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rative program in place, Urcid focuses on the patterns that emerge from the epigraphic contexts and is able to corroborate repetitions of calendrical and personal names in the various carved fragments. As a result, he adeptly confirms the logographic nature of the script, and at the same time shows us the value of understanding the original context of artifacts before we leap into an interpretative mode.

The book is a revival of the author's 1992 doctoral thesis, with little modification of the academic structure required for a dissertation. Fortunately, Urcid's argumentation is seamless and his writing fluid, so this point is at once lost by the reader who has everything well explained and illustrated. In terms of structure, I would have preferred that the series of glyphs he has compiled for each day of the 20-day calendar be presented together in Appendix I, along with their sources. Having these illustrations dispersed throughout the book makes them harder to consult at a glance, and from an epigraphers point of view, an easily accessible dictionary of glyphs is a useful tool.

We still have a long way to go before Zapotec script is deciphered; however, Urcid has given us a solid foundation upon which to build. He predicts that a future understanding of the script will require three levels of analysis: identifying the pictographic elements, decoding the speech embedded in the glyphs, and then comprehending what the message means. His comparative and contextual method has shed a great deal of light on the first level; however, much work needs to be done before we can elucidate the encoded speech. My hope is that this superb book will inspire a new generation of epigraphers to unlock the ancient voices contained in those texts.

Cultivated Landscapes of Middle America on the Eve of the Conquest. THOMAS M. WHITMORE and B. L. TURNER II. Oxford Geographical and Environmental Studies, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001. xviii + 311 pp., figures, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Vernon L. Scarborough, University of Cincinnati and the Laboratory of Anthropology at the Museum of New Mexico.

The authors of this volume had the charge to write a book that convincingly and compellingly documented what is known or understood about the engineered landscape across ancient Mesoamerica immediately prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the early sixteenth century. The volume completes a trilogy examining the New World for this Oxford University Press series. The other two books with encyclopedic coverage are by

William Doolittle (North America) and William Denevan (South America). Together, these books comprise our most comprehensive record of Native American agricultural practices concentrated in one set of volumes. As David Harris states in the foreword, "The unifying theme of this remarkable trilogy is its focus on the agricultural landscapes of the Americas 'on the eve of the conquest', and the scale and comprehensiveness of the undertaking is enormously impressive."

Mesoamerica can be viewed as a distinct subcontinent in a manner not unlike India, except that the isolating barrier of the Himalayas is substituted by the arid Gran Chichimeca to the north and the triangular peninsular tip of Tamal-speaking southern India is exchanged for the constricting isthmus of lower Central America. When compared to the landmass of other continents to the north and south, Mesoamerica is indeed diminutive-but NOT in terms of biophysical and cultural diversity. Because of the convergence of several active tectonic plates and the uplifted Yucatan peninsular limestone, the environmental diversity and richness is great. When viewed as the land bridge between two continents, the complexity of both animal and plant associations is nearly as varied as the cultural adaptations human populations made to them. This book is about agricultural landscapes associated with settled populations, though it attempts to restrict itself to the Late Postclassic Period or the final chapter of indigenous development before the last half-millennium of global hybridity.

The authors present a descriptive account of the varied multifunctional agricultural systems found in ancient Mesoamerica. They indicate the difficulties in attempting to categorize the variability, but provide a useful set of functional criteria for assessing the divisions offered. The five principal chapters of the book are each devoted to one of these agricultural adaptations. Arborculture and horticulture are the first treated and show the presence of a widespread and frequently more than supplemental food source, especially when cacao orchards were cultivated along the Xoconusco of coastal Chiapas and Guatemala. They also point to the long-term culling of non-economic plants from natural stands in producing an agroforestry of eatable and otherwise useful tree products and related flora particularly apparent in the Classic Period Maya Lowlands.

Rainfed cultivation is described as the most commonly employed agricultural practice and identified as either swidden, *conuco*, or *temporal*. Archaeological signatures for these three types of cultivation practices are frequently invisible, though *conuco* plots can involve considerable shallow mound preparation. The authors show that *temporal* cropping is a nearly annual activity for as many as 10 years when associated with root crops, like *conuco* use in the Antilles, but followed

by a period of fallow nearly as long as the period of soil productivity.

Terrace cultivation was a broadly incorporated farming practice as it remains today. B. L. Turner is especially knowledgeable about these systems as he is one of the first scholars to bring them to the attention of a broad professional audience, particularly in the Maya area. The typology for functionally identifying terraces is complicated, but the authors attempt to organize this divisioning by identifying (1) slope-field or contour terraces, (2) formal horizontal planting beds or bench terraces, and (3) cross-channel terraces that trap sediments and moisture in low-energy, intermittent drainages or weirs that direct flood waters outside the drainages.

