informal imperialism. The navies were important symbols. Seizing colonies was symbolically important. But in the era of high imperialism, as opposed to colonialism, the principal protagonists were capitalists, especially bankers, not diplomats. She quotes one observer saying that Mexico was a site for war between the interests of Pearson and Rockefeller. The dreams and actions of capitalists as well as admirals, diplomats and executives is central to understanding the dynamic of this period.

I applaud the use of multiple archives and the focus on several arenas of action. However, as is typical for many diplomatic histories, this is a study of a few great men, all of whom reside in the great powers. Mitchell has not consulted archives in any of the Latin American countries studied nor are any sources in Portuguese or Spanish cited. Hence Latin Americans are viewed as objects of imperial activity with little participation themselves. Although Mitchell certainly does recognise that President Castro in Venezuela, congressmen in Brazil, and President Huerta, as well as some revolutionaries in Mexico, were nationalists who did not necessarily bow to the will of the great powers, the question is framed in terms of German–US relations more than the agency of the Latin American states. Only in regard to Brazil is bilateral trade seen as being instigated by Latin Americans, not the European power. If one wants to understand Latin America’s place in international relations, Latin Americans have to be considered as actors.

*The Danger of Dreams* provides a reasoned, well-researched and geographically broad analysis of German–United States relations in Latin America. In that it makes an important contribution to our understanding of one aspect of imperialism.

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STEVEN TOPIK

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Yucatec ethnography, thanks to Redfield, was once a prominent field of study in US anthropology. When interest in the Maya shifted from Yucatán to the highlands of Guatemala and Mexico and interest in Redfieldian questions shifted to other paradigms, Yucatec Maya ethnography slipped into an obscurity that is only recently being lifted by a new generation of US-based dissertations that both pose new questions and address persistent themes with contemporary concepts. Hervik’s book is an important addition to this region of Maya studies, for these reasons and for bringing a European perspective to what is otherwise dominated by Anglo-American understandings and debates.

This ethnography is a study of ‘politics and practices of representing Maya’ (pp. xxi) based in analyses of the categories of Maya identity used by non-local, primarily academic-outsider discourses and by ‘insider’/local agents of a particular Yucatec Maya community, which is the anthropologically well-studied town of Oskutzcab. The main thesis is that the category ‘Maya’ has been constructed by non-Maya agents and rather indiscriminately imposed on the heterogeneous communities in Yucatán without consideration of the terms and
experience of self-identification by those same individuals and collectivities. The resulting disjunction between internal and external categories of identity is explored by Hervik in terms of first, the politics of representation by different, insider versus outsider, actors; second, the value and validity of ethnicity as an ethnographically substantive notion by which to analyse the heterogeneity of Maya lived experience and expressions of collective self-identity; and third, the culturally constructed experience and meaning of continuity and discontinuity between the past and present of a sociocultural group or community.

Chapter one presents a general history of the community of Oskutzcab as a way to pose the ethnographic questions of the study, ‘Who are the people living in Oskutzcab today?’ (p. 14), what are the terms of imposed and self-ascribed identities, and ‘how [do] ethnic groups transform into other kinds of social groups’ (p. 20). Important here is Hervik’s critique of the academic and popular stereotyping of Maya people in terms of traditional agricultural work, that is, as peasants. Chapter two continues this issue by defining the meanings or ‘semantic density’ of the social categories of ‘mestizo’, ‘Maya’, and ‘catrin’, in terms of the idealised forms of dress, language and occupation. Hervik’s history of these categories, which demonstrates their changing values, is pivotal to his argument against the academic belief in facile cultural continuity, especially in terms of ethnic identity. Unfortunately, a heavy and uncritical reliance on Redfield (as well as Hansen) and a lack of engagement with the rich Mayanist literature, not only the classics (e.g., Roys, Edmonson, Bricker, Tozzer) and revisionist work (Fariss, Restall, Lincoln), but the published indigenous texts (the Chilam Balam; Matthew Restall’s translations) weakens the argument in this and the following chapter. Chapter three analyses representations of contemporary and ancient Maya in National Geographic Magazine articles of the twentieth century and in Bishop de Landa’s sixteenth century ‘History of the Things of Yucatan’ with the purpose of isolating the way in which non-Maya, academic and popular discourses ‘archaeologises’ the Maya. The critique, that these external representations ‘position the Mayas in the past without allowing ordinary Mayas any active role as caretakers of their own destiny’ (p. 89), is a disappointing foray into a ‘cultural studies’ approach. If there had been engagement with the postcolonial and subaltern critiques of representation as well as the growing literature in Maya studies on this topic1 perhaps this chapter’s conclusion would have gone beyond the obvious point that what A says about B is not, and cannot be, controlled by B and therefore will most likely not reflect B’s interests.

