

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

From Mesoamerican History to the History of Mexican Archaeology

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This essay reviews the following works:

The Alchemy of Conquest: Science, Religion, and the Secrets of the New World. By Ralph Bauer. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019. Pp. 670. \$79.50 hardcover. ISBN: 9780813942544.

On the Lips of Others: Moteuczoma's Fame in Aztec Monuments and Rituals. By Patrick Thomas Hajovsky. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. Pp. vii + 194. \$45.00 paperback. ISBN: 9781477307243.

Time and the Ancestors: Aztec and Mixtec Ritual Art. By Maarten Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez. Leiden: Brill, 2017. Pp. ix + 615. \$182.54 hardcover. ISBN: 9789004340510.

En busca del alma nacional: La arqueología y la construcción del origen de la historia nacional en México (1867–1942). By Haydeé López Hernández. Ciudad de México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2018. Pp. 389. \$44.99. paperback. ISBN: 9786075391120.

The Value of Things: Prehistoric to Contemporary Commodities in the Maya Region. Edited by Jennifer P. Mathews and Thomas H. Guderjan. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017. Pp. iii + 309. \$65.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780816533527.

In the Lands of Fire and Sun: Resistance and Accommodation in the Huichol Sierra, 1723–1930. By Michele McArdle Stephens. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. Pp. ix + 177. \$50.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780803288584.

Género, ciencia y política: Voces, vidas y miradas de la arqueología mexicana. By Apen Ruiz Martínez. Ciudad de México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2016. Pp. 251. Paperback. ISBN: 9786074847970.

The Fifteenth Month: Aztec History in the Rituals of Panquetzaliztli. By John F. Schwaller. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. Pp. ix + 264. \$39.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780806162768.

Arriving to what is now Mexico, Nahua migrants from the north found evidence of ancient habitation and interpreted the evidence according to their own worldviews. The ancient city of Teotihuacan became a place of creation. Elsewhere, residents of the

lowland Maya region lived among the ruins of older cities, resignifying the abandoned structures in their environs. The Ñuu Dzuai (Mixtecs) theorized about the catastrophes that must have led to the ruin of past settlements.¹ Indigenous cultures of Mesoamerica articulated their understandings of the ancient past in different ways, from ritual practice in accordance with cyclical views of time to constructing political histories to legitimize rulership and empire. Centuries later, disciplines like archaeology reconstruct both these Mesoamerican pasts and the histories of their own disciplines. The eclectic set of volumes I review here advance novel interpretations of specific problems in Mesoamerican history (including archaeology and ethnohistory) while exploring the broader political and intellectual conditions of knowledge production in Mexican archaeology. Read together, these works point to possibilities for scholarship engaged with the Indigenous communities that claim the pre-Hispanic past as their cultural heritage.

The volumes reviewed here build on long-standing critical engagement with ethnohistorical sources to advance understandings of Mesoamerican pasts (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, Schwaller, and Hajovsky) while enriching our appreciation of the diverse ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies that undergird what became “archaeology” (Bauer). In Mexico, this archaeology, as institutionalized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, built on—and silenced—colonial and Indigenous uses of the past in response to national and international developments (López Hernández, Ruiz Martínez). These interpretations open the way for novel interdisciplinary dialogues, with the potential to further incorporate Indigenous perspectives through the in-depth study of specific regions (McArdle Stephens) and material culture over time (Mathews and Guderjan).

These questions are far from new. In 1979, Ignacio Bernal published his landmark *Historia de la arqueología en México* (published in translation as *A History of Mexican Archaeology: The Vanished Civilizations of Middle America*).² The book remains the most chronologically complete (sixteenth century to ca. 1950) account of what became Mexican archaeology, a reference for archaeology courses in Mexico and world histories of the discipline alike.³ Bernal’s key contribution was a vision of Mexican archaeology as a scientific discipline based in stratigraphic excavation and the interpretation of material culture. This discipline was set apart from its antiquarian predecessors, differentiated from more quotidian uses of the past, and professionalized in the context of the Mexican Revolution.⁴ The author’s stated objective illustrates his historiographic approach: “to pass in review the sequence of accretions to the store of knowledge . . . giving some time to those errors which often delay this process.”⁵ This internalist approach—which holds that science develops according to discoveries, debates, and intellectual movements inside the

