

cidos por medio de realidades etnográficas radicalmente distintas (135). Esta “decepcionante originalidad conceptual” (135) bien podría considerarse un “error potencialmente serio” (88) si expresara un compromiso excesivo con las teorías de G. Deleuze y su ahora popular programa de multiplicidad conceptual (142). Sin embargo, Holbraad sugiere que esta incongruencia proviene de la influencia que tiene, sobre los marcos conceptuales del giro ontológico, el método que los produce (148). De este modo, traduce el problema, una vez más, en términos metodológicos. Y concluye que estas aparentes similitudes ocurren sólo si consideramos, erróneamente, los conceptos antropológicos como “abstracciones”: “anthropological concepts as abstantial relations that contain within themselves the contingencies of specific ethnographic materials ... imagining them as pure concepts that could be transposed ... as ... *abstractions*” (153 s.). Podrían señalarse dos cuestiones adicionales aquí. La primera es que Holbraad se abstiene de abordar aquello que surge inevitablemente de su planteamiento: la trasportabilidad de los conceptos. La segunda es que su particular énfasis en la metodología parece alejarlo de una de las analogías que dan sentido a este libro: aquella entre la antropología y una filosofía entendida como la pregunta sobre aquello que compone el mundo.

Tanto en los temas menores como en aquellas cuestiones tratadas más ampliamente, esta compilación se mantiene más o menos fiel a un mismo conjunto de posturas teóricas (a saber, aquellas esgrimidas por autores, también incluidos en este libro, como Strathern, Latour, Viveiros de Castro y Descola). De hecho, en su texto titulado “Variedades del pluralismo ontológico”, este último contextualiza su propia propuesta como una forma de simetrización; advirtiendo que no se trata de un esquema descriptivo, sino de una máquina experimental: “The model is in no way a grid for describing empirical situations; rather, it allows for the formulation of hypotheses on the relations existing between phenomena” (37). Pero quizá sean los capítulos de Pierre Charbonnier y de Candea los ejemplos más notorios de esta lealtad. El primero está dedicado casi por completo a comentar tres de los autores arriba mencionados. El segundo retoma la consideración de Viveiros de Castro (250) de la comparación, no solo como método de la antropología, sino también como sujeto de esta. Además, frente a las críticas que advierten una complejidad etnográfica ausente o una generalidad etnográfica excesiva, Candea responde que las multiplicidades del naturalismo euroamericano no serían negadas por Viveiros de Castro, sino sólo puestas entre paréntesis. Como en la introducción del libro, lo extramoderno no implicaría, pues, una exclusión de lo moderno, sino un reconocimiento de su especificidad y diferencia (2). Finalmente, podría notarse que esta persistencia en sí mismos está acompañada también por una crítica, más o menos tangencial, hacia aquellos antropólogos que atribuyen “a la gente ordinaria una experiencia pre-predicativa del mundo” (3). En varias partes del libro, tales etnólogos son acusados o de usar los mismos dualismos que critican (86) o de valerse de conceptos poco pertinentes (como el de *becoming*) (127).

En suma, este más o menos voluminoso libro, a pesar de su organización algo floja y de algunas referencias bibliográficas incompletas, resulta de gran importancia para aquellos interesados en algunos de los debates más importantes de la antropología contemporánea en general.

Juan Javier Rivera Andía

**Chinchilla Mazariegos, Oswaldo:** *Art and Myth of the Ancient Maya*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. 290 pp. ISBN 978-0-300-20717-0. Price: \$ 65.00

“Art and Myth of the Ancient Maya” is the first comprehensive, book-length treatment in English of Classic and Late-Preclassic Maya mythology (ca. 100 BC to 900 AD) as depicted on vases, murals, and monuments. Its author, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, is a distinguished Guatemalan archaeologist, historian of religion, and iconographer, currently an assistant professor at Yale University. Based in part on articles and a previous book (“Imágenes de la mitología maya.” Guatemala City 2011), this ambitious publication largely concerns the iconography of hero mythology, with a nubile goddess, two young “headband gods,” and a maize god as the main protagonists.

The book has nine chapters, the first two of which deal with methodology and sources. A myth is conceived as consisting of narrative variants without anything resembling a canonical text. The focus is on Mesoamerican narrative themes that remain stable over time. These themes, or “nodal subjects” (such as a hero defeating a monster bird) form solid nuclei around which more accidental narrative elements, including individual names, coalesce. With respect to hero mythology, the main sources are Q’eqchi’ (for sun and moon), K’iche’ (Hunahpu and Xbalanque), Ch’orti’ (Kumix), and the peoples of the Gulf Coast (maize hero). In addition, narratives from other Mesoamerican regions, especially Oaxaca, are often vital to the argument.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the nodal subjects of cosmogonic myth, which, unlike those of hero myth, do not appear to have often found their way into vase iconography. One exception is the creation of human beings by Huncheven and Hunahan (or, following the author’s conjecture, Hunahau), a myth transmitted by Las Casas that pertains (as I argued at length in my 1987 essay “Artificers of the Days”) to the iconography of sculptors and scribes.

The remaining six chapters review the principal roles of hero mythology and their associated nodal subjects and iconography. Chapter 4 (The Maiden) iconographically identifies the nodal subject of the secluded, nubile woman whose impregnation by a hummingbird or a stinging insect results in the transfer to mankind of the riches of the earth, which she represents. The maiden’s prototype is furnished by the mountain’s daughter of the Q’eqchi’ sun and moon myth, while the hummingbird represents, in the same myth, her suitor.

