

the past, and they advance knowledge about associations among practices of warfare, sociopolitical complexity, and the consequences of warfare as enacted on multiple scales across past landscapes.

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***Life at the Margins of the State: Comparative Landscapes from the Old and New Worlds.* Alicia M. Boswell and Kyle A. Knabb, editors. 2022. University Press of Colorado, Louisville. xiii + 251 pp. \$67.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-64642-294-4. \$53.00 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-64642-295-1.**

David Pacifico

Department of Art History, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, USA

This volume asserts that margins only look marginal from the center; hegemonic cores and subaltern peripheries are mutually constitutive and of equal import. It demonstrates that complexity comes in many forms, and that prioritizing landscapes uncovers “counter narratives” (p. 4) to political hegemony that reveal “shadow polities” (pp. 3, 239) in the interstices between centralized states. Its goal is to retheorize complexity, unpack conceptual distinctions between cores and peripheries, and interrogate landscapes. To do so, it presents decentered perspectives to regional studies, new directions in settlement pattern analysis, alternative approaches to the directionality of power, reconfigured expectations about statehood and subjects, updated interrogations of heterarchy, and fresh takes on peer-polity interactions and secondary state formation.

In their introductory chapter, Bradley J. Parker, Alicia M. Boswell, and Kyle A. Knabb state that margins are “the crucibles of historical change” (p. 3). Geographical and political marginality go together and inevitably turn assumptions about political complexity “on their head (p.4, 140).” They argue that marginalized groups leverage the landscape to assert agency, manage internal hierarchies, maintain identity, and negotiate with hegemonic, centralized neighbors from positions of grassroots power.

In southern Jordan, Knabb explores an Iron Age (1200–586 BC) periphery defined by its rugged topography. Seminomadic agropastoralists exploited the landscape to avoid entanglements with neighboring Edomite societies undergoing centralization and stratification. Mobile subsistence allowed the population to avoid detection, attack, and demands for tribute from emerging state authorities. Selective engagement by seminomadic groups is evident from occasional Edomite ceramics found within peripheral settlements.

In her case study about the Moche Valley in Peru, Boswell argues that a group known as the Collambay leveraged natural and built environments to manage Chimú imperial expansion into their territory between AD 900 and 1470. The Collambay occupied the mountainous *chaupiyunga*, a crossroads of maritime and highland goods in northern Peru. They practiced political appeasement by facilitating and controlling the exchange of goods with the Chimú. Collambay landscape modifications—including funerary monuments, symbolic walls, and surveillance settlements—concretized Collambay territorial control and identity, thereby preserving their political and cultural center.

Medieval Iceland (ca. AD 870–1300) was squeezed between two competing empires—Britain and Denmark—while pursuing its own independence. Tara D. Carter measures economic activity there as “a proxy for . . . social relationships within and between” (p. 74) Icelanders and empires. Settlement and production patterns show that rural Icelanders in the “congested countryside”

(p. 80) produced both subsistence and surplus goods that flowed through internationally linked nodes. In this way, locals managed the transformation of Iceland into a secondary state.

The archaeology of Llanos de Mojos, Bolivia, seriously challenges our preconceived social and political categories, according to John H. Walker. For most of the history of indigenous occupation of the region, it was a low-density population center unto itself without any neighboring centralized states. Agricultural and population intensification were autochthonous political choices in the context of contact between “Arawak farmers [and] . . . non-Arawak speakers, farmers, fishers, and foresters” (p. 112). It was complex, but it was neither a refuge from nor contested space between centralized polities.

According to Esteban Gómez, in El Salvador, outside Spanish colonial state-administered core areas, Indigenous burial practices *within* church contexts demonstrate the bold endurance of Indigenous agency during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Despite dramatic demographic changes, postcolonial local agency remained so firmly intact that colonial material culture was appropriated, “controlled, managed, and maintained” (p. 132) by Indigenous people for Indigenous interests.

Among the supposedly simple Mojave Yuman and Santa Barbara Channel Chumash, Erin M. Smith and Mikael Fauvelle find overlooked military and economic complexities before and during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mojave Yuman groups “organize[d] extremely large and complex military expeditions” (p. 148), managed trade routes, and engaged in slaving. The Chumash managed a massive shell bead industry that spanned much of the US Southwest. The authors conclude that these southern California cases demonstrate that both hierarchical and heterarchical societies can manifest complexity in unexpected ways.

Focusing on an area at the edge of the Maya world in Mesoamerica during the Classic period (AD 250–900), Claire Novotny finds that rural residents saw themselves as central players in regional social landscapes. Archaeology at Kaq’ru’ Ha’ in the Maya Mountains region of southern Belize shows that domestic practices continuously, but selectively, engaged with regional power centers. Consequently, identity formation in the Maya hinterlands was a persistent negotiation between power centers and rural settlements with significant degrees of autonomy.

Scott MacEachern emphasizes the difficulty of distinguishing cores and peripheries. The emergence of the Wandala state (AD 1500–1900) in the Lake Chad Basin in Africa is marked by the appearance of novel architecture for chiefly residences. However, these structures emerged *within* a landscape populated by non-Wandala “*montagnards*.” Wandala and *montagnard* societies reinforced and facilitated one another’s genesis through their “pulling apart” (p. 207) to create distinct societies sharing the very same territory.

Elena A. A. Garcea finds cogenesis, too, along the Nile River. During the fourth and fifth millennia BC, Nubian lands and peoples were never passive vassals of Egyptian hegemony. Instead, they were an essential part in the development of Egyptian state society. The nomadic pastoralism of Nubian populations complemented and facilitated the growth of sedentary, agricultural Egyptian societies and their famous centralized states.

Parker’s epilogue returns to the idea of the “shadow state” (p. 239) and the borderland as loci of hitherto underappreciated social and political innovations. As scholars continue to tread into complicated conceptual territory to reconstruct the ancient world, *Life at the Margins of the State* will provide guidance in developing novel accounts of power, place, and people in the past.

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