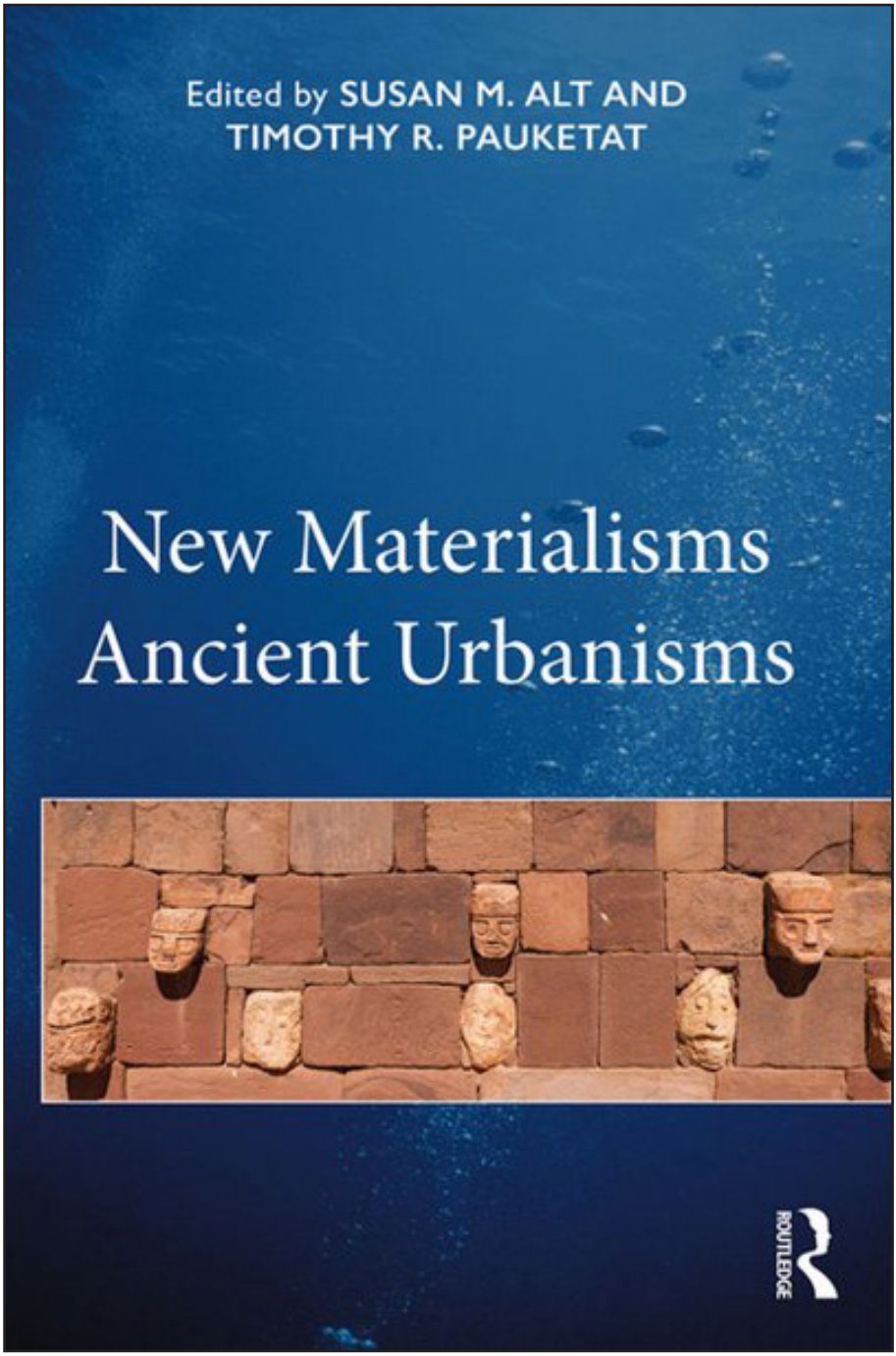

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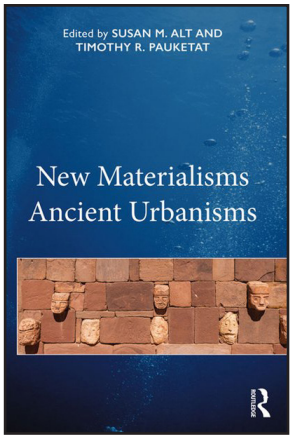

New Materialisms Ancient Urbanisms

Edited by Susan M. Alt and Timothy R. Pauketat. 2019. Routledge. xiv+264 pp., 72 figures, references. $160.00 (Cloth), $46.95 (Paper), $42.25 (eBook). ISBN: 9781351008488

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Alt and Pauketat's *New Materialisms Ancient Urbanisms* addresses the concept of urbanism, what constitutes it, and how it can be used to understand ancient cities. This assemblage of papers is a challenging, yet worthwhile contribution to archaeological theory with the potential to transform the way we perceive the past. To open the book, Pauketat (Ch. 1) presents a well-crafted review of the social theoretical frameworks put to use in the volume. All of this highly complex theory is to say that urbanism is an assemblage of people, materials, substances, and phenomena that made up the places archaeologists study today. Urbanism is more than a grouping of things, but a multiplicity of their elements and qualities and the ways in which these are assembled. Archaeologists can access these urban assemblages by tracing material relations to disassemble and consider all the moving parts involved: New Materialist approaches.

