrated chapters go a long way toward rectifying such a dismissive view, instead showing the dynamic nature of present-day Indigenous ontological views and ritual practices. Some of the studies in this book are bound to be crucial for further integration in future archaeological work in the area.

In addition to an introductory chapter, the book includes five area-wide comparative chapters, followed by seven chapters presenting several ethnographic case studies from Colombia and Panama, as well as one from Costa Rica. The introductory chapter puts forward an evaluative view of past and present telescopic analyses of the Isthmo-Colombian Area, surveying existing archaeological, linguistic, and genetic arguments. This is accompanied by a call for a more anthropological approach, outlining the potential contributions of a thesis of relational ontology. The focus is on charting human and nonhuman relations in the Isthmo-Colombian Area in comparison and contrast to the neighboring areas of Mesoamerica, Amazonia, and (to a lesser degree) the Central Andes.

Halbmayer carefully crafts an argument for the Isthmo-Colombian Area that is in dialogue with recent work on Amazonian ontologies that are defined by a limited set of relational ways of being. The title of this book is rather cumbersome, but that is not without reason: there is an explicit effort here to conceptualize the area—reluctantly coined “Intermediate Area” by Wolfgang Haberland almost 65 years ago—from a comparative point of view. For Mesoamerica, such an understanding of the world is based around an *analogic* ontology, consisting of a multiplicity of entities that are ordered hierarchically and temporally. In turn, adjoining Amazonia is marked by *animistic* ontological regimes consisting of internal continuity and external difference between humans and nonhumans. Beyond such external area comparisons—which, indeed, are fundamental to a long lineage of archaeological area discussions—understanding of the Isthmo-Colombian Area is also challenging due to the great diversity in lifestyles and natural environments. As a result, earlier studies, as the book notes, concluded that there may not be any significantly shared cultural patterns at all! This claim is challenged by Halbmayer and his contributing authors, and the results of their work are impressive.

The archaeological material culture from the Isthmo-Colombian Area is defined by a set of complex semiotics that often centers on the relations between humans

and animal or supernatural entities. The chapter by Niño Vargas is directly relevant to such work, because it convincingly argues for an anthropocentric form of ontology that is widely shared among Indigenous communities in the area. This ontology is based on a particular understanding of hierarchical distinctions between humans and nonhumans (consisting specifically of plant life and a separate group that includes animals and things). On the relations between humans and plants, several contributions illustrate that origin narratives situate humans as being born from plants or trees. As argued by Arenas Gómez and Kaviany in their case study chapters, these human–plant relationships extend to a symbiotic duty of care in the field of horticultural or agricultural practices, in which humans, having descended from plants, take care of the latter and in turn are allowed life through crop consumption.

Interestingly, in the ethnological materials presented by Niño Vargas, human–animal metamorphosis is morally prohibited, only occurring at the instigation of animals. This is of direct interest to, for example, practices of stone sculpture making as known from present-day Nicaragua southward to Colombia, many of which are materializations of such animal–human metamorphosis. Another archaeological pattern relates to practices of secondary burials, often closely associated with domestic settings and widely documented across the area. Here also, the book provides meaningful new insights through ethnographic studies with the Bribri (in southern Costa Rica) and the Wayuu and Yukpa (near the north-east Colombia–Venezuelan border): these studies

reveal the importance of keeping spiritual essences of the deceased close in order not to lose them and thereby create perilous situations. Such precariousness is also poignantly illustrated through Losonczy’s case study of the Emberá in the Chocó region of northwest Colombia, where recent decades of violence have severely disrupted traditional mortuary practices, leading to what she refers to as “bad death”: the lack of control over spirits due to the societal disruptions caused by armed actors in contemporary times.

The book also includes an overview by Clados and Halbmayer on the history of area conceptualizations, which extends to include a survey of the main archaeological periods, including the traumatic transformations of the sixteenth century. This overview is followed by a chapter on material culture in the area, in which Clados presents the role of brilliant and shiny surfaces, whether in objects or as applied to human bodies. In addition, the book offers a first comprehensive area overview of kinship systems by Halbmayer and a concise discussion of Chibchan, Chocoan, Yupka, and Arawakan language typology by Pache, Meira, and Grinevald.

In terms of the book itself, it is, regrettably, a rather uninspired Routledge object, and the copyediting leaves much to be desired, with mistakes showing up throughout the volume. This is unfortunate, especially in combination with the prohibitive price of a physical copy. Nonetheless, this book is a suitable companion to Hoopes and Quilter’s *Dumbarton Oaks* volume (*Gold and Power*, 2003) and will become a staple resource for archaeologists and anthropologists working on the archaeology and anthropology of the Isthmo-Colombian Area.