and institutions were implemented, and variously engaged with, or resisted by, indigenous groups in each of these distinct regions of southern North America, especially in the context of existing indigenous political economies and cultural landscapes.

As noted in the foreword by David Hurst Thomas, this volume self-consciously builds on the legacy of his edited three-volume *Columbian consequences* (1989-91), which is widely credited with transforming historical archaeology’s substance and practice in the Americas. As typified by the scholarship highlighted in this ground-breaking collection, contributions to the current book employ a broad range of perspectives, research methodologies, evidentiary sources, and interpretative frameworks to broaden and deepen our understanding of how the legacy of the colonial encounter in the American Southwest continues to shape the histories of, and relationships among, the region’s diverse peoples and cultures.

As is now characteristic among the most recent generation of archaeologies of the colonial encounter, the volume’s authors contest the simplistic dichotomies of acculturation and resistance in order to examine the creative and practical engagements of both indigenous peoples and settler communities with colonial institutions and processes in ways that were not just responsive but also constitutive. Several contributions also complicate the distinction between colonizer and colonized, presenting missions, presidios, *ranchos* and *estancias*, and even pueblos as multicultural spaces where indigenous and colonial actors interacted on an intimate and daily basis in ways that came to redefine social positions, statuses, and identities. Some authors also challenge our standard notions of ‘core’ and ‘periphery’, asking whether the American Southwest in the eighteenth century is best understood as the periphery of either a Spanish colonial empire centred in Mexico City, or of a Comanche empire centred on the Great Plains.

This collection’s particular strength lies in the diversity of approaches, data sets, and historical sources that are integrated into these various case studies. While some authors focus on the analysis of specific artefact categories (pottery, textiles, faunal remains), others employ broader site-specific, or landscape-based, approaches. Archaeological evidence is integrated with archival sources, including, in at least one case, detailed genealogical information. Finally, several contributions effectively engage with indigenous voices and perspectives on the colonial encounter, as drawn from contemporary testimonies recorded in Spanish documents, as well as surviving oral histories, especially as preserved among the Hopi. The vividness of these modern accounts of events hundreds of years in the past emphasizes that despite the practical agency and survival of many Indigenous American communities in the American Southwest, the historical trauma of the colonial encounter is a persistent and ongoing cultural legacy.

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**Hutson, Scott R. (ed.). Ancient Maya commerce: multidisciplinary research at Chunchucmil. xix, 376 pp., map, figs, tables, illus., bibliogr. Boulder: Univ. Press of Colorado, 2017. £54.00 (cloth)**

With more than 300 pages of illustrated text, and thirteen chapters by seventeen authors coming from different disciplinary fields, *Ancient Maya commerce* presents, in an exemplary manner, the results obtained from over ten years (1993-2006) of collaborative research based on clearly stated research questions. This book aims to interpret the trajectory of Chunchucmil, an exceptional site located on the northwest of the Yucatán Peninsula.

The site was first scientifically documented in the 1970s by the Archaeological Atlas of the State of Yucatán project, and a preliminary study revealed an important paradox: it seems to have been a large and densely populated centre, although situated within a natural environment poorly suited to supporting a large population. The PREP (Pakbeh – from the Yucatec words which signify, respectively, ‘wall’ and ‘street’ – Regional Economy Program) was initially launched by Bruce Dahlin, precisely starting from this paradox that had been noticed by his predecessors (chap. 1).

In order to be investigated and eventually clarified, this inconsistency required, first and foremost, the site’s integral mapping, giving special attention to its internal organization. This fundamental work, which began well before the first application of LIDAR (laser imaging and detecting) to archaeological mapping, was carefully designed and carried out, following a strict protocol which took advantage of a local tradition: the presence of *mojoneras* (stone markers) on the ground, dividing the fields into *mecates* (20 × 20 m units). This both avoided spatial distortions (checked by GPS), and made it
possible to precisely inventory countless data (registered using the Geographic Information System). Although extremely time-consuming – the total area covered was nearly 12 km², recording 7,677 mapped structures, which included mounds and foundation braces, but excluded platforms and stone-piles (chich) – the mapping study (chap. 2) resulted in the acquisition of hard-to-surpass knowledge regarding the site’s practical reality.

