

leftist vanguard that has traditionally looked to negotiate power within formal democratic politics.

Part II, titled “Doorways,” is divided into chapters 2 and 3 and as the name suggests provides an initial understanding of the manner in which the different GLBT groups set out to influence state strategies. More particularly, chapter 2 is engaged with the manner in which the traditional left in each country incorporated the GLBT debate into their midst. Chapter 3 analyzes how each country saw the first electoral activist movements flourish in the early 1980s.

Finally Part III, titled “Pathways,” is divided into chapters 4, 5 and 6 and this is by far the central part of the volume, engaging the different on-the-ground practices carried out by Mexican and Brazilian activists over the last twenty years. Chapters 4 and 5 engage with Brazil and Mexico respectively, offering a detailed account of the many legislative actions that have taken place over the last years, and in many ways defined the contours of the official GLBT debate, particularly within the state’s official outlook. Meanwhile chapter 6 goes ahead to take a closer look at a grand federal program, “Brazil without Homophobia,” implemented in the country in 2004. The program, with varying results, aimed to incorporate different government branches including the Ministry of Health into this national social policy.

The book’s most succinct contribution, and success, is its unique idea of focusing on state strategies (as opposed to grass-roots activism). Even more valuable is its detailed exploration of each case. However, it is only in the conclusion that de la Dehesa fully entertains the larger theoretical issues that his work points to. In particular he explores the manner in which these particular forms of GLBT engagements with the state speak to larger issues of democratic transformation and the ever menacing landscape of modernity re-defined in the new age of terrorist fears. If there is any weakness in the book, it is that it should have more fully explored these theoretical insights in greater depth. But that would most probably have taken another book of its own. Hopefully de la Dehesa, or other scholars, will be willing to take on this task in the near future.

O. Hugo Benavides

Fordham University

HENDON, JULIA A: *Houses in a Landscape: Memory and Everyday Life in Mesoamerica*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010.

Houses in a Landscape: Memory and Everyday Life in Mesoamerica, by Julia Hendon, is the outcome of a rigorous research tradition established in the Mayan region that has revealed a large and varied body of spectacular archaeological

data. This book is an excellent example of how multiple lines of evidence, collaborative research, and theoretical sophistication positions Mesoamerican archaeology in the realm of disciplines that contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of historical trajectories. The book is also a symptom of the interesting turn that the discipline has taken in some academic traditions.

In the introduction, Julia Hendon states clearly her goal: the book should be read as an example of how and why the archaeological study of memory is not only possible but also worthwhile. Using archaeological data from three different locations in what is now Honduras (Copan, the Cuyumapa Valley and Cerro Palenque), Hendon conveys herself and the reader through a fascinating and perplexing study of memory and material culture. *Houses in a Landscape* is divided into nine chapters. The introduction is a backdrop in which most of theoretical concepts are presented to the reader. In thirty pages, Hendon brings to the archaeological scenario of Mesoamerican societies the voices of numerous scholars who have theorized about memory, identity and history, mostly in modern societies. Memory, the author argues, is not static, it is not something people *have* but something people *do*. In this sense, the book is aligned with scholars who stress the importance of agency, practice, and contingency in history. Central to Hendon's argument is Burke's concept of memory communities: people who come together around bodies of memory; as well as the notion that people *do* memory through an engagement with materiality. Though this first section of the book is fascinating, it is also unsettling. At times Hendon's narrative seems more interested in convincing us why memory should be unbundled as a cultural category than in unbundling it. In fact, the reader will appreciate the passages where the author relies on material culture to illustrate her theoretical statements. For example, there is an image depicting a Royal Mayan stone lintel with a woman holding a bundle of ritual paraphernalia. Inside the bundle, tied up in cloth there is a clay bowl, with bark paper and sharp stone knives used to let blood as an offering to ancestors and deities (p. 6). Hendon uses this image to illustrate how her book is a narrative attempt to unbundle the complex relation between memory as embodied and situated in intersubjective social practice and the materiality of the world. However, like the bundle on the stone lintel, sometimes the wrapping allows one to see its content and sometimes the contents are not revealed clearly in the book.