The case studies in the volume focus on the concept of the urban assemblage at sites across the globe, transforming these well-known sites into living, breathing places. Importantly, many of the authors move beyond phenomenological approaches to incorporate Indigenous ontologies and consider the significance of religion in the social fields that create, maintain, and renegotiate urban spaces. Beginning in the western hemisphere, Alt (Ch. 2) brings us to the city of Cahokia, which she argues was designed to assemble relationships between people, water, thunder, lightning, and rain. Rooted in Indigenous ontologies of water, Alt discusses the water washed house floors and features of the Emerald Acropolis and the karst fields above which several Cahokian cities were built; access to and interactions with underworld water spirits and the multiplicities of water were integral to the assemblage of Cahokia's urbanism. Van Dyke (Ch. 3) describes Chaco as an everchanging assemblage of negotiated territorializing and deterritorializing processes. Both natural (buttes and water canyons) and built or enacted processes (shrines, music, stomping, shell trumpets) territorialized Chaco by attracting pilgrims to gatherings that forged relationships and constructed social memory. These processes went hand in hand with deterritorializing tensions caused by language, distance, and strained social relationships. Monte Albán, Joyce (Ch. 4) argues, is an assemblage of mountains, people, earth, rain, and corn. Religious in nature, these relationships are based on the transference of vital forces between gods and people through sacrifice and the consumption of maize. The building of Mound 1 at the site enabled these interactions, transforming the mound into a mountain of creation and sustenance while the gatherings in the plaza assembled agencies

that extended beyond the city into the Valley of Oaxaca. In Chapter 5, Janusek (pg. 94) asserts that "cities create electric engagements." At Tiwanaku, these engagements existed on multiple scales between multiple entities. The city's perimeter canal was a fluid counterpart to its stone temples as both water and stone created the circuits of human movement that brought them into the city from great distances. Monolithic personages guarded the temples, demanding offerings from visiting humans, creating reciprocal interactions that transformed people and expanded Tiwanaku's influence in the Andes.

Bridging east and west, Pauketat (Ch. 6) discusses the imminence of water in early urbanism at two sites on opposite sides of the world: Paquimé in Mexico and Lianghzu in China. Water was integrated into every aspect of life, particularly for these agricultural societies, and mediating its levels precisely (in deserts or wetlands) required both the building of infrastructure and spiritual relations with non-human forces. Pauketat posits that the relational fields brought about through human intervention with imminent forces ultimately converted these two disparate sites into cities. In Chapter 7, Fleisher uses a more classic materialist approach in his discussion of mosques as assemblages in Swahili towns in 1000 CE. The assemblage of materials "gathered" from near and far built a mosque whose purpose was to gather people in prayer and community. In Chapter 8, Bauer investigates urbanism on the Medieval Deccan by turning the focus from the city centers to the region to argue that the alignment of materials and political strategies at hill terrace sites, like Maski, played a fundamental role in shaping the political landscape of the Deccan. As more traditional theoretical scholars will agree, Bauer cautions against materialisms that take the materials too far from the human cultural fields from which they derive value and significance. Finally, Harmanşah (Ch.9) adds "more-than-human" processes—geomorphic histories—to that which constitutes an urban assemblage. Through the creation of mimetic water monuments in the Hittite world, he argues, water connected the urban landscape to the mytho-geological world.

As Harris points out in his concluding chapter (Ch.10), these authors bring out the importance of the "virtual" city that often goes unrecognized in archaeologists' search for the "actual." The potentialities that make up a city are as real a part of the urban assemblage as the material (or actual) traces we see in the archaeological record. While the language in this book can be unnecessarily complicated (at times, distracting), the authors have laid the theoretical groundwork for accessing the virtual cities of the past, enhancing our ability as archaeologists to fully understand the places and the people that we study.

At a minimum, readers of *New Materialisms, Ancient Urbanisms* are left inspired to assemble urban spaces in their minds, imagining, perhaps, the multiplicities of cities they already know well. For this reader, I was transported to New York City to consider the relational fields encountered on a single daily commute. The mind and body, even the nose, are flooded with memories of one's individual lived experience: horns honking; pigeon flutters; the feeling, the sound, and the smell of the wind being pushed through the subway tunnel with the arriving train; the dozens of languages spoken by

the hundreds of people passed by on their own commutes; and the familiar aroma of cooking onions emanating from apartments on the way home at dinner time. These experiences (and more) are all part of what makes up this urban space. As the authors in this volume have done, applying a similar (though more complex) exercise to the past brings much needed life to urban spaces across time and around the world in a way that archaeologists rarely consider.