

Argentine lab) help the reader understand the il/logics of the copy. Is *Lotrial* a copy or a brand? – depends on the locale (114). In Mexico *enalapril* is available as a *similares* (a generic) and Hayden highlights a patient's surprise when "it worked" (158). The other case is of *escitalopram* (US brand name *Lexapro*). Hayden is able to purchase *escitalopram* at a *Farmacias Similares* store as a similar, but not a generic. In fact, all the other pharmacies she visits only have the brand name – *Lexapro* at quadruple the price. What she uncovers is not a counterfeit market, which does exist throughout Mexico and the world, but rather the emergent "branded generics" market. *Escitalopram*, the generic, is being manufactured by Sandos, the maker of brand name pharmaceuticals, as a generic. The "trusted source" of Big Pharma, allows for the branded generic, in this case the similar *escitalopram* to cost more than the generic form of *escitalopram*, which does not exist yet in Mexico. However, miraculously, there was a branded generic form of *escitalopram* on a shelf of *Farmacias Similares* (178–182).

Students and theorists of "pharmapolitics" (199) will benefit greatly from engaging with "The Spectacular Generic." Nevertheless, they may emerge with more questions than answers. That is because Hayden is able to show that pharmapolitics and simipolitics are constantly evolving markets and movements within Mexico and beyond – the copying can be never ending in late capitalism. In the final chapter COVID-19 is making its mark during 2020 and many people are seeking care at generic *farmacias* (versus *Seguro Social* hospitals and clinics) – *Farmacias Similares* are there for care, but also guilty of price gouging on medical masks (198). Hayden leaves us with a candid summary of, then President, López Obrador's political philosophy as it involves the state, oil revenues, and dismantled social programs envisioned to fill gaps of care (e.g., *Seguro Popular*), "populist neoliberalism," and his call for free medicines and care to all – a health system "like that of Canada or the United Kingdom" (199). Obrador stresses this can be paid for by rooting out drug company corruption, monopolies, and price gouging. At the same time the government has to import pediatric cancer drugs from abroad to meet shortages at home to ensure what he calls the "right to health," and also because they are cheaper.

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Hirth, Kenneth, Susan Hirth, George Hasemann, and Gloria Lara-Pinto: *Ritual and Economy in a Pre-Columbian Chiefdom. The El Cajón Region of Honduras.* Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2023. 376 pp. ISBN 978-1-64642-474-0. Price: \$ 111.00

Few archaeological endeavors in southern Central America have been presented in extensive and detailed publications. This is particularly true for Honduras, where archaeological research has focused on the Maya region in the far west of the country. There is only limited detailed information available for non-Maya sites in the western and central parts of the country, and the publication status is even worse for the eastern region of Honduras.

Kenneth Hirth and colleagues present here a comprehensive and detailed study about the Archaeological Project El Cajón, which can be regarded as a milestone in understanding the pre-Hispanic history of Honduras and Central America. Beyond the presentation of archaeological data, the book utilizes the economic archaeological approach of "ritual economy" to understand the pre-Hispanic societies under discussion within the context of very specific ritual and economic practices. In its interdisciplinary nature, comprehensive presentation, and systematic theoretical approach, the book serves as a handbook and provides an excellent presentation of the current state of research on so-called chiefdom societies in Central America.

The book is based on archaeological research conducted by the authors since 1978 in the flooded area of the El Cajón dam, commissioned by and in collaboration with the Honduran heritage authority Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia as well as the state-owned electricity company Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica (ENEE). Initially, there was sufficient funding for the extensive survey and excavation work up to the field campaign in 1981. However, in the subsequent years, only limited resources were available for the project, leading to the necessity of utilizing third-party funds, primarily from various North American institutions, for the analytical work. The University of Kentucky, to which the main author and project director Kenneth Hirth belonged, took the lead in this endeavor. Many employees participants involved in the project later worked in other regions of Central and Mesoamerica, significantly influencing the development of archaeology in Central America.

Based on the presentation of the research results and especially their interpretation, the authors introduce the concept of "ritual economy," which represents a central aspect of the lifestyle and economic practices of the cultures under investigation. Ritual actions are identified as a significant driving force behind cultural activities in the El Cajón region, ensuring cohesion within the society and the overall settlement system. In addressing this theme, the terminologies are also formulated in reverse order, namely as "economy of ritual." Both concepts highlight that at the core of societal activities were actions evidently aimed at acquiring valuable ritual ob-

jects from distant regions and using them in ceremonies within central facilities at the investigated sites.

