

and Fredengren, respectively). The present volume also shows the increasingly successful application of stable isotope analysis and DNA research, which was very recently demonstrated by the fascinating research into the Neolithic bog body of the Vittrup Man (Fischer *et al.* 2024).

*In the darkest of days* will have a great appeal to both academic and non-academic audiences. Hopefully, it will be a start signal for a new era in the study of human sacrifice and ritual, in which the field gradually moves from speculation to more evidence-based narratives. As the volume shows, in this area of research, the facts may often be more surprising than fiction.

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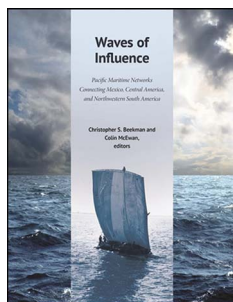
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CHRISTOPHER S. BEEKMAN & COLIN MCEWAN (ed.). 2022. *Waves of influence: Pacific maritime networks connecting Mexico, Central America and northwestern South America*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press; 978-0-88402-489-7 hardback \$85.



Firstly, I need to mention that this book is co-edited, but also dedicated to the memory of Colin McEwan who passed away before this volume was published. Colin was an outstanding pre-Hispanic scholar and this final book serves as a fitting epitaph to his considerable accomplishments.

Every so often a book comes along that surprises, this is one of them, and for all the right reasons. The theme it tackles, as well as the geographic area, is huge, nothing less than Pacific maritime contacts between Mexico, Central America and northwestern South America. In the latter case, mainly Colombia and Ecuador

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but also northern Peru. The book has real ‘chutzpah’ especially given the often-ephemeral evidence for some of these contacts, in particular for the earlier periods. The result is a good one, even if slightly hit and miss in some areas, such as the chapter by Sonia Zarrillo and Michael Blake on the question of cocoa dispersal and the lack of evidence for a western Pacific route for it.

Aside from a first broad-brush chapter on the evidence for maritime contacts across the Pacific littoral by Christopher Beekman and Colin McEwan and the theoretically well-founded final discussion chapter by Rosemary Joyce, the remaining 14 chapters are divided into four general sections. These cover: deep time contacts; early versus late networks; point-to-point contacts between Ecuador, Costa Rica and Mexico; and finally, the trade in *Spondylus* (thorny oyster). The list of contributors is equally broad with a good admixture of established and junior scholars from across the Americas and beyond.

As usual for a book of this nature and given the limitations of archaeology, the closer to the proto-historical and historical period of European colonisation we get, the more evidence we have for these Pacific littoral contacts. In this regard, most scholars agree that some sort of contact existed between Meso- and South America, yet the nature, depth and importance of these contacts is still very much a live research issue. Still, some ground-setting facts arise from this volume; the most salient being that the modern geographical and political division of the area into a multitude of different countries, each with their research agenda, has been the single biggest impediment to the advance of this theme. In this sense, the editors have done an incredible job in bringing many of these disparate research strands across different countries into one volume. Furthermore, in many ways this is still a book ahead of its time, a shot-across-the-bow with many critical gaps, such as linguistic evidence, gene-flow data of people, animals and plants, as well as the role of elites in fomenting exchange, trade and transfer of knowledge, among others. It is hoped that future research will fill in these blanks.

Returning to the past, another truism is that no single group of sailors were aware at any one time of the full extent of the interconnected networks that bound northwestern Mexico with Peru. Much of the contacts seem to have been in short seafaring jumps from one proximal area to the next, thereby exchanging and plying trade between short- to medium-distance groups. The second chapter, by Richard Callaghan, Alvaro Montenegro and Scott Fitzpatrick, tackles this question head-on with an important modelling of currents and winds to estimate travel and landfalls during the year across this whole interaction sphere; this has important implications for the potential intensity of interactions across this whole area. One important fact is that northwards travel was easier than going south. Zarrillo and Blake’s Chapter 3 is important in introducing the concept of *palaeoproteomics*, getting at the trade network behind the ingredients and items making a product—in this case cocoa.

The next four chapters—by Guy David Hepp, John Pohl and Michael Mathiowetz, Rebeca Mendelsohn and, finally, Eugenia Ibarra Rojas—together make up Part II delving into early and late networks across this whole geographical area. One important aspect that appears here and throughout many of the other contributions is the potential for some type of incipient globalisation across this area, following Justin Jennings (2011). In this regard, Pohl and Mathiowetz make a valuable contribution in widening the area of interaction by including southern California and the greater southwestern area of western Mexico and the Casas Grandes tradition playing well into this concept of globalisation.