¹ See, for example, Elizabeth H. Boone, “Venerable Place of Beginnings: The Aztec Understanding of Teotihuacan,” in *Mesoamerica’s Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Aztecs*, ed. David Carrasco, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000), 371–396; Carrasco, Jones, and Sessions, *Mesoamerica’s Classic Heritage*; Travis W. Stanton and Aline Magnoni, eds., *Ruins of the Past: The Use and Perception of Abandoned Structures in the Maya Lowlands* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008); Byron Hamann, “The Social Life of Pre-Sunrise Things: Indigenous Mesoamerican Archaeology,” *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 3 (2002): 351–382; Byron Ellsworth Hamann, “Heirlooms and Ruins: High Culture, Mesoamerican Civilization, and the Postclassic Oaxacan Tradition,” in *After Monte Albán: Transformation and Negotiation in Oaxaca, Mexico*, ed. Jeffrey P. Blomster (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008), 119–167.

² Ignacio Bernal, *Historia de la arqueología en México* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1979); Ignacio Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology: The Vanished Civilizations of Middle America* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980).

³ Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 276–278, 553; Margarita Díaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴ Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, 160–188.

⁵ Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, 12.

discipline—is useful for archaeologists seeking to understand changing interpretations of the pre-Hispanic past.⁶

Bernal's endpoint, state-sponsored archaeology based on excavation in the field rather than research in the archives, is a product of the revolutionary generation. As Haydeé López Hernández has observed, this purported break with the past relegated the discipline's diverse epistemologies, theories, and methodologies to antecedents or mistakes.⁷ At the same time, Bernal's perspective leaves the place of contemporary Indigenous communities undefined. Like other revolutionary intellectuals of his generation, Bernal saw archaeology as a way of addressing historical discrimination against Indigenous peoples of the past.⁸ Yet, as Christina Bueno and others have shown, Mexican archaeology worked together with broader Porfirian (1876–1911) efforts to eradicate Indigenous cultures quite comfortably.⁹ Other scholarship has explored how the assimilationist logic of *indigenismo*, once considered a way of valorizing Indigenous cultures, depended on a racist logic of essential Indigenous deficiency.¹⁰ In the context of archaeology after the Revolution, the state used the discipline to illustrate the glories of the pre-Hispanic past—and, in so doing, appropriated the pre-Hispanic past for national history.¹¹ What is needed, then, is scholarship that more fully considers Indigenous views of both the pre-Hispanic past and this history of archaeology. Reading the eight works reviewed here with Bernal's *History* provides interdisciplinary dialogues for further historiographical development in the history of Mexican archaeology and Mesoamerican history more broadly: approaches focused on regional and material culture provide novel ways of emphasizing Indigenous perspectives.

Bernal's *History* acknowledges “faint indications that the Indians felt an interest in the objects surviving from their past” but begins with colonial scholars debating the peopling of the Americas.¹² To be fair, much empirical research on pre-Hispanic uses of the past was still decades away. Furthermore, Mesoamerican conceptions of time do not easily fit with the Western ideas of time common to Bernal's work and others. Rather than a linear, progressive movement of history that enables a gradual accumulation of knowledge, Mesoamerican communities emphasized the cyclical nature of time. Time was measured by interlocking calendar cycles, in the context of a broader historical movement involving the periodic destruction and re-creation of the world.

The contrast between Western and Mesoamerican time grounds Maarten Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez's *Time and the Ancestors: Aztec and Mixtec Ritual Art*, which

⁶ On internalism, see Steven Shapin, “Discipline and Bounding: The History and Sociology of Science as Seen through the Externalism-Internalism Debate,” *History of Science* 30, no. 4 (1992): 333–369.

⁷ Haydeé López Hernández, “Ruptura y tradición en las historias de la arqueología, Parte I; Ciencia universal y revolucionaria,” *Saberes: Revista de Historia de las Ciencias y las Humanidades* 1, no. 4 (2018): 96–114.

⁸ Ignacio Bernal, “The Effect of Settlement Pattern Studies on the Archaeology of Central Mexico,” in *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns: Essays in Honor of Gordon R. Willey*, ed. Evon Z. Vogt and Richard M. Leventhal (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 1983), 398.

