Pecos River (Texas) pictographs suggests that these art forms developed "in response to cultural emanations originating in Mesoamerica," as part of an "island enclave of dilute Mesoamerican culture . . . far out in the Chichimec sea" (p. 51-52).

Kubler's contribution displays his impressive knowledge of the iconographic details of prehistoric Mesoamerican art. He uses three temple tablets from Palenque, to build a plausible set of linkages between Teotihuacán and the Maya, employing, in part, climatically-related costumes of the two personages depicted on the plaques. But other than the convention of the northern foreigner (from Teotihuacán), dressed in mufflers and capelots, in comparison to the tropical forest native (from Palenque) in his loincloth, environmental data or ideas play little role in the process of iconographic analysis. Whereas Kubler focuses on reconstructing restricted historical events based on a few art forms, Furst draws extensively on collections primarily of ceramics and sculpture from South and Mesoamerica to reconstruct the nature as well as the origin, spread, and distribution of the use of hallucinogens, snuff, and toad venom. Botanical identifications of plants and mushrooms depicted on murals, ceramics, and other art forms, as well as ethnohistorical, mythological, and contemporary ethnographic evidence is marshalled to support the long and widespread traditions involving hallucinogens in prehistoric South and Mesoamerica.

Brody's and Lathrap's papers stand out from the rest as well as from each other. Brody's concern is with the formal characteristics of Southwestern prehistoric kiva wall painting and historical Navajo dry painting, the symbolic requirements that led to these characteristics, and the subsequent transformations of these art forms as they have become "readymade" ethnic art. His emphasis on the immediate environment of the viewers of and/or participants in the artistic process has interesting implications for the resulting formal characteristics of the pictorial compositions.

Lathrap's extensive (40 pages) contribution is primarily a position paper for his theories on prehistoric cultural evolution in the New World. As an "unabashed propagandist for the cultural and agricultural priority of the moist tropics" (p. 116), he is an odd participant in a conference on art of arid lands. Lathrap focuses on the attributes and early appearance of various manifestations of a complex art style in northern South America as support for "the essential correctness of Sauer's model" (p. 116), which originally formulated the priority of the tropics. Lathrap also proposes an explanation for the appearance of the Chavín and Olmec "Great Art Styles." He reviews ceramic sources relevant to his thesis and also the causal processes leading to the rise of the Mesoamerican civilizations. His conclusions, which suggest that some of the epistemological premises cited as being at the roots of our own current "ecological crisis" may also be found as part of the Chavín-Olme world views, will surely lead readers into discussion if none of Lathrap's other ideas do. Despite the controversial nature of some of his propositions, Lathrap comes closest to an analysis of art and environment. By employing an explicit theoretical perspective, and by attempting to substantiate specific cultural processes that may lead to the presence, absence, or modifications of certain motifs or art forms, Lathrap contributes to the credibility of the proposition that art forms may be indicators of the cultural processes that obtained as prehistoric human groups adapted to changing socioecological conditions.


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This volume compiles 18 of the 26 papers presented at a joint Mexican-U.S. meeting on pre-Columbian archaeoastronomy held in Mexico City in June 1973. I am a little surprised at what a popular book it has proven to be. Both of the copies in the University of Colorado libraries seem perennially checked out, I see a number of private copies around, and somebody is always borrowing mine.

A text it is not, nor is it lavishly illustrated, as are so many of the fine, graphic archaeology books that tempt browsers nowadays. To expedite publication it was offset printed from typewritten manuscript, with resultant bleaching and dulling of photographic illustrations. As with most books that report conference proceedings, the reader must beware of believing all that he sees, for the articles were not refereed, and are published without the benefit of editorial comment, or any record of the questions and debate which one hopes came from the floor at Mexico City. Such a caveat, needless to say, seems especially needed in books which report new work in
fields as marginal and ill-defined as archaeoastronomy. Several of the papers are outstanding and conscientious reviews; others are so specific or so speculative that one wonders how they were chosen, and what they are doing between the hard covers of a book. Several would never have seen the light of day in a scientific journal.

