

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

aspects of food and, as such, it sits as an independent text. Labelling the first section number IV, however – whilst an attempt to create a nice continuity between the volumes – can initially be a little disorientating for the reader, who is inevitably led to wonder what they have missed in the first, more biological and archaeological, book. Organising the volumes in this manner, whilst logical, also misses the opportunity to maximise the dialogue between biological and sociocultural approaches, and hence “Food Culture,” as a standalone book, is not as interdisciplinary or as bridging as its aims suggest it will be.

The book comprises three sections entitled “Socio-Cultural Approaches,” “Linguistics and Food Talk,” and “Food Studies” and this organisation unfortunately produces little engagement across the biological and cultural divide, with the exception, to some degree, of the chapters on sensory ethnography (Black), body image (Taylor and Nichter) and direct observation in nutritional anthropology (Piperata and Dufour). These three sections are also somewhat arbitrarily defined, with the content of the chapters contained within the “Socio-Cultural Approaches” and “Food Studies” sections being particularly blurred in content yet organisationally distinct.

Organisation of the volume aside, “Food Culture” does offer a comprehensive and wide-ranging discussion of the multiple methods and approaches to the sociocultural study of food. There is a danger in such methods-orientated and practical books that they retrace old ground, with established methods such as participant observation and interviews being dressed up and renamed as new innovations. This volume deftly avoids such pitfalls and it drills down into such overarching methodologies in a valuable and productive manner; this is particularly well illustrated by the chapters on kitchen table ethnography (Pérez), body image (Taylor and Nichter), and visual methods (Vallianatos). Established methods are subject to rigorous intellectual scrutiny, as exemplified by Paxson’s assessment of “Participant-Observation and Interviewing Techniques.” There is also a strong ethical sensibility running throughout the book, and a commendable emphasis on sensitive and reflexive research. To this end, it is surprising that auto-ethnography is absent from the discussion – it makes a brief appearance in Counihan’s chapter on “Ethnographic Methods in the Classroom,” but the book could have benefitted from a chapter dedicated to the researcher as an embodied eater and the insights (and limitations) such a reflexive awareness can bring to a sociocultural understanding of food practices.

The “Linguistics and Food Talk” section presents a well-needed and original series of discussions on the discourses of food, including language, written texts, such as recipes, and food and cognition. Cavanaugh and Riley’s introduction to the section is a helpful theoretical orientation to those unfamiliar with a four-field approach and teases out how connections between the subdisciplines can be made through food language. This chapter thereby indicates the relationship between materiality and semiotics, and it is a shame this conceptual thread is not developed and woven across the volume, being as it is a potential point of engagement between biological and so-

ciocultural perspectives. Nevertheless, this section, overall, works nicely to demystify “linguistic” approaches and gives the reader a series of methodological tools to collect and analyse food discourses, past and present, in a systematic and considered manner.

The final section on “Food Studies” opens up the discussion by moving away from the methods that Chrzan categorises as “traditional anthropology” (12) to address those defined as “relatively new and untested” (12), “established but used in new ways” (12f.), and interdisciplinary in nature. The “bravery” and “fearless willingness” (12f.) of these approaches is maybe somewhat overstated by Chrzan, as the topics of sensory ethnography, a single-food approach, food value chains, food and place, and food as imbued with both cultural and personal meaning are not as new nor as “revolutionary” (13) as they are presented to be here. This over-selling, however, does not detract from the contribution of the individual chapters, which do tackle difficult and slippery subjects and collectively demonstrate the methodological and analytical value of adopting a fluid and holistic approach to the sociocultural study of food, as well as offering some practical and intellectual tools to do so in a rigorous and systematic manner.

In sum, “Food Culture” is a useful resource text, especially for teaching. Each chapter is well written and organised in a way that is easy for the reader to access; they give robust and clear overviews of methodological approaches, contextualise these theoretically, and provide examples and case studies of how they can be used. Through the series of individual chapters, the book also looks to practically show how interdisciplinary approaches and combinations of methods can work to provide greater insights into food cultures and, in so doing, extends our theoretical understanding. “Food Culture” is thereby more than a methods’ textbook and it will be an invaluable resource for higher-level undergraduates and postgraduates in that it offers practical, conceptual, and case study content. It may not have maximised its interdisciplinary potential by following a rather arbitrary, traditional, and discipline-specific organisational path, but this does make it easy to access for both teaching purposes and to the student researcher. The book’s value also extends beyond a student audience, and its intellectual rigour ensures it offers something new for more established researchers. As such, it is a welcome and useful addition to the Food Studies canon.

Emma-Jayne Abbotts

Cipolletti, María Susana: *Sociedades indígenas de la Alta Amazonía. Fortunas y adversidades (siglos XVII–XX)*. Quito: Abya Yala, 2017. 361 pp. ISBN 978-9942-09-412-4. Precio: \$ 24.00

“Sociedades indígenas de la Alta Amazonía. Fortunas y adversidades (siglos XVII–XX)”, constituye una de las obras más importantes y de lectura obligatoria para quienes quieran adentrarse en el estudio etnohistórico de la Alta Amazonía. Se trata de una compilación de artículos escritos durante más de tres décadas por parte de María Susana Cipolletti. Como bien señala la autora, el estudio