

compete in a radically changed religious market. In response, the parish priest Juan Paz Solórzano initiated a “dramatic housecleaning and defense of the shrine” (p. 118). His efforts ultimately returned the figure to national prominence, in part, by institutionalizing its miraculous nature, which had been previously sidelined. However, it was the recently arrived Protestants who sought to denigrate the image by using “a negative association of blackness with what was purported to be holy” (p. 124). Following the 1944 revolution, the archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano attempted to deploy the Christ as a symbol of anti-Communism in the face of the revolutionary platforms of Juan José Arévalo and, later, Jacobo Arbenz. Discussion related to the coloration of the Christ was unnecessary for this purpose and was therefore minimized or excised. Finally, by the last half of the twentieth century the moniker Black Christ of Esquipulas was accepted by lay and ecclesiastical authorities alike. What had originated in the late nineteenth century as a Protestant condemnation of the figure, namely, its blackened color, was transformed into the language of Catholic adoration by the twentieth century.

Despite Sullivan-González’s efforts to highlight the role of the Christ of Esquipulas as a shrine whose importance transcended the various political upheavals of the developing Guatemalan state, he fails to center the icon as a leading character in its own story. In nearly every chapter the explanation of the political landscape of the moment dominates, while how these circumstances affected efforts to manipulate devotion to the image often feels secondary. While aptly providing political context and discussion of how various power brokers attempted to use the figure in support of their cause, Sullivan-González often leaves the reader unsure of the success or failure of these efforts among the faithful. Sullivan-González’s conclusion—that certain individuals perceive, or at least market, religious images based on contemporary issues—is not groundbreaking. Nonetheless, the book still makes a worthwhile contribution to the discussion of how worldly concerns, including how these intersect with issues of identity, entwine with and sometimes even formulate religious belief. We will only reach broader conclusions about this complex and multivalent process, which continues to be probed by a number of academic fields, by considering countless case studies, and in this vein Sullivan-González’s work has provided us with yet another for consideration.

JESSICA J. FOWLER, IE University

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Precontact

Patron Gods and Patron Lords: The Semiotics of Classic Maya Community Cults.

By JOANNE P. BARON. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. xvi, 227 pp. Cloth, \$52.00.

Life during the heyday of Classic Maya rulers . . . We still have so many questions regarding the glue that linked the impressive royal courts with their sustaining populace

(often numbering in the tens of thousands). Recently, scholars have focused on the mass appeal of ritual and pageantry performed by royals, but the magnetism of a theater state only goes so far. In this book, Joanne Baron presents hieroglyphic and archaeological evidence of patron deities and argues that the larger-than-life effigies fed and housed in many of the well-known temples of the Maya lowlands (such as the Cross Group at Palenque) elicited an affective devotion that connected royal courts with ordinary people who grew the food and built the structures that sustained one of the Americas' best-known pre-Columbian civilizations.

Over the past 50 years, evidence of Classic-period patron deities has been slowly amassing. Baron presents a very useful appendix in which currently agreed-on instances of patron deities at Classic Maya sites are listed. Significantly, the titles of such deities differ only subtly from royal titles—an indication of why a full understanding of these supernatural beings has been slow to jell. It has been difficult to discern between royal ancestors and deities. Arguably, this book is the first to demonstrate the religious and political significance of such beings and, in this regard, is a landmark study.

Explicitly historical and semiotic in approach, Baron integrates to good effect information from archaeological deposits, architecture, and epigraphy at the Classic site of La Corona, Guatemala. In chapter 5, the author convincingly traces the introduction of new patron deities by rulers (sometimes as gifts from a more powerful royal court) and the savvy statecraft that supplanted ancestor shrines of competing lineages with shrines to patron deities (pp. 142–44). Baron argues that discarded materials from votive offerings found in somewhat tenuous association with the shrines of patron deities were not discarded by royals alone. Based on texts from La Corona and elsewhere, royals were intimately involved in the care and feeding of patron effigies that, Baron proposes, were linked to the overall well-being of a community. In accordance with the thesis of patron deities as integrative of community, the author proposes that ordinary people associated with the royal court of La Corona may be responsible for some of the votive offerings (pp. 156–62).

In chapter 4, additional support for the integrative role of patron deities during the Classic period is provided through citation of ethnohistoric and ethnographic evidence. The former is set within early colonial conflict between supernatural beings of Catholic orthodoxy and those of pre-Columbian times. Evidence of pre-Columbian patron deities helps to explain the intense popularity and extreme localness of Catholic patron saints. When this material is incorporated, the practice of feeding, dressing, and caring for a supernatural being that is specifically linked with a particular place or people (the Aztec patron deity of Huitzilopochtli is a commonly known pre-Columbian example from highland Mexico) takes on a time-worn character and conceivably could have been the subject of community-wide devotion during the earlier Classic period.

As is the case with the larger hieroglyphic corpus from the Classic lowlands, the texts of La Corona only obliquely reference statecraft or religion per se. Rather, texts hint at these topics through content that overtly identifies the protagonist in the dedication of a new shrine, for example. Deploying Peircean semiotics toward the understanding of Maya hieroglyphic texts and the semiotic “chaining” entrained by this written discourse,

Baron analyzes glyphic texts and archaeological remains in terms of their pragmatic effects (p. 23). She interprets these materials as “patterned precipitates of semiotic activities, constructed and dismantled one semiotic event at a time” (p. 170). This approach greatly facilitates analysis of claims to political authority and suggests that future applications of this approach to Maya linguistics could yield equally productive insights.

The site of La Corona, which provides the case study for this book, is proving to be a highly influential place in terms of refining our understanding of Classic-period statecraft among royal courts. Not the largest court by far, however, La Corona seems to have played an outsize role as a receiver of women from the powerful court of Calakmul—princesses who married into a royal lineage of La Corona and thus solidified alliance structures. Texts found at La Corona as well as other courts clarify the important role of royal females in the networked politics of the southern lowlands. Similar discourses of authority and connectivity permeate this study of patron deities and point to the efficacy of synergistic analyses in which hieroglyphs are framed within larger semiotic processes and examined alongside archaeological and architectural evidence. This well-written and accessible book—recommended reading for students and scholars of Maya archaeology—goes a long way toward addressing unanswered questions about authority at Classic Maya courts. According to the thesis espoused by Baron, patron deities provided an integrative mechanism that stitched together—for several centuries—very disparate social segments.

PATRICIA A. MCANANY, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Making Value, Making Meaning: Techné in the Pre-Columbian World.

Edited by CATHY LYNNE COSTIN. *Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Symposia and Colloquia*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliographies. Index. viii, 489 pp. Cloth, \$75.00.

This handsomely produced volume stems from a Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Symposium held in the fall of 2013 that, in traditional Dumbarton Oaks fashion, incorporated a mix of scholars specializing in the art and archaeology of Mesoamerica and the Andes. The resulting publication consists of fourteen chapters, including an introduction, seven chapters focused on the Andes, five pertaining to Mesoamerica, and one that offers a comparative analysis involving both regions. The majority of the Andean essays treat the archaeology of coastal cultures, while one focuses on a north-coast Inca outpost and two deal with Inca and Tiwanaku sites in the highlands; they span the chronological gamut from the Early Horizon to the Inca period. Three of the Mesoamerican essays focus on the Late Preclassic and Classic Maya, and two deal with highland cultures of the Classic period at Teotihuacan and Cacaxtla. There is no discernible order to organization of essays in terms of region, chronology, or media.

The volume coheres around the theme of craft production, a traditional topic of archaeological inquiry to which the editor, Cathy Costin, has made significant