In chapters four to six, Hervik presents his ethnographic data on local identifications and how ethnographers (outsiders) can best comprehend these insider/local definitions of cultural, class and ethnic belongings; he argues that academic understandings must be based on insider self identifications in situations of lived experience and practices. Unfortunately, the ethnographic presentation of situational action/activities and experience is truncated throughout chapters four to six and then left to a conceptual level in the concluding chapter seven. Chapter four continues the discussion of chapter two, but with respect to categories of class and ethnic distinction; and, chapter five summarises aspects of local cultural reappropriation of (primarily colonial) Maya cultural heritage, yet

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1 Quetzil E. Castañeda, In the Museum of Maya Culture (Minneapolis, 1996).
Diane Nelson, Finger in the Wound (Berkeley, 1999).
without thick descriptions of events/activities, quoted voices/texts or dialogically presented native statements. Chapter six is the most ethonographically interesting for it maps how different agents (Hervik the ethnographer, a local culture broker and a US folklorist) negotiate the meanings of cultural categories and their own positions as authorities of Maya culture. With this example, Hervik proposes the concept of ‘shared social experience’ as the way to overcome the contradictory position vis-à-vis external/internal identifications in which he has placed himself. Hervik claims to avoid ‘postmodernist’ pitfalls with this concept. However, there is weak engagement with the last two decades of work from cultural criticism, dialogical anthropology and experimental ethnography on precisely this problem of representation except through citation of the Northern European reading of the writing culture school. Similarly, the analysis of ethnicity is weaker for missing a fuller discussion of major works from the literature on ethnicity. These comments lead to the irony of Hervik’s preface in which he notes that two anthropologists of Yucatán conducted ‘fieldwork roughly at the same time’ in villages ‘two kilometres apart’, without having found reason to cite, much less discuss, each others work (pp. xxiv).

Ethnographies that attempt to do other than empirically report facts, such as this study, are frail and prone to various inadequacies. Hervik’s book is an important contribution that helps move Yucatec Maya ethnography beyond the Redfieldian paradigm of continuity and tradition. Unfortunately, the impoverished editorial work may distract readers from this value.

University of Hawaii

QUETZIL E. CASTAÑEDA

This volume offers, for the first time, a commendable anthology of ‘conservative’ texts written between 1840 and 1850, and which were published either as individual pamphlets or articles that featured in the main Mexico City-based newspapers of the period, namely El Tiempo, El Siglo XIX, El Monitor Republicano and El Universal. Furthermore, the selection deliberately avoids a chronological approach, following, instead, a thematic one that provides the chosen texts with a particularly noteworthy intellectual coherence. In brief, after Palti offers examples of ‘conservative’–monarchist writing for the years 1840–1846, the main bulk of the anthology (1848–1850) is divided into thematic sections that cover the analysis ‘conservatives’ provided of the moderate government and Mexico’s context following the Mexican–American War (1846–1848): their views on electoral fraud and political divisions; popular sovereignty; the origins of republicanism; human or fundamental rights; law and order, the issue of legitimacy; freedom of thought; constitutional practices; and, last but not least, the problems that characterised party politics.

Palti provides, moreover, an excellent 51 page introduction in which he sets the political context and raises a number of key historiographical issues regarding the relevance of the included texts. At a time when a new school of revisionist