

L'épilogue fait le point sur cette recherche commencée au début des années 2000 et fait le suivi concernant le développement de certaines des initiatives populaires visitées auparavant en soulevant les défis auxquels celles-ci font face dans leur quête d'autonomie vis-à-vis le Parti. Ils terminent en abordant certains des facteurs qui facilitent, si ce mot peut être exact, le développement de cette relation entre le Sage et le peuple que sont les sociétés syncrétiques, similaires aux sociétés rédemptrices abordées dans la première partie, ou encore aux groupes bouddhistes qui parfois intègrent du confucianisme également.

Cet ouvrage met en scène une série de réflexions théoriques et observations empiriques qui sont plus que pertinentes dans le contexte actuel où le Parti-État s'interroge sur le futur politique et social de la Chine. Ce dernier, qui regorge de détails et d'informations de première main, saura trouver écho dans la communauté académique et saura intéresser les chercheurs qui étudient le renouveau du confucianisme ainsi que d'autres groupes de lecteurs intéressés par la scène culturelle, religieuse et sociologique de la Chine contemporaine.

Un dernier point d'intérêt serait possiblement d'ouvrir un espace de discussion entre ces observations et les travaux de Oakes et Sutton (Faiths on Display. Religion, Tourism and the Chinese State. Lanham 2010) qui portent sur des sujets connexes, dont la question de l'autorité culturelle, de la reconstruction des pratiques religieuses et culturelles locales ainsi que le rôle de ces dernières en matière de gouvernance ainsi que dans la narrative nationale portant sur la culture "chinoise". Enfin, l'ensemble des interrogations abordées par les auteurs pousse la réflexion sur ce phénomène constamment en mutation qu'est la rencontre en "Le Sage et le peuple", le renouveau du confucianisme "populaire" en République populaire.

Alex Payette

Blake, Michael: Maize for the Gods. Unearthing the 9,000-Year History of Corn. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. 266 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-28696-2. Price: £ 19.95

Engaging and illuminating, this story of maize, one of the world's most unique grains, connects puzzles across 9 millennia to the "corn" use today. Debates have raged as to the origins of this remarkable Mesoamerican grass. Africa was once suggested as a source, a result of the earliest trading across the Atlantic. This reveals how fast a useful plant spreads and adapts. Later debates confused the presence of maize in South America for a second point of origin. The data presented in Michael Blake's book, "Maize for the Gods," makes it clear that central Mexico was the original home to teosinte and the genesis of the first domesticated maize.

The informal writing style captures your imagination as the subject unfolds. Blake begins by his own experiences with corn as a child, growing up, traveling, in archaeological and anthropological discoveries, and his own classroom teaching. This book is geared for classes on the history of maize, with straightforward discussion and a glossary. Nonetheless, it is informative for the pro-

fessional as well as the interested public, giving it a wide appeal.

Curiously, this remarkably adaptable, productive, and flexible plant has a mysterious past. The search for the ancestral maize brought together many disciplines and the reader is introduced to the cast of characters. Botanist Mangelsdorf teamed up with archaeologist MacNeish in the 1970s to study the archaeological collections from the Tehuacán Valley of Puebla. The voluminous data included 23,607 bits of all parts of the maize plant and even chewed pieces of stalk dating back more than 7,000 years. The teosinte mutation hunt continued with Beadle who felt that persistent selection on teosinte lead to its transformation to maize. More botanists followed the search and Wilkes found the key to the ancestral plant in dense stands on slopes of Balsas River.

Initially dependent on dating in the context of archaeology, it was not until DNA was refined that an actual conclusion was reached that linked maize origins to the Balsas River, one of the longest rivers in Mexico that drains from the east in Puebla down to the Pacific. The source of the earliest maize is around a section that traverses Guerrero and Michoacán, where the greatest genetic diversity of teosinte is found. Teosinte, *Zea mays parviglumis* and *Zea mays mexicana*, with its many stems, spikes or ears, and tassels, differs significantly from maize, *Zea mays* spp. *mays*. As the book exposes, it is the importance of common genes of large effect that confirm the relationship of maize to teosinte.

Yet even with the 1980 publication by Beadle demonstrating there were only a handful of genetic changes that related teosinte to maize, there was still a legacy pointing to South America. Ultimately, it would be the decoding of DNA that would settle the question, when Doebley's team in 2002 demonstrated that *Zea mays parviglumis*, of the moist lowlands between 400 and 1,800 meters, was the only subspecies today with sufficient genetic similarity to share a common ancestor with maize. *Z. mays mexicana*, ranging from 1,600 to 2,700 meter range, is a minor contributor, giving it maize higher range. It may well be that *Z. mays huehuetenangensis*, another highland teosinte, could be a contributor. Only recently rediscovered in the region of Huista, Huehuetenango, Guatemala. Locally known as *maiz de rayo*, there has been effort to create a protected area recognizing these rare plants.

What is fascinating about the long history of maize, is the time it took to get the cob to enlarge. Plants that make up the Mesoamerican diet, wild and early domesticates that became crops for the milpa cycle, including beans, squash, tomato, and chili. Many other plants were used by mobile horticulturalists over the course of the Archaic period. It is not until the formative Preclassic, from 4,000–3,000 years B.P., coincident with recognized settlements on the landscape, that maize cob begins to grow and take on more recognizable forms.

