In the early 17th century, the Spanish established dozens of missions in the southeastern U.S. region known as La Florida. Soon after, native populations were reduced by disease and hardship while the missions themselves were left largely desolate and destroyed by the early 18th century. In *Mission Cemeteries, Mission Peoples*, Christopher Stojanowski makes use of several avenues of skeletal, archaeological, and ethnohistoric evidence to better understand the life course experiences of individuals, families, and communities during this tumultuous time. His dataset consists of almost 1,700 individuals primarily from Early Mission Period (ca. 1600–1650) through Late Mission Period (ca. 1650–1706) cemeteries affiliated with the Apalachee, Timucua, and Guale people. These major ethnolinguistic groups inhabited a wide swath of territory stretching from the Florida Panhandle to the Atlantic coast.

Stojanowski’s goals in this book are to discern the rules that structured grave placement within each mission cemetery and to determine what those structuring principles reveal about the society writ large. To address this, multivariate statistical analyses of tooth-size phenotypic variability are marshaled to infer biological affinity. Stojanowski also makes significant use of intracemetery spatial analysis and paleo-diet and paleo-health data culled from site reports. This “community pathology” perspective aims to clarify intercommunity and interfamilial variations among members of the same social network and generation.

At Mission Patale in the Florida Panhandle (ch. 2), biological and social identity conditioned grave placement among the 17th-century Apalachee. Patale’s cemetery configuration is sex structured, with men on one side and women and children on the other. Burial rows were reserved for family groups. The patterned distribution and frequency of pathological lesions within the sample suggests differential frailty, with certain families suffering more than others over several generations.

Further inland, at San Martin de Timucua (ch. 3), a different pattern in community health emerged. There, the initial homogeneous population witnessed increasing genetic variability in early 17th century due to in-migration or population aggregation. During the mid–17th century, phenotypic variability declined, likely a result of genetic drift brought about by epidemic disease and demographic collapse.

Status played an important role in structuring cemetery internment throughout the Mission Period. At Santa Catalina de Guale de Santa Maria, a late-17th-century Guale mission on Amelia Island (ch. 4), kin structuring was reserved for higher-status individuals buried near the church altar. In contrast, the back of the church was used by lower-status, multicommunity groups. In this case, community identities determined which section of the church could be used for burial, while family identity dictated the appropriate burial row. Age at death apparently played a major role in how enthusiastically these structuring principles were implemented.

Most creatively, Stojanowski uses biodistance to reconstruct how commingled skeletons in the Santa Catalina Ossuary on Amelia Island (ch. 5) were collected and deposited. His analysis suggests that premission inland immigrants aggregated remains from several precontact Timucua channel houses and incorporated them into a single feature. At the abutting Mission Santa Maria cemetery (ch. 6), fascinating mortuary data highlight a community actively negotiating indigenous and medieval Spanish funerary traditions. Among high-status populations, social capital accrued in precontact times was maintained even as new Catholic identities were being cautiously adopted. For lower-status communities in the cemetery, sex and gender remained major determinants in grave placement.

Although not immediately felt after contact, formal mission activities over the 17th century incited significant changes within single families and entire regions. Declining health resulted from a mosaic of factors including arduous labor commitments, frequent epidemics, slave raids and frontier violence, and an increasingly homogenous diet and sedentary lifestyle. In terms of social structure, the era witnessed increasingly gendered notions of individual status and a changing emphasis on the family, with childhood identity becoming increasingly distinct.

Stojanowski’s comprehensive study demonstrates the potential of phenotypic approaches to microtemporal variation. His rationales in data collection and coding (i.e., a particular tooth dimension or the presence and severity of a pathological lesion) are straightforward and reproducible, and the inclusion of raw data in the text is commendable. The statistical methods used in the volume will be most
appreciated by those who specialize in biodistance and dental anthropology; scholars should look to Stojanowski’s other fine publications for a more thorough explanation on the applicability and reliability of such quantitative approaches.