⁹ Christina Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins: Archaeology, History, and the Making of Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); see also Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810–1930* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ David A. Brading, “Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 75–89; Emiko Saldívar, “‘It’s Not Race, It’s Culture’: Untangling Racial Politics in Mexico,” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2014): 89–108; Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, “Nosotros sin México: Naciones indígenas y autonomía,” in *El futuro es hoy: Ideas radicales para México*, ed. Humberto Beck and Rafael Lemus (Ciudad de México: Biblioteca Nueva, 2018).

¹¹ Federico Navarrete, “Ruinas y Estado: Arqueología de una simbiosis mexicana,” in *Pueblos indígenas y arqueología en América Latina*, ed. Cristóbal Gnecco and Patricia Ayala Rocabado (Bogotá: Fundación de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Nacionales, Banco de la República/CESO, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de los Andes, 2009), 65–82; Luis Vázquez León, *El Leviatán arqueológico: Antropología de una tradición científica en México* (Mexico City: CIESAS, 2003).

¹² Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, 18.

advances a novel synthetic interpretation of Monte Albán's Tomb 7 and the famed calendrical New Fire ritual. Excavated in 1932, Tomb 7 remains one of the richest Mesoamerican burials ever documented. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez's interpretation stems from a self-described decolonizing approach that emphasizes Mesoamerican sources and contexts, including living traditions, over the standard Spanish early-colonial sources. Across four chapters—from the archaeology of Tomb 7 to the iconography of the Ñuu Dzuai (Mixtec) codices—Jansen and Pérez Jiménez interpret the tomb as a site for Postclassic-era ancestor veneration and consultation. The authors' analysis links Tomb 7 to political movements in the foundation of Ñuu Dzuai and Beni Zaa (Zapotec) dynasties and the sacred landscape of Monte Albán (identified as a Temple of Jewels in ethnohistorical sources). The authors argue for the practice of New Fire rituals at the Temple of Jewels, and the following three chapters expand the analysis to focus on these calendar cycle-ending rituals and their iconographic representations. The authors focus especially on the Selden Roll and the Codex Borgia, retitled Roll of the New Fire and Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (in a decolonizing move, all such codices have been retitled and bear their previous names in parentheses). Jansen and Pérez Jiménez interpret the New Fire ceremonies as cyclical commemorations and reenactment of ruling lineage foundations—in this case, of the conquering Toltec Coixtlahuaca dynasty of the Early Postclassic, whose descendants were ritually legitimized in Tollan Chololan (modern Cholula) under the semi-legendary Nacxitl Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl.

The authors depict Mesoamerican pasts as the products of older histories, rejuvenated through Indigenous practices and representations and developed according to specific Indigenous worldviews. The substantial, detailed volume is an important contribution to scholarly understandings of Mexica and Ñuu Dzuai iconography. In other work, Pérez Jiménez and Jansen's collaborators have taken up the work of diversifying and representing the perspectives from which the analysis draws, and weaving ongoing research into Indigenous understandings of cultural heritage into the picture.¹³ This strikes me as an important avenue for research, a point to which I will return shortly.

Cyclical notions of time notwithstanding, the Mexica of Tenochtitlan were adept at rewriting historical narratives in service of their imperial objectives. Ruler Itzcoatl was famously said to have burned Mexica codices to reforge Mexica history.¹⁴ As John F. Schwaller's *The Fifteenth Month: Aztec History in the Rituals of Panquetzaliztli* demonstrates, Mexica reinventions of the past occurred in deeply rooted ritual and statecraft alike. Schwaller's key contribution is a comprehensive, history- and geography-sensitive interpretation of the month of Panquetzaliztli (the Raising of Banners). In this analysis, a month originally dedicated to Tezcatlipoca among the Nahua communities of the Central Basin became, through Mexica innovation, an elaborate series of rituals related to war and harvest, involving a running ritual called the Swiftmess of Huitzilopochtli and the extensive participation of Tenochtitlan's merchant class. Emphasizing a critical reading of diverse early colonial sources—Bernardino de Sahagún, Diego Durán, Motolinía, and others—Schwaller skillfully alternates between different geographic and evidentiary sites for understanding Panquetzaliztli. The author begins outside Tenochtitlan to discuss the major rituals of the month, before moving to a synthetic narrative of the same in Tenochtitlan and the Swiftmess of Huitzilopochtli ritual. Schwaller then broadens the analysis to consider pictographic sources, from which he argues that “in its most basic form, Panquetzaliztli served as a monthlong celebration of war” (133). The assertion provokes

¹³ See, for instance, Liana I. Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt, “Integrating Oral Traditions and Archaeological Practice: The Case of San Miguel El Grande,” in *Bridging the Gaps: Integrating Archaeology and History in Oaxaca*, ed. Danny Zborover and Peter Kroefges (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015), 263–277.

