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La mitad del mundo: Cuerpo y cosmos en los rituales Otomíes by Jacques Galinier

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analyses seems rather thin, despite his caution that such a context is prerequisite for structural analysis (p. 254).

One suspects that only a practitioner of Lévi-Strauss's ingenuity could maintain a reader's interest in such an unrelentingly structuralist work as *Histoire de Lynx*, more than 20 years after poststructuralism's birth was announced. Indeed, the major strength of this latest—and perhaps last—contribution to the Lévi-Straussian study of New World mythology is precisely that remarkable ingenuity, a brilliance that has conveyed us, frequently despite our better judgment, on an often exhilarating analytic tour.

La mitad del mundo: Cuerpo y cosmos en los rituales Otomíes. *Jacques Galinier*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1990. 748 pp.

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In the voluminous literature on the history and ethnography of Mesoamerica, the Otomí Indians of central Mexico appear as enigmatic figures, poorly understood by the Aztecs who conquered them and neglected by scholars throughout the postconquest period. French anthropologist Jacques Galinier makes a major contribution toward correcting this situation in his detailed study of Otomí history, society, and culture—a translation and updated version of the original French work completed in the 1980s.

Galinier bases his presentation on a decade of field research among those Otomís who live in the Huasteca Sur, located at the juncture of the states of Hidalgo, Puebla, and Veracruz. His principal aim is to reveal the basic structures and concepts of Otomí world view as these are embedded in and expressed through the concrete practices of Otomí life. Because of his concern with the relationship between thought and practice and his desire to avoid the reification characteristic of so many studies of world view, he privileges the analysis of ritual action over that of myths and explicit native commentary, although he employs information from both to supplement that garnered from his observations of the complex Otomí ritual repertoire.

The book is organized into five major sections. In the first, Galinier provides a historical overview of Otomí society and religion

from Spanish contact to the mid-20th century, followed by a presentation of the conceptual and sociopolitical organization of contemporary Otomí rituals. He begins the second section with an insightful symbolic analysis of Otomí domestic space which then serves as a framework for a consideration of domestic rituals, including shamanic curing and divination. In the third section, he describes in detail the more public Otomí ceremonies, contrasting those derived from European Catholicism (but subsequently transformed by the Otomís) with those of indigenous origin. In the fourth section, he turns to an exploration of themes traditionally expected of world-view studies—the organization of space and time—emphasizing the spatial and temporal frameworks within which ritual action takes place.

These four lengthy sections, totaling over five hundred pages, are preparatory to the final section, in which Galinier presents his analysis of Otomí ideas about the body and the relations between the sexes. He argues that these ideas serve as the foundation for Otomí cosmology as a whole and provide the framework in terms of which Otomí rituals are organized and legitimized. He offers a subtle analysis of the dualism that pervades this scheme (male–female, upper body–lower body, God–Devil, heaven–earth, social order–supernatural power, etc.), demonstrating convincingly that this conceptual organization of the universe is not a static collection of binary oppositions but a flexible and therefore enduring system endowed with dynamism by virtue of the dialectical relations among these categories.

Galinier's book is an outstanding ethnography and a significant contribution to anthropological theory. By combining the strengths of structuralist and symbolic analyses with attention to the processual and political dimensions of social praxis, he provides important insights into the organization and operation of dualistically oriented societies, the nature of social and cultural change, and the complex interconnections between thought and ritual action. Throughout his study, he eschews simplistic explanations and uniformist descriptions, carefully exploring the intricacies of his subject and documenting variations from one Otomí community to another. The quality of his ethnographic accounts as well as the credibility of his theoretical arguments confirm the importance of long-term field research, based on a thorough understanding of the native language, to the advancement of the anthropological enterprise.