Jessica Joyce Christie, Jelena Bogdanovic, and Eulogio Guzman, eds. Political Landscapes of Capital Cities

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Main content

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Teachers of global surveys of architecture face challenges developing analytic frameworks that are broadly applicable yet register local conditions, and in finding concise sources that allow one to get up to speed quickly on unfamiliar topics. Political Landscapes of Capital Cities addresses both. It presents ten case studies of ancient and more recent cities in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas edited by Jessica Joyce Christie (East Carolina University), known for her work in Maya and Inka studies; Jelena Bogdanovic (Iowa State University), who has written on Byzantine and later architecture in the Balkans; and Eulogio Guzman (School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts), a scholar of pre-Columbian art and architecture.

The book originated as a paper session at the 2010 meeting of the College Art Association devoted to testing modes of spatial analysis posited by Adam T. Smith in The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities, published in 2003. (1) It isn't necessary to have read Smith before delving into this collection--the editors summarize his key arguments in their introduction, but his presence in each essay is prominent.

Smith, a professor of anthropology at Cornell University, wrote his book to counter certain deterministic paradigms employed in some areas of anthropology and archaeology for interpreting the structures of early complex polities. Informed by the work of Henri Lefebvre and others investigating the production of space as a social construct, Smith argues for relational approaches that consider the dynamic interplay of social space...

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