

The book ends with two must-read reflections: one from Webster, about field projects in Copan, Tikal, and other sites, but also about research questions and theory. He makes our choices clear in an era of “anything-goes” postmodernism. Those observations are perhaps not unrelated to his view that ideologies are oftentimes maladaptive (and that an obsession with maize may have contributed to the Classic Maya demise). Regardless, the interested student will find a dozen or so potential dissertation topics in this chapter. The other is from Don and Prudence Rice, a thought-provoking reflection on scholarly networks, and their own research trajectories. I found myself thinking about disciplinary training and the current state of anthropology throughout the book. It is hard to imagine another Webster coming along in the future, and that is unfortunate.

Human Adaptation is readable, accessible, seemingly error-free, and looks good on a shelf with other University Press of Colorado books. But is that enough to recommend it? Festschrifts are notoriously uneven, limited in scope, and rarely worth the trouble of being opened. More often than not, one wishes instead for an annotated collection of the honoree’s writings. In the present instance, the reader might further ask whether the book is too nostalgic about Penn State. The downside of our “invisible colleges” (Rice and Rice) is the tunnel vision that might arise from it. Still, the book transcends the limitations of its genre. Webster is widely known and read by Mayanists and non-Mayanists alike. This book elucidates the reasons for those achievements.

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Political Strategies in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Sarah Kurnick and Joanne Baron, eds. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016, 288 pp. \$60.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-60732-415-7.

This volume is the result of a Society for American Archaeology session designed, as the editors state, to stimulate discussion and debate about “the processes associated with the creation, perpetuation, and negation of politically authoritative relationships” (xv), and to a great extent the volume succeeds.

In her introductory section, Kurnick eschews long chapter summaries, instead presenting an interesting, dense review of theoretical positions related to a central theme: the contradictions inherent in rulership. She uses Max Weber’s definition of authority: the idea that, most likely, a given group of people will obey specific commands, and that those people have an interest in complying. Authority in turn implies legitimacy. She sees this Weberian view as compatible with agency theory but asks a crucial question: Is any modern political theory applicable to the past, or are current theories of

little use since they are embedded in the modern world, particularly recent hierarchical capitalism?

Kurnick concludes that legitimacy is a process, with rulers constantly trying to develop and sustain legitimacy. She also asks these questions, following Weber (pp. 8–9): “How do rulers induce their followers to obey? What techniques and tactics do rulers use to promote their legitimacy and encourage their subjects to participate in politically authoritative relationships?” The questions lead to a review of resistance versus compliance (Marx, Engels, and Gramsci on ideology and inducement, Althusser on hegemony, and Bourdieu and Foucault on repression and ideology), concluding with Mann’s Ideological, Economic, Military, and Political (IEMP) power model and James Scott’s ideas about leaders regularizing institutions to best effect compliance.

Kurnick also surveys positive inducements to compliance (Scott, Bourdieu, and Foucault), and repressive approaches (Foucault). Following this, Kurnick presents the book’s central question: How do rulers and the ruled negotiate the contradictions of rulership—do the rank maintain their differences from and superiority to the ruled while also assuring the ruled that they, the rulers, are really much like their subjects? Kurnick believes that structuration theory (Giddens) and agency (Scott), as well as Marxian dialectical approaches and Practice Theory, will be key analytical ideas.

Kurnick’s introduction presents us with much to consider, whether or not one agrees with her perspectives. A strength of the book is that the contributors do *not* always agree with the premise. For example, Inomata questions the use of *any* contemporary theory without extensive consideration of underlying assumptions and biases. He explicitly disagrees with Weber’s relevance, also asking whether our ideas about agency and personhood are applicable to antiquity. Inomata suggests that using these ideas is a functionalist approach that essentializes humanity. I ask, however, whether or not assuming that individual and group agency did not exist in the past also essentializes our predecessors. In his discussion of Late Formative Ceibal, Inomata points out that fundamental Maya site planning was established there around 950 BCE, and that the public role of elites at that time presaged the development of “institutionalized performance” seen in later times; he does emphasize that both changed through time—ancient Maya culture and politics were not static.

Baron, and Davenport writing with Golden, look at Classic period Maya culture. Baron, examining the role of patron deities, suggests that their worship united all polity members in communal activity, yet rulers differentiated themselves by introducing new deities as leading lineages changed and polities were overtaken by competitors. Davenport and Golden explicitly reject the idea of contradiction. They look at how territorial boundaries relate to the landscape, pointing out that Maya peoples see boundaries at multiple levels: household, community, and polity, among others. Their landscape approach is quite interesting and worth further examination.