¹⁴ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, vol. 10 (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1982), 191.

the question of Panquetzaliztli before the arrival of the Mexica, and Schwaller goes back in time to consider the elevation of Huitzilopochtli as Mexica patron deity and changes in how the month was celebrated.

While more general interpretations focus on Panquetzaliztli's culminating ritual, the Swiftness of Huitzilopochtli, *The Fifteenth Month* is notable for its assessments of Mexica ritual with reference to Aztec statecraft and broader Nahua culture and society, as well as the author's emphasis on change over time; Schwaller's detailed analysis demonstrates the benefit of a narrow focus. This fact, combined with a straightforward, descriptive writing style and a well-scaffolded analysis, makes this volume especially approachable. I might have appreciated an analytical conclusion chapter to draw the book into a broader scholarly context of Mesoamerican studies, but *The Fifteenth Month* remains a welcome contribution to the politics of time and ritual in Postclassic Mesoamerica.

Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, as well as Schwaller, demonstrate the importance of considering politics and ritual in the context of broader Mesoamerican worldviews. This focus narrows considerably in Patrick Thomas Hajovsky's *On the Lips of Others: Moteuczoma's Fame in Aztec Monuments and Rituals*, which studies depictions of the Mexica's most infamous ruler and the nature of fame in the Aztec world. In contrast with the superstitious, vacillating Montezuma of colonial fame, Hajovsky's Moteuczoma is an innovative, dynamic ruler who made himself present in speech and script, tying his person and office to broader Mesoamerican ideas of cyclical time, religious ritual, and political authority.

To develop this novel interpretation, Hajovsky evaluates the eight surviving precolonial depictions of Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin with reference to Nahua concepts like that of lipness (*tenyotl*): "This sense of fame, expressed here as a duality of Aztec visual and oral cultures, ties several indigenous notions of kingship to the ritualized appearances and stone representations of Moteuczoma" (1). Hajovsky's careful analysis demonstrates how Moteuczoma linked himself with an ancient, noble Toltec lineage, via his namesake Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina. Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin condensed specific elements of rulership and speech in his name glyph to evoke a sensory experience from the viewer. He further transformed representation by engaging broader oral (speech, song, ritual, prayer) and visual (consumption of ritual and mercantile goods) cultures than had previous Aztec rulers. In this context, Hajovsky evaluates well-known Aztec public monuments (the Calendar Stone) and reconstructs lesser-known depictions like the Chapultepec Portrait. Like Schwaller and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, Hajovsky is careful and critical with the ethnohistorical sources. Tracing the colonial trajectory of Moteuczoma's reputation would require another book, but I would have been curious for more detail on how early modern Spanish notions of personhood and fame came to affect later depictions of Moteuczoma.

Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, Schwaller, and Hajovsky illustrate the richness of the context for Bernal's "faint indications."¹⁵ For disciplinary history, these works illustrate the interpretative losses incurred by legitimizing a history of Mexican archaeology that begins with the colonial period. Emphasizing the division between Mesoamerican uses of the past and colonial antiquarianism renders the dynamics of Mesoamerican thought and practice irrelevant to the history of archaeology. As Óscar Moro Abadía has argued, the history of archaeology itself functions as a colonial discourse, to the extent that it ignores factors "external" to the science—like Indigenous perspectives.¹⁶ In this vein, histories of archaeology might begin with substantive engagements with Mesoamerican uses of the past and the contemporary Indigenous communities who advocate for rights to recognition, autonomy, and cultural heritage.

¹⁵ Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, 18.

¹⁶ Oscar Moro Abadía, "The History of Archaeology as a 'Colonial Discourse,'" *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 16, no. 2 (2006): 4–17.

