



Book Reviews

TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE: ROCK ART AND THE MISSISSIPPIAN COSMOS, EDITED BY CAROL DIAZ-GRANADOS, JAN SIMEK, GEORGE SABO III AND MARK WAGNER

Oxbow Books, American Landscapes Book 4. 2018. 288pp, 36 maps, 77 photographs, 47 drawings, 6 diagrams, 13 tables, pb, ISBN. 978-1-78570-628-8, £38.00

Dedicated to Dr Fred Coy, co-founder of Eastern States Rock Art Research Association (ESRARA), this volume draws together the work of several scholars whose aim it is to reconstruct the pre-contact Mississippian landscape context of rock art. This is rare in American rock art scholarship. For that, I commend the authors for their efforts. The volume's chapters encompass the greater south-eastern region of the United States. While the main focus is the Mississippian period, named for the state-level society originating in the Mississippi Valley and ultimately spreading throughout the eastern woodlands and prairies of North America, readers will find it useful to be familiar with the broader timeline of North American history:

Paleo-Indian	10500–8000 BC
Archaic	8000–1000 BC
Woodland	1000 BC–AD 1000
Mississippian	1000–1600 AD
Protohistoric or Colonial	1500–1700
Historic or Post-Colonial	1700–present

The first chapter, 'Materiality and cultural landscapes in Native America', by George Sabo III and Jan F. Simek, provides the overarching theoretical framework for the whole text, drawing on Bender (1993), Ashmore & Knapp (1999), and Tilley (1994) for their core landscape theory. By citing widespread examples from North and Central America, the authors intend 'to demonstrate that the materialization of religious ideology was a hemisphere-wide practice, one that was ubiquitous in Native America...This survey will, we hope, demonstrate not just the utility but the imperative of including the cultural landscapes created by people in any attempt to understand the archaeology of ancient America' (p.3). Indeed, I would argue that this would place the sites in a world-wide context. After discussing examples of materiality (religious ideas made visible and manifest in the landscape) from California, Central America, the American Southwest, the North-eastern Woodlands and the Midwestern prairies, Sabo and Simek sum up, 'Landscape modification reflecting materialized ideology is a ubiquitous aspect of humane experience.

Moreover, it comprises hard archaeological evidence for ancient religious beliefs, subject to the usual requirements for rigorous data acquisition and analysis that characterizes all archaeological work' (p.28). A crucial component in the analysis is ethnographic data, something each author incorporates in the subsequent chapters.

James Duncan and Carol Diaz-Granados contribute two chapters to the volume based on their ground-breaking work in Missouri. Chapter 2, 'The Big Five Petroglyph Sites: Their Place on the Landscape and Relation to Their Creators', is a brilliant and ambitious summary of their work since the early 1990s, focusing on five key rock art sites located near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. There is some of the earliest rock art scholarship to incorporate ethnographic research, particularly that of the Osage and their Dhegihan-speaking relations. They present a thoughtful discussion linking iconography in rock art to cosmological symbols, such as vulvar motifs and serpents found in the southern-most sites with First Woman (Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies or Grandmother), or aviamorphs, bi-lobed arrow motifs, axes, and maces in the northern-most sites with male figures such as First Man, Symbolic Man or 'Hawk', the Morning Star, his nephews, the Thunderers, Stone, and/or the Gray or Dark Wolf. They also argue for the differentiation of the various circle motifs found in Mississippian art: the 'petaloid' circle (the upper world), the quartered circle or circle with cross (the middle world), and the whirling cross (the lower world). This chapter applies landscape theory at multi-site level.

Duncan and Diaz-Granados also contributed the third chapter, 'Landscape, Cosmology, and the Old Woman: A Strong Feminine Presence', that expands on their discussion in Chapter 2 about First Woman (Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies or Grandmother), based on their ethnographic information. Not just rock art, but also pottery and sculpture dated to the Mississippian period are linked to this supernatural figure. The authors conclude that the 'Big Five' petroglyph sites discussed in both chapters show a gendered orientation, with images related to First Woman predominating in the southern sites, the direction of death, her vulva being 'the portal where the dead begin their journey' (p.61). While this chapter includes a fair number of images, most readers will probably want more in order to understand the authors' references in their regional summary.

In Chapter 4, 'Petroglyphs, Portals, and People Along the Eastern Ozark Escarpment, Arkansas', George Sabo III, Jerry E. Hilliard, Jami J. Lockhart, and Leslie C. Walker, present their latest findings in the Arkansas Rock Art Project. The authors understand that most readers are not familiar with their region or history, so they offer a concise summary of their earlier publications. This chapter discusses three different sites on the Eastern Ozark Escarpment. Based on proximity and iconography, the authors argue their three sites were likely created during the Greenbriar phase of Mississippian culture (c. 1450–1600) (p.94). I readily agree with the authors that more

sites need to be included in order to substantiate their ideas to more fully delineate a cultural landscape.

In Chapter 5, 'Transformed Spaces: A Landscape Approach to the Rock Art of Illinois', Mark J. Wagner, Kayleigh Sharp and Jonathan Remo discuss primarily two sites and their surrounding region. This chapter offers a rigorous application of landscape theory, where the authors define their terms such as 'occurrences' (instead of sites), Optimized Hot Spot analysis and viewshed or intervisibility analysis. They provide several maps generated with GIS software that show the relationship of the rock art sites to local 'occurrences' through the Archaic, Woodland and Mississippian periods between the Millstone Bluff and Fountain Bluff cultural zones. They also recreated the history of flood events that would have theoretically shaped the ritual landscape, where certain landforms, including Fountain Bluff, would have always remained above the floodwaters. It will be interesting to see what will happen when they apply these methods to a broader sample of rock art sites.

