

huacan, and patron of the Moon Pyramid, Teotihuacan's "water mountain," Zoltán Paulinyi makes that case that there was no such singular deity but rather several deities, including the Mountain God, patron of the high-ranking Coyote Lords also linked with the Rain God and his weapon the fire of lightning – the source of water and rain, thus fertility and plants. Teotihuacan is also the subject of a chapter by William Fash and colleagues who argue that the Adosada platform of the Sun Pyramid associated with Pleiades was the house of the New Fire ceremony and place of investiture of rulers and thus integral to the creation of a new regional political order following the eruption of Popocatepetl. Teotihuacan with its quadripartite layout perhaps best exemplifies David Carrasco's concept of cosmovision.

Barbara W. Fash takes up the importance of water and water symbolism in Mesoamerica focusing on the low density, tropical cities of the Classic Maya where she sees linkages between water management, ritual, and corporate groups. Symbols of the Flowering Mountain of Maguey and water appear together in the center of a ballcourt at Epiclassic El Tajín where decapitation rituals transferred political power from gods to human rulers. Although Tajín is not in a maguey producing area, Rex Koontz speculates that maguey symbolism signaled Tajín's westward expansion into the sierras of Puebla.

Urban centers through architecture, layouts, imagery, and objects manifested rulers' strategies of legitimation through archaism and the invocation of ties to earlier powerful cities and people. Mastache and colleagues discuss Tula's evocations of Teotihuacan – neo-Teotihuacanism. They suggest that the roots of Tula's urban institutions extended to a precinct of the city known as Tula Chico, built about A.D. 650 and destroyed and abandoned ca. A.D. 800–850, perhaps from political conflict. Some attribute foreign attributes at the northern Maya lowland city of Chichen Itza to the Toltecs, but Ringle and Bey begin their chapter on Chichen Itza posing an important question: who did Mesoamerican cities present themselves to? How should the foreignness incorporated into Chichen Itza be understood? They propose that it marked a change in militarism and governance from a system of paramount lords and lesser nobles to a more regulatory state influenced by Teotihuacan's legacy and the growing importance of military orders and Feathered Serpent ideology.

López Luján and López Austin take up the core ideology of Tollan-Quetzalcoatl and the development of Post-classic confederations, not merely as military alliances but as political units that exercised power over a territory and inspired the notion of the prototypical city, Tollan, as a place where all ethnic groups lived together. In the final chapter Carrasco concludes that while military and economic forces were important in nucleation of people into cities and towns, it was "art, ideology, and performance" that sustained successful civic-ceremonial centers through good and troubled times.

Pre-Hispanic urban centers were political capitals; although that was not their only function, they materialized political relations that were mediated and legitimated by the production of religious symbols and rituals and the

creation of landscapes that shaped the experiences of city-dwellers and visitors. Based on close readings of imagery and architecture, "The Art of Urbanism," produced to the Dumbarton Oaks' high standards, provides rich details of elite symbolic production, but only some authors consider how to assess the validity of such interpretations, e.g., Paulinyi's critical analysis of the "Great Goddess" imagery at Teotihuacan and Bey and Ringle's analysis of symmetry and regalia. The meanings of urbanism discerned in this volume cannot be divorced from the development of ideologies that though divine order sanctioned and reinforced the "worldly" authority of rulers and legitimized upper classes. Such urban landscapes and the act of building them helped to create and naturalize such ideologies, but how did subjects internalize them? Did cities have the same meaning for all subjects and factions? Tula suggests otherwise. Were there no ideological struggles – the destruction of Teotihuacan, abandonment of Classic Maya cities and kingship, and episodes of centralization and fragmentation also suggests otherwise. Cosmovision has been an important concept in Mesoamerica, but the volume would have been strengthened by drawing more broadly on theorizing about the production of space and landscapes of power.

Deborah L. Nichols

**Fjelstad, Karen, and Nguyễn Thị Hiền:** *Spirits without Borders. Vietnamese Spirit Mediums in a Transnational Age.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 219 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-11493-7.

Movement, be it in real space or in cyberspace, be it by individual choice or by imposed circumstances, has become a distinguishing feature of our modern world. Movement opens opportunities to see hitherto unknown lands and meet new people, and more than that, it affects the thinking and attitudes of the one on the move. When people move from one country to another or from continent to continent, and especially, if their moving involves a prolonged or definite stay in a place away from their place of origin, they take with them not only material goods dear to them but also concepts and images that help shape the way they are accustomed to live. Religious ideas, beliefs, and their expression in ritual and customs are part of these goods that travel with their bearers. How moving from one country to another affects the manner people imagine their deities and spirits, formulate their beliefs, and express them in ritual and social activities is the challenging question the two authors address in their present work.