Beginning with the colonial period likewise downplays the late-medieval influences on the colonial missionaries, chroniclers, and antiquaries who wrote what became standard ethnohistorical sources. Ralph Bauer's *The Alchemy of Conquest: Science, Religion, and the Secrets of the New World* emphasizes the influence of alchemical ideas on European conceptions of the New World. Bauer advances a new interpretation of the "discovery" by arguing that conquest "*legitimated* the modern idea of [scientific] discovery by underwriting it with a salvific and even millenarian reason that forged an unprecedented synthesis of science, religion, and state power" (11). To do so, Bauer evaluates the authentic and apocryphal works associated with a dizzying array of late medieval and early modern thinkers, from Ramón Llull to Walter Raleigh. Of the book's four parts (three chapters each, bookended by an introduction and a coda), I expect the middle two will be of most interest to Latin Americanists.

Part 1 explores alchemy's foundational role in legitimizing investigation into the occult, previously the domain of the divine alone, by focusing on the relationships between diverse streams of Aristotelian thinking and contemporary theology. Part 2 moves the discussion to the New World, elucidating the relationships between alchemy, sixteenth-century missionary efforts, and research into the Indigenous cultures of the Americas. Well-known colonial processes of landscape transformation and knowledge production take on new valences here. Bauer emphasizes the (pseudo-)Llullian alchemical roots of *reducción* and the missionary "ethno-demonology" studies of Sahagún and others: "The Franciscans saw Native spirituality not as an undifferentiated matter that had to be formed; rather, they saw it as its own *substantial form* that had to be *reduced* to its *prima materia* in order to be *re-formed*" (225). These reflections on alchemy and materialism ground part 3, on the origins of discovery in science. Bauer argues that early colonial travelogues employed a "cannibal ventriloquism" (278) that enabled discussion of pagan theories of matter—especially the atomism of Lucretius—"not as a classically Epicurean (pagan) enjoyment of nature but as a Christian, penitential, and alchemical *conquest* of nature in the natural philosophy of the so-called Scientific Revolution" (269). This analysis enables novel readings of well-known events and topics. For example, Bauer argues that Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's infamous justification of Spanish treatment of Indigenous peoples at the Valladolid debate of 1550–1551 derives from alchemical ideas about the spontaneous generation of human life (and the demonic nature thereof). Part 4 discusses the White Legend of Protestant colonialism, its debts to alchemy and to Spanish ethno-demonology, and its influence on Francis Bacon's "hermeneutics of discovery in terms of a penetration of natural secrets in order to extend man's dominion over nature" (468).

Bernal and his contemporaries were not wrong to suggest the importance of ethnohistory to Mexican archaeology.¹⁷ However, Bauer's analysis of Sahagún, Motolinía, José de Acosta, and others recontextualizes these authors in terms of late medieval history rather than the progressive accumulation of knowledge about precolonial Mesoamerica.¹⁸ From Bauer's innovative braiding of the histories and historiographies of science and religion, the transitions between the late medieval and early modern become ever more multifaceted—depending on how one follows alchemical traditions, the Reformation, or the Spanish and English colonial ventures in the Americas. For archaeologists and ethnohistorians, especially, Bauer's work, grounded in late medieval science and religion, provides ample material for critical readings of standard sources. A prospective reader would do well to review the basics of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy before diving into this challenging and wide-ranging book.

¹⁷ See, for example, José L. Lorenzo, "Archaeology South of the Rio Grande," *World Archaeology* 13, no. 2 (1981): 190–208.

¹⁸ Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, 35.

The logic of entangling distinct historiographic periods through in-depth analyses of specific intellectual trends proves productive for histories of archaeology. Haydeé López Hernández's *En busca del alma nacional: La arqueología y la construcción del origen de la historia nacional en México (1867-1942)* charts the development of Mexican archaeology from the 1867 publication of the colossal Cabeza de Hueyapan to the 1942 Segunda Mesa Redonda of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología. In contrast to triumphant accounts of discovery or critical accounts of nationalist appropriation, López Hernández's careful interpretation focuses on how the material culture now called "Olmec" went from evidence of transatlantic contact in debates around the origins of New World Indigenous populations, to evidence for a singular "mother culture" (*cultura madre*) and the origins of Mexican civilization.