Chapter 5 (The Grandmother) focuses on the nodal subject of the defeat of an oversexed, cannibalistic grandmother (or adoptive mother), sometimes provided with a

*vagina dentata*, and her transformation into the main goddess of midwifery. In chap. 6 (The Sun's Opponents) her defeat seems to be mirrored by the defeat of the heroes' demonic bird antagonists, macaws or otherwise, some of which are equally endowed with a *vagina dentata*. Also discussed in this chapter is the vexing problem of the bird demons' relationship to the upper god, Itzamna, when the latter appears as a bird.

Chapter 7 (The Sun) presents the transformation of an ascetic hero covered with pustules into the sun and of his unblemished partner, irresistibly attracted to women, into the moon. The solar hero is argued to be represented by God S, one of the two headband gods. His lunar partner – stereotypically associated with water – is identified as the tonsured maize god, appearing in the role of a same-age travelling companion to the headband gods and as another hero. In chap. 8 (The Perfect Youth), the tonsured maize god's dance and seduction by women, both occurring in a watery place, are argued to connect to his subsequent lunar transformation, the hero often being shown within an aquatic crescent. At the same time, water also forms the setting for the hero's death and rebirth and for his mythological voyage to the rain and water deities, whose abode appears to be symbolized iconographically by a turtle carapace.

Finally, chap. 9 (The Father) concerns the nodal subject of the father's failed resurrection, either by falling apart into bones or by changing into a deer quarry. This last event is argued to be represented by the interaction between a deer, covered by a shroud with crossed bones, and the headband gods, which occurs next to a tree associated with a month (Pax) dedicated to war ritual.

Throughout, the Popol Vuh informs the discussion, though not always in ways one might expect. Its grandmother figure is suggested to possess the same aggressive sexuality as her homologues in other hero myths, and the dead father to be like a deer in his inability to speak. In other respects, this late source is shown to be idiosyncratic, lacking obvious parallels in other Mesoamerican myths. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the author questions the overall equation of Hunahpu and Xbalanque with the Classic headband gods, casting doubt on the reading of the latter's hieroglyphic names, and suggesting that the Classic demigods are more similar to the Q'eqchi' solar hero and his brother, an owner of animals. These proposals are significant in that they signal a clear break with the privileged status of the Popol Vuh version of hero myth.

Also among the book's more challenging interpretations are the origin of death and the lunar transformation of the maize god. From the perspective of Mesoamerican hero mythology, equating the icon of the shrouded deer with the heroes' transformed father seems all but inescapable. Given that this interpretation runs counter to the usual, if weakly argued, identification of the tonsured maize god as the "resurrected" father of the headband gods, the author might have reinforced his hypothesis by noting the presence of the aforementioned war month tree in deer scenes (including the "Ten Gods Vase" [K555]) which seem equally concerned with the origin of death.

Moreover, on some of the illustrated vases, there are unmistakable indications of the theme of "curing death" implied by the deer father episode, particularly in its Chiapas variants.

The explanation of the maize god's interaction with nude women as the prelude to the hero's transformation into the moon – another consequence of the adoption of a Mesoamerican perspective – makes sense of scenes that would otherwise remain enigmatic. It is perhaps of interest to note that the explanation could have been buttressed by reference to an isolated Totonac episode (Ichon) that stages a maize hero entirely absorbed by the female, aquatic, "lunar" domain, standing on the beach and teaching a group of midwife goddesses how to model the navel of a new-born from a gastropod. Nonetheless, the interpretation has limits. Thus, it leaves unexplained the ritual activity of the women surrounding the hero and their death attributes. Moreover, the maize deity's encounter with the women might be expected to be immediately followed by his change into the moon. Instead, the author appears to view the encounter as a transition to the maize god's aquatic death and (presumably lunar) rebirth.

The book's iconographic analyses are generally astute and its interpretations, whether right or wrong, carefully argued. Inevitably, in a book of this scope, there are occasional flaws. For example, the paradigmatic reanalysis of the "Ten Gods Vase" (K555) included in the first chapter is itself not entirely free from error (thus, a composite of deer and puma is incorrectly labeled a "tapir jaguar," while the resemblance of the associated insects to the Lord of the Deer goes unremarked). Both here and in the case of the "bleeding conch" motif (100–103), on the eponymous vase, there is perhaps undue speculation, a concern that also extends to the less than precise iconographic analysis and interpretation of several maize god scenes (under the label of "rebirth"; pp. 214–218). Furthermore, although the author rightly insists on the importance of sexuality in myth, his apparent enthusiasm for detecting sexual innuendos is sometimes less than compelling. In addition, credits and references could have been more comprehensive.

These points aside, this is an exceptionally rich and thought-provoking work that will surely prove to be a milestone in the reconstruction of ancient Maya mythology.

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**Chrzan, Janet, and John Brett** (eds.): *Food Culture. Anthropology, Linguistics, and Food Studies*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. 276 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-289-0. (Research Methods for Anthropological Studies of Food and Nutrition, 2) Price: \$ 130.00

"Food Culture" is the second book of a three volume collection that ambitiously aims to present a methodological and practical "resource that bridges the biocultural or biological focus that traditionally characterized nutritional anthropology and the broad range of studies widely labeled as the anthropology of food, and food studies" (1). This volume on "Anthropology, Linguistics, and Food Studies" focuses primarily on the social and cultural