

tären und der an Museen betriebenen Ethnologie gesehen werden.

Ingrid Schindlbeck

(i.schindlbeck@smb.spk-berlin.de)

Markus Schindlbeck (m.schindlbeck@outlook.de)

**König, Viola** (ed.): *On the Mount of Intertwined Serpents. The Pictorial History of Power, Rule, and Land on Lienzo Seler II*. Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag; Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2017. 172 pp. ISBN 978-3-7319-0486-1. Price: € 49,95

The subject of this edited volume, the Lienzo Seler II, is a pictographic document on which “sacred and human history transpires over a conceptual map of the territory” (38) of the town of Coixtlahuaca (Oaxaca) in the early colonial period, as it is described by Boone in the introductory chapter. On this large roughly 4x4 meter cloth, the boundaries of this territory are depicted as well as indigenous origin narratives but also Catholic churches and priests. It is clearly a complex document. The interpretation of the pictography is made more difficult by the fact that the Lienzo is rather damaged. At the edges the cloth is torn and some of the paint is severely faded.

Before going into the interpretative part, three chapters of this volume focus on the history of research done on this manuscript. Most of this focusses on the period before the 1970s, when the Lienzo was put up for public display in a vertical glass case, making it almost impossible to study the small and detailed images. Chapter 2 by Viola König gives a good biographical overview of the known whereabouts of the Lienzo since its creation. This mostly looks at the period of collection by Martínez Gracida and the Selers, and the Lienzo’s eventual transportation to Berlin. Chapters 4 and 5 together form the section “The Collectors” taking up the topic introduced by König and presenting much needed biographical information about the two previously mentioned collectors and their contributions to Mesoamerican studies. Araceli Rojas Martínez Gracida shows how her namesake was an exquisite researcher and educator, especially when considered in the spirit of his time. Within the political climate of Porfirian Mexico, he sought to strengthen the indigenous identity and encourage the research of its roots. It was likely this context that prompted him to give the Lienzo along with other artefacts to the Selers, so that the study of Mexican heritage would be promoted in foreign countries. The Selers themselves and the collection they brought to Berlin are discussed by Maria Gaida. She shows that although some records have survived of their acquisitions, the exact circumstances of their acquisition of the Lienzo Seler II remain unclear. The inclusion of chapters on these important early Americanists is important, not just for the role they played in the history of the Lienzo but certainly also to call attention to their woefully understudied and underused legacy. The studies of Martínez

Gracida, including those of now lost archaeological objects and sites, remain largely unpublished. The work of Eduard Seler, although partially superseded by later work, and especially the journals of Caecilie Seler-Sachs are also fonts of knowledge that remain unread in the anglophone world.

Other important contextual information is given in chapters 6 and 10 by Kowalewski and Pohl respectively. Based on the information gathered in the archaeological survey of the Coixtlahuaca valley, Kowalewski provides important insight into the demographic development of the region. The link between these historical documents and archaeology is often not made, not in the least because the archaeology of the early colonial period is woefully underdeveloped as Kowalewski shows. I sincerely hope that integrated projects including archaeology, historical sources, and present-day indigenous knowledge will give a clearer picture of this time. Pohl shows the importance of southern Mexico in the investigation of Mesoamerican history. While I am not entirely convinced by his interpretation that this expresses a deliberate imperial strategy, it is clear that southern Mexico had an important impact on the development of the Mixteca-Puebla style. In my opinion, grouping all of these peoples together in one “Children of the Plumed Serpent Confederacy” has the undesirable effect of erasing the different identities that were clearly expressed in precolonial written sources. I am surprised to find that this tendency to “whitewash” indigenous peoples is in this chapter continued in the use of certain culturally insensitive terminology, such as the use of “Indians” and “Demons.”

Three chapters focus mainly on the interpretation of the landscape encoded in this Lienzo. Van Doesburg, Pacheco Silva, and Rincón Mautner they each approach the document from a different angle and often also look at different sections of the Lienzo. One of the main issues that they try to tackle is the relation between places mentioned in the Lienzo and the geographical reality of the Coixtlahuaca valley, i. e., can we pinpoint places in the Lienzo on a modern map. Their conclusions are based on complex chains of evidence obtained by the study of often small details in the Lienzo in combination with linguistic, ethnographic, and historical information from other sources. My main concern with these chapters and for that matter with any investigation of the details of this Lienzo, is that it is both layered and damaged. In the final chapter of this book, König addresses this issue of later additions, but she does so mainly based on stylistic differences. It is clear that some figures are done in a different style and that these were added later. It is in my opinion very hard, however, to see stylistic differences in, for example, the lines that run all over the Lienzo and that connect different sections. Even when we can distinguish different hands, we are still stuck with the fact that much of the Lienzo is faded, including most of this line work. The top right corner and the whole section along the border on the right hand side is faded, though traces of figures

can be seen in the exquisite photographs of this publication.