In three substantial chapters (plus a preamble, conclusion, and epilogue), López Hernández follows four lines of analysis: the vexed question of origins; the epistemologies and methodologies for studying the pre-Hispanic past; the generations of scholars and institutions doing so; and changes in nationalist ideology. In 1867, following liberal efforts to reconstruct the Mexican state, intellectuals sought to establish American antiquity (on par with the classical heritage claimed by European states) and Mexican civilization (vis-à-vis the United States and its growing interest in the Maya region). Scholars such as Ramón Melgar, Ramón Mena, Alfredo Chavero, Marshall Saville, and George Kunz drew on textual and iconographic evidence, taking comparative approaches to debate the transatlantic origins of New World civilization in specialized publications and sharing results in synthetic histories like *México a través de los siglos*.¹⁹ López Hernández's serious and thorough reconstruction of this period is an important contribution and a welcome alternative to internalist approaches that regard theories of precolonial transatlantic contact as error or pseudoscience.²⁰

In the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the question of origins became the domain of field-based archaeology. Figures like Manuel Gamio and Alfonso Caso worked to institutionalize archaeology through scholarly bodies like the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología and government agencies like the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. As befit the new political context, debates over transatlantic origins gave way to issues of cultural evolution, the origins of civilization (singular or multiple?), and the spatiotemporal relationships between pre-Hispanic cultures. López Hernández expertly moves between intellectual debates and institutional contexts, no small task in discussing the complexities of state building after the Revolution. As revolutionary factionalism gave way to the single-party state, a more unified discourse became necessary. The celebrated consensus on the Tollan problem—the identification of the archetypal, civilized Tollan of the ethnohistorical sources with the archaeological site of Tula—disqualified Teotihuacan as the origin of civilization described in the sources, and left the place of the older Maya cities undefined. It became necessary to "locate an origin that could be linked to both the Highlands and the Maya region, but older than the known urban centers . . . to anchor national history in true 'Mexican origins'" (295). In this context, López Hernández reconstructs the Gulf Coast expeditions of Frans Blom, Matthew Stirling, Philip Drucker, and Miguel Covarrubias as well as the debates that led to the site of La Venta becoming Olmec, and the Olmec becoming the *cultura madre* in turn. Fieldwork at Tres Zapotes demonstrated the antiquity of the culture; the uniqueness of the Olmec style definitively excluded transatlantic contacts; and the relationships between

¹⁹ Vicente Riva Palacio, ed., *México a través de los siglos: Historia general y completa del desenvolvimiento social, político, religioso, militar, artístico, científico y literario de México desde la antigüedad más remota hasta la época actual* (Mexico City: Ballescá y Compañía, Editores, 1887).

²⁰ Bernal, for instance, considered debates on these topics as examples of "the mania for explaining the origins of American man and his culture by excursions into fantasy." Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, 34.

Olmec iconography and other contenders for the mother culture could be reckoned as ones of descent. This set of relationships, López Hernández argues, would later sustain the concept of Mesoamerica. The epilogue adroitly reflects on the multivocality and legacy of these “Olmec” materials.

We might further question the empirical and interpretative losses resulting from the emphasis on a *cultura madre*. What does this emphasis mean for today’s Indigenous communities, beyond the nationalist appropriation of the pre-Hispanic past? What does the constitutive disqualification of African origins mean in a context where contemporary Afro-Mexicans advocate for recognition and rights? What might a decolonizing approach look like in the historiography of archaeology? López Hernández raises these and other important questions in this landmark work.

Like López Hernández, Apen Ruiz Martínez rethinks Bernal’s internalism in favor of practices, institutions, and funding, in *Género, ciencia y política: Voces, vidas y miradas de la arqueología mexicana*. Whereas *En busca del alma nacional* involves a close engagement with intellectual history, the key contribution of *Género, ciencia y política* is a transnational and gendered approach to disciplinary history. Ruiz Martínez’s analysis demonstrates that a progressive historiographic approach occludes a series of complex, gendered conflicts that should make us question both the boundaries between science and its contexts and the revolutionary state’s negation of the Porfiriato’s cultural politics.

