



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

In the Museum of Maya Culture: Touring Chichén Itzá by Quetzil Castañeda
James E. Todd

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“strategies” that reflect local cultural, economic and religious factors. She points out that these strategies neither simply reproduced dominant culture or reproduced a static local culture, but rather could be seen as “adaptation in the face of changing [economic and social] circumstances” (p. 153).

Chapters 8 (The Politics of Schooling) and 9 (Everyday Life at School) describe the relationships between parents and teachers and between children and school personnel that Reed-Danahay observed at the Lavallois school during parent-teacher meetings, in the classroom, on the playground, and in the lunchroom. Three cases of overt confrontation in parent-teacher disputes documented by Reed-Danahay shed light on the parental ideologies that drive “everyday forms of resistance.” For example, Lavallois parents are shown successfully opposing the teachers’ requirement that children help to clean up in the lunchroom. Since the rationale (that helping to clean up encouraged cooperation and responsibility) was hardly inconsistent with local values, we can read this event as an open “flexing the collective muscles of the commune” (p. 182) that emphasized that the teachers and staff were public servants. In the chapter on Everyday Life, Reed-Danahay shows that children both actively and passively resist the “hidden ideological curriculum” of the school. They do so by drawing on some of the comportments taught and valued in local life. For example, despite classroom practices that emphasize competition and the child as an individual learner, children adopted strategies of cooperative behavior among peers. They helped each other out, made sure their work conformed to that of others, turned to other students for help, used a generic “on” (one)

instead of the first person pronoun “je,” and whispered despite their teachers’ disapproval.

Because of their ethnographic depth, the evidence for “resistance” in these last two chapters is very persuasive, rather more so than in the more historical chapters. The notion of covert, or “everyday forms of resistance” (James Scott 1990, *Domination and the arts of resistance*) has been very provocative. It has been a useful shorthand for anthropologists who wish to emphasize that domination is never complete; humans never completely lose their ability to construct alternative meanings even within the most totalitarian systems. However, the use of “resistance” has also come under fire (Susan Gal 1995, “Language and the arts of resistance”), mainly because of the difficulties involved in deciding exactly what to count as resistance. There are many acts, after all, that are not in themselves either resistant or compliant but can be intended and understood by social actors as either one or the other. While these intentions are teased out persuasively in Chapters 8 and 9, there are times when they are not transparent, as in the description (p. 108) of first communion as part of a “defensive strategy of resistance to the state’s efforts to control socialization.” Maintaining local religious rituals certainly is a strong alternative set of practices and values to those promoted by official state school ideology, but given the high percentage of Catholics in France, it may or may not be seen by families as a deliberate act of local “defense.” Even if “resistance” is occasionally too strong a term for what is going on, Reed-Danahay convincingly demonstrates the way that national institutions and ideologies are shaped by local cultures just as much as the other way around.

In the Museum of Maya Culture: Touring Chichén Itzá. QUETZIL CASTAÑEDA. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; 341 pp.

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This historical ethnography provides a refreshing perspective on the strategic relationships among anthropology, tourism, and Maya culture(s). In a profound effort to investigate the “invention” of Maya culture in Yucatán, Castañeda’s “Guidebook to the Archaeology of Chichén Itzá” is a palimpsest: each chapter sets out to reveal a layer of a complex stratigraphy of discourses, texts, practices, histories,

and events which (re)constitute and (re)invent the space and place of the archaeological site of Chichén Itzá. The result is an outstanding intellectual work that broadly uses postmodern and literary theory in order to give the reader tours of the many cultural inscriptions which comprise the “museum” of Maya culture at Chichén.

Castañeda argues that Maya culture, anthropol-

ogy, and tourism are not homogenous entities. Instead, they share an interdependent history of collusion and complicity, which has allowed them to perpetuate. This guidebook, then, serves as an ethnographic map to present the numerous possible analytical approaches — or “departures” (p. 2) — to these intersections of discourses and practices, through history, theory, and autobiography.

By examining the history of the production of anthropological knowledge surrounding Yucatán, Castañeda illustrates how the “rediscovery” (p. 5) of the “Maya” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to the area becoming the “target of massive scientific intervention” supported by both the U.S. and Mexico. After extensive investments by the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the Mexican government, the “scientific laboratory” (p. 6) of Yucatán and Chichén Itzá paved the way for the institutionalization of Maya studies in conjunction with the establishment of tourism activity. Castañeda argues that because the relations among anthropology, tourism, Maya societies, and governments have shared the common ground of complicity and collaboration, it is ridiculous to ask whether tourism has had an “impact” (p. 9) on the people of nearby Pisté and other villages. Instead, Castañeda challenges us to understand historically how anthropological practices and discourses have invented Maya culture and civilization according to our epistemological predispositions. This invention has contributed to the production and maintenance of the tourism industry in Yucatán. However, the Maya themselves are active agents and subjects in this invention process, whether as informants, workers, or “culture-bearers” (p. 8), and their participation in this invention process has also been critical. The task for Castañeda, then, is to provide an analysis that helps to show how anthropological and tourism practices and discourses are related to the politics of identity, not only at the local level of Pisté and Chichén, but at regional, national, and international ones as well.

