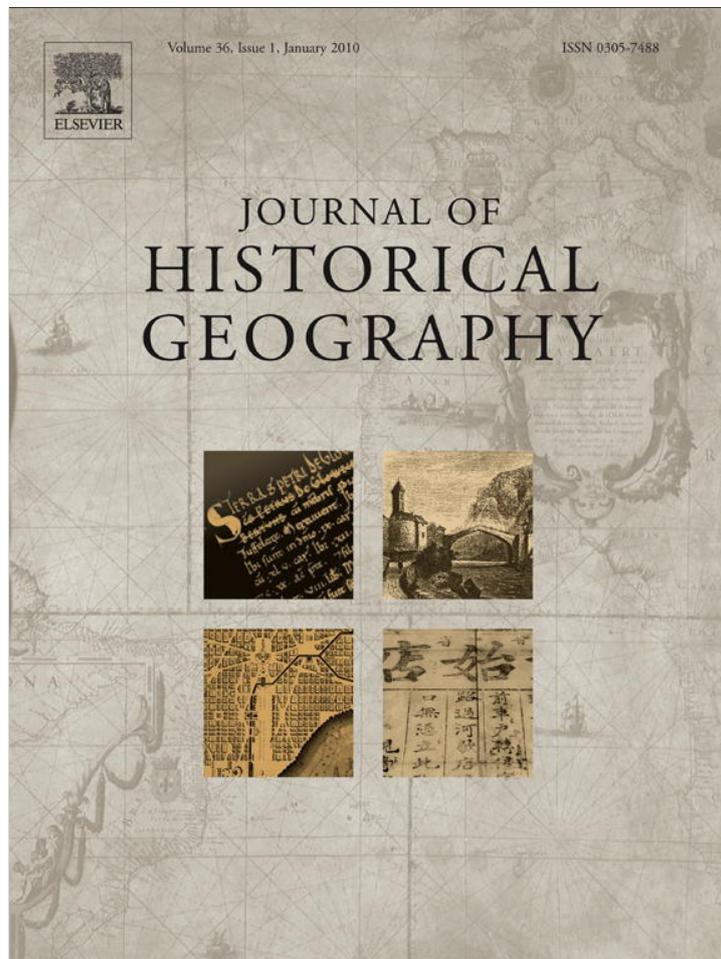


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the sense that it is precisely Taylor's anxious mobility that makes possible his sensitive masculinity. This comes across in a short anecdote concerning a manic episode David experienced in the hours leading up to Taylor's departure for New York to give the presidential address at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in 1941. In spite of David's poor health, Taylor made the trip, gave the address, and immediately thereafter rushed home to Toronto to be with his son. The anecdote stages Taylor as torn between family and career. But it also invites the reader to consider how Taylor might have perceived himself had he stayed behind to care for his son. For someone so accustomed to careerist mobility was domesticity akin to emasculation? Might Taylor have resented his son had he stayed behind? Was his love for David reinforced by his absence? *Griffith Taylor* does not resolve these dilemmas. However, it provides fruitful ground for thinking (and teaching) the historical geographies of patriarchy and masculinity against a backdrop of the history of geography.

A good deal more can be said about this text both as a biography and as a pedagogic device. One could explore methodology in *Griffith Taylor*: there are numerous instances where Strange and Bashford point out that much of what passed as genuine research for Taylor was nothing more than a series of passive observations made from the window of a train. One could also explore the history of environmental determinism, Taylor's cold war Geopacitics and, more broadly, Geography's almost relentless need to find validation in the public domain. Above all though, this book is provocative without ever having the pretense of being so. It is a story about a flawed man, written by two very well-regarded feminist historians, which situates vulnerability in the production of geographic knowledge. The authors do not ask the reader to pity Taylor nor forgive him. Instead this book opens up the possibility to consider what 'precarious subjectivity' (Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* [London, 2004]) might mean when reading backwards into twentieth-century geographies of race, gender and class mobility.

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Karen Bassie-Sweet, *Maya Sacred Geography and the Creator Deities*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2008, xxii + 359 pages, US\$50 hardcover.

Maya peoples, like other advanced Mesoamerican cultures, accomplished the civilized habit of writing long before Spaniards arrived on the scene and changed their world forever. Hieroglyphic inscriptions appear on a number of different surfaces and date back to AD 250. Texts from the Classic period (AD 300–900), regarded by archaeologists as the zenith of Maya civilization, are abundant compared with those at hand for the Postclassic era (AD 900–1524). The art of knowing how to record history and a particular view of the world, however, had certainly not disappeared by the time of Spanish intrusion in the early sixteenth century. What is remarkable about Maya peoples is their ability to respond strategically to invasion and domination in ways that safeguard essential features of their culture: adapting age-old ways of doing things to the new realities imposed on them, or in which they find themselves, is the key to Maya survival. Such is the case with writing and Maya modes of memory. Quick to see the advantages of European conventions, they learned how to use the Latin alphabet and so began scripting records in this manner, thereby documenting, in a flourish of

textual production, the events that had befallen them and the beliefs they upheld.

