

Gedanken vor zur Philosophie, zur Dialektik von Natur und Kultur, zum Mythos und zu den sozialen Strukturen. Sein Denkgebäude wird somit auf seine Konsistenz hin geprüft, was die jeweilige Fragestellung betrifft und weniger diskursiv als narrativ zusammenfasst. Dadurch kommt Lévi-Strauss selbst zu Wort. Sein Werk wird lebendig. Es wird auf diese Weise auch für den interessierten Neuling oder aufs Neue zu Begeisterten in Sachen französischer Strukturalismus, Kulturanthropologie, Religionswissenschaft, Soziologie und Metatheorie erfreulich leicht zugänglich gemacht. Die Bände im Einzelnen:

Band 1 (Claude Lévi-Strauss und die Philosophie) ist eine Sammlung der im Gesamtwerk verstreuten Gedanken zur Philosophie. Deutlich wird die bestürzende Erfahrung herausgestellt, dass der Fortschritt der westlichen Geschichte das lebensnahe Philosophieren der so genannten "primitiven" Kulturen unaufhaltsam zerstört. Zugleich vernichtet er die Lebensgrundlage der westlichen Völker, die er in seiner inneren Dialektik im Vollzug des Erkenntnisgewinnes, den die Sozialanthropologie ermöglicht, einerseits erhalten will, und die er andererseits gerade dadurch zerstört, dass er das Gleichgewicht von Natur und Kultur aufhebt.

In Band 2 (Natur und Kultur bei Claude Lévi-Strauss) wird mit Lévi-Strauss anschaulich gemacht, worin die Leistung der indigenen Kulturen beim Übergang von der Natur in die Kultur liegt. Strukturen werden aufgedeckt, die das westliche Denken in seiner Blindheit als "primitiv" diffamiert und missachtet. Da solche Wurzeln auch westliche Kultur unerkant bestimmen, ist es sinnvoll, ihnen nachzugehen: "Das wilde Denken und seine Strukturen macht eine Anwendung auf die Literatur und alle anderen Gattungen der abendländischen Kunst wie z. B. der Malerei und der Musik möglich. Ist es uns in unserem Alltag unbewusst, können wir es bei den so genannten primitiven Kulturen objektiv anschauen" (110f.).

Mit Band 3 (Claude Lévi-Strauss – Mythen) wird durch Fischer ein weiterer Pfad in das Denken des Belgiers hinein markiert: "Der Mythos hat für uns Relevanz. Die Psychoanalyse kann vom Schamanen lernen, der zum mythischen Helden wird. Der Mythos antizipiert die Wissenschaft ... Es gibt nicht nur eine historische Vergangenheit, sondern auch eine mythische, so auch eine mythische Geschichte" (92). Lévi-Strauss' Untersuchungen münden in die Haupteckdaten: Wenn wir blind sind für den Mythos, dann sind wir es auch für die Kundgebungen unseres menschlichen Geistes, in denen jener mit all seinem Reichtum anwesend ist.

Band 4 (Claude Lévi-Strauss – Verwandtschaftssysteme) ist eine Einführung in die höchst komplizierten Strukturen der Heiratssysteme bei indigenen Ethnien. Mit den auf Feldforschung bei den Nambikwara Indianern (Brasilien) in den 40er Jahren aufbauenden Erkenntnissen begründete Lévi-Strauss seinen Ruhm als Ethnologe. In den daraus ableitbaren Strukturen sieht er eine Äußerung des menschlichen Geistes, die sich ähnlich in den Gesetzen der Sprache zeigt. Die Ahnung eines solchen elementaren Vorganges lebt A. Fischer zufolge auch in unserer westlichen Form der Zivilisation fort. Band 5

(Claude Lévi-Strauss – die strukturelle Analyse) ist noch in Vorbereitung.

Mit diesen Bänden erarbeitet sich der Autor eine literaturwissenschaftlich interessante Position, von der aus er in weiteren Fortsetzungen der Serie demnächst Robert Walsers "Räuber"-Roman (Band 6) und später "Die Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald" von Ödön von Horváth (Band 7) beleuchten möchte. Anton Fischers Verdienst ist es, solche Offenheit dem Mythischen gegenüber fruchtbar zu machen für neue Perspektiven zum Verstehen von literarischen Texten. In diesem Sinne sei diese Lektüre des auf sehr einfühlsame, werkimmanente Weise aufbereiteten Werkes von Lévi-Strauss einer Leserschaft unterschiedlichster Wissenschaftsdisziplinen empfohlen. Spannend wäre die Anwendung von Lévi-Strauss' Mythenlehre auf die Frage, warum sich Religionen einerseits gegenseitig so stark anziehen können – bis hin zur gegenseitigen spontanen Erkenntnis ihres gemeinsamen Urrundes infolge ein- und derselben Grundstrukturen – und warum sie sich andererseits im nächsten Moment zum Vorwand und zum Motor eines inszenierten, so genannten "Kampfes der Kulturen" missbrauchen lassen. Damit wären wir bei der Notwendigkeit einer "Theorie der interkulturellen Theologie", ja bei der Frage nach der Anwendbarkeit des Lévi-Strauss'schen Denkens auf die Beschreibung interreligiöser Strukturen.