I have saved the discussion of chapter 3 by Reiche and Marten for last, for it is my belief that in it we find a first step to help solve some of the difficulties encountered by the authors attempting an interpretation of this Lienzo. Although the study of the conservation state of the Lienzo is important in its own right, I focus here on the investigation of different materials used. As they show, multiple inks have been used to create different parts of the Lienzo. In some cases, they were able to link inks with particular styles of drawings. What is needed, then, is a mapping of these materials, to distinguish different phases or interventions in the creation of the final Lienzo. This brings me to the second point, which is that the investigation by Reiche and Marten has shown that the inks, because of their chemical composition, are likely to show up clearly if investigated with certain types of spectral imaging (multi- and hyperspectral imaging come to mind). This would also apply to the faded areas, which means, that if the extraordinary size of this Lienzo can be accommodated, a more complete reconstruction of the Lienzo could be made. It is my fervent hope that future research will include such scanning, leading to a clear picture of the different stages of the document, in turn allowing for interpretation on an even more solid basis. Clearly this book is an important work in the study of this Lienzo, and in the field of Mesoamerican studies in general. I am eagerly awaiting future publications of these researchers on this subject.

Ludo Snijders (l.snijders@arch.leidenuniv.nl)

**Lavrillier, Alexandra, and Semen Gabyshev:** *An Arctic Indigenous Knowledge System of Landscape, Climate, and Human Interactions. Evenki Reindeer Herders and Hunters.* Fürstenberg: Verlag der Kulturstiftung Sibirien, 2017. 467 pp. ISBN 978-3-942883-31-3. Price: € 68,00

This subtle and detailed book documents four years of the work of a “transdisciplinary observatory” established between a group of French anthropologists and a community of Evenki hunters and reindeer herders in the Aldan and Amur rivers regions of southeastern Siberia. The volume attempts both to provide an encyclopaedia-like reference work of landscape, meteorological, vegetations and snow-cover terminology, and a discussion of the unique logic of how Evenkis understand environmental change and adaptation. It is a dense complex work of 467 pages with frequent regrets that yet another volume or chapter could not be added to document the unending eye for detail that Evenki pastoralists hold. Uniquely the book is written in several voices and several languages, with both the lead anthropologist Alexandra Lavrillier presenting portions or diagrams under her own name, and the lead herder Semen Gabyshev presenting complementary views. The reference sections are thickly documented with scheme drawings,

photographs and contain well-edited texts in Russian, (local dialect) Evenki, and English. The work therefore serves a number of different audiences ranging from folklorists, to environmental scientists, to policy makers. Although it lacks an index, it is available from the website of the Kulturstiftung Sibirien as a downloadable PDF free of charge. I found this version often more handy since it allowed one to skip through and follow themes which were not always directly tied together.

I have to admit that this is a very difficult book to review since it combines a variety of voices, makes an argument about the state of climate knowledge, yet also strives to be a comprehensive reference work. In places it sometimes reads like the first draft of a fieldwork study where a single term – for example the dense brush of a *sehi* – is used as a peg to hang observations on climate-induced shrubification and an analysis of niches useful for encountering animals (132f.). In other places it makes general assertions about the limits of being able to translate highly contextualized landscape knowledge into “scientific” texts. The text often portrays itself as a pioneering study in this respect, taking time and space to present multiple textual and visual artefacts of the same phenomena in order to communicate as much of the localized contextualized knowledge as possible. One unique quality of the volume, evident from the cover photograph, is the use of digital photographs of landscape features which are overlain with computer-generated sketches and labels which draw attention to the relevant features of the landscape. This creole technology is put forth as new method developed by the co-authors to help the urban ethnographer (Lavrillier) understand the proximal landscape feature through a photograph while the experienced landscape expert (Gabyshev) could demonstrate the same features conceptually through line-drawings (450–453). The diagrams therefore serve as a sort of shorthand for the intermediate sketch-work of an apprentice trying to explain and conceptualize a new concept. There are dozens and dozens of sketches and diagrams of this type, and every reader will likely be drawn to different ones. My eye was caught by the sections on snow types (315ff.), *ulan* “overflows” (348f.), and landscapes which lent themselves to setting snowmobile roads (310). Much like the authors found it impossible to represent the outer edges of Evenki knowledge in this book, it is impossible to review every sketch-map or encyclopaedia entry.

The book in my view therefore sits in-between a number of different genres. As a project-generated report, it is one of the most detailed and intellectually honest I have ever read – and individual pages and entries will be a great reference work for specialists in years to come. As a work exploring the boundaries of the “scientific” mindset I found it sometimes superficial. For example, one or the other of the authors argues that scientific anthropology cannot conceive that a landscape can be moulded and changed by the people who live within it. Granted this may have been a quality of environmental determinist ethnology of a previous era,