For understanding the sociopolitical development in the El Cajón region, the concept of “chiefdom” is significant. This political organizational form is characteristic of pre-Hispanic societies in Central America and differs from many more hierarchically organized complex societies of neighboring Mesoamerica. However, the term “chiefdom” does not allow for a precise definition; rather, it describes a broad spectrum of societal forms characterized by varying degrees of complexity, hierarchy, centrality, and monumentality. To contextualize the developments in the El Cajón area, the emergence of chiefdoms is traced using available data from Honduras spanning from the Formative period (starting around 1600 BCE) to the end of the pre-Hispanic era (around 1500 CE).

The study area is defined by the regions affected by the flooding of the El Cajón dam and the immediately adjacent surrounding mountains. The ecology of the region is described in the book based on investigations by a team of geoscientists. In the study area, all visible pre-Hispanic settlements were recorded through a regional survey. From the distribution of these settlements and a four-tiered settlement hierarchy, regional settlement patterns and their changes over time are derived. The largest and most prominent settlement center is the site of Salitrón Viejo, characterized by large platform constructions of various types. Within this center, the La Iglesia Precinct stands out, identified by its ceremonial area and elite residences. Other major settlements in the study area include La Intendencia, Cueva Grande, La Ceiba, and Guarabuquí.

The cultural development of Salitrón Viejo reached its peak with a maximum of construction and ceremonial activity during the late Sulaco Period (600–1000 CE), coinciding with the flourishing of the neighboring Classic Maya civilization. Salitrón Viejo features the largest assemblages of ceramics and the most offerings of jade and other valuable materials of any site from this period, interpreted as evidence of ritual activities. Similar to the Maya area during the “Maya Collapse,” settlement activity in the El Cajón area also ceased around 1000 CE, and the region was abandoned. The reasons for the end of settlement activity in El Cajón, like in the Maya region, are still not definitively understood.

The most intensive excavations took place in the Iglesia Precinct, which contains the largest architectural groups of the main site of Salitrón Viejo. Apparently, a significant portion of the ritual activities was concentrated here. The development of the building complexes is clarified through architectural stratigraphy, ceramic analysis, and radiocarbon dating. The architecture, consisting of stone, adobe bricks, platforms, as well as wattle and daub construction, is described in detail. A

notable feature within the building complex was a platform constructed in the Talud/Tablero style, a typical architectural form from Teotihuacán in the highlands of Mexico. Within the Iglesia Precinct, evidence of ritual activities was abundant, including censers, areas for food preparation, and notably, a multitude of jade object deposits.

A particularly detailed analysis is dedicated to the objects found in many sacrificial deposits made of greenstone (jade) and other valuable materials such as marble, obsidian, and flint. These objects are crucial for understanding the settlement and cultural development of the region and form the core of what is referred to as ritual economy. The objects were not grave goods but intentionally deposited sacrificial offerings. Nowhere else in Central America have so many offerings (a total of 3204) with confirmed archaeological context been excavated. These objects were demonstrably not locally produced but were all imported from mostly distant regions. This circumstance underscores the eminent importance of economic aspects in relation to the research in El Cajón.

Jade, an extremely difficult material to work with, was highly esteemed in Mesoamerica and held special symbolic significance as a fertility symbol. As a result of the analysis, formal categories are defined: beads, pendants, earflares, and others. A particular category includes what are known as “Hunchback pendants.” Hunchbacked individuals were believed to possess special spiritual powers. In addition to the sparsely illustrated monograph described here, the authors published a detailed study on the stone artifacts titled “The Pre-Columbian Lapidary Art of Salitrón Viejo, Honduras” (<<https://journals.psu.edu/opa/article/view/63318>> [16.07.2024]). The detailed analysis of the distribution patterns of ritual deposits in Salitrón Viejo underscores the authors’ hypothesis that much of the social life in the El Cajón region revolved around the acquisition of such valuable materials and their deposition in connection with ritual activities. Ritual economy is thus considered a part of the broader extensive exchange of goods.

The peak of the ritual economy occurred during the period of strongest population growth and most intensive construction activity in the study area. Feasting, which involved the deposition, celebration, consumption, and drinking in the context of such ritual objects, was an important mechanism for fostering societal cohesion. Feasting, combined with monumental architecture, is interpreted as an expression of societal complexity. All valuable objects were obtained through trade from distant regions. This ritual economy thus represented a significant societal endeavor that defined societal cohesion and individuals’ positions within society. However, it remains unclear which goods from

the El Cajón region were exchanged as equivalents for the valuable ritual objects. Possible trade items include feathers from tropical birds, cacao, cotton textiles, charcoal, and other trade goods.