Ruiz’s approachable, reflexive study is a case-by-case analysis of interactions between foreigners and nationals and the acceptance or rejection of certain voices in the archaeological community during the Porfiriato and after the Revolution. The author situates the work in the venerable historiographies of archaeology and nationalism and in gender archaeology, exploring how Mexico was rendered a “virgin territory” (34) subject to predation by foreigners, and in need of a masculine protector: state archaeology. Ruiz Martínez evaluates the American Museum of Natural History–funded expeditions of Carl Lumholtz (1894–1897) and Marshall Saville’s Loubat Expedition (1897–1901) to argue that the constitutive separation of past and present in archaeology was produced in practice rather than in discourse alone. The author follows this argument by discussing Zelia Nuttall and Isabel Ramírez in the International School of American Archeology and Ethnology and its scientific communities. Both women participated in this community in ways configured by their distinct national origins, social positions, and networks. Nuttall, the subject of one chapter, is an “outsider within” (134) the still-professionalizing discipline. Ruiz convincingly argues that a fuller accounting of women in archaeology must consider women’s spaces, like Nuttall’s famed Casa Alvarado in Coyoacán. The author’s grounding in Nuttall’s correspondence and publications allows for a compelling assessment of the scholar’s conflict with state archaeologist Leopoldo Batres in the subsequent chapter. Nuttall’s excavations on the Isla de Sacrificios attracted the ire of the volatile Batres, and the publicity of the dispute makes a personality conflict seem the obvious cause. But, as Ruiz Martínez shows, the conflict was shaped around ideas of statist, masculine patrimonialism and the proper place of female researchers: not in the field, penetrating the nation’s subsoil. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of understanding disciplinary professionalization in the context of changing ideas of the nation and gender roles.

In Ruiz Martínez’s analysis, the Lumholtz Expedition—focused largely on ethnographic fieldwork and objects—illustrates how anthropology, in contrast to archaeology, was “neglected, undervalued, and kept at the margins of the concept of national heritage” (70). For Michele McArdle Stephens, in her book *In the Lands of Fire and Sun: Resistance and Accommodation in the Huichol Sierra, 1723–1930*, the Lumholtz Expedition provides evidence of the willingness of Wixárika (Huichol, in McArdle Stephens’s source base) communities to engage foreign researchers on the Wixárika’s own terms, and to their own ends. This contrast demonstrates another shortcoming of Bernal’s *History*: with scholars as the

protagonists, Indigenous participation in the history of archaeology is necessarily limited to disciplinary concerns. As Mary Leighton's ethnographic research shows, we cannot assume that Indigenous peoples and archaeologists engage with the past—or the discipline—for the same reasons.²¹

In the Lands of Fire and Sun's interpretation focuses on shared Wixárika cultural practices (especially peyote pilgrimages) and a strong tradition of autonomy, leaving communities “bound politically to no one but their gods” (xxi). With admirable concision, McArdle Stephens adopts a chronological approach to map Wixárika efforts to resist and appropriate external pressures to defend land and religion. By the beginning of Spanish colonization of Wixárika lands in 1722, communities understood the outsiders' threat and leveraged the Spanish legal system to their advantage. The expansion of haciendas during the national period motivated engagement with the Mexican state and provoked Wixárika responses, though without overarching political cohesion or ethnic identification. Traditional religion (especially the use of peyote) concerned nineteenth-century Franciscans, but the missionaries faced numerous geographical and political challenges in their efforts. Later liberal efforts stymied the unwelcome Franciscan efforts but commercialized communal lands as never before, leading to uneven Wixárika participation in events like the Lozada Rebellion (1857–1873). Foreign scholars like Lumholtz and other ethnographers provided more sympathetic portraits of the Wixárika than had previously been the case and, McArdle Stephens argues, enabled the Indigenous communities to engage foreign intrusions for their own ends. In keeping with their long tradition of political autonomy, the Wixárika engaged revolutionary and Cristero factions on their own terms and in accordance with local politics and history. A brief conclusion brings the history up to the present, emphasizing the territorial threats of mining and the drug trade, and Wixárika unity vis-à-vis religion and sacred landscape.

McArdle Stephens admirably avoids reducing Wixárika politics to expressions of ethno-linguistic unity. This interpretation is a welcome addition to a growing historiography that takes these distinctions seriously, especially given the essentialism of the “Indigenous” label and contemporary efforts to advocate for communal autonomy.²² Yet, as the author acknowledges, Wixárika voices are difficult to find in her source base. There are compelling hints of colonial-era memories of precolonial autonomy, and occasional references to older “idols” that recall Mesoamerican ideas of time and history (à la Pérez Jiménez and Jansen). In this context, McArdle Stephens's focus on the tension between political autonomy and religious cohesion calls into question the role of material culture for the Wixárika, as well as the contemporary uses of Wixárika history.

