Pluralizing Ethnographies: Comparison and Representation in Maya Cultures, Histories, and Identities. *John M. Watanabe and Edward F. Fischer, eds.*, Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004. 370 pp.

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This volume, derived from an SAR seminar, includes chapters by four internationally

recognized senior Mayanists, three mid-career scholars, and one junior faculty. The jointly written introductory chapter (ch. 1) identifies each editor's distinct objectives. John Watanabe's goal was to develop a "comparative historical anthropology"—similar to the tradition of historical sociology, but based on the work of Eric Wolf and refigured to address contemporary processes of globalization, the nation-state, and cultural representation. Ted Fischer's goal was to "explore new modes of cultural representation in a global world" (3) and specifically to push Mayanist ethnography toward innovative studies of the localization of global processes. These two objectives intersect in the general concern for the politics and history of local culture and the problem of cultural continuity that is especially recurrent in Maya studies.

Watanabe (ch. 2) lays out a general comparative framing of Maya peoples in three major cultural regions of Guatemala, Chiapas (Mexico), and Yucatan (Mexico) by focusing on the relationship between national politics and subnational groups. This historical comparison leaves Belize out of consideration and is based on poor knowledge of Yucatan. Relying on highly selected secondary literature, Watanabe does not consider substantial research that disrupts simple comparison of the Maya of Yucatan to Mayans in Guatemala and Chiapas (e.g., Castillo Cocom in press; articles by Castañeda, Castillo Cocom, Gabbert, and Restall in Castañeda and Fallaw 2004).

Bricker (ch. 3) uses her own research experience in Chiapas and Yucatan as context to contrast the attitudes of Maya speakers towards their native language and to map the politics of literacy, language learning, language institutions, and language continuity. Kray (ch. 4) in a valuable chapter effectively incorporates research on the history of the Summer Institute of Linguistics' translation of the Bible to her fieldwork based knowledge of the politics of language choice and use in Yucatec community.

Gossen (ch. 5) analyzes Chamulan ritual and Zapatista discourse to identify a cultural conception of history that constructs the Mexican state as Other and a Mayan identity based on resistance to the state. Nash (ch. 6) uses Fred Eggan's method of controlled comparison to map "site-specific" variations of continuities in the cultural processes that shape and substantiate local-state interactions in Chiapas. Jan Rus (ch. 7) illustrates the politics that inhabited the Harvard project and the sociopolitical processes and consequences that were both enabled and sustained by Harvard's "academic" anthropology.

Montejo (ch. 8) articulates regional Jakaltek culture to "globalization," specifically migration to the United States, in an explanation of cultural change and continuity in the face of processes that he identifies as Jakaltekization, Ladinization, and alienation. Fischer (ch. 9) analyzes the cultural logics that operate in the way Kaqchikel Maya negotiate economic forces and agents associated with "globalization." His ethnography, crafted to examine how the global is localized, makes the important conclusion that there is a false dichotomization of "traditional" and "modern" in the Mayan "culture" of Tecpán. The explicit demonstration of this point by Fischer is a significant contribution and could be a lesson extracted from the evidence presented in chapters by Kray, Gossen, Rus, and Montejo, even though these authors did not address this issue.

Richard Fox, then SAR Director, provides a concluding chapter (10). He identifies what he values in these essays by noting that Maya studies can primarily contribute to the field of anthropology by the study, not of "change," but of how and why cultural "continuities" continue to exist in the context of "global forces." In my own view, the problem of continuity might have been better addressed in ways, as exemplified by Fischer, that reconfigure our ideological oppositions of tradition/traditional culture against modernity and the "global."

Chapters on Yucatan by Victoria Bricker and Christine Kray focus on the politics of language. Chapters on Chiapas by Gary Gossen, June Nash and Jan Rus have a thematic unity in the use of history of political processes in local interactions with the state (i.e., not global forces). Chapters on Guatemala by Victor Montejo and Ted Fischer focus on the interface between local and "global" (i.e., not state) agents, forces, and processes. Belize receives no discussion. This "plurality" of themes and approaches, as well as regional coverage fundamentally precludes Watanabe's aspiration of the collection actualizing a comparative analyses of culture history. This weakness does suggest the volume's title, even though the full phrase—"pluralizing ethnography"—also lacks materialization. While each chapter uses ethnographic knowledge of local contexts—often extensive knowledge accumulated over two to three decades—the analyses are primarily historical and textual, not ethnographic. With few exceptions (e.g., Fischer, Kray), they are not ethnographic in either the sense of being primarily derived from first-hand ethnographic research materials or an ethnographic representation of cultural processes accessed through first-hand fieldwork. Despite Nash's plea for a return to, and Fischer's call for innovation in ethnographic methodologies, neither the authors, with the exception of Rus, nor the volume as a whole, address the issue of what constitutes an "ethnography" (representation or field research).

The Latin Americanist and Mayanist will nonetheless find each chapter rewarding and valuable for specific classroom use. In my mind, the chapter by Rus in particular is the most significant contribution of the volume. It is invaluable not only to Maya studies, but to anthropology, generally, because it forces us to recognize that our anthropological practices, institutions, and knowledge production are both shaped by real sociopolitical factors, and have real effect and meaning in the world and in the regions in which anthropology has a long history of intervention. This analysis demonstrates the profound need for us to interrogate the history of our own anthropological practices and to bring this interrogation into the very doing of our ethnographies in the present.

References Cited

Castañeda, Quetzil E. and Ben Fallaw, guest editors

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