

En la línea de lo apuntado más arriba, tan sólo una opción metodológica cual es la de emplazar en pie de igualdad a un vasto, complejo y proteico movimiento como el *cinema novo* -sean cuales fueren las limitaciones ideológicas que señala el autor- frente a la puntual y precisa labor del colectivo Cine Liberación podría plantear por momentos algunas dificultades de escala. Sin restar importancia a éste en el contexto del cine argentino y latinoamericano de finales de los sesenta y comienzos de los setenta, tal vez cabría preguntarse si no ha llegado ya el momento de reescribir aquella historia de manera que su larga sombra no eclipse tantas y tantas otras coetáneas manifestaciones de interés y, una vez más, incluso en un estudio de estas características, la discusión de *La hora de los hornos* no acumule docenas de páginas en detrimento de otras posibles alternativas críticas. Al fin y al cabo, ya la propia película nos alertaba para no confiar en los propios monumentos y a Tzvi Tal debemos un brillante y desmitificador ejercicio de historia intelectual en la que, lejos de la inútil noria de la vacua cinefilia, es sin duda “el enunciado de proyectos de construcción de un futuro mejor” (p. 279) el que alienta su escritura.

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**KATRIN S. FLECHSIG. *Miniature Crafts and their Makers. Palm Weaving in a Mexican Town.*** Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004.

This book makes a significant contribution to Mexican studies in two ways: as an analysis of craft production and marketing by rural, indigenous artisans from one village in the state of Puebla, and as a case study of Mixtec-speaking peoples based on serious ethnographic fieldwork. *Miniature Crafts and their Makers* is well written and amply illustrated: it includes useful maps and tables, 35 black and white photographs and 8 color plates, many of them illustrating the author's points about the development of palm weaving styles.

Katrin Flechsig begins with a general introduction to the role of craft production in Mexico, particularly in national identity formation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the Mexican Revolution, and in relation to tourism. This industry rapidly expanded in the 1950s and 1960s, first with foreign tourists, but soon incorporating the once burgeoning Mexican middle class that flourished between 1950 and 1984 and grew to appreciate local hand-crafted objects. Mixtec speakers from Sta. María Chigmeatitlán, in the southern part of Puebla state, developed a line of woven palm figures especially for sale to this new market. In this regard, local developments were part a of larger trend observed in many other parts of Mexico during this period, as rural artisans made strategic adaptations

on their traditional skills to generate lines of products of interest to this new kind of buyer, the tourist.

In subsequent chapters the author traces how palm weavers created different styles of human figures, birds, plants and animals as a specialized subject matter, along with miniaturized baskets, fans and other more traditional items. Particularly striking are the compositions involving groups of figures in the same piece: for example, nativity scenes, musicians playing instruments in a bandstand, or scenes of work such as a man pushing a wheelbarrow and a man harvesting juice from a maguey plant to make pulque.

Unlike some authors who are dismissive of crafts made for tourists, Flechsig deserves credit for taking these objects seriously, and she examines them in some detail from several perspectives. Her book describes weaving techniques, how raw materials are obtained and prepared, and considers how children have been incorporated into the household production cycle. The author documents the shift from palm to synthetic fibers that have now become common. Fortunately, she does not fall into the usual trap of seeing this as a “loss of authenticity” but properly relates these changes to larger forces that the craftsmen must contend with in becoming successful at their overall objective, economic and cultural survival. At the same time, her data suggests that the broad array of colors and material characteristics of the synthetic fibers offer new and different creative possibilities to the craft producers.

Flechsig’s description of how villagers developed palm weaving for an urban, tourist market and the ensuing changes in design, especially the remarkable trend toward increased miniaturization, includes excerpts from interviews with well known artisans. Here we see clearly the complex interplay of economic pressures, technical considerations, and the aesthetic concerns of artisans. An interesting fact emerges: the smaller figures actually require less skill and attention to detail than the larger figures, contrary to the perception of unknowledgeable observers and buyers. The photographs illustrate this point quite well. Villagers from Chigmecatitlán also developed ability to commercialize their craft as itinerant merchants, giving them direct access to urban buyers. There is less emphasis in the book on the earnings from this trade and the general economic standing of the community, located in an arid area with marginal possibilities for agriculture, might be viewed as marginal: nonetheless, it is clear that the income from palm weaving has enabled these artisans to remain in their villages and reproduce local Mixtec cultural identity.

Finally, the book gives us an overview of the village itself, located in southern Puebla state and shared by Mixtec, Nahuatl and Popolocan speakers. The author suggests that the location of the village – on the fringe of the greater Mixtec region that includes parts of three states – contributes to a relative detachment

from the Mixtec core with regard to palm art. She likewise suggests that the latter is possibly related to the innovative and distinctive line of palm weaving. Other factors are probably involved as well, but the geographic location of the village in relation to the Mixtec heartland is an interesting factor that undoubtedly influences other aspects of local culture and social organization.

The study does not directly consider how this local variant of Mixtec culture compares or contrasts with other Mixtec groups reported in ethnography from elsewhere in Puebla or in Oaxaca State, where Mixtec speaking peoples have been more intensively studied: unfortunately, the sizeable Mixtec population from Guerrero has received scant attention from social anthropologists and there is very little literature available on them. In any case, this kind of comparison lies outside the stated aims of this research project; Fleschig's book nonetheless provides interesting data on fiestas, agriculture and ecology in Sta. María Chigmecatitlan that could allow others to make this kind of comparison. *Miniature Crafts and their Makers* is a useful book for teaching and contains valuable information for researchers with specialized interests in a number of areas.

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**VERÓNICA OIKIÓN SOLANO: *Los hombres del poder en Michoacán 1924-1962*.** Zamora y Morelia, El Colegio de Michoacán y la Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2004.

Corre el año 1921. El General Francisco José Múgica, veterano de la Revolución asume el poder en Michoacán, uno de los estados más importantes de México, y se propone convertirlo en centro político soberano dentro del territorio federal. Esta posición, a su juicio, conferiría a sus gobernadores amplia libertad de acción para llevar a la práctica los ideales sociales de la Revolución en materia de tierras, trabajo, educación, organización política popular, etc.

Múgica fracasó: el centro político consideró que sus aspiraciones eran demasiado radicales y lo destituyó. Su sucesor, Gabino Vázquez, con el que comienza el libro de Verónica Oikión, tiene otras metas. Vázquez hizo su aparición en escena en 1924, apadrinado por el hombre fuerte que comienza a destacarse en Michoacán, el Gral. Lázaro Cárdenas, que encubre la orientación soberana de su política. El gobierno de Vázquez (1924 – 1928) marca la orientación política de Michoacán, que en adelante será un Estado atento al centro político y moderado en la concreción de los objetivos revolucionarios. Sus gobernadores se dedicarán, como método, a acotar el uso de su fuerza política.