Castañeda’s theoretical approach primarily owes a debt to de Certeau, and secondly to Foucault and Derrida, as emphasis is placed on doing an archaeology, genealogy, and deconstruction of Maya culture at the museum of Chichén and the town of Pisté. Operating within the dual assertion that “culture is text” and “text is culture,” and that cultures are both invented and continually reinvented, Castañeda is able to contextualize anthropology’s role in Maya cultural imagination. He uses de Certeau’s notion of

a scriptural economy to discuss, or rather imagine, how Maya culture is (re)inscribed, (re)lived, (re)embodied, (re)imagined, and (re)invented in the contexts of various economic, social, political, and historical vehicles at Chichén Itzá. Castañeda goes on to note:

What seems to me to be at stake is the problem of culture, not only as a practical issue but as a theoretical/critical question in relation to modernity: What is the invention of culture (in the register of truth) and the culture of invention (as an economy and technology of the real)? The analytical problem, then concerns the circuits by which *culture travels*. How are cultures transported, imported, exported, deported, reported across topoi (i.e., the textual spaces of discourse and ethnographic localities)? As it — culture, that is — traverses landscapes of imagination, how does culture constitute topographies, by which I mean the multiply contexted differentiation and mapping of space into socio-geographic units of identity, belongings, and power? Also, how do topographies shape and constitute culture(s) as these imaginary communities traverse space (p. 18; emphasis in original)?

Consequently, this critical ethnography focuses on three strata: the history of the economic and political processes that have constructed the landscape of Chichén and Pisté (that is, the historical mapping of the topography); the question of how the Maya are invented as culture in the daily operations of the museum, and how this strategy is related to the inscription and production of knowledge at Chichén; and how the tourist apparatus and everyday touristic activities (re)constitute the site of Chichén as one of cultural contestation and (re)invention. The reader finds that the Museum of Maya Culture is not just displaying, deciphering, and textualizing, but is indeed continually (re)inventing and (re)producing knowledge and culture (that is, “culture-as-lived” and “culture of” (pp. 16-17) the Maya).

This guidebook — just as the museum — is therefore one part of the scriptural economy that Castañeda is trying to describe. It is necessarily self-reflexive and autobiographical in terms of placing both anthropology and Castañeda as subject/object entities (and non-entities) of investigation, for they are both part of the larger power scheme which produces, interprets, constructs, and (re)invents Maya culture as a subject/object of knowledge. Consequently, we find Castañeda calling for a critical-analytical-reflexive approach toward (historical) ethnography—one that would relatively situate our position(s) as ethnographers and research subjects. This becomes very apparent in Chapter 8, “Panopticon as Tianguis,” where he discusses his role through the

engagement of fieldwork. Here he is making another sophisticated ethnographic move: instead of seeing the production and emergence of cultures as a mere dialogical process, Castañeda suggests that the

idea of dialogue should be discarded for *complicity* and *collusion*, since the inscription of cultures always already occurs within an interconnected social field criss-crossed by multiple series of economic, social, political, historical and *even* cultural vectors (pp. 16-17; emphasis in original).

Throughout our tour, we visit the historical emergence of Pisté and Chan Kom in anthropological discourse and intervention and the historical positioning of the tourism apparatus as Pisté and Chichén. We also visit, envision, and imagine Chichén Itzá through the discourses and practices of tour guides, artisans, vendors, Mayas, New Age spiritualists, Aztec revivalists, tourists, archaeologists,

anthropologists, maps, and exhibits in the space and time of the Museum.

The complexity of this book cannot be expressed in the space of this review. Though many Yucatec Maya scholars may express difficulty with the theoretical and methodological implications of this work, I believe that Castañeda is helping to lead the way toward new and exciting opportunities for Maya studies. Castañeda's efforts, informed by post-positive intellectual movements, underscore a need for Maya studies to acknowledge its role in the production of knowledge. The discourses and practices of anthropology and other social sciences are inherently implicated in the transnational history of tourism and the invention of culture in Yucatán. *In the Museum of Maya Culture* is truly a brilliant endeavor, and one that should spark debate for years to come.

Culture/Power/Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology. AKHIL GUPTA and JAMES FERGUSON, eds. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997; 361 pp.

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In our relentless search for theoretical guidance in understanding "culture," the central conceptual cornerstone of our discipline, cultural anthropologists have long looked to other analytic realms and disciplines for insight. By counterpoising "culture" to ecology, personality, history, or now, "power" and "place," we have tried to not only define the nebulous contours of what culture *is* by exploring what it *is not*, but sought, more importantly, to understand how culture is produced, reproduced, and transformed. As part of this pursuit, contemporary anthropologists have turned first to history (think, for example, of the important volume *Culture/power/history* edited by Nicholas Dirks, Sherry Ortner, and Geoff Eley), and more recently to geography for assistance. The widespread appeal of geography's conceptual apparatus is revealed in the plethora of spatial metaphors — landscapes, spaces, places, maps, displacement, global, local, to name just a few — in recent titles in anthropology.

Culture/power/place is a landmark contribution to this current theoretical trajectory in cultural anthropology. The anthology reprints, in revised versions, the ground-breaking theoretical essays (by Lisa Malkki, John Borneman, James Ferguson, Lisa

Rofel, Akhil Gupta, and Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson) which first appeared in a 1992 special issue of the journal *Cultural Anthropology* dedicated to the theme of space and place in anthropology. Since their initial publication these essays, especially those by Malkki, Gupta, and Gupta and Ferguson, have become pivotal to current rethinkings of the relationship between culture and nation, territoriality, identity, difference, transnational processes, and power. The additional seven essays in the volume (some of which, like Kristin Koptiuch's, are also reprinted versions of published articles) complement, enhance, and complicate the themes raised in these earlier essays (all of the pieces were originally presented at three panels for the American Anthropological Association annual meetings). The volume therefore has a theoretical coherence and depth rarely found in edited collections, for which the editors, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, should be commended.

Two themes organize the format and contributions of the volume: issues of culture and space, and the relationship of culture and power. As Gupta and Ferguson argue in their introduction and in their article, ideas of place have always been implicit in cultural theory. The terms may be the territorially cir-