

Book Reviews

there are no images in the book), it is hard to imagine assigning this book – as valuable as it is – if the larger textbook by Barnitz and Frank is also required, since that book is quite expensive.

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Taylor, Sarah R. (2018) *On Being Maya and Getting By: Heritage Politics and Community Development in Yucatán*, University Press of Colorado (Louisville, CO), xvii + 159 pp. £47.70 hbk, £17.57 pbk.

Sustainable development, environmental protection, economic well-being, and social transformation come together in so-called integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs). Since the mid-1980s, ICDPs have been developed and promoted by NGOs and governments as a win-win-win method to improve human well-being, especially of rural or otherwise marginalised populations, through community-based projects that provide economic benefit through careful management of natural resources that helps to preserve biodiversity. ICDPs have evolved through several iterations, and community-based tourism (CBT) is now a common type of ICDP. In this short, readable, and timely book, Sarah Taylor uses an ethnographic study of the two Ek'Balam – one a renowned Mayan archaeological site in the Yucatán, the other the adjacent eponymous village – to illuminate the many benefits and costs, assumptions and contradictions associated with government-funded CBTs. In doing so, she illustrates that CBTs, and by extension, ICDPs, may not be a triple win for everyone concerned.

As an ecologist and statistician who favours quantitative studies and lacks background in anthropology or ethnology, I approached *On Being Maya* with some trepidation. But I was quickly enthralled by Taylor's qualitative analysis refracted through engaging narratives of her seven visits to, and stays with, the 'Ay Mena' family ('a fictive, composite family made up of real actions and words of actual people in the community' (p. 12)) in the village of Ek'Balam. These visits spanned the years from the end of her undergraduate studies at Cal-State Chico (2004) through her dissertation work at SUNY Albany (completed in 2012). The narratives together serve as a metaphor not only for understanding the myriad ways that residents of the contemporary Mayan world both respond to and create global demands for new tourist experiences, but also for illustrating Taylor's intellectual evolution from a self-aware but intellectually naïve first-time viewer of the remarkable Mayan sites of Chichén Itzá and Ek'Balam to a mature anthropologist with a nuanced appreciation of the fabric created by the many interwoven threads of the stakeholders of, and participants in, ICDPs. The seven narratives – one for each visit – are bracketed in each chapter by a short introduction to the key concepts to be addressed and a lengthier discussion of the academic and practical issues raised by that year's experiences.

For me, there were three important conceptual aspects of Taylor's work in *On Being Maya*. First, the idea that the local participants in CBTs are not passively responding to the 'demands' of eco-tourists but rather are co-creators and definers of the tourist experience, and perhaps more importantly, the concept of what it means to 'be Maya', frames the entire book. Although this clearly is not a new concept, Taylor uses it to full advantage as the basic warp supporting the weft of her analysis. The second is her nuanced dissection of 'community' as an artificial construct of well-meaning governments and

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NGOs that has little relationship to the range of positive and negative interactions among individuals, families, and social groups who live in any locality singled out for an ICDP. And third is her detailed consideration of the ‘ecosystem of authenticity’ surrounding the expression of contemporary Mayan culture and its perception both by visitors to La Ruta Maya and by the Maya themselves.

Taylor uses ‘ecosystem of authenticity’ as a metaphor for understanding interactions between the Maya of Ek’Balam and the visitors who come there from throughout the world to learn about and experience Mayan culture. Visitors expect an authentic expression of Mayan culture; the Mexican government in turn designates as Pueblos Mágicos those villages with ‘symbolism, legends, history, important events, day-to-day life – in other words, “magic” in its social and cultural manifestations, *with great opportunities for tourism*’ (p. 122, emphasis added). Criteria for selection include preservation and maintenance of traditional architecture, emblematic buildings, traditional festivals, artisanal crafts, and culinary traditions. In 2012, those residents of Ek’Balam who were still participating in the CBT programme (many dropped out during Taylor’s time there) were excited about becoming a Pueblo Mágico. At present (1 March 2019), the nearby city of Valladolid is a Pueblo Mágico, but Ek’Balam is not (<http://www.pueblosmexico.com/mx/movil/>). One suspects that the Pueblo Mágico accreditors were nonplussed by ‘Doña Goma’, wearing a modern skirt instead of a *terno*, entertaining visitors by grinding store-bought maize in a reconstructed *metate* while her metal grinder was just out of sight behind the refrigerator bought with the proceeds from selling them machine-embroidered *huipiles*. The contradictions laid bare by the modern construction of the *maya verdadero* and the inherent unsustainability of CBTs illustrated by Taylor’s clear-eyed ethnography suggests that the real residents of Ek’Balam are much better off as a Pueblo Real than a Pueblo Mágico.

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Whigham, Thomas L (2017) *The Road to Armageddon: Paraguay versus the Triple Alliance, 1866–70*, University of Calgary Press (Calgary, Al) xxi+ 672 pp. \$49.95 pbk.

The Paraguay War was the longest and bloodiest conflict fought in South America and the title given by Professor Thomas Whigham to his book *The Road to Armageddon* does justice to this reality. This recently retired professor from Georgia University not only uses vast bibliography, but also incorporates historiographic advancements of the last two decades and presents us with unprecedented information from document research in different countries’ archives.

Whigham presents the origins of the war in the unstable political arena of the *Río de la Plata* region in the first half of the 1860s. In that period, there were government changes in Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay, and the imposition in Argentina of a centralized state project by the Buenos Aires elite. Furthermore, between 1863 and 1865 there was a civil war in Uruguay.

The war began in December 1864, with the Paraguayan invasion of a disputed territory in the Brazilian province of Mato Grosso and expanded in April of the following year with the Paraguayan attack to the Argentinian province of Corrientes. On 1 May 1865, the Triple Alliance Treaty was signed in Buenos Aires by the governments of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, stating that the war was against Solano López – the