

# Heaven and Earth: The Same Landscape. Ways of Approaching Landscape Archeology and Cultural Astronomy



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**Submission:** December 05, 2022; **Published:** February 01, 2023

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## Mini Review

This special issue is dedicated to issues related to landscape theory and Cultural Astronomy in the field of Archaeology. The authors met on several occasions during the pandemic to present and discuss the scope and problems that each work had to develop it as an academic paper. Some of these meetings were held at the Archaeoastronomy Seminar of the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia of Mexico coordinated by Stanisław Iwaniszewski and Jesús Galindo Trejo (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), but the last time was in May 2022, in a session called Heaven and Earth: the same landscape. Ways of approaching Landscape Archeology and Cultural Astronomy at the X Meeting of Theoretical Archeology of South America, held in Oaxaca, Mexico. Four of the manuscripts that we present are the product of the postgraduate study objective that the authors undertook a few years ago, and refined over the last year to prepare it in an academic format for the purpose of diffusion. The fifth contribution is part of an investigation of more than twenty years on the Mayan lunar series and in recent years it has achieved remarkable results, such as the one that the specialist shares with us here. So far, all are dedicated to Mesoamerica. The sixth work is from South America and is the product of excavations in an architectural structure at the Shincal archaeological site, Argentina.

Landscape Archeology has generated in the consciousness of the people who have heard of it or have used it in their lives, an interest in the totality of the contents of the contexts of human occupations; including those that include intangible elements from the earth such as celestial and atmospheric phenomena. Every archaeological context is part of a social landscape, which is why it is not limited to a space with little scope for human activity, but on the contrary, it is full of intertwined lines of life, as Tim Ingold assures, and that, in turn, make up relational fields such as Martin Heidegger's being-in-the-world or Maurice Merleau-

Ponty, inclusive, until coming to think of the lines of flight of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. With this, we say that materiality has projections, even to infinity, on the dimensions of space, time and chorology. Landscape studies make it possible to integrate more variables, completing the record, in such a way that the interpretations, largely a product of the imagination, reach better terms. Some currents of Landscape Archeology will be covered, such as phenomenology, post-structuralism, even hermeneutics.

Places with ontological connections have generated new assemblages of objects like those of Deleuze and Guattari, human and non-human, that reveal various aspects of cultures. Therefore, it is about studying landscapes from different perspectives and giving them a cultural meaning, adding our conclusions in each of the study areas. We will undertake an ontology of the archaeological context. Therefore, among one of the issues that the papers in this special number must address is that, is it possible to understand how people lived in their environment by observing and studying the landscape with Cultural Astronomy or with any other aspect of an archaeological site?

The central objective is to achieve a presentation of the archaeological study with interdisciplinary contributions in which the research is complemented with the contribution of other sciences and study methods in related areas.

It is proposed to address issues related to the problem of landscape conservation from the perspective of Archaeology, or landscape as an essential heritage, even from configurations such as simple observation; for example, the landscape as a meeting point with the different ontologies, the relationship of the local horizon for Cultural Astronomy or the importance of the territory in terms of the subsistence of societies and their ontological response to problems such as desiccation and environmental deterioration.

Miguel Pérez Negrete shows, in his work on the memory of water, about desiccation and environmental deterioration, how it is that in recent decades an aggravated environmental deterioration in the Costa Chica of Guerrero, Mexico, as a result of globalization that extends to all territories, generated among other phenomena, the use of monoculture agricultural techniques, extractive activities and the unplanned growth of urban sprawl, resulting in a desiccation and contamination of the rivers of the region. The affectation is widespread and is also damaging the language and traditions, reducing the ritual activities of the Amuzgos, Mixtecs, Tlapanecos and Nahuas, as well as Afro-Mexicans, who still carry out agricultural ceremonies to request rain and visit sacred places. The latter are mostly pre-Hispanic archaeological sites, which have been given a new meaning based on a cultural baggage that is reminiscent of pre-Hispanic societies, integrating the resistance and adaptation mechanisms of the peoples, including a mythical corpus that still prevails. Here he used the municipalities of Azoyú, Ometepec and Xochistlahuaca as a case study to approach, with landscape theory, the construction of the sacred space around water, in a diachronic and critical way.

Héctor Patiño Rodríguez Malpica, in "Layouts of Tula: landscape and orientation", studies the way that the Toltecs of Tula Xicocotitlán had to intertwine the monumental space with the horizon calendar based on the registration of the dates that Franz Tichy indicated as necessary for set it. His results offer clues about the ancient way of establishing this configuration and giving real dimension to the ceremonial space of Tula Grande. The study reveals the importance they gave to the use of the ancestral territory. It is a space in which we find a potential series of sanctuaries –which he named "ancestor"; whether natural or built places, their organization reflects the influence of the intercardinal model to give structure to that corresponding center-periphery relationship with an imperial formation.

