

The ancient Maya made extensive modifications to their landscape and constructed enduring vestiges of the complex organizational structure that once sustained their civilization. Justine Shaw has undertaken a comparative study of one structural form, the Maya *sacbe* (pl. *sacbeob*) or “white road,” that served as a binder for their vanished organizational framework. Her interest in this topic is both inspired and conditioned by her research in the central part of the Mexican Yucatan Peninsula at the sites of Ichmul and Yo’okop, and the archaeological data from these two sites is utilized as a springboard for a broader contextualization of ancient Maya roads.

Shaw’s book deals with two very different topics. Although overtly a consideration of ancient Maya roads and their spatial distribution throughout the lowlands, Shaw also presents the results of her archaeological research in the northern lowlands. Chapters 2, 3, 9, and 10 deal with her archaeological data, while Chapters 1, 4–7, and 8 deal with the broader topic of Maya roads. The distribution of roads in the ancient Maya area is exhaustively examined. The different ways in which they can be constructed is delineated, and the lengths of the constructed *sacbeob* are examined for potential patterning. Based on *sacbe* length, Shaw differentiates between local intrasite *sacbeob*, core-outlier intrasite *sacbeob*, and intersite *sacbeob*. All these roads, but especially the intersite *sacbeob*, are viewed as being relevant to Maya sociopolitical organization. The longest road known is the one between the Maya sites of Coba and Yaxuna, which runs for 101 kilometers. Shaw strongly suggests that other long-distance road systems once existed in the northern lowlands but have been destroyed by modern construction activity. Although not an extensive focus in the book, aerial photography also has documented long-distance road systems in the southern lowlands, particularly focused on the site of Mirador, Guatemala.

By far the majority of Maya road systems were of the intrasite kind. Following the lead of other researchers, Shaw synthesizes previous categorizations of Maya intrasite causeway systems, identifying four kinds. The first type is referred to as a “linear *sacbe* system” and is fairly common in the northern lowlands, being characterized by the site plan of Sayil, Mexico. The second type is also common in the northern lowlands and is referred to as a “cruciform *sacbe* system,” such as the one found at Ek Balam, Mexico. The last two types are called “radial” or “solar *sacbe* systems” and “dendritic *sacbe* systems.” The site plans of Caracol, Belize, and Chichen-Itza, Mexico, present examples of dendritic *sacbe* systems. Shaw uses Coba, Mexico, as an example of a radial or solar *sacbe* system, but this may be a misnomer. In fact, as Shaw herself notes, the Coba *sacbe* system probably results from two temporally different sets of causeways—an initial cruciform *sacbe* system that is overlaid with a second *sacbe* system, resulting in a dendritic or radial appearance. Explanations for the functions of these different causeway systems run the gamut from ritual to sociopolitical to economic; the one unifying

factor is recognition of their use in facilitating transportation and access.

Although the contextualization of *sacbeob* comprises much of Shaw’s book, just as important is her presentation of her archaeological research undertaken at Yo’okop and Ichmul. Both of these sites are in a part of the Yucatan Peninsula that has been little explored. The site of Ichmul is directly beneath a modern Yucatec community, whereas the better-preserved ruins of Yo’okop are in the rural countryside. From 2000 through 2002, Shaw and her colleagues carried out research at Yo’okop, mapping the core of the site as well as excavating eight test pits and one structure. Work at Ichmul was carried out between 2003 and 2005. Besides mapping, excavations at Yo’okop consisted of ten test pits: two within the Ichmul site core and eight at Ichmul’s causeway termini (two each at San Andres, San Juan, San Andres, and Xquerol). From this relatively small archaeological sample, Shaw has assembled an impressive interpretation of the archaeological history of both Yo’okop and Ichmul.

Shaw’s *White Roads of the Yucatan* is a case in point for how a determined researcher can carry out meaningful archaeology with limited resources. Her book is a well-written exposition on the archaeology of a little-known part of the Yucatan Peninsula that succeeds in framing the data in terms of a broader consideration of Maya causeways, which will have relevance for most other Maya scholars.

Cultural Transmission and Material Culture: Breaking Down Boundaries. Miriam Stark, Brenda Bowser, and Lee Horne, eds. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008. 320 pp.

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The most important result of this edited volume is that it represents the first substantial integration of Darwinian archaeology into the broader concerns of anthropology and archaeology. This collection assembles diverse studies that identify theoretical parallels and intersections between Darwinian and other more broadly held approaches. In doing this, the editors should be congratulated on successfully achieving their goal of “building bridges across paradigmatic boundaries” (p. 16).