"Spirits without Borders" is the fruit of the two authors' personal experience and collaborative fieldwork and of about twenty years on Đạo Mẫu, the Mother Goddess religion. Đạo Mẫu is originally a local religion of the common people in North Vietnam, from where it spread to South Vietnam and further overseas. In possession rituals performed by initiated mediums the deities and spirits of the religion's pantheon become incarnated in their medium (their seat), and dance before and for their believers. Because of the religion's emphasis on possession and direct contact with its spirits, it had long been accused of

being superstitious and for that reason it had been suppressed by the government. Suppression by officialdom forced the religion to go underground, but did not succeed in eradicating it. When, therefore, the government allowed for more freedom after introducing the Renovation of 1986, Đạo Mẫu began to resurface, yet at least in the early years its activities remained restrained in order not to unduly attract the attention of public authorities. At the end of the war, when many Vietnamese fled or migrated to the United States, Đạo Mẫu religion traveled with them. One of the places where it found a new home was the Silicon Valley in California, where a large number of immigrant Vietnamese came to settle. This did not mean, however, that these people's contacts with their homeland, Vietnam, were cut. As soon as it was possible again to travel there, believers of the religion used the opportunity to seek contact with temples in Vietnam, to be initiated as a medium by a master medium, or to buy religious items needed, for example, to properly furnish a temple. Further, the rise of electronic media dramatically fostered contacts between the religion's homeland and its diaspora. The nature of such border-crossing exchanges between people actually living in separate nations is what attracted the attention of the two authors. They, therefore, were induced to investigate how a place-bound religion like the Mother Goddess religion could travel beyond national borders and develop in regions significantly different from that of its origin. The authors' choice of their field of investigation, i.e., the contacts between members of the religion living in Vietnam and California, gained a further interesting aspect, because they themselves are an example of such transnational contacts and exchanges. Fjelstad, an American, works among Vietnamese and Nguyễn, a Vietnamese, does research in America.

Especially the last mentioned fact is a feature that distinguishes the authors' method of research. Of course, they too observe peoples' actions and reactions, but they are never completely detached observers. Rather they are personally very much involved participants. Taking such a stance they were able to foster close and intimate relations with their partners which then enabled both sides to overcome their initial hesitation. The authors' patient efforts were rewarded in two ways: on one side, they increasingly learned that the religion and its mediums were alive and active to a degree they had not expected when they began their research; on the other side, they were able to produce a work which, more than being a so-called objective report, is a personal story involving the authors as well as their partners on equal terms.

As already mentioned, Fjelstad and Nguyễn focus their research on the Mother Goddess religion, especially its pantheon and possession rituals. The latter are the place and time, when deities and spirits become not only incarnated in the medium, but also act through it. They show the hierarchical structure of the pantheon focused on the Mother Goddess and the responsibilities of its individual spirits. Because the spirits become present during a possession ritual the authors describe what happens in such a ritual. But they also pay attention to the ritual's environment: to its main actor, the medium, and its "spirit

root" that is the basic condition for becoming a medium; to the social relationships linking the people attending a ritual and supporting the temple; and finally also to the difficulties involved for the religion to settle and to become established in the alien and unfamiliar environment of Silicon Valley. Being separated from the home country demanded that a medium find ways to procure a minimum of items necessary for the rituals, even if the materials to fashion them were not what would be considered indispensable for the same ritual held in Vietnam. In the early years of Vietnamese settlement this problem was pressing because there was practically no way to procure the necessary materials from Vietnam. Once contacts between Vietnam and the United States were again made possible, the number of Vietnamese visiting their homeland grew and with it the flow of goods appropriate for the rituals increased as well.

Fjelstad and Nguyễn delineate the situation as it developed in the two countries and between them with care and much empathy enabling the reader not only to gain objective knowledge about the religion and its rituals, but also to acquire a sense for what these processes meant and still mean for their actors. The question, however, remains why this "place-bound" religion without a center of organization and doctrine and without missionaries to propagate its beliefs could establish itself in California and other areas of the globe. In other words, the question is why such a local religion can travel the world. The authors' basic answer to this question is that it is the religion's, or the Vietnamese people's, intrinsic flexibility and ability of adaptation. This attitude is reflected in the title of the book's last chapter: "You Have to Respect the Local Spirits." Đạo Mẫu religion is not concerned with fixed doctrine or strict ritual, its main stance is that it is a "personal experience" and, therefore, admits personal expressions of the experience. But it is important to "respect the local spirits." However, following a suggestion by Thomas Csordas the authors suggest that for a religion to travel without regard to national borders two characteristics are necessary. The religion has to be transposable as well as transportable. This means that such a religion in order to be transposable needs to be flexible enough in its message to adapt to different cultural environments. Furthermore, in order to be transportable it needs to be relatively free of cultural bonds as well as of ideological or institutional strictures (9). Having stated so much, the authors then add a caution by saying that the possession rituals *lên đồng* possess both characteristics, however, "in ways that are unique," because they command a great deal of doctrine, are associated with certain sacred places in Vietnam, and remain generally linked to Vietnamese culture (9).

