

tion of supposed colorblindness and meritocratic practices conceals discriminatory practices and works against policies such as affirmative action that could begin to level the playing field for many students at a disadvantage.

In all, this volume provides an expansive, in-depth exploration of the current state of higher education and how changes are being brought upon it by global political and economic forces. It would be a valuable read for anyone working in higher education, as well as those who have or will have students moving through the system. The only shortcoming is that, especially given its ethnographic focus, the volume could include more diverse perspectives within academia, including those from administrators and staff. This would make its arguments that more effective and open its readership up to a wider base.

Robin Conley Riner

**Iannone, Gyles, Brett A. Houk, and Sonja A. Schwake** (eds.): *Ritual, Violence, and the Fall of the Classic Maya Kings*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016. 361 pp. ISBN 978-0-8130-6275-4. Price: \$ 89.98

Explanations for the collapse of ancient states often involve, in whole or in part, the “scapegoat king” model. The model originally appeared in “The Golden Bough,” an often-republished 1890 volume by Sir James George Frazer. It involves two different, complementary themes. The first is that kings are embodiments of their kingdoms; the physical body of the king is a reflection of the strength, will, and well-being of the realm. The second is that kings are special, unique individuals with extraordinary powers that enable them to carry the moral transgressions and impurities of their subjects. Both themes require an exceptional relationship with supernatural forces as well as the idea that the king is the supreme benefactor, responsible for the prosperity and fecundity of the kingdom. In this model, the king is at fault for a kingdom in decline. And if the kingdom collapses, the king is treated as a “scapegoat,” removed from power using prescribed ritual practices or violence.

“Ritual, Violence, and the Fall of the Classic Maya Kings” investigates the ability of this model to explain the Maya collapse in the ninth century. Bringing together a variety of scholars working throughout the Maya lowlands, the volume uses several case studies to explore the collapse and to assess whether the “scapegoat” model applies at individual sites. The book is organized into twelve chapters, including two introductory chapters and a synthesis at the end. Most of the articles can be characterized as either theoretical in nature or as portraits of specific sites and events in the Maya collapse. Chapter 1, by Gyles Iannone, Brett A. Houk, and Sonja A. Schwake, sets the tone for the volume by describing the “scapegoat king” model as well as its major problems. That being said, however, the authors argue that testing this model against specific cases from the Maya area is necessary, as all too often the “scapegoat model” is accepted uncritically. In chapter 2, Gyles Iannone continues this line of thinking, providing not only an overview of the model but also a critical assessment. Iannone argues that a better un-

derstanding of the “scapegoat model” can help to explain what actually happened to the Maya in the first few decades of the 9th century.

Chapter 3, by Eleanor Harrison-Buck, explores the widespread mutilation of royal monuments during the collapse. Rather than attributing the mutilation to “scapegoating” per se, Harrison-Buck argues that many of the various termination and destruction events were the result of Chontal-Itza Maya groups moving into the southern Maya area. Much more research will be needed to test the validity of this point, but Harrison-Buck (re)visits an interesting line of investigation here.

Chapters 4 through 7 likewise deal with warfare, albeit on a regional – and not foreign – level. In chapter 4, Takeshi Inomata explores the collapse at Aguateca. He suggests that the “scapegoat king” model, while useful, needs to be evaluated against specific historical instances and not applied wholesale to the Maya collapse. Citing anthropological and sociological theory, Inomata notes that there is a difference between the theoretical fitness of a king to rule and the actual attitudes of that king’s subjects.

Chapter 5, by Charles Golden, Andrew K. Scherer, Melanie Kingsley, Stephen D. Houston, and Héctor Escobedo, argues that there is little to suggest that declining prosperity or environmental conditions caused the fall of the dynasty at Piedras Negras. Rather it was a failed conflict with neighboring Yaxchilan, followed by a program of ritual termination in order to desanctify the places and objects associated with the defeated ruler; the surviving elites unsuccessfully attempted to restart the kingdom in another part of the center.

The next three chapters explore themes of reverence and desecration. In chapter 6, Sonja A. Schwake and Gyles Iannone suggest, that declining prosperity was a factor in the collapse at Minanha, and point to the destruction of stelae and friezes as an attack on royal identity. At the same time, however, they note that the royal palace there was reverentially buried, as if people who no longer subscribed to kingship per se still had respect for past institutions. Chapter 7, by Arthur A. Demarest, Claudia Quintanilla, and José Samuel Suasnávar, explore the execution of the royal family at Cancuen. They note that despite the violence to which they were subjected, the royal family was buried with full regalia; the authors suggest that they were scapegoats who, by virtue of their one-time position, still needed to be treated with a measure of reverence and respect. Not so for the elites at Colha in chapter 8. As Palma J. Buttes and Fred Valdez Jr. argue, the well-known executions there are best understood as ritualized terminations of elite power and identity. They argue that these were scapegoats proper, an example of what happens when the local population decides to take matters into its own hands.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 all focus on Terminal Classic surface deposits. In chapter 9, Brett A. Houk looks at termination deposits in northwestern Belize and explores the idea that nonelites may have been involved in their creation; the monumental residences and core areas of the elites were powerful symbols to the nonelites from these cities. Chapter 10, by Thomas H. Guderjan and C. Col-

leen Hanratty, examines a similar situation at Blue Creek, which was periodically revitalized, revisited, and reoccupied between the 9th and the 12th centuries. In chapter 11, Olivia C. Navarro-Farr points out a major problem archaeologists face in determining the validity of the “scapegoat model”: it is often difficult to distinguish termination rituals from other ritual acts that, on the surface, look like ritual termination. Although some activities may be characterized as dedicatory or desecratory, there is often considerable overlap between the two.