The role of material culture, its ability to constrain interpretation (as material) and afford dynamic meanings across time and space (as culture) is key for contributors to *The Value of Things: Prehistoric to Contemporary Commodities in the Maya Region*, edited by Jennifer P. Mathews and Thomas H. Guderjan. The volume's theoretical contribution lies in the application of theories of value—David Graeber, Arjun Appadurai, and Igor Kopytoff are key interlocutors—to Maya commodities produced since the beginnings of settled life: jade, agricultural commodities, chert, salt, honey, cacao, henequen, rum, land, ceramics, and tourist market handicrafts. Most of the studies are archaeological, focusing especially on production. The volume's narrow geographical and conceptual focus, combined with the time span covered, gives *The Value of Things* an uncommon degree of coherence.

²¹ Mary Leighton, “Indigenous Archaeological Field Technicians at Tiwanaku, Bolivia: A Hybrid Form of Scientific Labor,” *American Anthropologist* 118, no. 4 (2016): 742–754.

²² Compare, for instance, Jake Frederick, “A Fractured Pochgui: Local Factionalism in Eighteenth-Century Papantla,” *Ethnohistory* 58, no. 4 (2011): 560–583; Justyna Olko, “Indigenous Agency, Historians' Agendas, and Imagination in History Writing,” *Latin American Research Review* 56, no. 2 (2021): 500–511; Aguilar Gil, “Nosotros sin México.”

However, I would have liked to see more engagement with two particular theoretical strengths of archaeology: materiality and time. Concepts like object itineraries take advantage of the ways material things necessarily exceed human life spans; things work according to their own temporalities.²³ Mary Katherine Scott's contribution to *The Value of Things* highlights this point. Focusing on the producers of handicrafts (*artesanías*) in Yucatán, Scott argues that producers strategically leverage precolonial forms to appeal to tourists expecting "authentic Maya art." The resulting objects are not derivations but reinterpretations and homages. *Artesanías* thus evoke the precolonial past, modern craft-promotion efforts, and the agency of producers as artists and cultural brokers.

By implication, taking the mutability of things across time and space (materiality writ large) as a starting point offers a novel perspective on relationships between archaeology, state institutions, and diverse Indigenous communities.²⁴ For example, tracking an object like the 9-Xi Vase, a decorated Teotihuacan vessel reused as a Mexica funerary urn, would not simply be a discovery that contributes to the store of scholarly knowledge.²⁵ Tracing the itinerary of such an object would require the admission of the Mexica (and other precolonial cultures) as scholars of the past in their own right; a reconstruction of the intellectual debates surrounding inscribed calendar glyphs; and the political and social context for the Templo Mayor excavations, to name a few venues of analysis.

Decades ago, Bernal's *Historia* compiled an immense body of evidence and put it into an internalist, teleological framework that made knowledge production a matter of increasing empirical exactitude over time, reaching an apex with the revolutionary generation. The works collected here point another way forward. The studies of Mesoamerican history illustrate the richness of Mesoamerican uses of the past. They further demonstrate the value of ethnohistorical approaches and critical engagement with colonial and late medieval sources, redressing the past negligence of Indigenous sources. For their part, the histories of Mexican archaeology elucidate the broad conditions of knowledge production in the discipline, while pointing to its exclusions. At the intersection of these lines of research, regional and material culture-focused approaches provide novel ways of addressing these exclusions.²⁶ Illuminating Indigenous perspectives on the precolonial past, and on disciplinary history, thus remains an ongoing task.

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²³ Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, "Making Things out of Objects That Move," in *Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice*, ed. Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2015), 3–19.

²⁴ On this point, see Christina Bueno, "The Allure of Antiquity: Archaeology and Museums in the Americas," *Latin American Research Review* 56, no. 1 (2021): 242–250; this point is further developed in another recent volume: Miruna Achim, Susan Deans-Smith, and Sandra Rozental, eds., *Museum Matters: Making and Unmaking Mexico's National Collections* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2021).

²⁵ Leonardo López Luján, Hector Neff, and Saburo Sugiyama, "The 9-Xi Vase: A Classic Thin Orange Vessel Found at Tenochtitlan," in Carrasco, Jones, and Sessions, *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage*, 219–249.

²⁶ Lisa Breglia, *Monumental Ambivalence: The Politics of Heritage* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006); Hilary Morgan Leathem, "Manifestations That Matter: A Case of Oaxacan Ruin Possession," *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 34, no. 2 (2019): 92–110.

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