While it is clear that a combination of factors lead to the domestication of maize and other plants, and climate change and population growth feature prominently. Blake introduces his ideas of the role of the maize stalk in early domestication. Experiments conducted and published

with his student Smalley show that fermentation of the sugary juice from the stalk can turn into beer. While not falsifiable, the hypothesis fits the data. This recalls the chewed stalks of the Tehuacán archaeological collections. In the absence of sugarcane, introduced after the great Columbian exchange, the sugar in the stalks of maize was unique. We know the stalks of maize were used in many ways including simple wall constructions and for paste, as seen in the 16th-century crucifix exhibited in the 1991 “Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries” art exhibition.

Over the course of the scrutiny of maize, new ways of understanding its development have arisen. Three core chapters are focused on the different lines of evidence of maize in the archaeological record. Plants, and maize among them, are organic and their traces are not the most common nor as obvious as other aspects of the record. While archaeologists have known about these ephemeral remains, it is only in the past several decades that the study of plant remains has become a systematic part of archaeology. The first core chapter is on the macroscopic view of maize, the second is on the microscopic views of maize, and the third is on the elemental view of maize.

The study of the archaeology of maize has been growing. Early on, sites with maize were indirectly dated, but today carbon samples can be very small, allowing the conservation of most of the organic parts while sacrificing some to understand the timing of maize development and use. Blake has gathered all these data together in the “Ancient Maize Map.” Today there is an updated database on the directly dated maize and can be found online.

Blake’s book, “Maize for the Gods,” brings new light on an old subject. He has provided a source book for understanding the archaeological development of maize and the advancement of the science of the research on maize. There are some things that come to my mind having read this book, and that is the influence of maize around the world. James C. Scott, in his book “The Art of Not Being Governed” (New Haven 2009), addresses the adaptability of maize that rapidly proliferated around the world following the conquest of the Americas, calling it the basis of “escape agriculture.” This has transformed agriculture practice around the world at the smallholder level as well as the expanses of monocultures, discussions that are fundamental to “Corn and Capitalism” by Arturo Warman (Chapel Hill 2003). These musings are the result of my admiration of Blake’s synthetic study of maize, providing remarkable insights into the relationship of humans and plants.

Anabel Ford

Blier, Suzanne Preston: *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba. Ife History, Power, and Identity*, c. 1300. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 574 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-02166-2. Price: \$ 115.00

The present voluminous publication contains an impressive amount of original research on the famous art objects of ancient Ife in the light of archaeological, anthropological, and historical evidence. It is lavishly illustrated by 31 colour plates and 100 black and white plates, representing not only classical art objects but also present-day

individuals, shrines, and objects. The first part considers art, risk, and identity, exploring questions of art making, art viewing, aesthetics, and body-marking practices. Focussing on politics, representation, and regalia, the second part looks at the corpus of copper and copper alloy portrait beads, animal sculptures, crown and headdress forms, sceptres, and seating. Contrary to Frank Willett’s seminal “Ife in the History of West African Sculpture” (London 1967), the author attempts to use our knowledge of present-day cultic performances, including the results of her own field research, to throw light on the context of art making and on the significance of art objects for early Ife society, religion, and history. With the aim of filling some of the great lacunae in Ife art scholarship by giving an overall view of all aspects of the city’s ancient art, she analyses the relationship of this art to the city’s early history and society. At the same time, she challenges the enduring Western preconception that African societies and their art are fixed through time and space. Looking at classical Ife art in terms of risk and creativity, the book considers the central role of art in restoring a state of equilibrium for society and its individual members after situations of trauma. In this sense, the sculptures under consideration are believed to have promoted peace among the city’s cosmopolitan residents and to have preserved the memory of specific events.

The major historical issue in this approach is to identify the period of risk and disruption during which the art objects fulfilled this purpose. Suzanne Blier approaches this difficult task by using an orally transmitted king list for establishing a semblance of royal chronology. She combines average reign lengths with archaeological datings and thus assigns the period of classical Ife art to 1250–1350 c.E. In her opinion Obalufon II (who is presumably represented by the famous copper mask – Plate 3 – found in the inner palace in 1935) was an intermediate king between Ife’s first and second dynasties. Since in the ensuing devastating civil war families and neighborhoods are supposed to have fought against each other, the artworks of that period are believed to have served in the aftermath of these events as visual loci to help repair the fractured center. Therefore, the objects are thought not only to have helped to reconcile the inhabitants of the city-state, but also to have been a means of recalling and commemorating the critical roles played by leading figures on both sides in the dispute and its resolution (17).

As an historian who has himself done field research in Ife on the anthropological remnants bearing witness to important historical events, I can only congratulate the author for having attempted to bring together art historical, historical, and anthropological sources. Although I am unable to reach any judgment about the properly art historical aspects of this work, it does, however, seem necessary to caution against a seemingly historical and anthropological approach which tends to disregard basic standards of source criticism and systematic field research. With respect to the inadequacies of the historical method, certain misinterpretations can be noted: In order to support her assumption that Ife was a flourishing cosmopolitan center with vast international connections in the late medieval