Finally, historical archaeologists and bioarchaeologists of the southeast are well served by Stojanowski’s integration of multiple data sets as well as his discussion of colonial mortuary practices.

The Ecology of the Spoken Word: Amazonian Storytelling and Shamanism among the Napo Runa


Michael Wroblewski
Grand Valley State University

Michael Uzendoski and Edith Calapucha-Tapuy’s *The Ecology of the Spoken Word* refreshes an enduring goal of Amazonian ethnography: to illuminate cultural discourses that are "philosophically and aesthetically different from those that define the Western world" (9). Ethnographers of indigenous Amazonia have long challenged persistent primitive–civilized dichotomies and the dominance of Western separations of “nature” from “culture.” In so doing, Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy add energizing methodological and theoretical innovation to a rich tradition of discourse-centered ethnographies of Amazonia. Combining extensive experiential knowledge of the “storytelling world” of the Amazonian Quichua of Napo, Ecuador, with deep multimodal and multimedia analysis, they offer provocative new definitions of orality and textuality. Seeking to suture these analytically severed concepts, they demonstrate the “oral textuality” of what they term “somatic poetry,” an art form that allows the body to both create and become text.

The authors make it clear from the outset that their book is a self-conscious methodological experiment. The product of collaboration between an anthropologist (Uzendoski) and a native expert on Amazonian Quichua language, culture, and aesthetics (Calapucha-Tapuy), it is a multivocal exploration of indigenous ethno-poetics that foregrounds real speakers and the spoken word. The style is modeled on classic Hyemsian verse analysis, in which original stories are transcribed and organized in terms of lines, verses, stanzas, and acts and are bookended by detailed ethnographic context and analysis. The analytical emphasis is on the somatic aspects of stories, conceived as “multisensory works of art.” Reinterpreting storytelling texts through the “communicative potency” of the body, the authors combine evaluation of semiotic strategies with detailed accounts of storytelling experiences—namely, sights, smells, sounds, emotions, and bodily kinesthetics.

The methodological breakthrough here is the authors’ multimedia approach. Contesting Western conflations of textuality with literacy while recognizing the limitations of translating somatic poetry into written text, the authors provide a companion website (http://spokenwordecology.com) with drawn images, music, audio speech files, and video versions of storytelling performances. These tools allow the reader to experience the full semiotic resources of Amazonian Quichua storytelling; to observe storytellers and their complex gestures, voice qualities, and movements; and to follow the circular flows of Quichua-language narrative. Exemplary of contemporary multivocal and multimedia ethnography, the book-and-website combination has important potential as both a guide to holistic representation and as a classroom teaching resource.

Centralizing the expressive power of the body in storytellers’ dialogues within a larger world of ecological beings, Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy contribute to established Amazonianist traditions in ethnopoetics and structuralist-influenced theoretical frameworks. The book’s chapters spotlight shamanic discourses and songs, mythic narratives of primordial space-time, and a popular Quichua-language music genre called *Runa Paju*. The authors’ reviews of these “oral texts” focus on questions of indigenous ontology, subjectivity, and a distinctive Amazonian nature–culture relationship that builds on the reworked structuralist paradigms (Turner 2009) of perspectivist cultural analysis (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Perspectivist theory points to a collective Amazonian vision of the world as a place where all living and nonliving things share a circulating “soul substance” and can metamorphose into different corporeal forms. In Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy’s view, Amazonian Quichua somatic poetry is a medium that nurtures the “communicative relatedness” of all extant things through its creative use of words, music, and shifting bodily subjectivities of humans, animals, and landscape. Building on postmodernist critiques of the Western distinction between orality and literacy, the authors conceptualize somatic poetry as a process of oral-textual creation in which storytellers inscribe meaning on the body and the material world. Their theoretical propositions thus synthesize a structuralist concern with ontological questions surrounding the nature–culture relationship (Turner 2009) and a poststructuralist vision of storytellers as agentive, text-producing mediators. And their deep synchronic analysis is framed in historical terms, as a call for recognition of critical Amazonian alternatives to spreading Western naturalism.