Each chapter analyzes a particular set of archaeological data to explore some of the theoretical propositions advanced in the introduction. In the first chapter Hendon describes the archaeological setting located in three valleys (with maps of households and monumental architecture). In this chapter the concept of communities of practice arises as a backbone to understand the significance of daily life for memory and identity. The next chapter takes a different lens and examines

objects as generative resources for remembering and forgetting. Particularly interesting is Hendon's focus on *metates* to show that remembering is enabled by and embodied in not only commemorative objects and acts but also enabled by and embodied in useful objects such as grinding stones. Houses as ritualized domains are analyzed in chapter three. In accordance with the previous chapter, the author moves beyond the analysis of royal burials and massive offerings to examine mundane and pragmatic actions taking place in homes as resources for memory-making (storing food, caching objects, and burying the dead in houses). In another section of the book, homes are also analyzed as the locus of special events such as feasting. Hendon suggests that houses have personified status and therefore are also subjected to celebrations at particular moments in their constructive life history. A detailed archaeological analysis of Cerro Palenque's houses suggests that people got together to feast, eat, drink and burn incense prior to the raising of the foundation platform. Finally, people smashed fine paste vessels on the pavement. These special events involving objects and houses were made to be recalled ritualistically over time. Cooking as well as crafting textiles, pottery, paper and shell ornaments are repeated practices that belong to the realm of ritualized practices. These actions and practices of doing things merge the mundane with the religious. They require a form of knowledge that is transmitted across generations and is "preserved in products of labor that are worn" (ornaments), presented as gifts, or offered as tribute. According to Hendon, the interaction of people who make things (craftspersons, potters, cooks, weavers) with their materials becomes a locus of memory and the processes of remembering settle as sediment in the body of the expert.

As the title suggests, the book is about houses, memory and everyday life in Mesoamerica, but this project also offers more avenues for thinking about material culture. It pushes us to think as we look at the small shell ornament, the crushed vessel in the pavement, the bench located in the upper side of the platform, the *metate* and the cooking pot as embodying processes of social remembering and forgetting. The discussion of archaeological material is fascinating. However there are sections in the book that seem to have fallen victim to trendy concepts and the overuse of jargon that characterizes some archaeological writing. Rather than helping us to see or interpret material culture, they confuse us. The project is quixotic, not so much by the length of the book, but because it aims to unbundle through textual narrative the argument that "memory can be approached as embodied and situated intersubjective social practices of remembering and forgetting intimately bound up with the materiality of the world around us" (p. 6). This is indeed a challenging endeavor and one has the fascinating sensation while reading the book that it opens several paths

to critically research, think, and write about memory, space, landscape, ritual, cooking, weaving, and objects.

Apen Ruiz

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

LAURA GIRAUDO (coord.): *Derechos, costumbres y jurisdicciones indígenas en la América Latina contemporánea*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2008.

Originada en unas jornadas celebradas en Madrid en 2007, esta colección de ensayos se centra en el análisis del “Derecho Indígena” en Hispanoamérica. Multidisciplinario en su enfoque con la participación de historiadores, antropólogos, filósofos y juristas, su meta es la de entender qué supone este derecho, cuándo y hacia quién opera y cómo se puede definir y protegerlo mejor. Como confiesa la coordinadora del volumen en el epílogo (p. 293), el fin que se busca es invitar a los lectores a volcarse en un debate cuyas conclusiones no son evidentes, ni se pretenden dictar en este libro. Este debate versa sobre los términos a usar (incluyendo la importante distinción entre derecho y costumbre, entre indígena y no-indígena), pero también recoge el papel fundamental que adquiere el derecho en la vindicación de lo nativo, obscureciendo (y, tal vez, en ciertas instancias, transformando o trastocando) las cuestiones políticas, sociales, antropológicas y culturales que se debaten y se deciden mediante el recurso a soluciones legales.

El libro se divide en cuatro partes: “Acerca de los derechos indígenas”, “Costumbres y codificaciones”, “Entre jurisprudencia, derecho penal y jurisdicción” y “La jurisdicción indígena: conceptos y actores”, cada una con varios autores. Tiene, además de una breve introducción, un epílogo titulado “Repensando el derecho indígena: acerca de su conceptualización, protección y juridificación”, en el que, junto con otro autor, la compiladora pregunta más que resume, ofreciendo una evaluación crítica de lo alegado y constatado por los demás participantes en el volumen.

En conjunto, se trata de una reflexión madura y altamente necesaria sobre temas de gran importancia. La vindicación de lo indígena y de sus derechos está en alza en diferentes países hispanoamericanos. Sin embargo, también lo está la tendencia a pensar que tanto una categoría (“indígena”) como la otra (“derechos”) son obvias. Este estudio demuestra que nunca lo fueron, no lo son y, tal vez, nunca lo serán. Cada uno de los autores a su manera y con su particular enfoque parece coincidir en que existe una distancia enorme entre querer proteger a personas y culturas, y saber cómo traducir este deseo en una política jurídica que tenga sentido tanto para individuos como para comunidades e instituciones,