

collection a useful resource in teaching and research on water, materiality, and environment in anthropology, geography, and related fields.

The edited volume, in short, constitutes a dance with water – moving through a great variety of geographical and hydrological contexts and applying a host of theoretical approaches and analytic concepts, most undefined of which is perhaps water itself. Nevertheless, the malleable, fleeting water, simultaneously empirical material and theoretical tool, plays a role in all chapters and integrates them less by holding them together (as a “framework” would) than by making them adhere to each other (as water would). Franz Krause

**Hyatt, Susan Brin, Boone W. Shear, and Susan Wright** (eds.): *Learning under Neoliberalism. Ethnographies of Governance in Higher Education*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 226 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-595-0. (Higher Education in Critical Perspective: Practices and Policies, 1) Price: \$ 120.00

Most anyone working in an academic setting can attest to the current atmosphere of anxiety in which we are all immersed. It is difficult to determine whether this form of anxiety is new, how long it has been building, and its source. But it seems clear, that some changes are occurring, and, for many, the changes are uninvited and may threaten the future of academia. Susan Brin Hyatt, Boone Shear, and Susan Wright’s edited volume, “Learning under Neoliberalism,” investigates the current state of higher education, arguing that a neoliberal logic now pervading the global economy and political institutions is disrupting academia.

The difficulty with such an argument, as the editors and many of the contributing authors recognize, is that “neoliberalism” is not a readily identifiable concept. The editors deny a conception of neoliberalism as a “coherent, cohesive project” and suggest that the ubiquity of the term “works to conceal as much as it reveals about the world” (5). Nonetheless, each chapter in the volume seems to recognize neoliberalism as a common reference point against which to position negative changes occurring in institutions of higher education across the world. Each chapter investigates a unique ethnographic setting in higher education, but they all identify a number of common factors that characterize these negative changes. These include a focus on quantification and measurement of achievement, increased reliance on market models in higher education administration and teaching, a rise in competition among university departments and faculty, increased economic autonomy of higher education institutions along with a simultaneous increase in regulation, and a move towards the internationalization of universities. The editors summarize these changes as “discourses and rationalities associated with neoliberal governance” (6), arguing that they are ultimately constraining and reconfiguring how scholars and teachers must do their work.

One of the valuable contributions of the volume is that it illustrates the unique and significant role ethnographic research can play in understanding global changes that

are underway, especially given neoliberalism’s potential ubiquity and the lack of clarity surrounding the term. The ethnographic approach allows each author to start with on-the-ground details of a situation in higher education and build from such details a picture of macro-processes that are informing that situation, rather than attempting to apply neoliberalism as a top-down, self-evident operating force. Each contributor to the volume uses ethnographic methods to help elucidate “how academic practices, working conditions and university objectives are structured through changing conditions that can be linked to dominant class interests” (4).

A number of the chapters describe changes in U.S. higher education, including Susan Brin Hyatt’s chapter on the development of a Philadelphia university as a real estate investor and the impact of this new role on university and community members, Vincent Lyon-Callo’s account of how middle-class Michigan residents reinforced market-driven educational reforms and the inequalities perpetuated by such changes, Boone W. Shear and Angelina I. Zontine’s study of “university corporatization” at UMass, and Dana-Ain Davis’ discussion of the cultivation of an atmosphere of fear for scholars at a New York public college. Contributions to the volume also include international perspectives, as in Cris Shore’s chapter on New Zealand as one of the first “neoliberal experiments” in higher education, John Clarke’s detailing of the modernization of higher education in the U.K. through an increase in managerial strategies, and Susan Wright and Jakob Williams Ørberg’s discussion of changes in Danish higher education promoted by the government’s push for so-called “university freedom.”

Though the chapters are diverse in scope, they collectively provide some important takeaways in regards to how to move forward amidst these changes in higher education. For one, most if not all of the contributors emphasize the need for active scholarship in order to better understand and potentially work against any unwanted changes. Lyon-Callo, for instance, stresses that students should go beyond “simply documenting inequalities” (98) and collaborate with community members to come up with strategies of resistance. I would add that working in collaboration with university staff and administrators is equally important. Shear and Zontine argue that “conventional and disengaged academic work” (117) is in fact promoted by university bureaucracy. This kind of scholarship reinforces the very forces academics wish to combat, thus underscoring the need for “action research” (3) that can incite real change.

In addition, the chapters in “Learning under Neoliberalism” reveal the ways in which certain types of inequality are amplified by current changes in academia. Lyon-Callo, for example, describes that the drive to treat students as individual consumers simply assures that already privileged students receive the highest value education. As a result, these students are set up to excel in the global marketplace, while underprivileged students are left without resources and thus remain vulnerable to economic instability (80). Davis specifically addresses the racism inherent in neoliberal reforms, as their promo-

tion of supposed colorblindness and meritocratic practices conceals discriminatory practices and works against policies such as affirmative action that could begin to level the playing field for many students at a disadvantage.

