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Landscapes of Origin in the Americas: Creation Narratives Linking Ancient Places and Present Communities

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Landscape is a powerful factor in the operation of memory because of the associations narrators make between the local landscape and the events of the stories they tell. Ancestors and mythological events often become fixed in a specific landscape and act as timeless reference points.

In conventional anthropological literature, "landscape" is the term applied to the meaning local people bestow on their cultural and physical surroundings. In this work, the authors explore the cultural and physical landscapes an individual or cultural group has constructed to define the origins or beginnings of that cultural group as revealed through shared or traditional memory. The cultural landscapes of origins in diverse sites throughout the Americas are investigated through multidisciplinary research, not only to reveal the belief system and mythologies but also to place these origin beliefs in context and relationship to each other. In a continual interaction between the past, present, and future, time is subordinate to place, and history, as defined in Western academic terms, does not exist.

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