The collection is a tribute to the late Carol Kramer, and the concept that unifies the volume derives from her work on the material manifestations of cultural transmission. Geographic coverage ranges from the Americas to Africa, the Near East, and South Asia, and chronological coverage spans prehistoric–precontact and colonial periods through to the present. There are a diversity of research strategies (ethnographic, ethnoarchaeological, and archaeological) and conceptual approaches (esp. the European framework of the anthropology of technology and the North American dual-inheritance approach).

The two chapters by Peter Jordan and Ruth Mace and Jelmer Eerkens and Carl Lipo exemplify the combination of robust, empirical, Darwinian approaches to investigating patterns of cultural transmission with ethnographic, historical, and archaeological data that give rich detail on the specific contexts and outcomes of transmission. Jordan and Mace examine variation in textile and housing types in nine hunter-fisher-gatherer communities on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Textiles and housing styles were geographically constrained, but textiles tended to cross linguistic boundaries more than house styles. Using ethnography, they interpret this as a result of patrilocality, wherein women moved away from their birthplaces after marriage and transferred textile patterns and technology, whereas men and their housing styles were less mobile. This chapter is a good example of how large-scale patterns analyzed with Darwinian methods can be productively integrated with more traditional anthropological interests in apprenticeship, identity, and the performance of technological practice.

Eerkens and Lipo use a simulation to estimate the amount of variation that should be present when only simple copying errors are the source of assemblage variation over time. They use these simulated estimates as a baseline to compare measurements of variation in the thickness and diameter of Woodland Period ceramics from Illinois to determine when variation-increasing forces (such as experimentation by potters) and variation-reducing forces (such as conformist or prestige-based transmission) were active. Their main point is to show that random drift in ceramic metrics over time can be differentiated from transmission processes that increase or reduce variation over time. This chapter augments Rob Boyd and Peter Richerson's (1985) cultural evolutionary approach by demonstrating that a basic empirical method for quantitatively analyzing cultural transmission and material culture changes over time.

If these two archaeological chapters are the equivalent of using a telescope to peer into past transmission processes, then the ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological chapters in this volume are the equivalent of an electron microscope. These chapters give extremely fine-grained and sophisticated insights into the transmission processes. For example, Brenda Bowser and John Patton's ethnoarchaeological research in the Ecuadorian Amazon shows that changes in the styles of pottery produced by a woman are strongly correlated to changes in a woman's political networks that occur during her life history. A similarly fine-grained analysis is provided by H el ene Wallaert's study of apprenticeship strategies among Dii potters of northern Cameroon, which focuses only on the period when a girl is between 7 and 15 years old. Citing Eerkens' work on copying errors, Wallert describes how corporal punishment, public humiliation, and the incremental release of technical instructions are used to minimize errors and variation. Ingrid Herbich and Michael Dietler show that, between the

Luo and Rendille societies of Kenya, there are substantial differences in postmarital stylistic variation. Among the Luo, women must adapt their pottery craft to conform with the style of their husband's family, with whom they reside after marriage. Rendille women, however, bring their household objects into their husband's homes and are under little pressure to conform to the local styles of their husband's family (and in this way resemble the Pacific Northwest groups that Jordan and Mace describe).

One productive area for future research suggested by this collection—which would truly be a synthesis of approaches (of which only a selection are described here)—is the application of quantitative Darwinian methods of material cultural analysis at the microscales examined by ethnographical work on apprenticeship and life history. To conclude, the richness and quality of the contents of this volume are ample justification for including this volume in any library, and the book is likely to inspire much interesting new work.

REFERENCE CITED

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Counting the Dead: The Culture and Politics of Human Rights Activism in Colombia. Winifred Tate. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. 379 pp.

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Oppositional politics based on the idea of human rights became a way of contesting the rule of repressive governments in the last half of the 20th century. Although debates about human rights have focused on their universality and how they affect state sovereignty, Winifred Tate has written an impressive book that tacks in a new direction. *Counting the Dead* explores how different and frequently opposed groups in Colombia use the idea of "human rights" to categorize certain kinds of violence, organize political action, and generate public support for their agendas. The book is a fascinating analysis of how the theory and practice of human rights activism emerges from particular social, political, and historical contexts and bends to the competing agendas of diverse people and institutions.

The book first traces the rise of human rights activism amid an intensifying dirty war in the late 1970s and 1980s through its subsequent transformation and professionalization in the 1990s, as political violence intensified. Early Colombian human rights activists belonged to solidarity organizations linked to the left, and they intensely debated collective-versus-individual understandings of rights. Influenced by liberation theology and the Colombian Communist Party, activists tied human rights advocacy to progressive political projects, including revolutionary socialism.