

Among the cited works of six ethnomusicologists of Maya music, there is only one published after 1970. Just as this indigenous song tradition has ended, there is no active ongoing tradition of Maya ethnomusicology. The scholarly context that will be important for most readers is the corpus of writing on Maya literature, ritual, cosmology, and expressive culture. O'Brien-Rothe controls this literature for Santiago Atitlán, and it is used effectively to situate her discoveries in a tradition of scholarship.

A masterful foreword by Allen Christenson places the book in the literary conventions of the Popol Wuj, and O'Brien-Rothe provides her own extended take on this in chapter 4. She finds that the couplet, triplet, and quatrain structures documented by others for K'iche'an pre-Hispanic literature is shared by the texts of her songs, but she adds to this a series of observations on the unexpected presence of an even metrical pattern in many of her songs (p. 161), and her analysis of in-line rhyme via alliteration and assonance as opposed to European end-line rhyming has captured a Mayan poetic convention (pp. 157, 165). Her explanation of how the irregular rhythm of written K'iche'an poetry may be far more regular when it is sung to a musical pulse could offer some new perspectives on the poetry in the Popol Wuj understood as musical lyrics (p. 166).

The main focus of the book is on presenting the lyrics of 24 songs representing two major genres (the Nawales and the Road) and numerous subgenres, in Tz'utujil and English translation, with thorough exegesis. We learn in chapters 1 and 2 that songmen perform the music to invoke nature spirits (Martines and Mariás), foundational ancestors (Nawales), syncretized Maya-Christian deities (Santos), and the souls of the dead. At the beginning of current time, the Nawales erected a carved image known as Old Mam to guard the town, and it taught them the three *recibos* of the Mam and the three *recibos* of Santiago—that is, the tunes that

welcome or receive and “stand up” or resurrect the Santos so they can act for the community. In chapter 3, we learn that the songmen channel the Mam who sings through them and that the combination of song and dance “opens the road” for courtship, marriage, grieving, healing, and protection from a bad destiny. Finally, songs of the flowers and fruit in Holy Week were performed in connection with a trip to the coast and back again, transporting symbols of fecundity that initiated the young men in the community, who would then marry and begin the journey of *cofradía* service, the road to Nawal status after death.

While offering an original take from the perspective of the songmen and their tradition as well as numerous detailed descriptions of rituals, the core of the book on the Maya Cosmos and rituals of renewal in Santiago Atitlán elaborates on the work of E. Michael Mendelson, Robert Carlson and Martin Prechtel, Vincent Stanzione, and Allen Christenson rather than offering a completely new interpretation. It does not seek to frame any broader comparative generalizations on Maya tradition, and with the exception of a few references to work in Chiapas, it remains situated in the ethnography and history of Santiago Atitlán.

O'Brien-Rothe has made two really important contributions to ethnographic work among the highland Maya. She has recorded a collection of songs that can therefore now be heard again in the descendant community. For professional researchers on Maya culture, the descriptions in chapter 3 of the role of ridicule in courtship and of the ritualized and poetic explorations of the tensions, ambivalences, and emotions that figure in parent-child relations, in sexual love, and in marriage provide original and profound insights into this indigenous culture. We are reminded of how little we actually know about the psychological texture of the lives of indigenous peasant villagers whose social organization and ritual life have been so thoroughly documented.

## The Spirit of the Laws in Mozambique by Juan Obarrio.

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*Kaleidoscopio—Research in Public Policy and Culture*

Postcolonial research on state and governance in Africa has long been in need of ethnographic studies that document the everyday work of state functionaries and processes within state institutions. Juan Obarrio's *The Spirit of the Laws in Mozambique* is an important addition to this growing body of literature. The ongoing legal reform in Mozambique provides an excellent opportunity to examine how

the state is constituted and presented in the everyday lives of Mozambicans.

Obarrio organizes his book in two sets of essays that explore from different angles the place of custom and citizenship in Mozambican legal reform and its implications for access to justice. Collectively, he tells a story of “spatial and temporal discontinuities between different areas of the country [that] separate the spaces of the inception of the law and the spaces of its alleged enforcement” (p. 19). Hence, the first three chapters of part 1 look at the policy-making process at the national level and consider how, through legal reform, state units and transnational donor agencies give

shape to the Mozambican state. This is done through an examination of the views of policy makers, bilateral and multilateral organizations, experts expressed in interviews, draft policy documents, and policy workshops on customary law held in the capital city.

In part 1, Obarrio is economical in his references to the wealth of literature on the customary in Mozambique (probably to allow space for references that might have more global appeal). Still, his long rehearsal of the legal reform of the customary will be highly valued by the reader who is not initiated into the history of Mozambique and its political economy. Part 1 also describes how, with the help of national experts and foreign consultants, customary law was placed at the center of neoliberal legal reform. In this way, Obarrio shows how the enactments of customary law that are the focus of part 2 are rooted not only in Mozambican history and economy but also in neoliberal legal and economic reforms promoted by transnational institutions.

It is when he turns to the local level analysis of fieldwork material from Nampula's periurban and rural localities that Obarrio's book makes a significant contribution. The ethnographic description captures dynamics of local governance through the trajectories of various figures and institutions that work on the provision of everyday justice—neighborhood secretaries, community judges, religious leaders, and local state officials. The focus is on the ritualized performances and mobilization of kinship grammar and the logic of the gift at community courts. Here, we find evidence of how centrally produced legal reforms (outlined in part I of the book) are imbricated in customary practices and local politics, giving rise to what Obarrio calls "customary citizenship," a form of citizenship "blending national belonging, official rights, and local norms and claims, encompassing vast sectors of the population within a process of inclusive exclusion" (p. 6).

The clear separation of national and local level of analysis sometimes produces a tension that seems to push part 1 and 2 of the book in different directions. A good example of this can be seen when the author discusses local

officials and citizens' engagement with the state, noting that "the legal reform of the post-Socialist state generated an individual citizen torn between the call of unfathomable laws and the apparent absurdity of recurrent political alteration, constantly mixing various disparate systems of norms" (p. 20). Later, in part 2, Obarrio's ethnographic materials lead him to affirm that "customary law and state law, oral and written norms, blend in a commonly shared feature once again through the judges' respect for legal precedent" (p. 165). These differences in perspectives may also be explained by the option to focus on spatial and temporal discontinuities rather than on continuities well captured in his concept of "customary citizenship" or the ideas of "state of relatedness" or "the gift of justice."

The diversity of institutions that settle everyday disputes has increased since the early 2000s when fieldwork for this book was conducted. In addition to the community courts and the Bureau of the Neighbourhood Secretaries that are the central institutions in Obarrio's study, a number of donor-promoted local associations, community councils, and religious and customary institutions settle everyday disputes in urban and rural areas (Kyed et al. 2012). Obarrio's idea of looking at the same material and institutions from different entry points has proved fruitful in that it has produced a nuanced ethnography of the state. Because the multiple institutions that settle disputes follow a similar logic to that of the community courts, this book is certainly a timely contribution to the debate on the dynamics of the state in Africa and legal reform in Mozambique. Furthermore, it will provide a useful counterpoint for the much-needed reframing of old debates on legal pluralism and access to justice.

#### REFERENCE CITED

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