

enter the political sphere to determine in part when, how, and in what image a crumbled Roman city is rebuilt.

Smith's own chapter serves as a transition from mass events to the incremental power of nature. Early hominids encountered naturally occurring fire on the landscape, which likely conditioned them to consider fire as a resource. Over time, manipulating fire had cumulative cognitive effects that would contribute to the development of more and more complex pyrotechnologies. Similarly, pathogens and people engage in constant feedback. Sara L. Juengst and coauthors discuss the elements—ecological and anthropic—that created microbe-scapes in the ancient Lake Titicaca Basin of Bolivia, demonstrating that pathogens were particularly sensitive to shifts in human subsistence and sedentism over time.

For Harper Dine, Traci Ardren, and Chelsea Fisher, weeds wielded power over place-making and the formation of ancient Maya landscapes. Similarly, bird behavior (Katelyn J. Bishop) is shown to have dictated human practices of bird procurement. Long-term interaction with these birds gave rise to a value system that had implications for ritual life in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. Rats, bats, and birds were powerful agents in the local ecologies of East Polynesia; as Seth Quintus and coauthors suggest, their population dynamics may have played a major role in forest contraction and consequent declines in the agricultural productivity of Rapa Nui and other Polynesian islands.

Steven Ammerman's chapter on wild and feral animal activity complements Silvia Tomášková's fascinating chapter on reindeer, which the author describes as both wild and tame and therefore representative of a different kind of co-domestication process. John Robb concludes *The Power of Nature* with a reflection on the Black Death as a crisis. *Yersinia pestis*, he points out, shares characteristics readily observed among other natural agents: flexibility and ecological and social contingency.

With its rich case studies and theoretical implications, *The Power of Nature* will appeal to all those with an interest in human-environment dynamics. At times, the wide-ranging coverage of this book inhibits it from working as a cohesive whole; yet, that same ambition offers a provocative panorama of a truly “nature-centered” archaeology.

doi:10.1017/aaq.2023.75

***Gods of Thunder: How Climate Change, Travel, and Spirituality Reshaped Precolonial America.* Timothy R. Pauketat. 2023. Oxford University Press, New York. xvi + 330 pp. \$29.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-19764-510-9.**

David A. Freidel

Department of Anthropology, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, USA

This accessible and well-written travelogue boldly frames the hypothesis that late medieval Indigenous eastern North Americans embraced rain-bringing wind gods, originally conceived in Mesoamerica, along with maize agriculture. The spread of these beings and their cults was similar to the spread of the faiths in the Old World—Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam: they were conveyed by sages with their words, bundles, and visionary charisma early on, as much as by force in later colonialism. Author Timothy R. Pauketat has traveled and contemplated the places that witnessed the turn to these gods, from the Maya Lowlands through the Valley of Mexico, the Gulf of Mexico, the Sonoran Desert, the American Southwest, Caddo country, the Mississippi Valley, and the American Bottom. The introduction presents the case for environmental change in the late medieval era triggering an embrace of wind and rain gods.

The 12 chapters following the introduction are organized as a saga moving those gods northward, resonating with the historical adventure of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and his companions, which was an astonishing affirmation of the ability of strangers, especially magicians and healers, to survive long treks through the continent. That Indigenous Americans interacted with each other over great distances on metaphysical matters, as well as technical ones, should by now be obvious to archaeologists, and it is to some. Indigenous archaeologist Robert Hall always knew this, as Pauketat reports. That Indigenous people should respond to environmental change over distance intellectually as well as practically should also be obvious.

Pauketat strives to reveal the materiality of his arguments, tying the cults of wind/rain gods to round structures, feathered serpents, conch trumpets, and flower-shaped points, among other artifacts. Such empirical data are not perfectly aligned with the grand sweep of cultic movement over space and time, as he admits, and this point invites debate and discussion among specialists. Fugue-like, Pauketat keeps the focus of his interest on the larger proposition as he moves through space toward eastern North America. Each chapter is anchored into engaging physical description of the sites and artifacts, the ambient landscape, and the people.

The thesis will continue to be subject to debate. Yes, there were water shrines at Cahokia, not only the well-documented ones but recently advanced ones like the group north of Monk's Mound. Yes, the raptor deities, avatars of the feathered serpent storm gods, were also present at Cahokia. Yes, there are sacred monumental poles at Cahokia, like the great poles that allowed bird men to descend in Mesoamerica—not only in the late medieval period but also from much earlier. Indeed, a “sprawled” sacrificial victim at Mound 72 at Cahokia is probably a pole flyer descending with the bundled woman/man next to him.

The great methodological advance of diffusionism in the mid-twentieth-century archaeology of North America was not conceptually wrong but rather was a foundation for a new understanding, in which the movement of technologies was always accompanied by dialogue and coherent discussion of an animate, ambient world in which humans are agents of balance, not chaos. The material forms were bundles, as Robert Hall declared, as much as points or seeds. Pauketat discerns this truth moving toward a more perfect understanding.

A product of his years in conferences at the Santa Fe Institute, a major scientific think tank in the United States, this book affirms that archaeological science takes many forms, and the approach taken in *Gods of Thunder* is one of them.

doi:10.1017/aaq.2023.80

***Archaeologies of Cosmescapes in the Americas.* J. Grant Stauffer, Bretton T. Giles, and Shawn P. Lambert, editors. 2022. Oxbow Books, Havertown, Pennsylvania. ix + 265 pp. \$39.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-78925-844-8.**

Tamira K. Brennan

Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA

This book argues for the use of cosmescapes as a theoretical tool for improving archaeological interpretations of non-Western cultures. With case examples from throughout the Americas, it illustrates how archaeologists might better understand the richness and relatedness of materials, motifs, and monuments when considered as they exist within a culture's cosmescap. The benefit of a cosmescap approach derives, in part, from the expansiveness of the concept. It provides a template for the cosmos