He argues that ritual was likely used in service of a state centered at Chaco, rather than Chaco being simply a ritual center from which the power of politics has been reduced or ignored. Conversely, ethnographic analogy provides a starting point for Christie and Piscitelli’s assessment of huacas and stone observation towers in the Peruvian Late Archaic and Early Horizon.

While perhaps not a cutting-edge theoretical contribution to the existing literature on religion in politics in the archaeological past, *Ritual and Archaic States* does provide a substantive contribution with its detailed, well-argued case studies. As the book is set forth as a functional rather than relational or ontological undertaking, it accomplishes its goal of considering the role of ritual in past politics. Perhaps partnered with other available texts on religion and ritual (such as Fowles 2013 or Pauketat 2013), this book contributes to a critical assessment of the interconnections between complexity, politics, and religion.


Reviewed by David M. Carballo, Boston University.

Evolutionarily oriented researchers have long appreciated variability in trajectories of change through time, allowing for the possibilities of divergence, convergence, hybridization, and the impacts of other factors on any given evolutionary sequence. Yet in archaeology, the influential neo-evolutionary perspectives on societal complexity of the mid-twentieth century channeled thinking into strongly unilinear, stage-based frameworks. These frameworks engendered new lines of investigation and moved archaeology past the terminological baggage of earlier approaches to the “origins of (mostly Western) civilization”; but almost as soon as they were proposed, scholars found them deficient in ignoring certain key elements of social life or not matching particular archaeological datasets.

This recent volume, edited by Lane Fargher and Verenice Heredia Espinoza, is truthful in its advertising, as the title and subtitle convey the unifying theme and varied angles for approaching it. *Alternative Pathways to Complexity* has its own evolutionary trajectory, with origins in a Festschrift to the distinguished career of Richard Blanton. Blanton’s decades of field and comparative research has sparked the critical rethinking of highly centralized frameworks for the emergence of social complexity—focused largely on political leaders and conflict—in favor of more diffuse and participatory social entanglements such as domestic economies, markets, and world systems. True to his legacy, the volume represents an important contribution to the examination of issues for which Blanton has furthered scholarship, organized as three sections with cases from Mesoamerica, the Old World, and cross-cultural studies.

The volume as a whole will be of interest to scholars concerned with comparative analyses of early large-scale societies, particularly their political and economic organization. Contributions reflect, and reflect on, Blanton’s academic career, which provides coherence to the diversity of subjects. Slightly over half of the contributors are primarily Mesoamerican specialists, but many of these have, like Blanton, contributed to the archaeology of other culture areas. Many of the contributors grapple with understanding variability in sociopolitical organization along the corporate-network axis that Blanton and colleagues first outlined in the mid-1990s, or its evolution into the more comparatively grounded field of collective action research, which articulates with interdisciplinary social sciences and has been pursued by Blanton, Fargher, and others. Blanton’s intellectual legacy nicely frames the chapters through an introduction by Fargher, Heredia, and Cynthia Bedell, and two final chapters by Tim Earle and Fargher. Case studies from particular parts of the globe are written to touch more broadly on themes of general archaeological concern, and will be of interest to researchers working elsewhere. Mesoamerican chapters focus on economic organization (Stephen Kowalewski, Frances Berdan, Lisa LeCount), architecture (Arthur Joyce and Sarah Barber, Christopher Beckman, Barbara Stark), and survey data (Kowalewski, Heredia, Stark). Among the Old World cases, Peter Robertshaw covers historic period Uganda, and Deborah Winslow provides an ethnographically-based study of architecture in contemporary Sri Lanka. Robertshaw’s study and two archaeological cases from the Old World (T. L. Thorson on Scandinavia and Rita Wright comparing the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia) examine their cases through the lenses of collective-action theory. Among the cross-cultural studies, Peter Peregrine and Carol Ember provide an ethnographic analysis of the relationship between environmental calamity, warfare, and networking political strategies; Gary Feinman and Linda Nicholas focus primarily at issues of societal scale, political financing, and social capital/collective action;
and Earle problematizes the distinction between polities deemed primary or secondary by instead emphasizing political-economic strategies.

Together, the contributions underscore the maturation of research on variability in past complex societies as well as the need for multiscalar frameworks. Within anthropological archaeology we strive to maintain cultural relativism and neutrality within our analytical frames, yet there remains the impulse to overlay value judgments on whether particular societies of the past we study are deemed to have been collective, inclusive, or resilient, versus elite-individualizing, exclusive, or ultimately inflexible. An important issue that comes through in the assembly of diverse cases such as this is to draw attention to scales of analyses and specifically examine interactions at varying scales. Some societies may have been ruled by preening kings who invested little in public works, but at the intermediate scales of suprahousehold resource management or market activities there was a tremendous level cooperation and coordination; others may have been internally very collective in holding principals accountable for returning public goods, but with one outcome being the sort of corporate military power that allowed them to conquer or terrorize their neighbors. The movement away from mere social typology to such issues of scale and interaction is one of the major contributions of Blanton’s career and its continued evolution in this volume.

The book is organized into six parts/contexts; abridged titles and descriptions follow. “Part I: American and Ohio History,” by Shields, provides a succinct overview of the destruction, preservation, and multiple uses of the land that the Newark Earthworks site encompasses. “Part II: Hopewell Archaeology and Archaeoastronomy” reveals the little we know about the site from archaeological evidence. What we do know has been well presented in previous publications but interpretations here are useful extended by Lepper to conclude that the key function of the site is as a mortuary engine of world renewal. The similarly well-known archaeoastronomy interpretation of Hively and Horen is also importantly extended to include broader landscape issues. “Part III: Cross-Cultural Archaeology” includes chapters by archaeologists with expertise elsewhere who compare the Newark Earthworks to sites they have focused their research on, including Chaco (Lekson), Nazca (Silverman), and Stonehenge (Durvill). “Part IV: Interdisciplinary (Architecture, Cartography, Religious Studies)” focuses on how the Newark Earthworks are relevant for contemporary culture. Each author in this section (Bartie, Breiner, Hancock, Pearce) provides an interesting interpretation of the archaeological site with an eye toward contemporary experiences in the ancient spaces. “Part V: Indigenous Rights and Identity (American and International)” and “Part VI: Law and Jurisprudence (Ancient and Ongoing)” focus largely on the issue of who should manage ancient sites like the Newark Earthworks. Chaatsmith, Champagne, and Goldberg hold that, because indigenous people built them, they should be the managers. MacDonald reaches a similar conclusion, but makes the important point that a more global ownership is appropriate in this case. Johnson’s contribution raises the point that Newark is a “depressed cultural site” in that, while it is admired and celebrated, most of all there is concern about its well-being. Sullivan’s chapter on “law stuff” questions whether the Newark Earthworks site was used for ritual, instead arguing that it was used for regulating human relations and solving disputes.

The editors are to be commended for assembling a diverse set of often-contradictory interpretations. However, as is often the case in such undertakings, it would have been useful to explore some of the shortcomings and contradictions. For example, a key shortcoming is that no larger summary of Hopewell culture was provided. If there was such a chapter, it would have sharpened our knowledge of what our earthworks in comparison to many other Hopewell mound sites. This is crucial, for much of what is discussed in


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