

Series: El Mar Y Sus Metáforas

Mariana Favila Vázquez

Del árbol a la canoa: surcando el mar en Mesoamérica



Department of Spanish
and Portuguese

Lydeen Library
4302 Rolfe Hall

Feb 13th - 12:00-2:00

Talk will be in Spanish

Mariana Favila Vázquez is a Professor of Archeology at the ENAH (National School of Anthropology and History, México) and a research associate in the project “Digging into early colonial Mexico: a large-scale computational analysis of 16th century historical sources” of the University of Lancaster, United Kingdom and the Museo de Templo Mayor in Mexico. Her research has focused on indigenous pre-Hispanic and colonial navigation traditions in the Mesoamerican cultural area.

Archeological studies regarding pre-Hispanic mechanisms of environment appropriation have been crucial to explain the complexity of Mesoamerican societies. However, an ontological dichotomy of water and land has permeated these investigations for decades. The activities practiced on the mainland, such as agriculture, among many others, are the preferred focus of interest for explaining indigenous social and historical processes. The activities and the role of the aquatic spaces are generally considered subordinate or secondary concerning the former. Through archaeological, iconographic and historical evidence this paper argues that Mesoamerican cultures, such as the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec, had a perception of the environment in which, although water was of course distinguished from the mainland, it was not seen exclusively as an opposite space, liminal and independent to the political, social, economic and religious dynamics of the indigenous people. Evidence of this is the development of a complex nautical technology that was permeated by the religious and ideological configurations of the societies that produced it. Consequently, navigation was practiced as a landscape connectivity system that integrated the use of waterways, coastal lagoons, wetlands, and estuaries, along with roads and activities in the mainland. This study allows for rethinking the valuation of aquatic spaces and getting closer to the local perception of the environment, in which the aquatic spaces are no longer the limit of the territories inhabited by humans.

For more information about *El mar y sus Metáforas*:

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