The second essential point that needed to be established was the chronology of habitation, and this was based on the excavation of a representative sample of the settlement components (chaps 3 and 4). It appears that, while people were living in the general area from around 700 BCE until now, about 80 per cent of the site was constructed and occupied during a short period of time: the second half of the Early Classic era (400-630 CE). From there it was possible to cautiously estimate the number of people who lived at the site (chap. 5) and in its hinterland, documented through various regional surveys (chap. 8).

According to Dahlin, Hutson, and their collaborators, Chunchucmil’s existence and that of nearby sites during their apogee poses two sets of problems to which the remainder of the book is dedicated. How could such a large population have supported itself, considering that it was probably not capable of being agriculturally autonomous? While the enlightening soil study in chapter 9 stands out, chapter 7 on the population’s water supply does not really succeed in answering this question. On what resources (especially in the vicinity – chap. 10) could the site and its hinterland have relied to exchange for those they lacked?

Ancient Maya commerce argues that trade was key. However, the model which is proposed is not straightforward. It resembles a game of three-cushion billiards: Chunchucmil with its hypothetical port (Canbalam) would have controlled the salt production in the Celestun region, which could have been exported south, acquiring in exchange obsidian from Chayal. On the other hand, both salt and obsidian along with some other products, exotic or from near the site (shells, for example), could have been traded east to the interior for maize, which the region was not able to produce in sufficient quantities. Therefore, Chunchucmil’s initial success would have been based on its capacity to organize itself as a gateway community within a long-distance maritime trade network (chap. 12).

Finally, according to the volume’s editor, the organization of the trade flows would have been based on a market economy (chaps 12 and 13). This is clearly supported by the discovery of a main marketplace, and coincides well with the absence of a centralized political power, possibly promoting a redistributive system. About fifteen families would have dominated the site, each one at the head of a district or neighbourhood. In fact, Chunchucmil’s political organization and its functioning are crucial subjects that deserve to be discussed in more detail. Moreover, it could be useful to further investigate the possible role that Teotihuacan played in the creation of the maritime commercial route to the west of the Yucatán peninsula around 400 CE. Whatever it was, the Chunchucmil’s success story, although brief, forces us, more than ever, to investigate the economic activities of ancient societies, the Maya in particular.

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URTON, GARY. Inka history in knots: reading khipus as primary sources. xvii, 293 pp., maps, figs, tables, illus., bibliogr. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2017. £23.99 (paper)

Khipus are among the most challenging-to-comprehend recording devices ever created in human history. While the decimal system at the base of their numerical records has been understood since the beginning of the twentieth century, many aspects of their use remain mysterious, and it is still unclear how the knotted cords would have functioned in the administration of the Inka Empire or how they encoded non-numerical information. Gary Urton, Director of the Harvard Khipu Database Project and a leading scholar in the field of khipu studies, sums up the results of his lifelong interest in his most recent book, Inka history in knots. In Urton’s words, khipus do not ‘constitute a three-dimensional cord version of a “true writing system” – i.e., one in which signs denote the sounds of a language’ (p. 238); rather, they are a form of semasiography that employs non-language-based signs. By detaching khipus from writing systems, it becomes possible to get rid of both the ‘alphabetic prejudice’ (p. 9) that prevented sixteenth-century Spaniards from properly understanding and describing khipus, as well as the still-prevalent idea that they represent an imperfect script.

Quite paradoxically, once freed from these theoretical burdens, khipus can be studied as primary historical sources. This forms the most interesting aspect of Urton’s book: while narrative non-decimal khipus might encode a linear,