Chapter 12, by David Freidel, discusses how the various authors characterize the relationship between kings and their subjects. As Freidel notes, focusing on the problem of the “scapegoat king” allows us to better understand how people at the time viewed Maya kingship. Although this chapter might have focused more on the “scapegoat model” proper, his overview of the evolution of divine kingship from its beginnings to its demise places all of the sites covered in better perspective.

One can conclude from the articles that, as with many early sociological or anthropological theories from the mid-late 19th century, the “scapegoat model” is a vague truism: it can be shaped to fit many different situations to a degree of approval, but never to complete satisfaction. As for whether it is demonstrable archaeologically, the articles in this volume are clearly divided. Some of the disagreement probably stems from the difference between the theoretical *nature* of Maya kingship and the everyday *practice* of Maya kingship. The former might be characterized as a model largely rooted within inscriptions and iconography, with the latter more a combination of “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to the material culture of elites and nonelites alike. Another part of the problem is the perennially difficult, often impossible, task of correlating the fall of a ruler with specific destruction or termination events. Yet the solution is not to throw up our hands in despair, but to keep teasing out the nature of divine kingship. All too often we look at the collapse and ask ourselves why it happened. We regularly do so without really understanding what failed in the first place. The value of this book is that it provides a comprehensive look at kingship from a variety of site specific, 9th-century case examples. It is a worthy addition to the literature and will doubtless influence our thinking on the politics of the Terminal Classic.

James L. Fitzsimmons

**Jahoda, Christian:** Socio-Economic Organisation in a Border Area of Tibetan Culture. Tabo, Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh, India. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015. 368 pp. ISBN 978-3-7001-7816-3. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Philosophisch-historische Klasse: Denkschriften, 486; Veröffentlichungen zur Sozialanthropologie, 21) Price: € 89.00

In this book, Christian Jahoda addresses and discusses socio-economic changes in Spiti society in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, which is located next to the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. The majority of the inhabitants of Spiti speak Tibetan dialects, believe

in Tibetan Buddhism, and live mainly on agriculture and cattle-breeding, adapting to the harsh environments of the Himalayan range. Though it is located in Indian territory, their society and culture should essentially be characterized as Tibetan.

Thanks to its geopolitical context, the society was not affected by disastrous Chinese policies such as the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution, and, therefore, not only were their priceless Buddhist works of art not destroyed, but also their belief in Buddhism has been kept safe, and their socio-economic structure has maintained its traditional character to some extent.

Before becoming a British territory in the middle of the 19th century, the villages of Spiti traditionally had been governed by petty lords called “Jo,” to whom each household had the duty to pay various kinds of tax. This administrative system was substantially preserved, even during the British-ruled period. After the independence of India, however, the Jo were disempowered and Spiti came under Indian control. Since then, the influence of Indian society has significantly increased. The same situation is also observable in other Tibetan-culture-dominant societies of Western Himalaya, such as Lahoul (Himachal Pradesh), Zanskar (Jammu and Kasimir), and Ladakh (Jammu and Kasimir).

The book consists of two parts. One part is a historical description of Western Tibet including Spiti, and the other part is an anthropological study of Spiti society. The author conducted field research in a village called Tabo, which is famous for the precious and beautiful wall paintings of its monastery.

Since the aims of his research are “to give an account of the historic development of the socio-economic organisation of a society, i.e. the peasantry in Tabo and in the Spiti Valley, on a local level and in relation to the prevailing political powers over long periods up to the present day” (228), Jahoda attempts to reconstruct not only the history of rulers of Western Tibet, but also the history of their tax-systems, village political structures, and the relations between villages and monasteries, etc. He collected historical records thoroughly, including reports of British officials and travelogues by other European authors. This makes this book a must-reading for all scholars who are interested in the socio-economic structure of Tibetan society.

Compared with the historical descriptions, the anthropological study section, based on the fieldwork in Tabo, is rather short and simple. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this book marks a starting point for the anthropological study of Western Tibet, dealing with topics such as stratification, descent and kinship groups, the household, inheritance law, marital patterns, village organisation and economic structures, etc. In chapter five, textual sources and illustrations are presented. Among them, the collection of documents on the village community (*panchayat*) of Tabo seems especially important. It includes records on a wide variety of topics, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.

The anthropological study on Spiti presented in this book will hopefully lead to comparative studies with oth-