Jan F. Simek, Alan Cressler, and B. Bart Henson offer an ambitious analysis of rock art across three south-eastern states in Chapter 6, 'Prehistoric Rock Art, Social Boundaries, and Cultural Landscapes on the Cumberland Plateau of Southeast North America'. This eloquently written regional survey focuses on both open-air and dark zone sites in Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. After brief regional geographic history of Cumberland Plateau, the authors discuss art of Kentucky (northern-most) first, then Alabama (southern-most) whose body of rock art differs markedly, then finally Tennessee, where most of the dark zone art is, and which shares characteristics of their northern and southern neighbours. Kentucky rock art is predominantly petroglyphs in open-air sites, usually featuring anthropomorphs and wildlife, but no serpents. Cave art is found in Kentucky, but not as much as in Tennessee. Alabama yields considerably more pictograph sites than Kentucky. Iconography is widely varied but the most common are geometric images, followed by animals and anthropomorphs. While Kentucky sites often had animal tracks, these are rarer in Alabama, but serpents are 'well-represented' (p.173). Bart Henson, the primary scholar of Alabama rock art, 'noted that pictograph sites and petroglyphs sites were spatially segregated' (p.78). In Tennessee, pictographs vastly outnumber petroglyphs in open air sites, constituting more than 70% of recorded sites (p.182). But Tennessee is justly famous for its prehistoric cave art, since the world's most extensive caves are found here. Over 50 sites have been recorded. Subject matter in cave art is similar to open air, but many more bird images are found in dark zone art, as are serpents. The latter are expected in cave art, but the presence of aviaforms is described by the authors as 'a bit perplexing' (p.187). To explain the spatial distribution of rock art in Tennessee, the authors posit the notion that open air and dark zone art 'are two complimentary aspects of a larger physical landscape modification' (p.189). In their discussion, the authors point out that the presence or absence of suitable surfaces for open

air and approachable spaces for cave art is not rare. Sites are chosen, in their opinion, where 'open sites are stacked *above* cave sites' [emphasis original] (p.191). The authors conclude by suggesting that Tennessee's 'cosmological landscape' extends into Kentucky and Alabama, although other landscapes can be detected further north and south. The regional analysis and conclusions at the end of the chapter needed a map to support the points made, but this is an ambitious analysis of a large and varied region.

In the final chapter, 'Betwixt and Between: The Occurrence of Petroglyphs Between Townhouses of the Living and Townhouses of Spirit Beings in Northern Georgia and Western North Carolina', Johannes Loubser, Scott Ashcraft and James Wettstaed set out to prove (1) that many petroglyphs sites are located along trails connecting inhabited river valleys and mountain tops or old mound sites, and (2) the content of this rock art shows a belief system where the visible and invisible worlds connect (p.200). All rock art sites in Georgia and South Carolina are found in the mountainous regions to the northwest. Their argument is weakened by the fact that the Track Rock Gap and Witches Nest sites are the only ones discussed where the petroglyphs are still in their original locations. The other boulders discussed were moved to their current locations for their protection. For all but two of these 'captive' boulders, their original locations are only approximately known. Ethnographic analysis of the surviving rock art focused on the central religious practice described as going-to-water, a purification and renewal ceremony. Central beliefs include the idea that spirit beings are physically hidden from view behind veils or rock or water, that there are seven directions, each with their own properties, and that the cosmos is organized in three tiers. Key supernatural figures include the *Uktena* (Giant Serpent or Horned Serpent), the Little People, and Judaculla or the Master of Game. Key sites, such as Track Rock Gap in Georgia and the Judaculla Rock in North Carolina, are interpreted in light of these stories. Petroglyph sites located along known trails are suggested to connect the townhouses or mounds of the people living on the floodplains below to the townhouses of spirit beings in the mountains. Others are interpreted to be maps, such as the Judaculla Rock from North Carolina. More images or conceptual maps would have really helped support the authors' argument.

While this volume is critical to the development of American rock art discourse, and makes significant contributions, I did feel it needed two things: (1) a deeper discussion about landscape theory and methodology, and (2) more images. For this first point, several chapters use terms like space, place, centre, and boundary slightly differently, or substitute other terms such as node or nodal without defining them. I also felt a need for a clearer discussion about the issues of scale in landscape theory. George Sabo III and Jan Simek set out the goals of the volume, and outlining the scholarship to date but they draw primarily on the theoretical interpretations of other archaeologists. I would have liked to see them go deeper, to include particularly the work of human geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1974, 1977) or Kent Ryden (1993). An excellent work

regarding the implications of scale would be Carol Crumley and William Marquardt's work in the Burgundy region (1987). As to the second point, I absolutely understand the dilemma every editor must face regarding images: how many to include, how many in colour vs. black and white, and how to get the necessary permissions. Lack of images weakened the author(s) arguments, in my opinion, or at least weakened my understanding of their essential points. Despite these lacunae, I commend the editors for their daring vision and timely contribution to American rock art scholarship.

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