One of the most celebrated texts composed in this vein is the *Popol Vuh*, a sixteenth-century K'ich'e Maya account of the creation of the universe that encompasses a vast multiplicity of knowledge, among which figure myths, legends, memories of historic migrations, and tales of lineage wars, from the dawn of time to the arrival in Guatemala of the first Spaniards. There have been many interpretations of what the *Popol Vuh* has to say, just as there have been many different versions of the text itself, one of the most recent being an English translation by Allen Christenson (O Books, 2003). It is Christenson's version of the *Popol Vuh* that Karen Bassie-Sweet prefers to work with in her ambitious effort to take its mythological contents and locate them – literally ground them – in the geography of Guatemala, especially in the highland environs of majestic Lake Atitlán.

She begins by noting that 'the sacred geography of the Maya was based on the way they modified and changed the natural landscape to produce corn'. One of her main goals, therefore, 'is to identify and describe the agricultural nature' of a host of deities 'who the Maya believed created the corn cycle' and 'who were thought to be responsible for the creation and ordering of the world and its cyclical renewal' (p. xvii). Bassie-Sweet's hypothesis is that '[b]y analyzing the *Popol Vuh* as well as Maya art and hieroglyphic texts, and making analogies with contemporary sources, the major themes concerning Maya cosmology can be explored' (p. xvii). Her book is a meticulous exercise in correlation, undertaken with assiduous erudition in fourteen bountiful, beautifully illustrated, and intellectually absorbing chapters. The only drawback is Bassie-Sweet's self-confession that her 'personal experiences in highland Guatemala have been limited', thus forcing her to rely for her information 'on the exemplary publications of dozens of scholars to understand the landscape and the culture of this region' (p. xiv). As many of the individuals whose work she draws upon surely would attest, or would have advocated when still alive, there is no substitute for fieldwork designed to verify the current applicability of observations made a year, a decade, or a century ago. It's a pity, therefore, that Bassie-Sweet was unable to spend as much time in the field as the researchers she rightly admires and leans upon heavily.

The 'disconnect' is most apparent in Chapter Two, 'Corn', and Chapter Three, 'Agricultural Events and Ceremonies'. Bassie-Sweet indeed gleans from 'dozens of scholars' (p. xiv) what they document about how the Maya grow corn throughout highland Guatemala and what rituals and ceremonies are associated with the agricultural cycle – or, to be more precise, how they *used* to grow corn and what rituals and ceremonies *used* to be associated with it. The reverence towards cultivating *el santo maíz* (holy corn) may endure, but no mention is made of how it is harvested these days with the help of pesticides and fertilizers, to the benefit of hungry people but often to the detriment of *la madre tierra* (mother earth). Likewise, many of the fascinating rites that characterized 'the corn cycle' when Oliver La Farge and Raymond Stadelman were hard at work in the 1930s and 1940s are now no longer practiced or are under threat and disappearing fast. All too often, Bassie-Sweet's distillations belong to another time, another place, yet are recorded as being extant and present still. For instance, there is no disputing the fact that '[t]he process of grinding corn by hand is labor intensive', but no longer is it necessary 'that the woman rise well before dawn' (p. 30) to prepare the *masa* dough that makes tortillas and feeds her family. It is not the crowing of roosters that wakes up most people in the Maya countryside these days but the clatter of rickety, motorized corn grinders. And were Bassie-Sweet actually to head 'down the Pacific piedmont and across the coastal area' then she would most likely see, at least in the latter zone, not 'rich cacao plantations' (p. 240) as in pre-Columbian and early colonial times

but a vast expanse of sugar and cotton enterprises worked at industrial capacity.

Furthermore, while there is no denying her formidable command of the archaeology literature, Bassie-Sweet's dependence on someone else's grasp of colonial-period history can occasionally let her down. 'Making offerings in the center and four corners of the milpa [cornfield]', she writes, 'is one of the most common rituals' (p. 46) – or at least *used* to be. Attributing what she next states to Christenson, she informs us: 'Just after the Spanish conquest, such a planting ritual was recorded by Francisco Ximénez' (p. 46). Ximénez was shown the original *Popol Vuh* when serving as parish priest in Chichicasteñango, from which he made a copy that is now housed in the Newberry Library in Chicago. The Dominican friar, however, was entrusted with the precious original not '[j]ust after the Spanish conquest' but in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, which is also when he observed, presumably, 'that the farmer placed fire and incense at the center (heart) and four corners of his field' (p. 46). Not an egregious error of fact, perhaps, but one that could have been avoided by consulting the works of Ximénez directly.

