

REVIEWS

Edited by Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos

Material Relations: The Marriage Figurines of Prehispanic Honduras. JULIA A. HENDON, ROSEMARY A. JOYCE, and JEANNELOPIPARO. 2014. University Press of Colorado, Boulder. xiv+200 pp., 54 b&w photographs, 44 line drawings, 11 tables. \$70.00 hardcover. ISBN 9781607322771.

Reviewed by Christina T. Halperin, Université de Montréal.

Honduran figurines of a conjoined male and female pair embody a series of relations between individuals, and by extension, between families, and even between regions. Julia Hendon, Rosemary Joyce, and Jeanne Lopi-paro argue that these paired figures represent marriage alliances and use these delightfully expressive objects to bring us into a world of networking social relations across western Honduras. The focus on what are actually very rare depictions of male and female pairs in figurine form serves to constantly remind us that the ties between villages, towns, and regions—as well as between cultural, linguistic, and ethnic groups—are always made by individuals who were part of families. As such, *Material Relations: The Marriage Figurines of Prehispanic Honduras* provides a humanistic perspective of the social relations forged between sites along the Ulúa, Chamelecón, and Comayagua river valleys in Honduras between 500–1000 C.E. Indeed, one of the book's great strengths is its ability to move artfully and informatively between different social scales of analysis from the most intimate to the territorial.

The book denotes that the marriage figurines are more of an anchor, bringing us into the household activities, crafting production, ritual exchanges, and ball game ceremonies of the Honduran past. The figurines are contextualized by this broader perspective of social life, which is understood through (1) the authors' combined fieldwork at the sites of Copán, Cerro Palenque, Currusté,

Campo Dos, and Travesía, and (2) a re-analysis of Honduran figurines and ceramic vessels from museum collections. These analyses are framed through the theoretical perspectives of “social houses,” social memory, materiality, and Peircean semiotics, which are more fully developed in their previous publications and treated more axiomatically throughout the book.

In this sense, the book is much more than a study of figurines. In fact, just as much discussion is devoted to the representations, movements, and exchanges of polychrome pottery (although frustratingly, no photographs and illustrations of the various polychrome types were provided, with the exception of some Ulúa polychromes). The figurines and polychrome pottery are complemented with discussions of household excavations, settlement patterns, building orientations, stone vessels, and architecture, among other material analyses. In this sense, we are given a better understanding of the marriage figurines, not necessarily by a comprehensive and comparative analysis with other figurines from their own collections or with those found elsewhere in Mesoamerica, but rather through a detailed and informative account of their social contexts.

The authors specifically examine the social contexts of western Honduras and largely exclude discussions and comparative lines of evidence from the Maya area, or even greater Mesoamerica. Such an emphasis was done on purpose. Much previous scholarship has treated Precolumbian Honduran societies as poor imitations of the Maya (e.g., hence use of the term “Mayoid” to describe Ulúa polychromes) that never reached the level of social inequality seen to the north. The authors' focus served to examine the people of Precolumbian Honduras on their own terms and without the cultural evolutionary baggage of earlier studies.

At the expense of this goal is a more isolated perspective, even though the authors make it clear that the Honduran societies were tied to greater Mesoamerican

peoples through the movement of objects. For instance, interesting parallels might be drawn between the distinctiveness of headdresses on Honduran figurines, which the authors interpret as family crests, and those from Late Classic Veracruz. Depictions of marriage or sexual unions in Central Mexican manuscripts as well as in West Mexican figurines might provide a provocative source of comparison with the Honduran marriage figurines, as some are represented by a paired man and woman under a blanket. Such a depiction resonates, in particular, with the more anomalous paired figurines from Travesía, Honduras, which possess two distinct heads with different headdresses, but bodies cloaked below a single cloth. They interpret the cloth as a single *huipil* (women's dress) with the implication that two women were paired together as a single social person. In addition, a great deal of archaeological fieldwork with extensive analyses of excavated pottery has been conducted in the Honduran river valleys immediately to the east of their study zone (e.g., Naco River Valley and beyond). The authors, however, provide little information on how the people in their study region may or may not have interacted with people further east.

Material Relations: The Marriage Figurines of Prehispanic Honduras showcases a series of paired figurines that bring us into a world of marriage alliances, the crafting of person-like objects, the reproduction of households, the curating of ancestors, and public celebrations that brought diverse people together. As such, the sites of Campo Dos, Cerro Palenque, Copán, Currusté, and Travesía come to life, and the reader gains a greater appreciation for the social archaeology of western Honduras.

Moctezuma. Apogeo y caída del imperio azteca. MICHEL GRAULICH. 2014. Ediciones Era, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City. 503 pp, €348.00. ISBN: 978-6074453430.

Reviewed by Guilhem Olivier, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Twenty years after the publication of the French first edition (*Montezuma ou l'apogée et la chute de l'empire aztèque*, Paris, Fayard, 1994), the Spanish translation of this masterpiece by Michel Graulich is a most welcome contribution to Aztec studies. Renowned for his in-depth analyses of myths and rituals in prehispanic Mexico—including *Myths of Ancient Mexico* (1997), and *Ritos aztecas: Las fiestas de las veintenas* (1999)—the Belgian historian tackles one of the most controversial figures in Mexican history in this biography, namely Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin or Motecuhzoma II, the king of the Mexica

Empire who had to face the conquistadors led by Hernán Cortés. Like Jacques Le Goff, who in his book *Saint Louis* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009) pursued the difficult search for the personality of a French king from the Middle Ages—beyond the stereotype of the sovereign and the model of the saint—Graulich raises the question of the possibility of offering a reliable portrait of a prehispanic figure on the basis of sources rife with bias and contradiction. Just as Le Goff contextualized his biography by presenting thirteenth century French society, religion, and art, Michel Graulich includes a detailed description of Mexico at the start of the sixteenth century, from the structure of the Mexica Empire, the daily life of its inhabitants, and the myths that were the foundation for their vision of the world. In fact, drawing on myths to analyze Motecuhzoma's actions is one of the most innovative aspects of Graulich's book. Also striking is the author's systematic comparison of sixteenth century sources—historical accounts written by the Spaniards and those by members of the indigenous population and the religious community—without overlooking the results of modern scholarship. Graulich not only exploits different versions to try to reconstruct a close approximation of the reality of the conquest, but he also assesses the indigenous perspective, without which many of the events would be inexplicable without. When viewing Spanish sources, the Belgian historian's gaze is at times critical, as in the case of Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*, often used by historians who praise his remarkable memory. However, Graulich catches Bernal Díaz in a number of lies, such as the conqueror's claim that the Mayas began the hostilities during the initial contact with the Spaniards at Cape Catoche—he suspects that Bernal Díaz did not even participate in the Córdoba expedition—or when he describes how Cortés destroyed the idols of the Totonacs at Cempoala. Similarly, Graulich points out the discrepancies between Spanish accounts or their significant silences. We know that after the destruction of the idols at the Templo Mayor, Motecuhzoma urged Cortés to leave Tenochtitlan, a fact that the future Marquis del Valle naturally omits to cast blame for the Aztec rebellion on the arrival of Narváez. As for the indigenous sources, Graulich's criticism is of another sort. He discusses the reconstitution of events carried out after the conquest, many of them aimed at minimizing their resistance to the invaders or presented to enhance the image of collaboration with the Spaniards.

It is worth noting that more than half of the book is devoted to the period preceding the arrival of the Spaniards. After a brief presentation of the creation myths and Mexica history, Graulich describes the education of Motecuhzoma and the complex ceremonies performed for accession to power. Military campaigns were carried out continuously during Motecuhzoma's reign to con-