If "transnational" means that people as well as ideas and things can travel freely in the modern world without being restricted by national or other borders, one can imagine that a body of rituals and beliefs that is transposable and transportable in the sense mentioned above can freely cross any national border and, therefore, become "transnational." The reviewer's first impression was in fact that the Mother Goddess religion would offer an example of such a transnational institution. However, it

turned out that the claimed uniqueness of the Đạo Mẫu religion's transnational character seems to limit this very character. Certainly, exchanges of many kinds take place freely between the people in Vietnam and those in the Silicon Valley or in other countries. As much as Đạo Mẫu religion is part of these exchanges it can be considered to be transnational. Yet it is also striking to note that, with the possible exception of a few examples of non-Vietnamese persons showing interest in the religion, the Mother Goddess religion thrives mainly among Vietnamese, at home as well as abroad. For these believers Vietnam commands a special place of honor in their religion "because it is the birthplace of the religion" (143). As a parallel example the authors refer in this context to the significance of Rome for Catholics. Although this is an interesting comparison, it will be noticed that Rome is the center of a religion but not at all for a particular ethnic group, while in the case of the Mother Goddess religion "Vietnam" seems to function for its followers as the center of attention either as a political body (the state of Vietnam) or as an ethnic entity (the Vietnamese, at home or abroad). As a result, it may be better to say that the religion of the Mother Goddess is transposable and transportable to any place where Vietnamese live and that in this (avowedly rather restricted) sense it exhibits also transnational characteristics.

The authors' longstanding fieldwork experience and their empathetic collaboration with their Vietnamese partners, mediums as well as believers, and with one another have given us a fascinating book. Its fascination lies in the fact that the reader is given the feeling of participating in the events described. The book is like the Mother Goddess religion it introduces, it is "a deeply personal experience."

Peter Knecht

**Fong, Vanessa:** *Paradise Redefined. Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. 267 pp. ISBN 978-0-8047-7267-9. Price: \$ 21.95.

In "Paradise Redefined," Vanessa Fong follows the lives of young Chinese from the town of Dalian in northeast China as they venture abroad in their quest to become "citizens of the developed world." Utilizing Benedict Anderson's notion of the "imagined community," and Aihwa Ong's extension of the concept from the national to the global level, Fong posits that the condition of "developed" is not delineated by national borders, but rather is an imagined community of individuals with access to certain social, cultural, and legal resources in whichever country they may happen to reside. That is, individuals can live underdeveloped lifestyles in developed countries, and concomitantly, individuals may enjoy highly developed lifestyles in what are characterized as underdeveloped countries. Fong argues that due to the "increasingly globalized nature of the media, language, and educational pilgrimages available" to them, young Chinese citizens in cities like Dalian "aspire to belong" to this "imagined developed world community composed of mobile, wealthy, well-educated, and well-connected people

worldwide" (6). Her book portrays the experiences of the young Chinese citizens she studies as they seek to gain membership to this imagined community of the developed world. To do so, she follows a cohort of 2,273 Chinese citizens born under China's one-child policy she first surveyed in 1997, when she taught in Dalian, until 2010, tracking the trajectories of their education, careers, child-bearing, and childrearing, regardless of where they ended up living. Despite the obvious methodological challenges, which she describes in her "Introduction," Fong followed students to the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Singapore, among others. The result is a rich and enjoyable book which leaves the reader feeling that he/she has genuinely achieved a deeper understanding of the people behind the much debated topic of China's role in the world.

There are at least two key bodies of literature that Fong's work addresses and enriches. Within existing literature on large-scale migration trends, there are assumptions that people make their migration choices on the basis of rational, predictable reasons that are discernible through quantitative analysis. However, Fong argues that analyses of human migration based on quantitative data cannot help but tend to oversimplify motivations and goals. She notes that even with the depth and breadth that a global-scale ethnography across multiple field sites provides to the study of global processes and transnational people, the full reality of a group of people making choices in a global context still cannot be adequately represented (33). However, a methodology involving qualitative analysis at the very least reveals complexities and nuances often overlooked in the conclusions reached through quantitative approaches. For example, as Fong notes, while a quantitative analysis of her data would suggest that it is children of professionals, managers, and large business owners who are most likely to study abroad, the qualitative approach to analyzing the ethnographic data that Fong has utilized suggests that this was in fact not the most important reason for individual migration decisions (94).

A second field of literature for which Fong's study has resonance is that around China's growing global role. While much has been written in the last few years about this topic, much of the literature lacks historical and social context. Individuals, and their ideas and perspectives, are rarely treated as subjects worthy of analysis to better understand China's potential international impact. As a result, the conventional discourse around China's international behavior, focusing on the state as an autonomous and cognizant central actor, tends to characterize China as a unitary, monolithic actor acting on fixed geopolitical objectives to increase its share of international power. In recent years there have been calls for increased efforts by analysts to acknowledge the critical importance of Chinese perspectives when discussing China's role in the world and Fong's work fits into a small but growing trend of exceptions to the oversimplifications prevalent in the dominant discourse. Rather than perpetuating the fictionalized monolithic view of "China" constructed from an overreliance on non-Chinese sources, research such