This book is very much a specialty item, one in which diehard Mayanists will revel and from which they will derive much satisfaction, for Bassie-Sweet's ability to connect myriad musings from the *Popol Vuh* to disparate geographical features is truly impressive, be the earthly manifestations in question rivers, lakes, mountains, volcanoes, valleys, or inhabited locales. Most historical geographers, however, I suspect will be content to know that a copy of the book, another elegantly produced volume from the University of Oklahoma Press, is available for consultation at a nearby university library.

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A.L. Beier and Paul Ocozbek (Eds), *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective*. Athens, Ohio University Press, 2008, vii + 396 pages, US\$24 paperback.

*Cast Out* is an edited collection of essays, predominantly written by historians with a few exceptions, with the laudable aim: 'to bridge some of the geographic, temporal, and disciplinary divides that have discouraged a global history of vagrancy and homelessness' (pp. 2–3). Unifying this collection, as suggested in the volume's subtitle, is the objective of demonstrating how the discourses and experiences related to vagrancy are particular to geographic and temporal contexts. The book's stated goal is to create a comparative social history of humans' responses to 'managing poverty, labor, and social norms' (p. 3) through the development of the concept of vagrancy and implementation of vagrancy laws. Frank Tobias Higbie succinctly states the common thread running through the volume when he asserts that 'vagrancy has always been a discourse of social control that criminalizes certain populations in order to facilitate selective punishment' (p. 253). *Cast Out* imparts details about the shared customs and historical trajectory of social control over vagrants that is necessarily abbreviated in case studies of responses to homelessness, which are more commonly found in the literature.

The collection of fourteen chapters spans seven centuries and five continents, which is both a strength and weakness. Such breadth necessarily makes comprehensiveness an impossible goal, but the introductory chapter by co-editor Paul Ocozbek attempts to

fill in the historical and geographic gaps by discussing time periods and locales not mentioned in individual chapters. Ocozbek does a good job of tracing the history of attitudes toward the poor and the increasing state intervention in their lives shaped by these attitudes. Within this broader historical narrative, from classical Greece to the present, he intersperses descriptions of the chapters within a literature review of the work of authors not included in the volume. The chapters are not mentioned in the order of their appearance, which is a minor symptom of a broader weakness of the book, which is the lack of a clear articulation of the reasons for the selection and organization of the individual chapters and the specific ways in which the chapters effectively provide a comparative social history.

Most of the chapters trace the use or threat of vagrancy laws through legal documents and the rhetoric of political and law enforcement institutions of the local state in individual cities and national states, including perspectives from colonial and post-colonial states. A few of the chapters focus on tracing the emergence and shaping of discourse through the publications of newspaper reporters, social commentators, and literary figures (Woodbridge's Chapter Two and Beier's Chapter Three). Vincent DiGirolamo's 'Tramps in the Making' about newspaper peddlers in nineteenth-century America (Chapter Eight) and Abby Margolis' 'Subversive Accommodations' about homeless communities living in a Tokyo park in the late 1990s (Chapter 13) are notable for integrating the voices of the homeless themselves into their accounts.

Despite using different points of entry, the chapters effectively illustrate the wide range of ways that vagrancy laws and institutions were and continue to be used to address the impacts of contrasting labor dynamics. On the one hand, vagrancy was used to keep laborers from leaving settlements experiencing labor shortages (such as desertion of emancipated slaves and indentured laborers in plantation colonies like Mauritius described in Chapter Five) and on the other, to prevent newcomers from straining resources and degrading the image of modernizing cities (nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro in Chapter Six). Additional uses involved moving people to places of labor shortages (twentieth-century British East Africa discussed in Chapter 10) or exiling perpetrators of social disorder and crime (Siberia in Tsarist Russia discussed in Chapter Seven). Also important is the attention several authors give to relaying the failures of many of these approaches to achieve their desired goals (policy shifts in China described in Chapter 11 and Papua New Guinea in Chapter 12).

While the collection provides an important step toward developing a global history of vagrancy, in contrast to more commonly found detached national narratives, it is less successful at articulating the findings of the comparative analysis. None of the individual chapters is explicitly comparative in approach or writing style so the comparative social history is left for the reader to assemble. Hibgie's contribution (Chapter Nine) on the discourses of vagrancy in late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth-century North America is one of the few that references the content of other chapters in a manner that explicitly acknowledges the comparative social history objective of the volume. The collection would have benefited from more of this type of integration and reflection on how each chapter contributes to meeting the overall goals of the book.

Most of the chapters review practices and policies at the level of individual countries (England, India, Mauritius, Russia, the United States, and Papua New Guinea). Some chapters focus on regions defined at scales above the level of the nation-state (North America, British East Africa) and others on individual cities (London, Rio de Janeiro, Beijing, and Tokyo). The volume's geographic coverage expands that found in Huth and Wright's *International Critical*