Part III contains three chapters and a more concrete material is studied, which correlates proof for commerce and contact between Central America and northwestern South America, even though the evidence is still far from conclusive in many cases. This is clearly stated by James Zeidler and José Carlos Beltrán Medina, who bemoan the lack of systematic excavation of coastal sites throughout this vast area. In turn, María Masucci and John Hoopes discuss the possibility of contacts between Costa Rica and Ecuador, especially between 500–300 BC and AD 300–800. These links might be seen in similar styles as well as stylistic effervescence at these moments in time, which might allude to long-distance travel and contact. As with other examples given by the authors, direct evidence for contact is lacking. This is a perennial problem for many of the contributions in this book. The chapter by Kim Cullen Cobb, Christopher Beekman, Emily Kaplan and Thomas Lam, on the other hand, tackles potential contacts between these two areas on the evidence from axe-monies as a medium for exchange which came in play during the twelfth century AD, although this same evidence points to axe-monies being used independently in both areas, rather than between them.

Part IV is the final substantive section and doubles down on Spondylus as the medium of exchange par excellence. Undoubtedly, given the physical, political and ritual importance of Spondylus throughout the Andean area and its natural gestation in the tropical Pacific waters stretching from Ecuador to Mexico, it was a product that elicited important trade networks to and from these two areas. Five chapters break down this trade in Spondylus across time.

Benjamin Carter's research identifies two species of Spondylus (*S. limbatus* and *S. crassiquama*) and makes a case for *S. limbatus* being the mainstay of potential Spondylus exchange networks due to its greater abundance. Having a better grip on Spondylus ecology promises important future research avenues, especially if archaeologists can identify Spondylus species from a small fragment—a difficult task. Douglas H. Ubelaker, Yaohan Wu and James Zeidler analyse the effects of diving on human auditory exotoses making the case for Ecuadorian coastal populations exploiting this resource. Beekman discusses the Andean cultural concepts pertaining to Spondylus making headway in Mesoamerica, especially in Chiapas and Colima. This shows that Spondylus was indeed a medium for contacts across this region. Richard Luniss's study on Ecuadorian Manteño sailing craft consolidates these vessels as the means by which persistent and long-distance movement of Spondylus was effected around the Americas Pacific coastline, especially in the period just before European contact. McEwan and Luniss's article on Isla de la Plata (Ecuador) pivots on this location's importance as a marine 'sanctuary' and ritual place delimiting relationships between the local Manteños and the Inca and through that the Spondylus trade and with it the connection between the Spondylus area and the greater Central Andean zone.

The final chapter by Joyce identifies the 'pluricultural backdrop' that links this subject area, theorising over what she terms the incipient 'cosmopolitanism' by 'communities of practice' across cultural interaction spheres and potential globalisations at different moments in time. It is an ambitious statement of intent that, while still undercut by fragmentary evidence and too many unsubstantiated hypotheses, serves as a welcome grand theory underpinning this broad theme of Pacific maritime networks. As the first substantive book (especially with its numerous and data-laden appendices and tables) on this theme in the twenty-first century, this volume will stand as an important marker on how far we have come in researching Pacific maritime contacts, while signposting how much is still left to be done.

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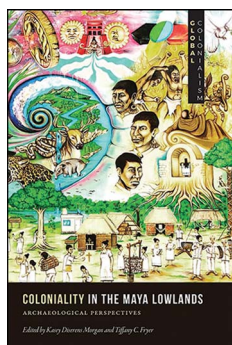
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KASEY DISERENS MORGAN & TIFFANY C. FRYER (ed.). 2022. *Coloniality in the Maya lowlands: archaeological perspectives*. Denver: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-64642-283-8 hardback \$75.



*Coloniality in the Maya lowlands* brings together a collection of contributions emphasising later periods in Maya history. The division of the book into three parts appears mostly to be chronological, but timeframes overlap between sections. Most chapters focus on settlements, features and topics in archaeology and ethnohistory of the Caste War period (1847 to c. 1901). Exceptions include Chapter 2, on the town of Tahcabo with a history as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth century (but continuing later), Chapter 3's discussion of Afro-Yucatecan settlements of the 1700s and early 1800s, Chapter 4's analysis of piracy and defensive strategies in the 1700s on the east coast and Chapter 10's concerns with cultural heritage.

Chapter 1 by editors Kasey Diserens Morgan and Tiffany Fryer raises useful points about the importance of later period Maya historical archaeology, a matter long acknowledged with the USA and Mexico. I was surprised by the indignant (and at times, accusatory) tone of Chapter 1 and the authors' exaggerated claim of how little work has been done. This is perhaps due to their emphasis on citing sources published only since 2000 and few references to works written by scholars native to the host countries. Was it necessary to state that Maya historical archaeology publications are 'one-off' efforts 'tacked on obligatorily' by investigators working in earlier periods? The term 'coloniality' is not well explained in the Introduction, especially its links to the concepts of ambivalence and hybridity in current postcolonial approaches.

The strength of this volume lies in the interesting case-study chapters offered by the contributors. Household economy and social organisation are considered in the context of changing political economies by Maia Dedrick, Patricia McAnany and Iván Batún Alpuche for Tahcabo (Chapter 2), with data brought to bear on resource availability, inequities and strategies for resilience or survival. Julie Wesp's review (Chapter 3) of Afro-Yucatecan archaeological research in the northern peninsula reminds us of findings from a cemetery in