Honduras is described in the book as an ideal cultural region for studying the development of chiefdoms. Ritual practices evidently played a central role in these societies. Accordingly, the acquisition of valuable ritual objects was a key aspect of economic activities. It is emphasized that even in the relatively small settlement centers of southern Central America, compared to the major centers of Mesoamerica, a considerable effort was dedicated to ritual activities. Therefore, ritual activities were the decisive factor for integrating members of society and settlements in the region. Rituals played a crucial role in fostering cohesion and community integration within these societies.

The publication presented here can be considered exemplary for studies in southern Central America. Impressively, the work maintains a consistently systematic and clear structure. Starting with considerations of general economic theory, with a particular focus on “ritual economy,” the authors transition to general social theory to illuminate the organizational form of chiefdoms in detail. The cultural history of southern Central America in general, and that of western and central Honduras in particular, is excellently summarized. The authors further approach the central theme through an examination of ecological conditions, a description of settlement patterns, the architecture of the main site Salitrón Viejo, focusing on the central precinct La Iglesia, and finally, with great detail, describe the most important finds – specifically, the jade artifacts within their ritual context. The publication presents a comprehensive and well-structured analysis that contributes significantly to our understanding of the archaeology and culture of southern Central America.

This is a very convincing approach to analyzing an extremely complex archaeological finding. Based on the specific analysis of surveying and excavation results, as well as the examination of artifact materials, the authors are able to unlock the entire panorama of the pre-Hispanic lifeworld of the El Cajón region, thereby making a significant contribution to our understanding of Central American cultures. The study benefits from the scale and systematic execution of the project, involving numerous contributors and employing an interdisciplinary approach. The book can be regarded as an exceptionally current handbook on non-Maya archaeology in Honduras, serving as an excellent and up-to-date guide to relevant literature in southern Central America.

It is regrettable that, despite the richness of detail in the descriptions of architecture and artifact materials, there is so little graphic documentation presented of the finds and features. Although this was provided for

the lapidary art through an online publication, many interesting details regarding architecture and the large quantities of analyzed ceramics remain hidden from the reader, except for two partial publications on ceramics. Finally, it should be noted that the lead author, Kenneth Hirth, has published a very interesting diary about the El Cajón project (<<https://journals.psu.edu/opa/article/view/63316>> [16.07.2024]).

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Homola, Stéphanie: *The Art of Fate Calculation. Practicing Divination in Taipei, Beijing, and Kaifeng.* New York: Berghahn, 2023. 304 pp. ISBN 978-1-80073-812-6. (Asian Anthropologies, 14) Price: \$ 145.00

This book provides a new perspective on the practice of divination within the Chinese cultural sphere, offering a detailed description of the interaction between divination and the world of everyday life. In the author's view, divination is less about a belief system under a unified worldview and more about diviners using specific skills in particular contexts to help people understand both significant and minor issues in life and to make decisions.

Selection of Field Sites: Taipei, Beijing, and Kaifeng – In choosing the field sites, the author selected cities that are not only prominent within the Chinese cultural sphere but also representative: Taipei, Beijing, and Kaifeng. In the 1990s, a “fortune-telling fever” emerged in Taipei, characterized by extensive media coverage, commercial divination services, and the use of modern technology. This trend played a significant role in popularizing divination knowledge. As a form of traditional knowledge, divination seeks to adapt to the Western modern knowledge system through professionalization and intellectualization, aiming for dissemination in an academic framework of standardized training.

Beijing, being at the center of power and decision-making, poses sensitive issues regarding the legitimacy of diviners and related practitioners. However, the state allows the commodification of “lucky culture” in and around religious sites. From “national studies” to folk culture, and even to the literature of Jianghu society, divination finds survival strategies for legitimization, thriving within the cultural domain of the grassroots society without having to choose sides in the opposition between science and superstition.

Kaifeng, located in the Central Plains, is the birthplace of the I Ching's sixty-four hexagrams and home to a large number of divination practitioners, academic experts, and amateur enthusiasts. In Kaifeng, the author observed a wide range of divination practices in cities, temples, streets, and specialized fortune-telling venues. She noted the presence of a large number of invisible