

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

new terms of interaction in the late 1990s in Anadyr, Chukotka. Gray provides a refreshing examination of an urban center of indigenous social life, one of the administrative centers in Siberia where indigenous leaders have been forged through decades of Soviet society.

The author makes her arguments in a lucid style as she demonstrates “indigenous Chukotkans’ understanding of their growing disenfranchisement in relation to the dominant nonindigenous population” (8). Gray borrows from Veena Das’s concept of “epitomizing events” to show how the loss of control over three nominally indigenous spaces – a newspaper, a radio program, and a community center, or “iaranga” that had existed up to the mid-1990s – represented a significant trend toward the disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples. Gray evokes a lasting image of the way the post-Soviet state in this region of Siberia is increasingly narrowing the social power indigenous community members can exercise. In chapter two, Gray builds her argument about the makings of social movements by examining James Scott’s idea of “scripts.” She effectively shows how in the past indigenous Siberians were part of the public “script” while in a post-Soviet era the prevalent discourse seeks to erase them from the public script (49) or logic of the system. In demonstrating how a Soviet civil society in fact operated in the past Gray effectively marshals examples of letters to the editor sent by citizens and politicians to address deteriorating social conditions.

Significantly, Gray seeks to examine global connections in this very local setting. In part she explores the potential for indigenous Siberians in this uniquely post-Soviet location to join a global social movement of indigenous peoples. While the connections across the Bering Strait into Alaska and the growing links to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) are a part of Gray’s story, they are not considered as extensively as one might like. Conversely, Gray also does not provide us with much sense of the social stratification within indigenous communities, or the ways that people from these communities have overlapping allegiances that are not defined simply by indigeneity (for such a perspective, see: D. Anderson, *Identity and Ideology in Arctic Siberia*. Oxford 2000; A. Bloch and L. Kendall, *The Museum at the End of the World*. Philadelphia 2004; P. Rethmann, *Tundra Passages*. University Park 2000). What Gray’s account very ably provides is insight into the indigenous elite as actors in a rapidly shifting set of power balances within Russian society.

Gray notes the political volatility of her field site and she is careful to respect the anonymity of those who participated in her research. She states, “I am reluctant to leave my consultees and their sometimes radical views too exposed in these pages” (xv). In her effort to protect her consultees, Gray employs what she calls “dramatis personae,” and depicts portions of the fictional character Malina Ivanovna Kevyngevyt’s life at the beginning of each chapter. This approach results in a sympathetic portrait of an indigenous Siberian woman and leaves the reader with the concrete experience of an amalgam of people Gray in fact came to know during her field-

work. While the device is a creative answer to the ethnographic dilemma of revealing too much about one’s consultants, it cannot replace ethnographic nuance that is gained through a reader’s acquaintance with the people inhabiting a given community. Especially given Gray’s lucid writing style, it is unfortunate that she could not create more extensive portraits of the diverse people she came to know.

Gray emphasizes that she is not writing a traditional ethnography, focused on local processes, but is especially concerned with the formation of a social movement inspired and supported in part by international indigenous rights movements emerging in the 1990s. Given this emphasis, the relatively sparse historicization of lives lived in the Soviet period is not surprising. However, in a number of instances, Gray’s argument would be better supported with more primary and secondary sources, including oral history accounts and direct narratives. For instance, she writes, “It was becoming clearer to indigenous Chukotkans that the attention paid to their concerns in the past had been a farce, done for appearances only, and masked by rhetoric of Soviet respect and concern for indigenous Chukotkans” (25), but we barely hear specific people voice this sentiment about the past. Gray’s assessments of contemporary (mid-to-late 1990s) concerns of indigenous leaders ring much truer and are better substantiated. Later in her text Gray downplays political sentiments that may have compelled some to become active in Soviet political processes; she writes, “people feared they could be shot . . . [and so were] more enthusiastically activist than the next person” (40). In one section she writes of people who were convinced to “buy into the notion” of the Communist Party (41), while in other sections she also refers to the “colonization by Soviet ideology” (64) and “Stalinist” culture, but does not provide the reader with much sense of the contours of these ideas or how they might have shifted over time. In Gray’s version of Soviet history people were duped by power, serving as uncritical cogs in the political machinery, but the reader is not convinced that Gray’s consultants hold the same view.

Aside from these comments, just a few details could be improved. For instance, there were no dates indicated on many of the photographs. Also, an appendix with some of the agencies mentioned in the text would have been helpful. Overall, however, this is an imminently readable ethnography and a timely addition to scholarship on the region. Gray’s work will be an important resource for those interested in indigenous rights worldwide, social movements, and the possibilities for marginalized communities in a post-socialist world to transform their conditions.

Alexia Bloch

Haley, Shawn D., and Curt Fukuda: *The Day of the Dead. When Two Worlds Meet in Oaxaca*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004. 149 pp. ISBN 1-84545-083-3. Price: \$ 28.75

Based upon many years of research, anthropologist Shawn D. Haley and writer/artist Curt Fukuda present