Archaeoastronomy and pre-Columbian America are both broad topics, and the meeting made no obvious attempt to restrict them. Papers range geographically from California to Peru, with most emphasis on Mesoamerica and the Anasazi Southwest. Only two papers touch on the non-Pueblo Indians of Northern America, and only one treats America south of the Panama Canal.

There is no general theme, and one of the papers, a ranging discourse by G. S. Hawkins of Stonehenge fame, escapes the bounds of the conference by dealing chiefly with sites in Britain and Egypt. Six other papers could be considered reviews: an elegant summary on the key topic of native astronomy in Mesoamerica by Michael Coe, an interesting review of Pueblo Indian sky traditions by Florence Hawley Ellis, significant papers by each of the two organizers of the meeting, Aveni and Horst Hartung of the University of Guadalajara, a light sermon in the social sciences made by J. E. Reyman, and a concluding summary, which adds little and reads like minutes-of-the-last-meeting, by Elizabeth Chesley Baily, whose major review of world archaeoastronomy (in Current Anthropology 14, 1973) has become an indispensable bibliography of the field. Of the 11 remaining papers, five deal with the Maya calendar, codices, and glyph interpretations, four with rock art in the southwestern U.S., one with American mounds, and one, by Alexander Marshack, details a wholly unconvincing interpretation of an Olmec mirror.

A number of these papers are interesting and enlightening. But for me, the most valuable are the three reviews by the archaeologist Coe, the astronaut Aveni, and the architect Hartung, each dealing with Mesoamerica. In each case they transcend specific sites and give us a coherent, inside picture of a field that is now, I believe, on the verge of explosive expansion.

Why is the book so popular? I would hope for its better articles, which for discriminating readers make the book authoritative and therefore worth its price. But also because it stands in a void. We find a growing number of books that deal with Old World megalithic astronomy, including two classics by Alexander Thom and a Royal Society of London review volume which come close to being texts. What books do you know that treat the American side of the story—where, in Mesoamerica, astronomy seems to have played so important a role in shaping early civilizations? Here Aveni has done science a great service. And he has a second review volume on the way, by the same press, to appear this year, covering a later conference held on the same topic at Colgate University. Those who are interested in archaeoastronomy, or astroarchaeology, or megalithic astronomy, or whatever you call it, will want to own both of them.


Clemency Coggins
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Stonework of the Maya is a photographic essay on the architecture and sculpture of 12 lowland Maya sites. The author tells us his photographs are primary and that they have been chosen in the hope of "providing an intensely evocative expression of an ancient culture" (p. viii). As a photographer Ranney has succeeded in projecting a very personal view of ancient Maya stonework, but despite his disclaimers, he has aimed to do more than that. For each site he describes the setting, and gives some history and general background. These introductory sections are ambitious and on the whole accurate, but they are not well integrated with the photographs which were chosen as photographs, rather than as illustrations.

The book begins with Tikal. Here, with ten photographs, including three of plain stelae, Ranney's personal vision becomes clear. His photographs are dark, with detail in low contrast, often producing rather gloomy, foreboding images that seem to allude to the Maya collapse. (The only clear error of fact is in Caption 3 which mistakenly declares that the fronts of Tikal Stela 3 and of other Early Classic stelae were undecorated.)

Seventeen photographs of Copan do more justice to that site. The photos include eight stelae and other miscellaneous sculptures, providing a student with a relatively inexpensive introduction to the sculpture of Copan. Four photographs of the sculpture of Yaxchilan would be similarly useful as a sampling, but in photographs of the two stelae at Bonampak the details of the monuments are all but lost in the rain forest penumbra of Ranney's vision.

At much-photographed Palenque, Ranney has tried to circumvent the clichés, and at Quirigua he has tried to animate the pon-