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# Visiones de los Andes: Ensayos críticos sobre el concepto de paisaje y región [Visions of the Andes: Critical essays on the notion of landscape and region]. Edited by Ximena Briceño and Jorge Coronado

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This book brings the perspective of cultural studies to the analysis of the notions of "landscape" and "region" in the Andes through heterogeneous and innovative readings that explore different facets of cultural production in this mountain region. With the term "visions," the editors give an account of the multiple stories, conflicts, and approaches to the landscape in the Andes and show a plurality of perspectives gathered in the book.

In her introductory chapter, Ximena Briceño offers a theoretical-methodological orientation for the book and discusses the notion of "heterogeneous landscape," a combination of different viewpoints encompassing terms taken from human geography, such as "cultural landscape." This aspect is of primary importance, since it proposes a vision of landscape that goes beyond the dichotomous separation between nature and culture, between the material and the sociocultural, to conceptualize landscape as a complex web forged by the mutual intervention of humans and nonhumans. The theoretical premises reflect the contemporary contributions of anthropology and human geography concerning political ontologies and contemporary critiques of anthropocentric notions, as well as drawing attention to a need to reverse the environmental impacts in the region.

In this sense, the Andes are among the world's regions most threatened by climate change. Their overwhelming environmental and cultural diversity is facing such challenges as globalization and urbanization and, above all, mining extraction, often at sites that are protected by or sacred to their inhabitants. In his chapter, Víctor Vich analyzes the performance of an artist from the city of Cerro de Pasco, *La última Reina* (the last Queen), in her denouncement of the environmental damage that affects the city and the lives of its residents, a city sadly known for the giant hole produced by decades of mining exploitation that has irremediably marked the face of this place located at an altitude of more than 4000 masl in the Peruvian Andes.

Tara Daly's chapter, also in an urban context, concentrates on describing another aspect of the Andean urban landscape by analyzing the *Andetectura* of the Bolivian architect Fredy Mamani, author of the famous *cholets* of the city of El Alto. Daly shows how Mamani's architecture is changing the face of an astonishingly dynamic, predominantly Aymara-indigenous highland city whose economic elites are connected to regional, national, and international markets, particularly China. The aesthetics of the *cholet* draws from traditional Aymara housing and blends with aesthetic motifs of Andean tradition, projecting, however, into an alternative modernity to the Western one. The result is a new, indigenous, and contemporary product that has a strong impact on other Andean cities as well.

Landscapes are heterochronic, that is, they are repositories of traces left by the many generations that have inhabited and lived in them. In this sense, the landscape is the archive of the human and nonhuman lives that have contributed to its construction and that continue to constantly transform it. The topic of the (non)archive is present in Silvia Spitta's work on 2 photographers from the Peruvian city of Cusco, Martín Chambi and Bernardo Quispe Tintaya. Spitta examines the way these 2 artists have portrayed the urban landscape of Cusco and its inhabitants—the former heritagized, the latter dispersed—contributing to the construction of an archive of the landscape and society of this Andean city.

Juan G. Ramos analyzes, from a perspective based on decolonizing thought, the work of 3 Ecuadorian artists—Alfredo Pareja Diezcanseco, Eduardo Kingman, and Oswaldo Guayasamín. From a theoretical point of view, he discusses the concepts of visuality and countervisuality, understanding by the first a "colonial gesture" evident in the conception of a romanticized landscape that follows Western canons. Conversely, the countervisuality of these authors would be a "decolonial gesture," a way of breaking with the Europeanizing tradition and, at the same time, a political critique of the asymmetrical relations of power and ethnicity in 20th-century Ecuadorian society.

In the first part of the 20th century, Andean countries experienced the indigenist "revolution," of which the Peruvian writer Gamaliel Churata is one of the most outstanding exponents. In her chapter, Elizabeth Monasterios Pérez analyzes Churata's perspective on the *chullpares*, emblematic landmarks of the Peruvian–Bolivian highlands. The author shows how the "scientific" interpretations made by chroniclers and travelers of the *chullpas* (pre-Columbian funeral constructions) misrepresented their meaning. Monasterios shows Churata's position that, on the contrary, inserts them into the Aymara ontological vision as part of the cultural landscape, that is, as elements that make visible the indigenous perspective on the relationship with the dead and, by extension, with the past and the future.



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The Andean region and its physical and cultural landscape have historically represented an important source of inspiration for literature. In his essay, Peter Elmore explores the representation of the Andean landscape in the 19th century through the study of 2 short stories by Clorinda Matto de Turner and Juana Manuela Gorriti. In these works, the Andean landscape and the Inca past operate as an authoritative repository in the construction of the Peruvian nation, being "characteristic features of a geography" (p 179) proper to this mountain region and its inhabitants.

Jorge Marcone's essay decenters the focus on the Andes, connecting it to the coastal area, particularly the city of Chimbote. Since the 1940s, migratory flows from the Andean region have transformed the country's sociocultural geography, as recorded in his last work—*El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*—by the distinguished author José María Arguedas. From the analysis of this novel, Marcone investigates Arguedas's position on the ecological crisis and the relationship between the human and the nonhuman as part of what the author defines as "provincial" affection.

In his concluding chapter, Jorge Coronado discusses the very notion of "the Andean" and the cultural construction of this region, its landscape and, indeed, the idea of nationhood, particularly in Peru. Specifically, the author identifies its genesis in 3 macro discourses, exemplified by 3 intellectuals who contributed—from different fields of knowledge—to its elaboration and subsequent fortune: what he defines as "the scientific Andean," whose figure is found in the outstanding archaeologist Julio C. Tello; "the cultural Andean," analyzed by Coronado through the contribution of one of the most important Latin American intellectuals, the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui; and "the public Andean," through the work of the great visual artist Elena Izcue. Coronado's conclusion—which joins the threads of the other essays in the book—is the "long and strange trajectory that goes from archaeology to the market, from the most purified spaces of the literacy city to the extreme diffusion of globalized and globalizing popular consumption," that is, the space where one must "search for the meaning of the Andean today" (p 216).

To conclude, this book provides a cultural overview of the landscape and the region in the Andes, but it also presents new insights into contemporary social and cultural phenomena, in an interesting dialogue between humanities and social sciences. For this reason, this book is certainly of interest to those who deal with cultural landscape in mountain contexts, but it may also be relevant to those scholars who wish to build bridges between the material and the cultural dimensions of landscape.

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