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Paul Sullivan. *Unfinished Conversations: Mayas and Foreigners Between Two Wars*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. 294 pp.

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ward government." (p. 131) Where comes the hostility if the state is not involved? Tariffs, currency and banking policy, treasury payments, labor policies et cetera are extra-business affairs?

Chernow's fast paced presentation may have contributed to numerous factual errors and/or misrepresentations and occasional redundancies. For example, George Perkins was actually offered a Morgan partnership twice not once before accepting; Willard and Dorothy Straight's support of Roosevelt in 1912 could not have been "subversive" to Morgan partners as Perkins was Roosevelt's primary fundraiser; and Pierpont Morgan had little to do with the resolution of the Northern Pacific Corner as he was in Europe, and Hill, Bacon and Perkins developed and executed the plans that led to the establishment of Northern [Securities, see original] Company. Likewise, Chernow argues that "The Yankee-Jewish banking split was the most important line in American finance." (p. 90)--where was National City Bank and Rockefellers in this so-called split? Was John D. Rockefeller, the devout Baptist, a member of the Jewish financial camp?

These criticisms should not detract from the wealth of research and helpful information that is presented in a well-written and engaging fashion. It is an important addition to Morganalia and an informative overview of banking history for the past century-and-a-half.

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Paul Sullivan. *Unfinished Conversations: Mayas and Foreigners Between Two Wars.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. 294 pp.

Grant D. Jones. *Maya Resistance to Spanish Rule: Time and History on a Colonial Frontier.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989. 382 pp.

"So you're going. Well, take me to your village, too," said a thin voice emanating from a stone figure in the forests of Quintana Roo. This talking effigy was found by Maya boys not centuries ago in the prechristian past, but in 1985--according to a report used by Paul Sullivan to give a final twist to his tale of *Unfinished Conversations*. The story, though not authenticated by Sullivan,

symbolizes the apparent persistence of Maya culture through five centuries of colonization, an image that has tantalized scholars of various disciplines and inspired a recent burst of investigative energy among Mayanists. Not only are rapid advances being made in the study of the precolumbian Maya--particularly through hieroglyphic decipherment--but so too are the postconquest Maya being rescued from the historical oblivion to which previous scholars had assigned them. Both Sullivan and Grant Jones are a part of this latter movement.

The stone effigy's request for adoption--"take me to your village"--also acts as a reversed analogy for the intrusions into Maya communities depicted by the two books under review. The effigy's unspoken promise is spiritual and material protection of the Maya by forces that are perceived as culturally native. The intruders promise a similar protection but their cultural context is alien to the Maya, prompting a suspicion that proves to be well grounded.

Sullivan details how ethnographer Sylvanus Morley insinuated and bribed his way into Maya confidences; Morley took advantage of the fact that native leaders saw in him an ally who could bring US military assistance, even benevolent annexation, into a rebellion against Mexican rule, all the while knowing this was impossible. He was capable of even greater duplicity: In 1919 he used his archaeological work at Chichen Itza and Tulum as a cover for an espionage mission for US Naval Intelligence.

Initial Maya contact with the Spanish was similarly deceptive. The "friendly" overtures of the Franciscans, for example, invariably preceded the violence and economic exploitation of Spanish settlers and colonial authorities. Jones does an excellent job of portraying the endless cycles of conquest/appeasement-mistreatment-flight/rebellion that characterised the difficult relationship between Maya and Spaniard on the southern frontier; as much as the Spanish tried to convince the Maya that conformity to Spanish cultural and political dictates was for their own good, the actions of the colonists consistently betrayed their self-interest.

Both Sullivan and Jones, then, reveal how the Maya have been subject to the invitations of an intruding culture that has proven to be hostile, that hostility in turn inspiring a multiplicity of resistance and reciprocal attempts at aggressive acculturation. From the baubles offered to the Maya by the first Spanish expeditions to the peninsula, to the cigarettes and medicines brought by early twentieth-century anthropologists, the friendly patronizing of the foreigner has masked ulterior motives. Sullivan shows the

Maya officers displaying a public obsequiousness towards Morley and his colleagues, while privately they were contemptuous of intruders' gifts and planned to exploit such relationships to their own advantage. Likewise Jones devotes most of *Maya Resistance to Spanish Rule* to the native struggle against Spanish incursion in the southern-most region of the Yucatan peninsula, a struggle whose strategies included accommodation as well as deception, flight, fortification, and armed resistance and rebellion.