Moritz Fischer

**Gabbert, Wolfgang:** *Becoming Maya. Ethnicity and Social Inequality in Yucatán since 1500.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004. 253 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2316-9. Price: \$ 49.95

"Becoming Maya" is a welcome addition to the continuously growing stock of literature on social and cultural processes on the Yucatán peninsula. This book is novel for several reasons. First, there are few authors who have covered such a long period of time (from 1500 to present) and vast geographic area, including the modern Mexican states of Quintana Roo, Campeche, and Yucatán. Second, still less scholars have combined ethnographic, sociological, and historical perspectives as productively as Gabbert does. Third, while he is not the first in challenging the received conception of Yucatán as an area peopled since the 16th century by two antagonistic ethnic communities – the ancestral Mayan Indians and the offspring of the Spanish conquerors – "Becoming Maya" provides the most detailed and empirically based deconstruction of this stereotype. Gabbert concludes that an encompassing ethnic Maya community has never existed in Yucatán neither before nor after conquest and that, to the contrary, a "Yucatec Mayan ethnicity today is still ethnic consciousness in the making" (161). Fourth, this is a handsomely crafted book and a concise and straightforward text that can be recommended to anyone interested in Yucatán's history and culture and/or in social and ethnic processes that characterize colonial and postcolonial contexts in general.

Gabbert's account is based on three types of data. These are source materials from archives of Mexico City,

Mérida, Campeche, and Hopelchén (a municipal town in southern Campeche) and already published primary source materials, then data collected during a total of 21 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Hopelchén (between 1993 and 1998), and finally insights from the extensive revision and discussion of the works of other scholars working in this area. Large sections of notes and reference matters stand for the meticulous work of the author.

The book is divided in three parts covering the colonial (1500–1821), the republican (from Independence in 1821 to the Mexican Revolution in 1910), and the postrevolutionary periods. A brief theoretical introduction is devoted to the phenomenon of ethnicity. Here it becomes clear that Gabbert adheres to a relational conception of ethnicity implying that involved actors may have different ideas about the meaning of resulting categorizations, that expressions of ethnicity tend to change over time, and that they are only indirectly linked to prevailing social and cultural structures (e.g., class or language distribution). As a result, Gabbert focuses “on the strategic use of cultural symbols and social categories by the dominators as well as by the dominated” (xvi).

Part one covers the time of the conquest and the development of colonial rule (1500–1821). Any conquest establishes by default a dichotomous system made up by the colonialists and by those who are colonized. However, this separation is never as clear-cut as the logic would have. Conquests, particularly those of the different Mexican regions, involved associations of interests and forces that from the onset contributed to a blurring of the boundary of this dichotomy. This, as Gabbert shows in the three chapters of part one, also follows the installation and adaptation of colonial rule. Differentiations and conflicting interests among the colonizers and the colonized and between them are not only characteristics of colonial domination but also entail that the “colonized” cannot automatically be considered as one social, political, or ethnic community.

Part two covers the time between Independence and the onset of the Mexican Revolution but its main focus lies with the Caste War of Yucatán, the most successful armed rebellion of indigenous people in Latin America that began in 1847 and lasted over five decades. Gabbert discusses the increasing commercialization of agriculture – best exemplified in the emerging henequen industry – which coincided with the colonial demise and thoroughly transformed rural life and its social fabric. This transformation is generally held responsible for the outburst of violence between a Maya-speaking lower class and the urban elites. Even though this movement included large proportion of the rural population, the Caste War “did not give rise to an Indian ethnic community that encompassed all speakers of Yucatec Maya” (37). However, a small portion of the initial movement retreated during the 1850s to the then isolated southeastern parts of the Peninsula where they established de facto autonomous polities. Some of these communities maintained their autonomy well into the 20th century. It is among these people only that a process of ethnogenesis was initiated and

maintained by the shared historical experience of long fighting against government troops. Apart from these events, the 19th century was characterized by a complex system of ethnic and status ascriptions depending in the first place on who was speaking, to whom this person was speaking, and in what language.

Part three, the largest and most ethnographical section of the book, takes readers to developments of the 20th century. The geographic focus is with the states of Yucatán and Campeche, where in the wake of the Mexican Revolution a series of interesting local and national developments became articulated. Thus, the state became, after a long period of de facto paralysis, again a strong player in the system of regional domination by challenging the power and influence of the landed elites and entrepreneurs. This also triggered intense social and political polarization and involved harsh ethnic discourses and latent racism and fused altogether with Cardenista revolutionary ideology and action on the national level which contributed to the empowerment of the rural underclass at large. These developments opened many channels for social mobility. However, Gabbert cautions that “[n]otwithstanding considerable social mobility and partial changes in the status system, members of the Maya-speaking population are still systematically placed at a disadvantage” (82). Most of part three is exemplified by ethnographic and historical examples from the Chenes region of the state of Campeche.

It is only today, Gabbert concludes, that a more encompassing Yucatec Maya ethnicity seems to develop due to the prevailing discourses of multiculturalism and “Indianization,” in which forms of cultural capital based on indigenous culture and ethnicity increasingly gain wide currency. Globalized flows of good, people, and ideas – including those of legions of Mayanists – articulate with tourism developments on the Caribbean coast and throughout the Peninsula, with the recent discursive mainstreaming of cultural heterogeneity in Mexico as a whole, and with the aspirations of local people in Yucatán. This, of course, increases the degree of ethnic complexity in such a place as the Yucatán Peninsula and calls for a sustained monitoring of the future developments of ethnicity and social inequality. Ueli Hostettler

**Gray, Patty A.:** *The Predicament of Chukotka’s Indigenous Movement. Post-Soviet Activism in the Russian Far North.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 276 pp. ISBN 0-521-82346-3. Price: £ 55.00

This book makes a significant contribution to the field of Siberian studies by turning our attention to the way indigenous elite were incorporated into Soviet political structures and part of the nested nature of power in a Soviet and post-Soviet context. In a departure from the wealth of ethnography on Siberian indigenous communities emerging over the last decade, Gray’s work does not focus so much on the workings of daily life for members of a given ethnic group, but instead on the ways that the post-Soviet state and indigenous leaders were negotiating