

Title: The Everyday, the Overlooked, the Fringe: New Perspectives on Interaction in the Precolonial and Early Colonial Americas

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Abstract

Social interaction and material exchange shaped the lifeways of prehispanic and early colonial peoples in the Americas. Archaeological evidence, often complemented by Indigenous histories and colonial-era documents, points to multi-scalar networks through which people, objects, raw materials, technologies, and ideas moved across and between islands, coasts, valleys, highlands, and tropical lowlands. Archaeologists of the Americas have participated in the development and application of a wide variety of interaction frameworks – including core-periphery models, interaction spheres, globalization perspectives, and (de)colonial frameworks. Nevertheless, like archaeologists around the globe, Americanists have often privileged highly visible, elite-centered exchanges—canonical prestige goods and emblematic iconographies—at the expense of interactions that structured everyday life. This session redirects attention to what commonly escapes the spotlight: non-elites as mobile agents and decision-makers (not merely producers or intermediaries); local and regional networks operating between the scale of states and households; frontier and “fringe” zones that connect, rather than simply separate, cultural traditions; and understudied materials such as perishables, local wares, utilitarian commodities, foodstuffs, and everyday technologies. We invite papers considering interaction of all scales and all time periods and particularly welcome contributions that bridge prehispanic and early colonial contexts, tracing how new institutions, markets, and coercive policies reshaped older routes, affiliations, and material practices. Our goal is a comparative, empirically grounded conversation—across the Central Andes, Mesoamerica, and beyond—about who participated in interaction, what circulated (and what did not), how connections were maintained or disrupted, and how exchange and mobility intersected with both life-ways and death-ways.