data, the most parsimonious explanation seems to be derived from Western myth.

Ever since the "the Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold," as Lord Byron paraphrased the Book of Kings, the great invasion has been the leading paradigm for modeling the replacement of one or several populations by a different one. The Huns were the next example in Eurasia, demonized by Europeans and the Church in the fifth century in a pattern to be repeated for the "Mongol Hordes" in the 13th century. I think it is significant to note that in all these known episodes of large-scale displacement, the invaders turned out to be multiethnic and multilingual and they typically intermarried with the previous inhabitants.

Another model of allelic rather than genonic migration, where alleles move to neighboring bands or villages each generation through intermarriage, is not nearly so colorful as mass migration or invasion but can account for the same distribution of alleles as Cavalli-Stone's theory. For example, assuming that Indo-European speakers migrated from Anatolia to central Europe over a span of 8,000 years—that is, 280 generations—we find that they only have to migrate 0.2 kilometers a year to make the trip. It seems to me that theories of mass migration are gratuitous, pending the collection of more genetic and linguistic data, so that we can choose between a "fast" theory and a "slow" theory of migration. The same kind of problem exists in the interpretation of Polynesian data.

In sum, this book seems to be an attempt to attract students to a parochial theoretical position rather than educating them toward a critical perspective by presenting all the alternatives for considering the expansion of human populations.

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JULIA A. HENDON
Gettysburg College

Establishing ritual acts as social practices central to Mesoamerican economies and with real explanatory power is the goal of this handsomely produced volume, which combines papers presented at the American Anthropological Association's 2003 annual meeting with others solicited especially for the book. E. Christian Wells and Karla L. Davis-Salazar argue in chapter 1 for the importance of ritual to economic transactions and institutions. They define the ritual economy as "the materialization of values and beliefs through acquisition and consumption for managing meaning and shaping interpretation" (p. 3). Contrasting this concept with that of the more widely used one of political economy, Wells and Davis-Salazar present a discussion of ritual informed by Roy Rappaport's writings on the subject.

Chapter 2, by Wells, and chapter 4, by Enrique Rodriguez-Alegria, draw on documentary sources to help understand archaeological remains related to ritual events. Wells describes communal events in post-Conquest Honduras to help assess the likelihood of feasting located at the site of El Coyote. Rodriguez-Alegria starts from the symbols on a set of Colonial terracottas made in San Juan Teotihuacan and concludes that the value of rituals to their participants resided as much in the economic, social, and political consequences as in the specific religious system that justified the practice of these rituals to Catholic authorities.

Chapter 3, by Brigitte Kovacevich, and chapter 6, by Antonia Folan, address the nature of Classic period Maya political organization through comparative discussion and analysis of archaeological materials from Copan (Kovacevich) and the Petexbatun area (Folan), challenging political economy models in the process. Kovacevich takes the evidence for the intensive production of jade and pyrite objects as indicative of the involvement of nonelite artisans in certain stages of the manufacture of these objects as well as in their consumption. Focusing more on decorated pottery from Dos Pilas, Moral de San José, Aguateca, and other sites, Folan discusses their importance as a kind of "social currency" (p. 178) required for the success of communal events that underwent political ties between elites as well as across social classes.

The fifth chapter, by Wells and Ben Nelson, looks at the question of pilgrimage's economic effects through a review of a range of literature and archaeological research. Their aim is to lay the groundwork for a better model for exchange systems in northwestern Mexico, including the site of La Quemada, rather than present conclusions about the region.

Chapters 7 and 8 are the most explicitly concerned with the question of origins. Davis-Salazar (ch. 7) argues that aggrandizer models place too much emphasis on the accumulation of surplus, although more recent recensions of aggrandizer models have given more of a role to sponsorship of communal events, including feasts and ballgames. Davis-Salazar contends that involvement in ritual acts provides a way for individuals to become prominent in their own right. She uses mortuary data from Early Formative Copan to demonstrate the development of this individual. Sarah Barber and Arthur Joyce (ch. 8) take a practice theory approach to sociopolitical change in the Rio Verde valley in the Terminal Formative period, emphasizing the importance of social identity and place making to the development of political authority. Their analysis of burial data and monumental architecture provides the most explicit discussion in the book of the degree to which such authority is contested.

The ninth chapter is an enlightening discussion by Frances Berdan of the material, labor, and temporal requirements of the highly elaborated ritual life of the Mexica (Aztec), based on a careful analysis of 16th-century written and pictorial documentary sources. Berdan has done a great service to anyone interested in how the continual ritual cycle affected society. In chapter 10, Barbara Fash and William Fash combine information from these sources with visual and archaeological data to discuss the ballgame as an economic force in Mesoamerica instead of employing the more usual focus on ballgame symbolism as an expression of political ideology.

Katherine Spielmann (ch. 11) and John Watanabe (ch. 12) raise several crucial questions in their comments. Spielmann asks how does someone within smaller-scale societies overcome the levelling mechanisms that work against the emergence of social hierarchy and more permanent forms of political authority? Watanabe distinguishes between the economics of ritual and the ritualization of the economy, suggesting that theorizing economic behavior and values as ritualized practice is central to understanding why ritual becomes integral to political power.

Although this volume does not provide complete answers to these questions, the chapters represent an important beginning.