These two works ostensibly tackle different subjects--Jones the conquest of the southern Yucatec Maya in the seventeenth century; Sullivan the interaction between anthropologists and the Maya of Quintana Roo in the 1920s and '30s--but they are thematically linked in a way that serves to illuminate the contribution (and weaknesses) of both. That link is more than just a parallel of intrusion and deception by foreigners into the Maya world; it is a debate on the nature of "frontier" in postconquest Yucatan, an idea that Jones deliberately places at the core of *Maya Resistance*, while it is the implied substance of *Unfinished Conversations*.

Jones' achievement is to challenge old perspectives, while, ironically, the book's greatest weakness is its failure to pursue that goal to a completely satisfactory conclusion. This may not necessarily be Jones' fault; unable to uncover Maya-language sources for this region and time-period (they probably do not exist), he was forced to make the most of Spanish sources, and thus Spanish perspectives, on native action and response (an excuse not applicable to the two most lauded histories of northern colonial Yucatan--those by Nancy Farriss (1984) and Inga Clendinnen (1987)--where Maya documentation is abundant). Inevitably, then, the bulk of Jones' book is hispanocentric and at odds with the title. Furthermore, he often accepts Spanish readings of events without the skepticism necessary to approaching such sources--a failure that anthropologists (as Jones is) are frequently accused of by historians.

Having said this, Jones has produced an engagingly-written work of solid scholarship, dense with translations of his Spanish sources that are invaluable in allowing the reader to insert his/her own skepticism. Jones' penetration of the forest and rediscovery of the fugitive must be deemed a success; the colonial Spanish perspective of a "civilized" northern Yucatan and a south that was paradoxically both *despoblado* and the dark refuge of intractable pagans is finally shattered by this work. That perspective, perhaps a collective denial and simplification to blur the memory of

failure on the part of the colony, had certainly been used as a pre-Jones justification for a scholarly lacuna.

If Jones has revised "our historical consciousness of southern Maya history by demonstrating the vibrancy of Maya life on the remotest of the frontiers of southern Yucatan," one of his achievements in this respect is to offer a more sophisticated interpretation of the state of colonization and the nature of a frontier between two opposed ethnic groups. The Maya nurtured a "culture of resistance" within (or behind) which could be hid "both people and ideas." Not only was the physical or geographical frontier line continually shifting with the pendulum swing of political control, but the Spaniards could not (and often did not) know whether they had really "reduced" a given Maya community. The link of relationships and ideas between the northern and southern Maya, convincingly described by Jones, not only explodes the notion of an isolated south but also undermines the traditional view of a pacified north in which the subdued natives submit to the process of cultural syncretism, if not acculturation. Intrinsic to Jones' concept of frontier is the idea that there was always more going on in the Maya world than the Spaniards could possibly know; by extension, there was always more going on that *we* know. Ironically it is the incision of Jones' theory that exposes what he himself cannot (yet) tell us about the colonial-era Maya.

One further aspect of Jones' interpretation of Maya resistance--its link to native prophecy--is likewise well conceived but not fully realized. Jones argues that resistance was dominated by Maya priests who used the cycle of the "katun prophecies", native texts grounded in the Maya calendar, to dictate when to fight or surrender. This allegedly explains Maya refusal to submit to the invaders between the 1540s and the 1690s and their subsequent peaceful capitulation. The problem here is twofold: First, while Jones is strong on what the Maya actually did, and even on their immediate motivations, he is weak on analysis of the prophecies themselves--largely because they are available to us only in the books of Chilam Balam, colonial-era texts written in Maya in a frequently opaque and obfuscating style. The prophecy-rebellion idea is tempting, but it must be placed in perspective and weighed against other more tangible factors. To be fair, Jones does not ignore this need, admitting that the evidence is "limited but suggestive."

