

CHOICE *connect*

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Anthropology

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Cosmology, calendars, and horizon-based astronomy in ancient Mesoamerica, ed. by Anne S. Dowd and Susan Milbrath. University Press of Colorado, 2015. 380p bibl index afp ISBN 9781607323785, \$80.00; ISBN 9781607323792 ebook, \$65.00.

Mesoamerican astronomical research has come a long way since its early research focus on the documentation of architectural alignments. The field has evolved into a “robust, disciplined, and ... detailed enterprise” represented by the excellent essays in this volume. Theoretical frameworks from many disciplines help decipher the meaning of building complexes and the metaphorical, social, and cultural implications of solstices, the Maya calendar, and the heirophanies noted and celebrated throughout the Maya world. Well-known and respected scholars in their own right, the editors argue for a perspective on Maya practice and ritual that suggests astronomy and cosmology can be thought of “as much in the realm of theater as science.” This collection of well-illustrated interdisciplinary essays places “skywatching” and its practice by the Maya firmly within the embrace of cultural anthropology. In addition to establishing the important role astronomy played in the lives of Mesoamericans and amalgamating the most current research, this volume honors the work of Anthony Aveni, a leading contributor to the field whose work has encouraged others to weave together cosmology, mythology, and anthropology. His influence is clear throughout this book.

--L. De Danaan, *emerita*, Evergreen State College

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.