Die Arbeit von Schwarz enthält zwar immer wieder Hinweise auf die gleichzeitigen politischen Ereignisse, dennoch vermisst man eine größere Kontextualisierung, sowohl der Institutionen als auch der Personen. Eine kurze Darstellung des weiteren Schicksales der Kunstwerke wäre hilfreich gewesen. Formal sind eine Reihe von Druckfehlern zu bemerken (61, 64, 68), aber wohl auch Austriazismen, die beim Lesen auffallen. Insgesamt ist es ein gutes Quellenwerk für die weitere Forschungsarbeit, als das sie auch intendiert war. Von allgemeiner Bedeutung ist das Buch bei der Frage der politischen Einmischung in den Kulturbereich.

Markus Schindlbeck

Siegel, PeterE. (ed.): Island Historical Ecology. Socionatural Landscapes of the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. New York: Berghahn Books, 2018. 427 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-763-5. Price: $ 130.00

The many dimensions of human settlement on islands, and the traces people left behind, can be frustratingly difficult for archaeologists to find and interpret. Over the years, however, researchers have been able to take advantage of more sophisticated techniques to recover and analyze micro- and macro-botanical remains (e. g., pollen, phytoliths, starch grains, charcoal) that provide greater insight into how and when islands were colonized in the past and subsequent environmental changes.

An important question for archaeologists working on islands is establishing when humans first arrived. This has implications for understanding various issues, ranging from why populations migrated (social, political, economic, climatic, etc.), seafaring capabilities, and the degree of impact humans may have had on pristine island environments. While the archaeological record has typically been the primary source of data for examining these events, a recent volume by Peter Siegel focusing on the Caribbean argues that the solution lies instead in organic remains recovered from paleoenvironmental cores.

This book synthesizes the results of research on nine different islands in the Antilles, with the explicit aim of trying to understand how and when humans interacted with ancient landscapes. This was accomplished through coring in areas that had good potential for trapping environmental information (e. g., lakes) and that were mostly in close proximity to known archaeological sites. The soil cores were brought back to the lab, sliced in half, and the pollen, charcoal particles, and other paleobotanical remains were then identified and quantified. Their goal is certainly a noble one and much needed in the Caribbean.

The actual process by which these data must be collected is extremely challenging logistically and the analysis painstakingly slow. Thankfully, Siegel has harnessed a reputable group of colleagues to analyze the remains and the data presented by various authors in chapters 5–13; to my non-specialist eyes, the reporting seems technically sound. It should be noted that much of the data found within (taxon names, etc.) are not going to be easily recognizable or understandable by most archaeologists. Nonetheless, the data themselves are the most important contributions of the volume simply because they fill in so many important spatial and temporal gaps in our knowledge of Caribbean environmental histories.

It is clear that the data are important in their own right; but, what do they actually mean for past human engagement with islands? To what degree can they be used to demonstrate when people actually got to islands and what happened afterward? For me, this is really the crux of the volume and a debate I am familiar with because it has also played out in another region I work, the Pacific, where similar proposals have been made (i. e., paleoenvironmental evidence can be used as a proxy for human colonization in the absence of archaeological data). What Siegel and others are essentially arguing is that the human occupation of islands can be discerned through proxies such as charcoal particles and "economically useful plants" in the absence of archaeology. But the issue in the Pacific, and now apparently in the Caribbean, is that there are large chronological disparities between the paleoenvironmental evidence and the archaeological record on the order of hundreds or even thousands of years. As one might imagine, this is controversial and has major implications for answering questions related to initial settlement of these islands.

To provide some context, Pacific archaeologists and specialists have been working for more than two decades to collect paleoenvironmental data on a number of different islands in Micronesia and Polynesia. And similar to what Siegel et al. have argued, the presence of these indicators – sometimes in conjunction with what appears to be increased rates of sedimentation (presumably due to erosion from landscape clearance after burning) – have been the impetus for proposing a much earlier human colonization than what archaeologists have found, usually on the order of a millennia or more.

It is worth noting that in none of the Pacific cases – which include the widely separated islands of Palau, Guam, Yap, Mangaia, and Rapa Nui, for example – has the paleoenvironmental data been confirmed with earlier archaeological deposits, despite a concerted effort to find them in many places. This in itself may, at first, carry little weight, for Siegel has argued that there are a number of reasons why coeval sites in the Caribbean might be obscured: volcanism and sea level rise are possible culprits. This is certainly true, with numerous sites around the world having been found in places we did not expect. But the inherent problem lies in Siegel's immediate acceptance of the data they have recovered. There is no circumspection involved whatsoever, and so the argument goes something like this: 1) charcoal particles (sometimes sustained over centuries) are present, even during wetter periods; 2) "economically useful" plants are found too; 3) there are some changes in vegetative communities (e.g., forests turning to grasslands);

and as a result 4) humans must have been there earlier than we once thought.

