tions, omissions of explanations, and the losing of the thread are sometimes evident. The glossary helps to counterbalance this deficit somewhat. It is one of the benefits of Bacigalupo’s multisided ethnographic approach and her openness to multivocality that readers who may struggle as they read the book with the question of what it means to be a machi will finally become aware that there are multiple ways of being a machi and will be persuaded that a nonreductionist approach is appropriate. The author contextualizes and explains her contradictory findings predominantly by referring to the personal experiences of her informants and the diverse expectations they face from others, including the spirits and gods. However, the merits of this important book would have been augmented by a general conclusion and a broader and comparative perspective situating her findings among Mapuche shamans within current anthropological debates on the functions and meanings of shamanism, witchcraft, and ethnomedicine.

Reference

Boccara, Guillaume


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Social Change and the Evolution of Ceramic Production and Distribution in a Maya Community. By Dean R. Arnold. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008. 351 pp., foreword, preface, references, index. $70.00 cloth.)

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This important volume will be of interest to everyone involved with ethnoarchaeology, archaeological ceramic analyses, and the contemporary Maya people. As a casual but repeated visitor to the town of Ticul, Yucatan, Mexico, I have had a long-standing curiosity about the dynamics of change among the town’s famed ceramic production community. In a way that can only be accomplished through several decades of long-term field research, Dean R. Arnold shows us how technologies, markets, status, and life have evolved since 1965.

Arnold has organized his book into ten chapters. Chapter 1 is a masterful, and brief, review of ethnoarchaeological theory focusing on the limits and utility of ethnographic analogy in archaeology. He then reviews the his-
tory of his own fieldwork in Ticul during a thirty-two-year period. Chapter 2 is the volume’s longest, at more than fifty pages, but is as readable as any book chapter in recent memory. In it, Arnold explores how the population and organization of potters changed, how and why individuals become potters, and the range of the social fabric of pottery making and makers.

In chapter 3, he tackles the dynamics of demand and consumption. The early need to carry water in pots from village wells no longer exists, and other readily available and inexpensive plastic containers, combined with modern tourism, have transformed the markets and the nature of economic demand. Today, every bus stops in Ticul for tourists to purchase the famed pottery. In chapter 4, Arnold discusses how the distribution systems and markets for Ticul pottery have changed with these macro-demand forces.

As an archaeologist currently engaged in studies of ceramic composition variability through time among the ancient Maya of Belize, I found chapter 5, dealing with clay procurement, to be especially striking. The degree to which specialized clays are sought out and utilized undermines many archaeological studies that assume local clays to be easily obtained and chemically characterized. The mining of clay “pockets” is in fact vastly more complex and variable than most archaeologists presume.

Chapters 6 through 9 deal with similar aspects of pottery technology and their dynamics. Temper procurement, composition, forming, and firing technologies are dealt with in individual chapters. As a set, the chapters on pottery technology are important reading for anyone interested in ceramics—as almost all archaeologists are.

In the final chapter, Arnold revisits and summarizes the relationships between pottery and social change. Even if the archaeological lessons are not of interest to a reader, understanding the social dynamics of Ticul potters provides a microcosmic view of the macrostructural changes of the entire Yucatan peninsula.

The richness of detail and wonderful blending of ethnography and archaeology make this volume important and valuable and a pleasure to read. Aside from a strictly professional audience, this book can be well incorporated into graduate-level courses in ethnoarchaeology and ceramic analysis. Further, I strongly suspect the book will find a market among the educated ethno-tourists who love Yucatan so much.

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