

William Billeck, Editor

Book Reviews

Landscapes of Origin in the Americas: Creation Narratives Linking Ancient Places and Present Communities edited by JESSICA JOYCE CHRISTIE. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2009. 280 pp., 24 figures, 3 maps. \$28.95 (paper).

Reviewed by William L. Merrill, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution

This volume is comprised of a brief introduction and nine essays that are loosely linked by a shared concern with the relationship between origins and places in diverse Indigenous societies in the Americas. The essays, all clearly written, consider rather different aspects of this relationship and combine to varying degrees Indigenous perspectives with data and interpretations derived from archaeology, ethnohistory, art history, ethnography, and linguistics.

The essays are organized into three sections: North America, Mesoamerica, and South America. In the first essay in the North America section, historian Christopher Arris Oakley summarizes Cherokee creation narratives and cultural geography as recorded by the ethnologist James Mooney in the late nineteenth century in Cherokee communities in the mountains of western North Carolina. In the second essay, anthropologists Polly Schaafsma and Will Tsosie explore Navajo rock art in the upper San Juan drainage of northwestern New Mexico that "was produced in an inspirational milieu and florescence of creativity during the formative years of Navajo cultural development (ca. 1670-1760)" (p. 19). They succeed admirably in contextualizing this art within Navajo philosophy and ritual practices and provide important new insights into the changing role of ceremonial rock art in Navajo cultural history.

Tsosie, a member of the Navajo Nation, is one of four Indigenous authors of essays in the collection. The other three—Richard Arnold, Betty Cornelius, and Larry Eddy, Nuwuvi (Southern Paiutes) from Nevada and Arizona—co-authored with anthropologists Richard Stoffle and Kathleen Van Vlack the third essay in the collection. Their contribution skillfully presents complex Nuwuvi cosmological concepts in terms accessible to non-Nuwuvi readers, concepts that are crucial to

understanding Nuwuvi perspectives on the significance of the mountains and mountain ranges in their world and their role as stewards of these extraordinary places. The fourth essay presents the origin narrative of the 'Namgis, a Kwak'waka-speaking society of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The narrative was redacted in elegant English by the 'Namgis scholar William Wadsen Jr. and "edited and approved by many chiefs" (p. 52), but only Jessica Joyce Christie, the editor of the volume, is listed as the author of the essay. Her contribution, in length less than half that of the origin narrative, is minimal, limited mostly to superficial commentary on the narrative and comparative cross-references to some of the other essays in the volume. Her failure to acknowledge Wadsen's contribution through explicit, joint authorship, is puzzling but unexplained.

The second section of the volume is devoted to Mesoamerica, incorrectly characterized in the section title as a "cultural region within Central America;" most of Mesoamerica falls within Mexico, which is part of North America. The first essay in this section, authored by the art historian and anthropologist Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, offers a scholarly analysis of the Aztec ceremonial center of Malinalco, located in the Toluca Valley west of Mexico City. His account is enriched by detailed descriptions of the structures and other items of material culture associated with this center, and his interpretations of them are informed by fundamental concepts of Aztec cosmology and ideology that were recorded during the early Spanish colonial period. In the following essay, Merideth Paxton, a specialist on Mayan codices, relies on Yucatec Mayan cosmology and conventions for graphically representing space that predate Spanish contact to interpret a sixteenth-century map of the Yucatan province of Mani. Although the fragmentary documentation associated with the map precludes a definitive analysis, Paxton's interpretations of it are convincing and intriguing, suggesting that pre-contact Yucatec Mayan views of space and time, as well as ways of expressing social and political relationships, were influential well into the Spanish colonial period. The third and final essay in the Mesoamerican section, written by the linguist and anthropologist Allen J.

Christenson, reveals the intimate connections among geography and supernatural power envisioned by the Tz'utujil Maya of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala. His engaging presentation is enhanced by extensive accounts of local cultural traditions by different members of the community, who regard their ritual practices as crucial to ensuring the survival of the universe. By explicating these practices in terms of local perspectives, Christenson also provides a succinct overview of contemporary Tz'utujil Maya worldview and religion.

The final section of the volume includes two essays on Indigenous societies in western South America during the late prehispanic period. In the first, archaeologist Patricia J. Netherly examines the social and political relations among societies situated along the Pacific coast of southwestern Ecuador and northern Peru. She relies on the concept of landscape as a framework for presenting and analyzing different aspects of the political economy of the region, devoting much of the essay to interpreting the rather limited documentation of the linguistic diversity of the region recorded during the Spanish colonial period. In the second essay, the volume editor and art historian Jessica Joyce Christie addresses the question of why the Inka would have considered Pacariqtambo, the site of a stone outcrop with cavelike openings but located in an area of little economic importance, as their place of origin. She suggests that this outcrop may have had cosmological significance in the pre-Inka period that the Inka elite drew upon to legitimize their political and religious authority and, further, that they created an ideological link to this marginal area as a way of integrating it into their polity as a lower status entity that reinforced their own higher status.

Each of these essays is interesting in its own right but the volume as a whole is less than the sum of its parts. The editor fails to indicate the purpose of the collection beyond the presentation of themes "that help frame a loose model that will assist future researchers in understanding locales" (p. xii). She does not situate the essays within a broader conceptual framework that would show how they, individually and collectively, contribute to the advancement of landscape studies and,

in fact, does not even mention most of the issues related to cultural landscapes that have engaged scholars from multiple disciplines for more than a century. In lieu of a synthetic introduction or conclusion, parenthetical notes inserted in the essays point out shared topics or themes, but these are rarely useful and often distracting. The essays also vary considerably in the degree to which specialist knowledge is required to understand and appreciate them, suggesting that the creation of the volume was not guided by a clear vision of the intended audience.

Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America by BENJAMIN C. PYKLES. Forward by Robert L. Schuyler. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. 2010. xxi + 389 pp., 5.5 x 8.5 inch format, 25 illustrations, 1 map, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$62.50 (cloth).

Reviewed by Carl A. Merry, Office of the State Archaeologist, The University of Iowa.

A "potential Williamsburg of the West." That is how Robert L. Schuyler in his Forward portrays one of the earliest nineteenth century townsite excavations in the United States. Located in western Illinois along the Mississippi River, Nauvoo grew into a Mormon community of 12,000 during the period 1839–1846. Benjamin C. Pykles, in his well-researched book, documents the 1961–1984 archaeological projects associated with the architectural restoration of Nauvoo sponsored by two competing sects of the Mormon church. He accomplishes this by presenting the Nauvoo excavations as a case study in the development of historical archaeology, placing Mormon institutions and historic preservation in mid-twentieth century context, and highlighting the contributions of pioneering archaeologist J. C. Harrington.

This volume is an entry in the Critical Studies in Anthropology series from the University of Nebraska Press. In a succinct introduction, the series editors call attention to several themes including the array of church and archaeological personalities during the period, the growing professionalism of the discipline, and religious conflicts, which converged to create and subsequently erode a viable archaeology program. The book