

BOOK REVIEW



Ancestral Landscapes of the Pueblo World by James E. Snead. 256 pp., 4 illustrations, 16 maps, Acknowledgments, Index, References Cited. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2008. \$45.00 (Cloth). ISBN 978-0-8165-2308-5.

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In *Ancestral Landscapes of the Pueblo World*, James Snead encourages Southwest archaeologists to treat “Pueblo landscapes as meaningful places rather than as abstract spaces” (p. 25). Accordingly, he uses three landscape tropes—provision, identity, and movement—to discuss and compare five study areas in the northern Rio Grande: Burnt Corn, T’obimpaenge, Tsikwaiye, Los Aguajes, and Tsankawi. Snead opens his deftly written, elegantly organized book with a brief review of British and American landscape literature, sorting contemporary approaches into three categories: phenomenology, history, and historical ethnography. After critiquing all of these, he proposes a “contextual” approach involving “deep mapping,” “community scale,” and “integrative perspective.”

In Chapter 2, “Histories,” Snead situates his work with respect to Ancestral Pueblo scholarship, seamlessly weaving together review and critique. He provides an overview of temporal developments in the northern Rio Grande and a brief description of each of the study areas. Encompassing fieldwork undertaken between 1992 and 2006, Snead’s Ancestral Pueblo Community Study includes his dissertation research (Tsikwaiye, ca. 1325–1375, and T’obimpaenge, ca. 1275–1375), more recent projects (Burnt Corn, ca. 1270–1302, and Los Aguajes, ca. 1450–1500), and trails-oriented work at Tsankawi (ca. 1350–1500). Using anthropological literature as his guide, Snead arbitrarily defines each community core as the area within a 2 km radius of the primary habitation structure. Each of his five study areas was occupied relatively briefly; each was peripheral to one or more larger settlements; each represents a different ecological zone.

In Chapter 3, “Provision,” Snead examines agricultural strategies and land tenure, arguing that we must try to separate environmental and economic decisions from social and political factors. Snead’s data suggest farming was organized at the family level. Snead separates field houses into shelters for temporary use and more durable structures for long-term use; the latter may be of stone or wood. At Burnt Corn, a suitable dryland farming locale, Snead found very few

agricultural features. At Tsikwaiye, atop the Caja del Rio Plateau where there is no permanent water, Snead recorded field houses of all types. At T'obimpaenge, in the rich valley of the Rito Sarco, field houses were of the substantial stone variety. Snead argues that T'obimpaenge field houses represent the symbolic appropriation and maintenance of high-quality lands in the face of competition.

In Chapter 4, "Identity," Snead addresses how "humans project their concerns onto the natural environment" (p. 81) through public architecture, formal shrines, and rock art. He reviews cosmological ideas—cardinal directions, center place, and emergence—that find physical and metaphorical expression on Tewa and Keres landscapes. Although Snead's community houses differ in specific respects, they all are located where multiple factors come together—arable land, visibility, defensibility, and symbolic associations with water and prominent hills. Snead pays particular attention to the locations and characteristics of shrines and rock art, which change over time. He interprets variability in terms of internal and external community competition. Rock art and shrines along access routes may be for boundary maintenance, intended for outsiders' views, whereas elaborate Classic period directional shrines emphasize collective community identities meant to hold factional farming families together.

In Chapter 5, "Movement," Snead focuses on the trail system in and around Tsankawi on the Pajarito Plateau. Paths are rich in Pueblo symbolism, but they are notoriously difficult to study archaeologically. Trails worn in the tuff bedrock near Tsankawi are exceptionally well-preserved and exhibit associated features such as stairs, berms, cairns, and petroglyphs. Snead argues convincingly that Classic period travelers continued to use a trail network dating from the earlier Coalition period. He further suggests that "guard pueblos" situated at strategic points are yet another indication of "a competitive climate" (p. 132). The reader may have begun to detect—correctly—that competition is the organizing principle behind Snead's interpretations, and indeed this is the subject of his concluding chapter (Chapter 6). Snead views Ancestral Pueblo society as one of continually negotiated contradictions, in which "competition—between people, groups, communities, and perhaps larger social entities" is a "central tension running through a social order that arose in a land of scarcity" (p. 134).

Snead writes with erudite aplomb, but in a clear style easily accessible for both a professional and a lay audience. Although Snead makes excellent use of a wide array of ethnographic and ethnohistoric sources, it would be laudable if, in the next phase of this work, he would attempt to bring contemporary Tano and Keres peoples into the conversation. There are surprisingly few illustrations (and, oddly, no photographs aside from the cover art) for a work that purports to help us "see" and "think about" Pueblo place and space. Snead dismisses phenomenological approaches as leading to either trivial generalities or traps of self-reflection where we learn "more about ourselves than about the past" (p. 15). But the phenomenological project is more than a set of survey methods; it is a philosophical

position that foregrounds dwelling in the world and that seeks to transcend culturally constructed categories. British post-processual landscape scholars such as Tim Ingold and Julian Thomas are engaged in a larger theoretical enterprise that involves deconstructing subject/object dualism and exposing the modernist precepts inherent in archaeological thought. Readers will not encounter any of that here. Although Snead adopts an interpretive style, his central argument—that ancient inhabitants of the northern Rio Grande were primarily concerned with competing for “limited resources”—will be quite familiar to scholars of a processual bent.

It is gratifying to see “landscape” in the mainstream Southwest literature as an organizing framework through which to engage past social relationships. *Ancestral Landscapes of the Pueblo World* will be a valuable resource for scholars of the northern Rio Grande. The work also will be of interest to those who are thinking about the archaeological investigation of meaningful places in the Pueblo Southwest.