Irrigated cultivation appears less widely in Mesoamerica when compared to the sophisticated systems in the Old World or Peru. In fact, Doolittle (*Canal Irrigation in Prehistoric Mexico: The Sequence of Technological Change*, 1990) makes the point that the Hohokam canal systems of Arizona were far more complex than those of Mesoamerica. Without sizable river systems with shallow gradients and broad floodplains, canalized field systems remained relatively small. Nevertheless, clever landscaping did combine terracing with several of the techniques already mentioned to accommodate the food production requirements of the sizable precolumbian populations projected. Whitmore and Turner carefully assess canal distributions and further demonstrate the relatively limited amount of formal canal irrigation, even within the Basin of Mexico.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the book is the examination of wetland cultivation. Although the authors argue persuasively that formal *chinampa* field systems were the pinnacle of agricultural success for Mesoamerica, best represented in the Basin of Mexico but perhaps as extensive and complex in portions of West Mexico, they understate the significance of the many variations of wetland cultivation. Recessional and subsurface cultivation, coupled with intensive wetland cultivation, were the evolutionary backdrop for *chinampas*; these former systems were likely as productive. Whitmore and Turner reserve the term "*chinampa*" as a special type of wetland cultivation practiced primarily in the Aztec Period in the Basin of Mexico. Regardless, wetland cultivation must be considered the great cultivation legacy of Mesoamerica and one of the most productive food generating landscapes known for the preindustrial world.

Whitmore and Turner have produced a fine addition to the cultural ecological literature. The authors accomplish what they intended. My only hesitation is the absence of a comprehensive discussion of the cultural processes that likely stimulated the "changes in the

landscape" (Cronon, *Changes in the Landscape: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, 1983). But that is perhaps another book.

Cultivated Landscapes of Native America and the Andes. WILLIAM M. DENEVAN. Oxford University Press, New York, 2001. xxx + 396 pp., figures, tables, appendices, bibliography, index. \$120.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Clark L. Erickson, University of Pennsylvania.

This volume is the culmination of a lifelong research and publication project on indigenous agriculture in South America. Author William Denevan provides a detailed and mature survey of the insights of cultural geographers, archaeologists, ethnographers, historians, ecologists, ethnobotanists, and agronomists who have dedicated their lives to understanding the origins, forms, contexts, functions, history, and meaning of indigenous agriculture. Denevan is the best person to write this massive, comprehensive survey because of his personal extensive fieldwork on raised fields, terraces, and agroforestry management in Nicaragua, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Denevan's mentors were Carl Sauer and James Parsons, two influential cultural geographers of the Berkeley School, and this book continues this tradition of fieldwork-based investigation that draws on the strengths of multiple disciplines. As many of my colleagues and I can attest, Denevan's knowledge, mentorship, and critical insights have influenced two generations of scholars.

This book is a tribute to the indigenous knowledge systems of South America, which developed over thousands of generations of farmers who not only occupied and cultivated their land, but also transformed the landscape completely through their daily activities. Denevan's focus on the "more visible" aspects of indigenous agriculture, which left an indelible material imprint on the land, provides a valuable perspective to understand these technologies. In many of the cases discussed, the people have long disappeared and the agricultural systems have been abandoned. Neglected by chroniclers, historians, and ethnographers, the describing, classifying, interpreting, and "reading" of the physical structure of archaeological landscapes often provides the only means by which to understand them.

Although versions of most chapters have been previously published, Denevan has updated and rewritten them to address the recent methods, research, interpretations, and debate. Chapters 1-3 provide a detailed introduction to fields, crops, tools, and indigenous techniques. Chapters 4-6 discuss the groundbreaking

COPYRIGHT: © 2003 by the Society for American Archaeology. Recommend this journal. Email your librarian or administrator to recommend adding this journal to your organisation's collection. PDF | On Mar 1, 2004, Vernon L. Scarborough and others published Cultivated Landscapes of Middle America on the Eve of Conquest | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. The human-environment conditions in the Americas 'on the eve of the conquest', and the scale and comprehensiveness of the undertaking is enormously impressive." Mesoamerica can be viewed as a distinct subcontinent. Focusing on Middle America, this book completes a trilogy which has made the most comprehensive survey ever achieved of pre-Columbian agriculture and culture throughout the continents. The human-environment conditions in the Americas on the eve of the sixteenth-century European conquest have of late attracted growing interest in both academic and public circles. Focusing on Middle America, this book completes a trilogy which has made the most comprehensive survey ever achieved of pre-Columbian agriculture and culture throughout the continents. It addresses the question of what lands were permanently occupied; how they were used; and what the environmental and social implications of this use were.