In all, this volume provides an expansive, in-depth exploration of the current state of higher education and how changes are being brought upon it by global political and economic forces. It would be a valuable read for anyone working in higher education, as well as those who have or will have students moving through the system. The only shortcoming is that, especially given its ethnographic focus, the volume could include more diverse perspectives within academia, including those from administrators and staff. This would make its arguments that more effective and open its readership up to a wider base.

Robin Conley Riner

**Iannone, Gyles, Brett A. Houk, and Sonja A. Schwake** (eds.): *Ritual, Violence, and the Fall of the Classic Maya Kings*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016. 361 pp. ISBN 978-0-8130-6275-4. Price: \$ 89.98

Explanations for the collapse of ancient states often involve, in whole or in part, the “scapegoat king” model. The model originally appeared in “The Golden Bough,” an often-republished 1890 volume by Sir James George Frazer. It involves two different, complementary themes. The first is that kings are embodiments of their kingdoms; the physical body of the king is a reflection of the strength, will, and well-being of the realm. The second is that kings are special, unique individuals with extraordinary powers that enable them to carry the moral transgressions and impurities of their subjects. Both themes require an exceptional relationship with supernatural forces as well as the idea that the king is the supreme benefactor, responsible for the prosperity and fecundity of the kingdom. In this model, the king is at fault for a kingdom in decline. And if the kingdom collapses, the king is treated as a “scapegoat,” removed from power using prescribed ritual practices or violence.

“Ritual, Violence, and the Fall of the Classic Maya Kings” investigates the ability of this model to explain the Maya collapse in the ninth century. Bringing together a variety of scholars working throughout the Maya lowlands, the volume uses several case studies to explore the collapse and to assess whether the “scapegoat” model applies at individual sites. The book is organized into twelve chapters, including two introductory chapters and a synthesis at the end. Most of the articles can be characterized as either theoretical in nature or as portraits of specific sites and events in the Maya collapse. Chapter 1, by Gyles Iannone, Brett A. Houk, and Sonja A. Schwake, sets the tone for the volume by describing the “scapegoat king” model as well as its major problems. That being said, however, the authors argue that testing this model against specific cases from the Maya area is necessary, as all too often the “scapegoat model” is accepted uncritically. In chapter 2, Gyles Iannone continues this line of thinking, providing not only an overview of the model but also a critical assessment. Iannone argues that a better un-

derstanding of the “scapegoat model” can help to explain what actually happened to the Maya in the first few decades of the 9th century.

Chapter 3, by Eleanor Harrison-Buck, explores the widespread mutilation of royal monuments during the collapse. Rather than attributing the mutilation to “scapegoating” per se, Harrison-Buck argues that many of the various termination and destruction events were the result of Chontal-Itza Maya groups moving into the southern Maya area. Much more research will be needed to test the validity of this point, but Harrison-Buck (re)visits an interesting line of investigation here.

Chapters 4 through 7 likewise deal with warfare, albeit on a regional – and not foreign – level. In chapter 4, Takeshi Inomata explores the collapse at Aguateca. He suggests that the “scapegoat king” model, while useful, needs to be evaluated against specific historical instances and not applied wholesale to the Maya collapse. Citing anthropological and sociological theory, Inomata notes that there is a difference between the theoretical fitness of a king to rule and the actual attitudes of that king’s subjects.

Chapter 5, by Charles Golden, Andrew K. Scherer, Melanie Kingsley, Stephen D. Houston, and Héctor Escobedo, argues that there is little to suggest that declining prosperity or environmental conditions caused the fall of the dynasty at Piedras Negras. Rather it was a failed conflict with neighboring Yaxchilan, followed by a program of ritual termination in order to desanctify the places and objects associated with the defeated ruler; the surviving elites unsuccessfully attempted to restart the kingdom in another part of the center.

The next three chapters explore themes of reverence and desecration. In chapter 6, Sonja A. Schwake and Gyles Iannone suggest, that declining prosperity was a factor in the collapse at Minanha, and point to the destruction of stelae and friezes as an attack on royal identity. At the same time, however, they note that the royal palace there was reverentially buried, as if people who no longer subscribed to kingship per se still had respect for past institutions. Chapter 7, by Arthur A. Demarest, Claudia Quintanilla, and José Samuel Suasnavar, explore the execution of the royal family at Cancuen. They note that despite the violence to which they were subjected, the royal family was buried with full regalia; the authors suggest that they were scapegoats who, by virtue of their one-time position, still needed to be treated with a measure of reverence and respect. Not so for the elites at Colha in chapter 8. As Palma J. Buttles and Fred Valdez Jr. argue, the well-known executions there are best understood as ritualized terminations of elite power and identity. They argue that these were scapegoats proper, an example of what happens when the local population decides to take matters into its own hands.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 all focus on Terminal Classic surface deposits. In chapter 9, Brett A. Houk looks at termination deposits in northwestern Belize and explores the idea that nonelites may have been involved in their creation; the monumental residences and core areas of the elites were powerful symbols to the nonelites from these cities. Chapter 10, by Thomas H. Guderjan and C. Col-