Second, the notion that the Peten Itza chose to surrender because the coming of the Spaniards had been prophesied smacks suspiciously of the Cortes-Quetzalcoatl myth used to explain

Moteczuzoma's failure to resist. That myth appears to have originated among the colonists at least a generation after the Conquest, and indeed the Spanish clergy repeatedly used the prophecy argument to persuade the southern Maya to peacefully submit. Furthermore, as Jones himself relates, the so-called surrender of the Itza in 1696 was marred by the fact that most of the community fled into the forest. As with the connection between political office and the katun round suggested by Philip Thompson for the northern Maya town of Tekanto, the influence of the Maya calendar on native political action seems to be inconsistent and less powerful than were more practical considerations.

Jones' view of frontier parallels that of the "new historians" of North America. Richard White's statement in the most recent Turner-debunking publication that "the West was a wilderness to Anglo Americans only because they defined it as such" is equally applicable to the Spanish characterization of the Maya frontiers, as is White's portrayal of the frontier as the setting for exploitation and an ongoing competition for resources. In other words, the more deeply the frontier is investigated, the more it seems to disappear. This is true of Jones' work and it also applies to Sullivan's.

Unfinished Conversations is on one level an update on Jones' Maya "culture of resistance" as well as a book-length examination of that culture in the twentieth century as suggested on the final pages of Nelson Reed's *Caste War of Yucatan* (1964). In an oft-cited and poignant scene Reed met in 1959 with an elderly native leader who asked Reed if he could supply the Maya with rifles from Belize, the origin of most of the weapons that had sustained the rebellion of the late-nineteenth century. Sullivan thus fills in some of the missing link, showing Quintana Roo leaders nurturing hopes of armed resistance two and three decades after the conclusion of the Caste War and the supposed territorial absorption of Quintana Roo into the Mexican Republic.

In other words, the frontier--as Jones sees it--persists. As in the south several centuries earlier the frontier exists in that cultural zone where Maya and non-Maya have divergent visions of reality. Sullivan is able to get a more concrete grasp on the role of prophecy than Jones' sources allow him to; for the natives of Sullivan's study prophecies of future conflict do not so much *dictate* how the Maya must respond to outsiders, but they are taken as a true glimpse of what is to come and thus influence how the Maya approach conversation with foreigners. The conclusion that in recent decades the pursuit of money has become the bridge chosen by

the Maya to cross the cultural frontier may not represent as much of a change as Sullivan implies. Perhaps, in fact, the pursuit of wealth has always been the building material of the frontier. Just as the first Spanish settlers sought gold above all, so did indigenous leaders of the time respond to the Spaniards with a view to using them for political--and thus material--gain. Likewise Jones is able to construct a picture of Maya motives in seeking accord with the Spaniards that prominently features material considerations. And in leaving their communities to seek employment in Cancun today's Maya are simply taking that frontier to today's dominant culture, in the arena of the Mexican tourist industry.

One aspect of frontier that is central to Sullivan's book--but not Jones'--is that between fieldworker and native subject. Sullivan's portrait of mutual connivance prompts certain conclusions that he never openly discusses. First, there is the implication, and it is a highly offensive one, that the Maya possess a scheming nature that necessitates duplicity on the part of the scholar among them. The danger of this argument, its inherent racism aside, is that it might be used to justify the behaviour described by the second conclusion: that fieldworkers of high standing in the academic community--in this case Morley, Alfonso Villa Rojas, and Robert Redfield--can lie shamelessly and out of pure self-interest to the people of a target culture, manipulating it to suit preconceived assumptions, leaving behind a trail of mistrust and misunderstanding. Such conversations may have been better left unfinished.

Although Sullivan fails to tackle this subject head on, his book is sufficiently well constructed and composed as to make a worthy text upon which to base such a debate--as part of a teaching course, for example, on anthropological method, or even on neo-colonialism. Likewise Jones' book not only bears close reading, but also makes a much-needed contribution to the field as both a work of scholarship and a potential seminar tool.

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