

# Recent Landscape Archaeology in South America

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**Abstract** South American archaeologists use the term *landscape* to analyze a broad range of relationships. Examples include intensive agriculture and political power, myth and place, and climate change and cultural development. Landscape archaeology is necessarily spatial analysis, but scholars work at different scales and use different methods. This essay highlights the influence of geography, anthropology, and new methodologies on four definitions of landscape: ecological habitat, built environment, a stage for performance, and integrating subsistence and settlement. In a number of cases, landscape archaeologists, stakeholders, and researchers from different traditions work at different scales to meaningfully share information, clarify their differences, and compare their analyses and conclusions.

**Keywords** Landscape · South America · Built environment · Settlement patterns

## Introduction

South American landscape archaeology has much to offer American archaeologists, scholars of landscape, and ethnographers of South America. Landscape archaeology has grown rapidly in the past decade, benefiting and suffering from the popularity of the term. On one hand, “landscape” is claimed by a large and growing number of archaeologists (David and Thomas 2008) who connect archaeology to cultural anthropology, history, architecture, geography, and geographic information science (GIS). This diversity makes it difficult to discern common assumptions or goals. In South America, landscape archaeology has a specific set of meanings because of three defining factors. First, indigenous South Americans had complex relationships

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