Slam dunk, right? Well, not so fast. What about cultigens? We know that peoples in northern South America and Trinidad were growing various domesticates such as corn and peppers between at least 7,000–8,000 years ago. These and many others (e. g., cassava) were later brought by native groups into the Caribbean islands beginning with the Archaic Age ca. 5,000–4,000 years ago and were a major part of native subsistence strategies. In fact, in general there are very few islands around the world that were colonized successfully without some form of food production to ensure long-term survivability.

This is a major issue that Siegel glosses over: why are not these domesticates found? It is true that some plants are just not good pollen producers, or that some soil contexts are not conducive to the preservation of botanical remains. But in their cores they report only a few instances of maize, and these are all found in sequences contemporaneous with the archaeological record. In addition, they make the argument that while fires can start naturally, it is highly unlikely this would happen during hydric periods. What I would say in response is that even during climatic regimes that are generally wetter or mesic, it is not going to rain every day. There will still be seasonal fluctuations and periods of drought and insolation where natural fires can more easily start. This would essentially leave a similar pattern of charcoal distribution in cores that is indistinguishable from anthropogenic processes.

We must ultimately ask the question: can the paleoenvironmental evidence recovered by Siegel et al. be unequivocally assigned to human intervention? The answer is an unequivocal "no" for the simple reason that there are still so many natural ways in which the evidence may *not* be human, not to mention the dearth of evidence for introduced cultigens that one would expect shortly after human arrival in an island region rife with agricultural proficiency.

Siegel et al. should be commended for their accomplishments. But his assumption *a priori* – that these environmental changes are the result of humans without considering the alternative – has etched a black mark on an otherwise useful and essential volume for archaeologists working in the Caribbean.

Scott M. Fitzpatrick

Sparks, Garry, Frauke Sachse, and **Sergio Romero** (eds.): The Americas' First Theologies. Early Sources of Post-Contact Indigenous Religion. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 324 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-067830-2. Price: £ 64.00

The possibilities for directly accessing and researching 16th-century ethnohistorical sources in Mesoamerican languages has changed tremendously in the past 25 years, as a growing group of younger ethnohistorians, trained in one or several of the indigenous languages of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize, have made a number of sources available in English and/or Spanish translations, often accompanied by valuable introductions, notes, and comments. These publications have allowed historians and other researchers to better understand not only the Spanish conquest but also the dynamic early colonial period, from the perspective of the indigenous peoples involved. While a great deal of focus has been on the surviving Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican culture traits in these sources, e. g., in terms of mythology and religion as well as various sociopolitical and economic aspects, there has been less explicit interest in examining under which circumstances, and under influence of which colonial Christian sources, the native authors composed and wrote their texts.

The present volume, by Garry Sparks, and with contributions by Frauke Sachse and Sergio Romero, opens a new chapter in our reading and understanding of an important group of highland Maya 16th-century documents, such as the well-known the "Popol Wuj," the "Title of Totonicapán" and lesser known sources like the "Xpantzay cartularies." As part of a larger on-going translation process, "The Americas' First Theologies," thus, offers translations of a selection of sections from the first volume of the Dominican friar Domingo de Vico's "Theologia Indorum" (1553/1554), a massive two-volume theological treatise written in K'iche' Maya, "to this day longest single piece of literature written in any native American language" (7) comprising a total of some 900 pages. Why this immensely important work has not been translated and formed an essential part of past ethnohistorical studies of the corpus of early post-conquest highland Maya documents before now is truly hard to understand. Thus, Sparks and colleagues convincingly show how Vico's text was read and used, implicitly or explicitly, by various indigenous authors in the second half of the 16th century. In this sense, the volume represents a key to understand these sources in a new intertextual perspective. Not only did colonial highland Maya read the "Theologia" (which was also translated into Kaqchikel and Tz'utujil) but we also learn how Vico was deeply inspired by references to "Maya practices and narratives … based on his direct conversation and ethnographic study among the Maya" (32). Vico integrated elements of native daily life that would make sense in a highland Maya setting, substituting them for items that derived from a European-Near Eastern context, using, for example, quetzal and cotinga feathers, jade, obsidian, chili, and cacao as examples of God's creation and symbols of wealth (55), sapote trees instead of apple trees in Paradise (124 f.), just as the cosmogony is expressed partly by metaphors rooted in Maya ideas of creation (57). Following the methods of the Dominicans, Vico went quite far to adjust the biblical accounts, Catholic folklore, and doctrinal theology in order to make them relevant to the Maya, as when using expressions like *q'anal raxal* "yellowness, greenness" (wealth and abundance) for "earthly Paradise" and "beatitudes," which had for centuries been used in