Ricardo Arturo García Reyna in "The Cerro Toloche archaeological site: link between architecture, landscape and sky", makes us see that the observation of the celestial vault played a prominent role in the development of Mesoamerican cultures, since it allowed them to transpolate the cyclicity of celestial phenomena to their concepts of space and time. Of the astronomical phenomena perceived by ancient societies, the apparent movement of the Sun over the horizon was key to founding, drawing and orienting buildings and cities, as well as the creation of their calendrical structures and capturing the important dates of the year in the landscape. At the top of the hill, there is an archaeological site, probably dedicated to Coltzin, a pre-Hispanic deity associated with fire and the year. Therefore, he wonders about the existence of links between architecture, landscape and the sky, erected by the ancient inhabitants through the location and orientation of their architecture.

Regarding my contribution, "From the base to the top: walking through the ritual circuit of the foldscape in Malpasito, Tabasco, México", I propose that the layout of a pre-Hispanic

archaeological site from the Late Classic period, of possible Zoque affiliation, conforms a foldscape (fold landscape) and that, this, in turn, is part of a meshworkscape (meshwork landscape), which is a generalization for Mesoamerican settlements. The fold is characterized by having two sides and in the words of Pedro Pitarch Ramón, it is the mode of relationship between the two sides or states of the cosmos: the solar state inhabited by humans and the non-solar state by non-humans. For its part, the meshwork, in terms of Tim Ingold's social theory, is formed by knots or places and lines along which life is lived, and therefore, each one of them is a relationship. In Malpasito, the fold is found in a watershed where it can be seen that the general orientation of the layout is projected towards the top of the great mountain behind, hidden from view from the architectural complexes. Both sides of the fold form a unity between the natural and the artificial. In addition to the above, it can be said that there are fundamental unknowns about the cultures that inhabited these regions and their materialities, during the Classic and Postclassic periods, in such a way that it has been useful to propose ethnographic analogies. The main one is the relationship between the mountain and the essence of the soul of the heart of the people among the Tzeltal Maya. In addition, the settlement contains a ritual circuit, which in the categories of Kathryn Reese-Taylor, is a "circuit from the base to the top of the mountain", because in Malpasito the human face of the fold begins in the architectural complex of the lower part of the settlement, when the Sun marks the summer solstice, and which, in Mesoamerica, is one of two possible beginnings of the count of the 364-day computing year. The circuit ends in the highest complex, when the Sun marks the division of the quarter days of the year ( $91 \times 4 = 364$ ), just when the intervals of significant days, such as thirteen (treceñas) or seven days, are fulfilled. Thus, solstices and days of the quarter of the year are present in the same context and for this reason we can speak of the cycle of 364 days in Malpasito. To reach the fold, you have to ascend the natural hill on which the architectural structures were built up to the top.

Stanisław Iwaniszewski, in his contribution "The use of the Xultun Lunar Table in the Lunar Series at Yaxchilan", shows that despite the fact that two values appear for the same lunar event on the same stele from an VIII century Mayan archaeological site, and which is known as "double dates"; the explanation goes in the sense that those specialists used the intercalation, and to show it, Iwaniszewski applied the lunar table from the Xultun archaeological site, which works as a lunar correction mechanism. Due to the partial decipherment that still affects the lunar question in the Mayan Long Count, it currently deserves all the attention, thus, significant contributions such as the one in this article are those that are contributing to its general understanding.

José Nicolás Balbi, in "Discovering the oracle. From a military garrison to a temple and a comparison with another distant Inka structure and their ritual significance", exposes us one of the structures of the archaeological site "El Shincal de Quimivil" in the Argentine Andes, Province of Catamarca, known by catalogue as

"Complex 19". Based on the idea of various authors, such as John Hyslop or Ian Farrington, that the Inka society would replicate their constructions in various territories and at great distances, they investigated several temples in different areas around Cuzco, the capital of the Inka empire, searching for astronomical, ceremonial and landscape characteristics similar to the investigated structure. With his work he concludes by discovering two fundamental

elements, on the one hand redefining Complex 19 from the old belief in a military structure to a ceremonial centre and, on the other hand, the constructive and orientation coincidences in a similar power centre in the archaeological site of Sondor, Province of Apurimac, Peru, which, in its constructive coincidence, ends up defining the ritual origin of both constructions and some additional elements that we explain in the work.



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DOI: [10.19080/GJAA.2023.12.555846](https://doi.org/10.19080/GJAA.2023.12.555846)

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