For western Mexico, Beekman presents a fascinating example of how in Jalisco similarity and difference were instantiated in site planning through the arrangement of shaft tombs and habitation areas (associated with families and lineages) and ballcourts

and *guachimontón* temple groups (elite-related constructs). He concludes that contradictions between leaders and supporters, and community and lineage leaders, may not be resolved but may be “massaged” into appearing less obvious. Pollard’s consideration of the Tarascan empire benefits greatly from ethnohistorical sources showing how incursions of Chichimecs altered indigenous Tarascan society, to the point that Chichimecs assumed the highest leadership positions. Invaders successfully appropriated existing Tarascan culture, while maintaining differences. The result was a multi-ethnic, highly complex polity that deserves to be called an empire.

For Teotihuacan, Murakami presents a view centered on an often-ignored group: intermediate-level elites, whom he sees as the bureaucrats actually running the state. Apartment complexes arose during what he calls an urban renewal, when standardized forms and building materials were as yet used to differentiate social status and occupation.

Joyce and his companion authors write about Terminal Formative coastal Oaxaca, where they have found an example of the dissolution of complexity. A massive acropolis was constructed at Río Viejo that necessitated laborers from many local communities, yet there is little evidence that post-construction, activities took place there to consolidate disparate communities into a sociopolitical whole. Thus, despite characteristics generally associated with political centralization and integration—for example, a five-tiered settlement hierarchy, urbanism, and an upper stratum capable of mobilizing labor for construction and ceremony—most communities in the area maintained a substantial amount of independence. The Río Viejo polity is an example of processes seen throughout Mesoamerica as hierarchies grew, relations among what I would call classes were negotiated, and variations on authority and legitimation were tested.

Martin’s concluding chapter is almost completely devoted to theory and is one of the most complex and stimulating discussions I have read in many a day. He is well-versed in the history of social and political theory and demonstrates his mastery in a chapter I will not even attempt to summarize, lest I misrepresent his elegant work.

This is an interesting volume with spatial breadth and temporal depth. There are central themes—contradictions inherent in social inequality, and how they can be and were negotiated—but there is no suppression of disagreement and discussion. I do have a few editorial quibbles—for example, on one map Quirigua is placed on the incorrect bank of the Río Motagua. More significantly, although the book focuses on commoner-elite relations, there is actually very little data on lower classes, a problem endemic in Mesoamerican archaeology. Second, I question how ethnohistorical and ethnographic materials are used in a number of articles. Pollard has a clear case that colonial documents have direct applicability to the Tarascan state, and Beekman, while using contemporary Náyarí as an analogy, makes it clear that he does not posit a direct relationship between ancient and modern peoples in Jalisco. On the other hand, I find that Baron, and Davenport and Golden, are insufficiently critical in their use of ethnohistoric and ethnographic materials. So many ethnographies are available that it is

possible to find something that will support any particular argument. My point is that one can trace a line through time from ancient to modern people and their practices for any given site, but that doing so is a form of essentialization that ignores the great complexity and variability in Maya culture at any given time. Nonetheless, I found this collection to be stimulating and believe others will find it so as well.

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The Myth of Quetzalcoatl: Religion, Rulership, and History in the Nahua World. Alfredo López Austin, translated by Russ Davidson with Guilhem Olivier. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015, 264 pp. \$32.95, paper. ISBN 9781607323907.

Reviewing a book that has been so influential to the field of Mesoamerican research for more than forty years is a curious task. Written in 1973 by one of the field's most prominent scholars, this treatise on the perplexing nature of the entity known as Quetzalcoatl goes far beyond this goal. The text is much more ambitious, for it not only endeavors to explain the nature of the deity and those closely identified with him, it also seeks to clarify the functions of myth, the reasons for contradictions between myths, and how political structures and lineage factored into Mesoamerican mythologized history. This first translation of the text into English from Spanish is a gift to all those engaged in precolumbian history, as it reveals the origins of much contemporary Mesoamerican scholarship, even as the present-day reader is keenly aware of newer data that offers some challenges.

As the first five chapters make clear, this book is not meant as an introductory text for those unfamiliar with the myths of Quetzalcoatl. Instead, López Austin takes us through a historiography of the various theories of Quetzalcoatl at a lightning pace. He moves from the early colonial period when the Spanish spuriously identified the precolumbian figure as a Christian who preceded them in the New World to Daniel Brinton's suggestion that Quetzalcoatl represents an archetypal myth in the Americas of the victory of day over night. This concise summary of the literature also mentions the scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s that argued for a historic, human identity for Quetzalcoatl.

In the sixth chapter López Austin begins with his own interpretations, first reasoning that communities had patron deities linked to kinship groups. Typical of his expansive objectives, he takes a structuralist approach, categorizing these patrons dualistically as male and female, sky and earth. A master of the ethnohistoric literature that followed the Conquest, López Austin's ideas are firmly rooted in literary sources. De-